

UNAMI Herald

Volume 8, Issue 1

January - February 2021



Transparency must rule Iraqi elections, 'loyalties cannot be for sale', Security Council hears

Baghdad/New York, 16 February 2021 - A deadly rocket attack on Monday night in Erbil drew condemnation from the UN envoy in Iraq, who told the Security Council on Tuesday that "such reckless attempts to inflame tensions pose grave threats" to the country's security. "Close collaboration between Baghdad and Erbil, to bring the culprits to justice, is now of the greatest importance", said Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, Special Representative and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), referring to the cooperation with the Kurdish Region in the north.

Credible elections

The UN envoy updated that in consultation with the Independent High Electoral Commission, the Council of Ministers had decided that elections would be held on 10 October, four months later than originally planned. But while parliament had passed financing legislation, it has not finalized the Federal Supreme Court law, which certifies election results. "Further delays cannot be accepted", the UN envoy said, urging all parties to proceed immediately. Against the backdrop that for elections to be trusted, "unfounded theories must be disproved, baseless accusations refuted, [and] intimidation replaced with accountability", Ms. Hennis-Plasschaert said. "Transparency must rule and loyalties cannot be for sale", she underscored. As credible polls require "a free and safe environment" for parties, candidates and the media, she called on all parties and authorities to "come together, to agree on a 'code of conduct' for free elections "without fear of intimidation, attack, abduction or assassination". Reminding the Council that it had received an electoral observation request from the Government, the Special Representative expressed hope that Iraqis can continue to count on its "steadfast support and solidarity". "No matter what your response is, the



elections will be Iraqi-led and Iraqi-owned at all times", she said. "The UN does not take sides. Our independence and impartiality define us".

Decisive action needed

While Iraq continues to experience acute financial and economic difficulties, a recent increase in oil revenues has "eased the liquidity crisis" and surging projected prices allow the government to move forward on pressing matters such as public services and civil servant salaries, the UN official pointed out. But because "precious little progress has been made" in implementing reform measures, "Iraq can afford neither continued dependence on resource extraction, nor the excessive burden of an outsized public sector", she continued. "And as always, the fight against economic and political corruption, the promotion of robust governance, transparency and accountability, must all be the watchwords accompanying such reform", Ms. Hennis-Plasschaert added.

Country-wide stability

Agreement on the 2021 budget law requires reconciliation and compromise between Baghdad and Erbil, which according to the UN envoy, "remains elusive". Constructive negotiations continue to be hampered by missing laws, including on oil, revenue sharing and disputed territories. "To date, no agenda or timetable has been set to address these outstanding issues", she said. And recent budgetary negotiations have not just

centred on technical questions but were "inherently political – about deeper misgivings and mistrust". Ms. Hennis-Plasschaert re-emphasized that "a positive, stable relationship between federal Iraq and the Kurdistan Region is absolutely essential to the stability of the whole country", as is enhancing and strengthening Iraq's federal system, which requires concessions.

'A ticking time bomb'

Although camp closures for internally displaced Iraqis, many of whom are women and children, have been in progress for the past three months, unwanted outcomes – such as secondary displacement or people returning to areas without sufficient shelter or basic services – are also ongoing, according to the UN Iraqi envoy. She stressed that "the haste and opacity" surrounding camp closures can easily precipitate another crisis and said that "the focus must be on safe and dignified measures to solve displacement", urging Iraqi authorities to adopt and roll out national plan for durable solutions. "Al-Hol continues to be a ticking time bomb. And if it goes off, the impact will be immense", Ms. Hennis-Plasschaert said, referring to repercussions for Iraq. "Iraq has a responsibility to take back its citizens – starting with the humanitarian cases. Many promises have been made...and it is truly time to live up to them", she spelled out.

By UN News.

In this edition ...

Security Council deliberated situation concerning Iraq on its videoteleconference

New York, 16 February 2020 – On its videoteleconference convened on 16 February 2021, the United Nations Security Council deliberated on the situation concerning Iraq. The text of the briefing (as delivered) by the Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert on this meeting starts on page 3.

Iraq celebrates the launch of the Clinical Handbook for the health care of women subjected to violence

Baghdad, 18 January 2021 - The World Health Organization (WHO), in collaboration with the Iraqi Ministry of Health launched the Iraqi Clinical Handbook- an adaptation of the WHO Clinical Handbook for the health care of women subjected to violence. *More on page 14.*

UN stresses the need for urgent action to alleviate Sinjaris' hardship

Sinjar, 10 January 2021 – In a spirit of continued solidarity with the residents of Sinjar, the United Nations Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) for Iraq, Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert visited the district today to follow up on the implementation of a recent agreement between Baghdad and Erbil aimed at creating stability, security and better living conditions for its inhabitants. She was accompanied by her Deputy, Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq Irena Vojáčková-Sollorano. The UN delegation stressed the need to do more – in unity and at a faster pace - to alleviate the current hardships. *More on page 5.*

In collaboration with UNAMI Human Rights Office, Supreme Judicial Council launches “Know Your Rights” poster campaign to promote the guarantees for the suspects

Baghdad, 28 January 2021 - Did you know that everyone has rights in case of arrest? *More on page 18.*

UN Calls for increased efforts to achieve durable solutions for vulnerable Iraqis in areas of return

Kirkuk, 11 January 2021 - Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General, Resident Coordinator and Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq, Ms. Irena Vojáčková-Sollorano, visited Hawija district in Kirkuk governorate. She called for scaled up efforts to meet the needs of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and returnees in areas of origin; work with the communities; and support the Iraqi Government in promoting local reintegration of IDPs and effective protection. *More on page 26*

Secretary-General appoints Ms. Ingibjörg Sólrún Gísladóttir of Iceland as Deputy Special Representative for Iraq



New York, 15 January 2021 - United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres today announced the appointment of Ingibjörg Sólrún Gísladóttir of Iceland as his new Deputy Special Representative for Political Affairs and Electoral Assistance of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI).

Ms. Gísladóttir succeeds Alice Walpole of the United Kingdom, who completed her assignment end February 2021. The Secretary-General is grateful to Ms. Walpole for her dedicated service since 2017 to the United Nations in Iraq.

Ms. Gísladóttir brings a wealth of diplomatic and political experience to the position, including from her recent role as Director of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) and most recently as the Head of its Election Observation Mission in Ukraine. She also served as UN Women's Regional Director in Europe and Central Asia and its Country Representative in Turkey and Afghanistan. She was Iceland's Foreign Affairs Minister from 2007 to 2009, member of Parliament for seven years, and Mayor of Reykjavík for nine years. She is a member of the Nordic Women's Mediators Network.

Ms. Gísladóttir holds a bachelor's degree in history and literature from the University of Iceland and did post-graduate studies in history at the University of Copenhagen.



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

PIO Director: Samir Ghattas
Editor-in-Chief: Ivan Djordjevic

Editorial Board: Samir Ghattas, Khalid Dahab, Ivan Djordjevic, Laila Shamji, Celia Thompson, Sarmad Al-Safy.

Photos: UNAMI PIO, UNHCR, UNCHR, UNICEF, IOM, OCHA, UNFPA, WHO, UNESCO, UNOPS, UN Habitat, UN Photo, UN Women, UNIDO, UNMAS, UNDP, WFP and as credited.

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

Security Council deliberated situation concerning Iraq on its 16th February videoteleconference

New York/Baghdad, 16 February 2021 – On its videoteleconference convened on 16th February 2021, the United Nations Security Council deliberated on the situation concerning Iraq. Here is the text of the briefing (as delivered) by the Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert at this meeting:

“Madam President,
Distinguished members of the Security Council,

Allow me to begin by again condemning last night’s deadly rocket attack on Erbil. Such reckless attempts to inflame tensions pose grave threats to Iraq’s stability. Close collaboration between Baghdad and Erbil, to bring the culprits to justice, is now of the greatest importance.

Madam President, we have welcomed a new year in which Iraqis hope to turn the page on a number of fronts: recovery from the pandemic, elections, economic reform, strengthening the rule of law and delivering a more secure environment for all.

Now, while 2021 presents many opportunities for profound, positive change in these and other areas, much work remains to be done.

As I pointed out in my most recent briefing to this Council, the impact of the multiple, interlinked crises afflicting Iraq will be lasting. Decisive and concerted action is therefore all the more urgent.

Madam President,

Iraq continues to experience acute financial and economic difficulties, as reflected by the exceptional devaluation of the Iraqi dinar by over 20% in late December.

Nevertheless, a nearly 40% increase in oil revenues since November 2020 has eased the liquidity crisis, providing some breathing room for the government.

Now, the projected continued increase in oil prices is expected to allow the government to move forward on pressing matters such as public service delivery and civil servant salaries.

But unfortunately, precious little progress has been made on the implementation of much needed reform measures as described in last year’s economic white paper.

It therefore bears repeating that Iraq



can afford neither continued dependence on resource extraction, nor the excessive burden of an outsized public sector.

And as always, the fight against economic and political corruption, the promotion of robust governance, transparency and accountability, must all be the watchwords accompanying such reform.

As I have consistently pointed out in the past, numerous opportunities for meaningful and necessary reforms have been wasted since 2003. And it is past time to prioritize sustainable economic diversification, as well as the development of a value-adding, employment-generating private sector.

I repeat: a dependence on volatile commodity prices is no strategy at all, ultimately, it can only backfire.

Madam President,

Agreements on the 2021 budget law requires reconciliation and compromise between Baghdad and Erbil. Within that context, I regret to again report that a final, durable agreement on budgetary and larger issues remains elusive. The harsh reality is that constructive negotiations between Baghdad and Erbil continue to be hampered by laws missing since 2005. Laws on, for instance, oil and revenue sharing. Other areas of contention also include the disputed territories.

To date, no agenda or timetable has been set to address these outstanding issues. And those who have followed the recent budgetary negotiations closely, will have realized that these

negotiations were not just centred on technical questions - such as barrels per day. They were also inherently political – about deeper misgivings and mistrust.

Given the abundant lessons Iraq’s history offers, many consider the current state of affairs particularly disappointing.

So, let me re-emphasize: a positive, stable relationship between federal Iraq and the Kurdistan Region is absolutely essential to the stability of the whole country.

And of course, enhancing and strengthening Iraq’s federal system requires concessions on both sides, and practicing what one preaches. It requires the responsible use of moderate language by all.

Turning to the electoral calendar:

The Council of Ministers, in consultation with the Independent High Electoral Commission, or IHEC, decided on a new date for Iraq’s elections: 10 October 2021 – 4 months later than originally planned.

Meanwhile, parliament has passed the legislation necessary to finance the elections, and countrywide registration of candidates and alliances, as well as voter registration updates, are underway.

However, parliament has not yet finalized the outstanding Federal Supreme Court law. As this court certifies the election results, further delays cannot be accepted. I would like to urge all parties to proceed immediately: failure to do so will not be understood.

Now, for credible elections to take

Security Council deliberated situation concerning Iraq on its 16th February videoteleconference (*continued*)



place, it is imperative that parties and candidates operate in a free and safe environment. The same goes for members of the media. In this regard, recent incidents are highly troubling – to say the least.

And with this in mind, I call on all parties, stakeholders and authorities to come together, to agree on a ‘code of conduct’ and to allow all Iraqi candidates to operate freely – irrespective of ethnicity, gender, language, religion, belief or background.

Any Iraqi who wishes to participate in these elections, as a candidate or campaigner, he or she must be able to do so without fear of intimidation, attack, abduction or assassination. And it goes without saying: voters must feel entirely free to choose their preferred candidate.

Madam President, a request from the Government of Iraq for electoral observation is currently before this Council. I understand that a decision has not yet been made, but I would like to take this opportunity to emphasize the importance, and also urgency, of obtaining clarity.

As I address this Council, I also would like to underline that, no matter what your response is, the elections will be Iraqi-led and Iraqi-owned at all times. And I sincerely hope that all of Iraq’s political leadership truly takes this to heart. Equally important, yet not always fully understood: the UN does not take sides. Our independence and impartiality define us.

Madam President, I have come to realise that facts do not always prevail. On the opposite. Sometimes facts are easily overtaken by perceptions, which in turn can morph into false, even dangerous - yet accepted - realities.

As I said last time, misinformation and conspiracies are poisonous. Credible elections require collective, concerted, timely and transparent efforts - with all parties, authorities and stakeholders assuming their respective responsibilities in the service of the Iraqi people.

I must say, after weeks of confusing declarations, I am somehow encouraged by the very recent statements made by some senior Iraqi political leaders, clearly emphasizing the importance of credible elections, and calling for unity - of the state and the nation - with an inclusive national identity.

Madam President, On the pressing need for greater transparency, justice and accountability, let me clearly state that repression, violations of fundamental freedoms - including freedoms of expression and peaceful assembly - enforced disappearances and targeted killings, that all of it has no place in a democracy.

Unfortunately, transparency, justice and accountability continue to remain largely absent - particularly when it comes to the repression of public protests - throughout Iraq, including the Kurdistan Region.

If this does not change, sooner or later public anger will yet again erupt.

Madam President, Although Iraqis marked the third anniversary of the territorial defeat of ISIL this past December, the heinous suicide attacks on a market in Baghdad, which killed at least thirty people and injured over one hundred, painfully demonstrated that violent extremism has not been vanquished. A callous act of cowardice, and a stark reminder that Iraq cannot rest on its

laurels.

And of course, strengthening safety and security is as much about addressing the root causes of extremism, as it is about the immediate ability to respond to threats on the ground.

Despite operating in a uniquely complex geopolitical context, Iraqi leaders continue to maintain open relations in the service of a foreign policy that emphasizes the sovereignty of Iraq.

As you have heard me underline before, the centrality of Iraq to regional stability cannot be overstated. Iraq must build its domestic resilience, and be shielded from rivalries. This responsibility is shared - of course, by the Iraqis themselves first and foremost, but also by regional stakeholders and the international community as a whole.

Again, reckless attempts to inflame tensions - such as last night’s rocket attack on Erbil - pose grave threats to Iraq’s stability.

Madam President, turning now to the humanitarian situation:

When I last briefed the Council, the Iraqi government had recently renewed its efforts to close camps for internally displaced Iraqis – many of them women and children.

Camp closures have been ongoing for the past three months, and the possibility of further closures is imminent.

In November, you heard me affirm our understanding of the Iraqi interest to end displacement - I do - but I also emphasized that such closures should not lead to unwanted outcomes, such as secondary displacement, or people returning to areas without sufficient shelter or basic services. However, as we speak, this is unfortunately happening.

And today I can only repeat myself: the haste and opacity surrounding camp closure decisions is of great concern to many. So once again,

I would like to warn against decisions which can easily precipitate another crisis.

To cut a long story short: closing camps cannot be an objective in and of itself – instead, the focus must be on safe and dignified measures to solve displacement. We accordingly urge the Iraqi authorities to rapidly adopt and roll out their national plan for durable solutions.

On a separate but related note, I would also like to remind the authorities of

Security Council deliberated situation concerning Iraq on its 16th February videoteleconference (continued)

the around 30,000 Iraqis residing in the al-Hol camp in Syria, including a number of non-ISIL affiliated Iraqi humanitarian cases.

As we all know: al-Hol continues to be a ticking time bomb. And if it goes off, the impact will be immense. Like any nation, Iraq has a responsibility to take back its citizens – starting with the humanitarian cases. Many promises have been made in past months, and it is truly time to live up to them. Again, non-ISIL affiliated humanitarian cases must urgently be tackled, without further ado.

Madam President,

With regard to Sinjar, as I have said before: signing off on the October agreement was just a very first step.

Visiting Sinjar last month, I again had the opportunity to engage with Sinjari representatives and officials. One thing is clear: much work lies ahead. Spoilers, domestic and external, continue to confuse the scene.

So - yet again, I would like to stress the

importance of establishing stable security structures without further delay - followed by a unified administration.

There is undoubtedly a pressing need to do more, in unity and at a faster pace.

On the issue of missing Kuwaiti, third-country nationals and missing Kuwaiti property, including the national archives:

Despite continued movement restrictions, the Tripartite Commission and the Technical Subcommittee successfully held semi-remote meetings.

The Commission confirmed the formal closure of case files for twenty Kuwaiti missing persons. This is significant progress sixteen years after the last identification. I extend my deepest condolences to the families of the victims, who waited three decades for this conclusion.

The sustained investigative work of the Iraqi Defence Ministry exemplifies

Iraq's commitment to this file.

The longstanding cooperation between Iraq and Kuwait, with strong support from the Tripartite Commission and the ICRC, is clearly bearing fruit.

And I would like to call on all partners to seize the momentum of recent progress and to further advance the search for missing persons.

Madam President, in closing, allow me to reassert that credible elections require the collective effort and commitment, in a way, of all Iraqis.

For elections to be trusted, unfounded theories must be disproved, baseless accusations refuted, intimidation replaced with accountability. Transparency must rule and loyalties cannot be for sale.

In this all-important election year, Madam President, I am hopeful that Iraqis can continue to count on the Council's steadfast support and solidarity.

Thank you."

Political Situation

UN stresses the need for urgent action to alleviate Sinjaris' hardship

Sinjar, 10 January 2021 – In a spirit of continued solidarity with the residents of Sinjar, the United Nations Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) for Iraq, Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert visited the district today to follow up on the implementation of a recent agreement between Baghdad and Erbil aimed at creating stability, security and better living conditions for its inhabitants. She was accompanied by her Deputy, Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq Irena Vojáčková-Sollorano. The UN delegation stressed the need to do more – in unity and at a faster pace - to alleviate the current hardships.

"Effective governance through a unified administration and stable security structures are the basis for any form of progress. What has been achieved so far could set the stage for a greater improvement in living conditions, but to make this happen all stakeholders will have to act in unity and solidarity", Ms. Hennis-Plasschaert said.

The field visit builds on a meeting Ms. Hennis-Plasschaert held with the Governor of Ninewa and all components of Sinjar in Mosul in



November, when she urged implementation of the agreement. During today's visit, the UN delegation was briefed by the deputy governor of Ninewa, Hassan Thanon al-Ala'af, the commander of the Western Operations Command, Major General Jabbar Al-Ta'e, as well as the military and security commanders in charge of the district. They also heard from the local

community and party leaders about their needs and concerns.

The UN Special Representative welcomed the agreement but calls for further action. "The completion of the security arrangements and the implementation of other parts of the agreement need to be expedited so that critical reconstruction work and service delivery can kick off and accelerate.

UN stresses the need for urgent action to alleviate Sinjaris' hardship (continued)

Conditions on the ground must further improve to facilitate dignified, voluntary returns.”

The delegation also visited Sinjar Old City, devastated in the 2014-2017 conflict with ISIL (Da'esh), as well as Al Banat village located in Sinjar where around 600 displaced Sinjari families, mostly Yazidis, have returned to their places of origin. Displaced Sinjaris voiced their concerns and requested further assistance to the vulnerable local communities who recently returned from displaced camps.

“The United Nations Mission, Agencies, Funds and Programmes have been active in Sinjar in support of the government’s efforts and will continue working with the local authorities to step up stabilization and rehabilitation projects. Sinjaris must be able to feel at home again,” said Ms. Vojáčková-Sollorano, deputy SRSG/RC/HC.



Social Cohesion

United we rise: How diverse religious leaders are promoting coexistence in Iraq



Religious leaders from various faiths across Iraq have come together to celebrate Iraq's diversity and promote peace in their communities.

Baghdad, 18 January 2021 - Supported by UNDP Iraq, 87 religious leaders from Erbil, Baghdad, Anbar, and Ninewa attended an eight-day online training session that coincided with the end of a challenging 2020, and

a universal period of hope for good things to come in the year ahead. Over six different religious sects were represented, including Sunni and Shia Muslim, Christian, Yazidism, Sabian Mandaism, Zoroastrianism, Yarsanism, and Bahai.

Mohammed, Imam and Khateeb, Muslim, Anbar: “When religious leaders work together, security and safety of communities is increased. The

role of religious leaders is crucial in combatting violence and extremism and promoting unity and cohesion inside communities for a safer and more secure country.”

Ara, Deacon, Christian Armenian, Baghdad: “A key message I tell people is to love each other unconditionally, in order to bring truth and justice to the people, because the Lord loves us as we are, and extremism does not benefit anyone. We all eat the same bread, drink the same water, and breathe the same air.”

Sheikh Majid, Imam and Speaker, Muslim, Ninewa: “Religion calls for equality, love for others, and the rejection of hatred. On this basis comes the role of religion in serving society to achieve cohesion and integration with others, because that is an essential part of life.”

Sarkawt, Religious Leader, Muslim, Erbil: “Humans were all created equally. There is no difference between religious groups and we can all exist together.”

The training included peacebuilding workshops focusing on enhancing dialogue, creative expression, coexistence during the COVID-19 pandemic, and the role of Iraqi women

United we rise: How diverse religious leaders are promoting coexistence in Iraq *(continued)*

in building peace. It also helped religious leaders to disseminate accurate information about COVID-19 to the public and improve the skills necessary for implementation of community peace initiatives.

A coexistence network will be

established among the trained religious leaders to foster dialogue, coexistence, and tolerance among communities in close coordination with the 24 Local Peace Committees supported by UNDP across the country.

UNDP Iraq's Social Cohesion

Programme is committed to improving community well-being and building cohesion by promoting peace and tolerance among various religious groups and ethnicities in Iraq, thanks to generous support from the Government of Denmark.

Giving youth and women a voice is vital to create a culture of peace

Baghdad, 25 January 2020 - In 2020, UNDP Iraq supported the formation of four Youth for Peace Groups and three Women for Peace Groups. The groups implemented 27 initiatives, reaching over 11,000 beneficiaries in 2020.

Giving youth and women a voice is vital to create a culture of peace, especially in Iraq, a country with one of the youngest populations in the world.

During January and February 2021,

Youth and Women for Peace groups supported by UNDP Iraq from Anbar, Ninewa, Salah-al-Din and Diyala participated in meetings to discuss initiatives that will make a positive difference in their communities this year.

In 2021, the groups will implement more than 50 initiatives, doubling their impact in 2020, thanks to support from the Government of Denmark.



Electoral

UN Special Representative Hennis-Plasschaert visits IHEC, emphasizes elections will be Iraqi-led, Iraqi-owned

Baghdad, 28 January 2021 – The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, visited today the Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC) in Baghdad.

At a press conference held by IHEC after the meeting, the Special Representative commended the commission for announcing the operational schedule to hold the early general elections, which are set for 10 October.

Ms. Hennis-Plasschaert responded to questions from journalists on Iraq's request to the UN Security Council for electoral observation. She emphasized that elections are Iraqi-owned and Iraqi-led.

“On the role of the international community and the United Nations in particular, let me emphasize that so far, we have been providing technical assistance only,” she said. Stressing that “it must be clear at all times that Iraqi elections are Iraqi-owned and Iraqi-led”, she added: “there is no such thing as the international community taking over.”

She listed the three options that can be envisaged to protect the integrity of electoral processes: supervision, monitoring and observation. In its



request to the Security Council, Iraq refers to the observation option.

“Observation is the mildest form of international presence in Iraq to see what is happening on election day. This is exactly what the Iraqi government asked the Security Council.”

While awaiting the decision of the Security Council on Iraq's request, the Special Representative explained that electoral observation is a widely known

and accepted tool.

“It is just an additional safeguard to protect the integrity of the electoral process, nothing specific to Iraq, but an important one to keep weapons and money from influencing the election outcome.”

She concluded: “Whatever happens, it is an Iraqi election conducted by Iraqis and not by the international community.”

Iraq's Electoral Preparations and Processes | Report No. 5

Baghdad, 5 February 2021 - Since September 2020, the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) has been issuing monthly reports on electoral preparations in Iraq, in conformity with its mandate under Security Council Resolution 2522 (2020) to provide electoral assistance and advice to the Government of Iraq and the Independent High Electoral Commission. The fifth report combining the months of December 2020 and January 2021 is also available on the UNIraq website (www.uniraq.org) through the following link: <https://bit.ly/2Z63RBC>

Among the highlights for December 2020-January 2021 are:

- The Council of Ministers (CoM) approves, in consultation with the Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC), a new election date of 10 October.
- IHEC presents electoral calendar in a media event attended by the UN

Special Representative for Iraq.

- The voter registration update and candidate nomination processes start countrywide.
- IHEC approves nine regulations governing the upcoming elections, including the candidate registration regulation.
- Two companies submit bids to audit the electoral results management IT systems.
- Parliament passes legislation to finance the 2021 parliamentary elections.

The electoral timeline, setting out detailed preparatory activities and a timeframe for the new 10 October election date, has been updated by IHEC. It was presented during a media event on 28 January in Baghdad in the presence of the UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq. The timeline contains the schedule of major preparatory activities leading to the election, including the finalisation of the voter registry,

accreditation of candidates, the electoral campaign period, procurement and logistics processes for the delivery and retrieval of electoral materials, outreach campaigns, election security, testing of software and systems, recruitment and training of staff, the polling period and the announcement of the election results.

During its finalisation, UNAMI shared detailed feedback on the timeline with suggestions on the timing of several activities, including staff training, procurement, out-of country voting, technology audit, and ballot paper design and printing.

UNAMI has provided a guidance document for IHEC to develop its communication strategy and communication plan, aimed at finetuning messaging for various electoral stakeholders. This should help IHEC to timely and effectively disseminate information to target audiences.

UN signs financing agreement with the USAID to support UN electoral assistance to Iraq

Baghdad, 8 February 2021 - The United Nations in Iraq welcomes the contribution of USD 9.7 million from the USAID to a UN-led project to support and assist capacity-building within the Iraqi Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC). The USAID funding will also support the deployment of UN electoral advisers at subnational levels as IHEC prepares the October 2021 early national elections.

On behalf of the United Nations

Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) signed an agreement with the US Agency for International Development (USAID) to manage the financing and administration of the project.

“The United States is committed to listening to Iraqi needs and providing tailored support that promotes Iraqi sovereignty and stability,” said USAID/Iraq Mission Director John

Cardenas. “This USAID funding will ensure UNAMI’s ability to effectively implement its most pressing electoral assistance activities in preparation for the upcoming 2021 Iraqi parliamentary elections.”

The United Nations thanks the United States for its contribution to the process of holding free, fair and transparent elections in Iraq.

Political Consultations



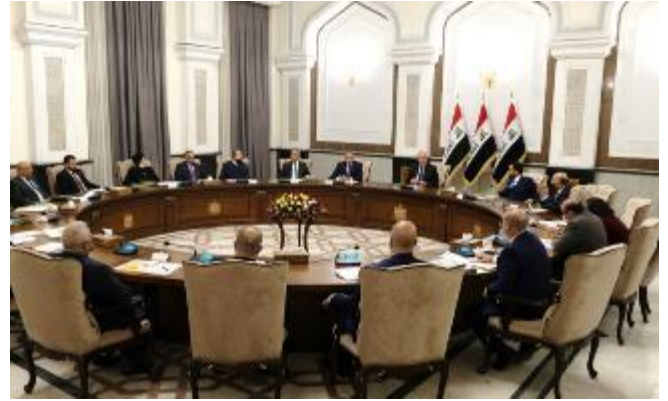
Baghdad, 04 January 2021 – The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, accompanied by Mr. Amir Arain, Director of the United Nations Office for Electoral Assistance in Iraq, met today with the Chairman of the Board of Commissioners of the Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC), Mr. Jaleel Adnan Khalaf. They discussed the preparations for the forthcoming early general elections in Iraq.



Baghdad, 04 January 2021 – The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, met today with the Head of the Iraqi Coalition, Sayyed Ammar al-Hakim. They discussed the current political situation in the country, including preparations for the upcoming early general elections. Photo courtesy of the Iraqi Coalition.



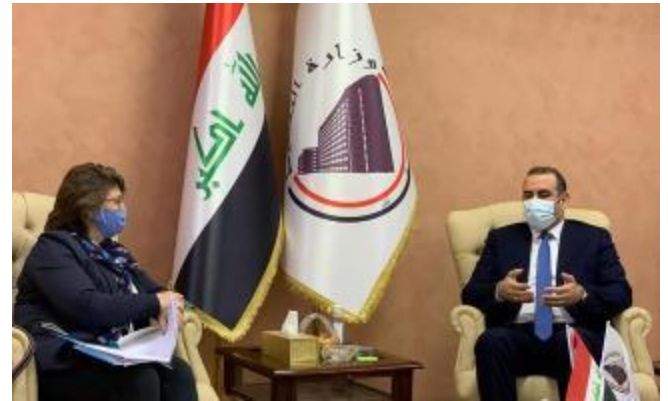
Kirkuk, 5 January 2021 - The heads of UNAMI, UNHCR and OCHA Kirkuk offices met today in Kirkuk with representatives of the Kirkuk Office of Tribal Affairs. They discussed coexistence, upcoming elections, social cohesion, IDPs return and durable solutions in the area. The Office of Tribal Affairs was represented by prominent Sheikhs of the Arab, Christian, Kurdish and Turkmen community in Kirkuk.
Photo courtesy of the Office of Tribal Affairs.



Baghdad, 12 January 2021 – The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, attended tonight the meeting of the three Presidencies. Preparations for the forthcoming early general elections were discussed, including timely biometric registration and completion of the Federal Court Act.
Photo courtesy of the Iraqi Presidency.



Baghdad, 14 January 2021 – The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, attended a meeting of Iraqi Presidencies at the Baghdad Palace. Right conditions for the conduct of upcoming Iraq’s early federal elections were discussed.
Photo courtesy of the Iraqi Presidency.



Baghdad, 17 January 2021 – The Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq/Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator, Ms. Irena Vojáčková-Sollorano, met today with the Minister of Planning, Prof. Dr. Khaled Battal Al-Najm. They discussed various humanitarian, health and development issues, including measures to enhance private sector activities in Iraq.
Photo courtesy of the Ministry of Planning.



Baghdad, 24 January 2021 - The Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General and Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq, Ms. Irena Vojáčková-Sollorano, met today with the Governor of Muthana province, Ahmed Manfi Jawda as part of her introductory meetings with the governors.



Baghdad, 8 February 2021 – The Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General, Ms. Alice Walpole, met with the Chairman of the Board of the Commissioners of the Independent High Electoral Commission, Judge Jalil Adnan Khalaf. They discussed preparations for the forthcoming early national elections, including ways to secure timely voter registration, including by displaced persons and out-of-country voters.
Photo courtesy of Independent High Electoral Commission.



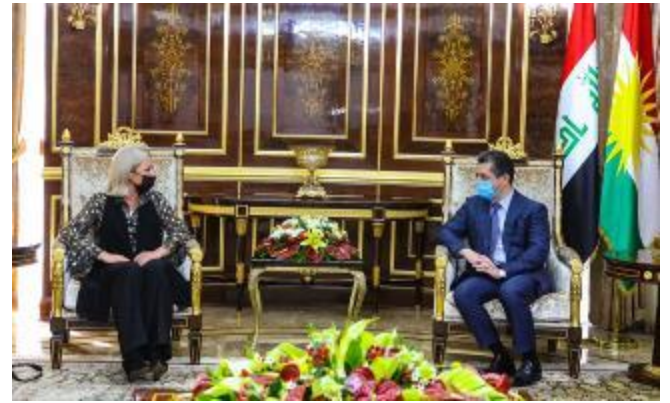
Baghdad, 9 February 2021 – The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, met with the Head of the Iraqi Coalition, Mr. Sayyed Ammar Al-Hakim. They discussed the current political situation in the country, including preparations for the upcoming early general elections.
Photo courtesy of the Media Office of the Iraqi Coalition.



Baghdad, 11 February 2021 – The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, met today with the Speaker of the Council of Representatives, Mr. Mohammed al-Halbousi. They discussed the current political situation in the country, including preparations for the upcoming early elections.
Photo courtesy of the Media Office of the Speaker.



Erbil, 14 February 2021 – The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, met today with the President of the Kurdistan Region, Mr. Nechirvan Barzani. They discussed the current political, economic and security situation in the country and the region, including Baghdad-Erbil relations.
Photo courtesy of the Office of KR President.



Erbil, 14 February 2021 – The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert met today with the Prime Minister of the Kurdistan Region, Mr. Masrour Barzani. They discussed the current political, economic and security situation in the country and the region, including Baghdad-Erbil relations and the implementation of the Sinjar agreement.
Photo courtesy of the Office of KR Prime Minister.



Erbil, 14 February 2021 – The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, met today with the President of the Kurdistan Democratic Party, Mr. Masoud Barzani. They discussed the political and security situation in Iraq and the Kurdistan Region, including Baghdad-Erbil relations.

UN Special Representative visits Tehran to support stability in Iraq

Baghdad, 1 February 2021 - The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, visited Tehran on 31 January and 1 February, holding talks with Iranian officials on regional issues as part of efforts to support stability in Iraq. The Special Representative has visited a number of regional countries, including Iran, before. Such visits are in furtherance of UNAMI's mandate under Security Council Resolution 2522 (2020), which includes the facilitation of regional dialogue and cooperation, including on issues of border security, energy, trade, environment, water, infrastructure, public health, and refugees.

The Secretary-General strongly condemns the deadly double suicide bombing targeting civilians at a market in Baghdad

New York, 21 January 2021 - The Secretary-General strongly condemns the deadly double suicide bombing targeting civilians at a market in Baghdad today. He expresses his deep condolences to the families of the victims and to the Government and people of Iraq, and wishes a speedy

recovery to those injured.

The Secretary-General appeals to the people of Iraq to reject any attempts to spread fear and violence aimed at undermining peace, stability and unity. He calls on the Government to ensure that those behind these horrific crimes are swiftly identified and brought to

justice.

The Secretary-General reiterates the commitment of the United Nations to support the people and Government of Iraq in their efforts to consolidate peace.

SRSJ Hennis-Plasschaert: “Deeply shocked and outraged by the calculated brutality and wickedness of the double suicide attacks at Tayaran Square”

Baghdad, 21 January 2021 - Statement from the Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert on the terrorist attacks in Baghdad on 21 January 2021:

“I am deeply shocked and outraged by the calculated brutality and wickedness of the double suicide attacks at Tayaran Square – bombs deliberately detonated to cause wanton killing and injuring of civilians. On behalf of the

whole UN family in Iraq, I wish to express our heartfelt condolences to those who have lost their loved ones in these attacks. I also wish a rapid recovery to those who have been injured.

Iraqis have been tested time and again by those who would seek to bring chaos and oppression to their country. They have suffered immensely from terrorism in the past and have sacrificed much to liberate their land from its scourge. Once again, the Iraqi

people will not be cowed by these cowardly attacks. Now is the time for unity and all national efforts must focus on ensuring the security of the people. Those responsible for this heinous act must be held fully accountable. The resilience and unity of Iraq’s people always prevail, and such despicable acts will not weaken Iraq’s march towards stability and prosperity. The United Nations will continue to support Iraq and its people in the quest for a stable and peaceful future.”

The members of the Security Council condemned in the strongest terms the cowardly terrorist attack in Baghdad

New York, 22 January 2021 - The members of the Security Council condemned in the strongest terms the cowardly terrorist attack in Baghdad, Iraq, on Thursday, 21 January 2021. The attack, which was claimed by Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Da’esh) resulted in at least 32 deaths and at least 110 injured.

The members of the Security Council expressed their deepest sympathy and condolences to the families of the victims and to the Government of Iraq, and they wished a speedy and full recovery to those who were injured.

The members of the Security Council reiterated their support for the independence, sovereignty, unity, territorial integrity, democratic process, and prosperity of Iraq.

The members of the Security Council reaffirmed that terrorism in all its forms and manifestations constitutes one of the most serious threats to international peace and security.

The members of the Security Council underlined the need to hold perpetrators, organizers, financiers and sponsors of these reprehensible acts of terrorism accountable and bring them to justice, and urged all States, in accordance with their obligations under international law and relevant Security Council resolutions, to cooperate actively with the Government of Iraq and all other relevant authorities in this regard.

The members of the Security Council reiterated that any acts of terrorism are criminal and unjustifiable,

regardless of their motivation, wherever, whenever and by whomsoever committed. They reaffirmed the need for all States to combat by all means, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and other obligations under international law, including international human rights law, international refugee law and international humanitarian law, threats to international peace and security caused by terrorist acts.

The members of the Security Council reaffirmed their support for Iraq’s security and the continued fight against terrorism, including against Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Da’esh).

UNITAD on Twitter

Baghdad, 22 January 2021 - UNITAD and Special Adviser Karim Khan join the Iraqi people in mourning

the innocent lives lost following the bombings in Baghdad. Our heartfelt thoughts and prayers are with families

and friends of those who perished or were injured in the attack. Perpetrators should be brought to justice.

Solidarity messages from Anbar and light candles for the victims of the terrorist attack in al-Tayaran Square

Anbar, 24 January 2021 - The Anbar Youth and Women for Peace groups supported by UNDP Iraq organized a ceremony to send solidarity messages and light candles for the victims of the terrorist attack in al-Tayaran Square on 21 January.

The group members are praying for the speedy recovery of the wounded, and for patience and solace for their families.



At least one child killed and another six confirmed injured in Iraq since the year began

UNICEF calls on all parties to protect children as they continue to bear the brunt of poverty and violence. Statement from Dr Paula Bulancea, UNICEF acting Representative in Iraq

Baghdad, 28 January 2021 - “We are less than a month into 2021, yet children and adolescents in Iraq continue to undergo death and injury due to violence and poverty.

“In the last ten days alone, UNICEF can confirm that:

- Three children suffered serious burns in the Darashkaran camp in Erbil in the north of Iraq, as a result of a malfunction in the heating system inside their tents.
- Two children were injured as a result of an attack in the Gara mountain region last Friday in the Dohuk governorate of the Kurdish Region of Iraq, north of the country.
- A child was killed and her sibling wounded in Najaf governorate

on Wednesday, after coming into contact with an unexploded remnant of war while collecting discarded metal to sell and earn an income.

“UNICEF received credible reports that children were among the casualties of the twin Baghdad explosions in a market last week which took the lives of at least 32 people.

“UNICEF appeals to all parties to protect children across Iraq at all

times. Violence in Iraq is commonplace due to decades of conflict, war, socioeconomic deprivation and poverty.

“As per the Convention on the Rights of the Child, children and adolescents have the right to safety at all times, free from all forms of violence. UNICEF renews its call on all parties to fulfill their responsibilities and safeguarding children’s rights this year, and at all times”.



UNAMI on Twitter

Baghdad, 16 February 2021 - We deplore the deadly rocket attack on Erbil. Such heinous, reckless acts pose grave threats to stability. Iraq must be shielded from (external) rivalries. We

call for restraint and for close Baghdad-Erbil collaboration to bring culprits to justice.

National unity and solidarity will defeat those seeking to inflame

tensions. Iraq already faces multiple crises, and such callous acts as the rocket attack on Erbil cannot be allowed to undermine stability and recovery.”

UNAMI on Twitter

Baghdad, 23 February 2021 - UNAMI strongly condemns the recent deadly violence in Dhi Qar. We again

call on the authorities to put an end to impunity: those responsible for this and earlier attacks must be brought to

justice. Calm and peaceful resolution of differences are the only way forward.

UNDP supports community reintegration of families with perceived affiliation to ISIL at Local Peace Conference in Habbaniyah



Habbaniyah, Anbar, 26 January 2021

– At today’s Local Peace Conference in Habbaniyah, Anbar Governorate, and under sponsorship of the Governor of Anbar (head of the Central Peace Committee in Anbar) and the Mayor of Habbaniyah (head of the Habbaniyah Local Peace Committee) with support from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Iraq, a peace agreement was signed allowing the return of 524 displaced families perceived as affiliated with ISIL to their places of origin. Through extensive dialogue and mediation sessions facilitated by the Habbaniyah Local Peace Committee (LPC) and with support from local government, the peace

agreement and its action plan were developed to ensure sustainable peace and community reintegration. The conference was attended by community representatives from security agencies, tribal and religious leaders, civil society, youth, women, and representatives of returning IDP (Internally Displaced Person) families.

According to UNDP Iraq Resident Representative Zena Ali-Ahmad, “Encouraging the return and reintegration of perceived ISIL-affiliated families to their places of origin through implementing sustainable reintegration action plans is vital for durable solutions especially following camp closures and will continue throughout 2021 to ensure

community peace and stability moving forward.”

UNDP supports the work of 24 local peace committees in Ninewa, Salah al-Din, and Anbar governorates, with ongoing planning to form additional committees in Diyala and Kirkuk. These committees play a fundamental role in resolving conflicts, urging peaceful coexistence, and empowering various leaders to enhance community cohesion. This conference is part of the UNDP project on community readiness and reintegration of perceived ISIL-affiliated IDP families and Local Peace Committees play a vital role in the project to enhance community readiness and reintegration through designing and implementing activities that facilitate dialogue, mediation, reintegration and trust-building between different community groups. The project is built on the UN Iraq joint approach for community-based reconciliation and reintegration of persons perceived to be affiliated with ISIL/Da’esh in Iraq.

Projects and interventions under the Social Cohesion Programme in Iraq are implemented with generous support from the governments of Denmark and Germany.

UNDP supports the reintegration of families with perceived affiliation to ISIL at Local Peace Conference in Al-Ayadhiya

Tal Afar, Ninewa, 10 February 2021

– A peace agreement was signed today supporting the reintegration of families perceived to be affiliated with ISIL (Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant) in the Al-Ayadhiya sub-district of Tal Afar in Ninewa Governorate. Today’s Local Peace Conference was sponsored by the Governor of Ninewa, the Mayor of Tal Afar, the head of Al-Ayadhiya sub-district, and other members of the Tal Afar Local Peace Committee, with support from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Iraq.

The Tal Afar Local Peace Committee (LPC) facilitated dialogue sessions with support from local government to ensure a comprehensive and sustainable return and reintegration process. As one of the 24 local peace committees in Ninewa, Salah al-Din, and Anbar governorates supported by UNDP, the Tal Afar LPC plays a vital role in the reintegration process by designing and implementing activities that facilitate dialogue, mediation, and trust-building between different community groups.

As stated by UNDP Iraq Resident Representative Zena Ali-Ahmad, “This is



one of several peace agreements UNDP Iraq will be supporting in 2021 to ensure the sustainable return and reintegration of families perceived to be affiliated with ISIL, through our work with Local Peace Committees and other community peace structures. Planning is ongoing to establish additional local peace structures in Diyala and Kirkuk, where we will continue to support social cohesion initiatives and facilitate dialogue and mediation where it is needed most.”

Today’s conference is part of the UNDP project on community readiness and reintegration of perceived ISIL-affiliated IDP families and is built on the UN Iraq

joint approach for community-based reconciliation and reintegration of persons perceived to be affiliated with ISIL/Da’esh in Iraq. The project includes a full social and economic area-based reintegration package in several pilot areas. Recently signed peace agreements have allowed the community acceptance and reintegration of hundreds of families with perceived affiliation in Habbaniyah, Anbar (January 26, 2021) and in Muhalabiya, Mosul (October 14, 2020).

Projects and interventions under the Social Cohesion Programme in Iraq are implemented with generous support from the governments of Denmark and Germany.

Developing capacities and skills for a better life

Najaf, 15 January 2021 - Said Noor Al Huda participated in a tailoring workshop provided by the Democratic Center for Awareness and Good Governance in Najaf with support from IOM said the following:

"I learned about the tailoring course provided by the Democratic Center for Awareness and Good Governance through an announcement. I really wanted to develop my capacities and skills, so I registered and was selected for the tailoring course.

I would like to work in the tailoring business to produce dresses and do embroidery. There isn't much diversity or choice when it comes to dresses in Najaf, so I would like to be the one to design and tailor modern and unique dresses to introduce them to the market.

Through this training I learned the whole process from how to handle fabric to cutting and using the sewing machine.

The presence of local organizations that provide these vocational courses is really important for women. Before, there weren't such activities to support women. We now need more psychosocial support and social awareness activities that aim to develop the society. Women have enormous potential to grow, develop and change the society for the better."

The local NGO's activities in Najaf and Ninewa are supported by the Government of Japan.



Under the Women's Empowerment and Livelihood Programme, led by IOM Iraq, Nadia's Initiative and Mission East, over 50 women have been trained in livelihood skills to start their own businesses.

Following ISIL's genocidal campaign against the Yazidis in Sinjar in 2014, women who lost their husbands during the ISIL attack are now coping with both looking after their families and earning a living while attempting to come to terms with the impact of the past years.

Participants in the project, as well as participants in Mission East's other projects in the area, also took part in Mental Health & Psychosocial Support

activities (MHPSS). Support groups helped participants gain an understanding of mental health; work to identify and name difficult emotions; and learn positive coping techniques for managing stress, anxiety, grief and loss. Some created artwork that featured in a virtual gallery for an initiative to recognise the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence Campaign.

This women's empowerment programme is part of the project "Leveraging the Security Development Nexus in Iraq: Support for Community Stabilization in Conflict Affected Communities", funded by the Government of Japan.

IWJF organized a seminar in Mosul on women's political participation between electoral security and legislation

Mosul, 27 December 2020 – With the support of UN Women, the Iraqi Women Journalist Forum (IWJF) organized a dialogue seminar in Mosul on the political participation of women between electoral security and fair legislation.

Representatives from the Electoral Commission, local government, jurists, academics and civil society organizations participated in the event. The purpose was to raise awareness on the importance of having a safe electoral environment for the involvement and empowerment of women for the upcoming elections. The dialogue session ended with an expanded discussion on the nature of women's participation in elections and focused on how to improve their role in exercising their rights in political action.



Iraq celebrates the launch of the Clinical Handbook for the health care of women subjected to violence

Baghdad, 18 January 2021 - The World Health Organization (WHO), in collaboration with the Iraqi Ministry of Health on both the Central and Kurdistan Region levels, launched the Iraqi Clinical Handbook- an adaptation of the WHO Clinical Handbook for the health care of women subjected to violence.

The event marked the attendance of more than 80 participants from health and protection sectors including healthcare providers, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), international nongovernmental organizations (INGOs), and civil society organizations and activists. It also signified the ongoing national efforts to address violence against women and girls in different vulnerable settings in Iraq.

"Violence in general and that against the vulnerable groups like women, girls, and children in particular, is a mounting concern worldwide and it is gaining a great deal of attention by the national authorities in Iraq," said Dr. Wael Hatahit, the Emergency Team Lead and Acting WHO Representative in Iraq. "The Gender Based Violence (GBV) team in WHO Iraq, with the technical guidance of our experts in the Regional Office, are supporting the national multi-sectoral efforts to address this issue scientifically and stress the importance of the health sector as a key partner in the prevention and early detection of violence in the country," Hatahit added. "The handbook will provide efficient responsive tools adapted to the Iraqi



context," a message conveyed during the launch by Dr. Maha El Adawy, Director of the Healthier Population Department in WHO Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean Region (EMRO). "We expect this manual to strengthen the health sector response to violence against women and to provide specific evidence-based guidance to improve health services for this vulnerable group," she further explained.

Violence against women and children in Iraq remains a public health issue of remarkable impact on the mentioned groups especially during the Covid-19 pandemic as it directly affects their general health, safety, and wellbeing in addition to limiting their ability to access timely life-saving services.

"It is important to ensure violence survivors a safe access to health care facilities," said Dr. Lana Fouad, a

mental health professional participating in the launch ceremony. "There are still huge gaps in addressing survivors' basic health needs especially during emergencies like the COVID-19 pandemic which further stressed the already overburdened health system in Iraq," she added.

On the other hand, Dr. Hussam Shareef, a public health provider in the Iraqi Ministry of Health and a participant in the virtual launch commented that "The Ministry of Health, with the support of WHO, will maintain its efforts to implement the National Clinical Handbook in 2021, with focus on training healthcare providers, conducting a quality assessment of health facilities to identify the needed support, and ensuring an accessible and adequate level of healthcare to women and girls survivors of violence."

Women Leadership Institute (WLI's) safe space center in Kirkuk provides psychological and legal services to women in need

Kirkuk, 8 February 2021 - Susan is a married woman, from a minority group called Kakaiya. She left university after getting married and lived with her husband's family. This caused economic and social problems between the spouses and the family as a whole and led to Suzan being treated badly and unfairly to the point where she was forced to leave the house. Suzan was 4 months pregnant when this happened and suffered from severe psychological conditions.

Suzan decided to file a lawsuit to obtain her rights. She visited the Women Leadership Institute (WLI's) safe space center in Kirkuk where the team provided her psychological and legal

services and enrolled her into the cash-for-work program. This was implemented under the LEAP project funded by the Government of Japan and supported by UN Women.

Through this program, Suzan was able to improve her self-confidence and obtain her rights as well as become more financially stable which in return contributed to improving her economic and psychological status. She also obtained approval decision for the separation lawsuit that she filed in court with the help of WLI's lawyer.

Suzan referred to the importance of this program, "I have benefited a lot from the topics of the trainings especially the issues concerning the

Iraqi labor law. Before receiving the training, I did not know how to use the legal documents appropriately. Now, I have become more knowledgeable and acquired sufficient information on how to use such documents."



DSRSG Walpole: “Let’s also use the opportunity to work together to reduce gender inequalities for Iraqi women not just in this time of pandemic but in the longer term”

Baghdad, 1 February 2021 – Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General Ms. Alice Walpole attended at the Nahrain Centre in Baghdad a seminar organized by the National Security Adviser and the University of Baghdad on the impact of the COVID19 pandemic on Iraqi women. DSRSG Walpole reported on the efforts of the United Nations in Iraq to mitigate the effect of the virus on women. She concluded with a request to all that “as we work together to mitigate the impact of COVID on women in Iraq, let’s also use the opportunity to work together to reduce gender inequalities for Iraqi women not just in this time of pandemic but in the longer term, too”.

Here is the text of the address of DSRSG Walpole:

“Mr. Qasim al-A’raji, National Security Adviser,

Dr. Muneer al-Saadi, President of the University of Baghdad

Distinguished Panelists,

Distinguished Guests and Civil Society Representatives,

Thank you for inviting the United Nations to address this seminar on the impact of the COVID pandemic on Iraqi women. At the start of the pandemic in March 2020, the United Nations Secretary-General issued a global message that “Today’s declaration of a pandemic is a call to action – for everyone, everywhere”. The United Nations began to focus specifically on the effects of COVID on women, which led the Secretary General to report subsequently that “the pandemic is exposing and exploiting inequalities of all kinds, including gender inequalities.” Unfortunately, that statement has a particular resonance here in Iraq, where women have borne many of the negative effects of COVID.

UNAMI and other United Nations entities in Iraq have undertaken, and continue to undertake, efforts to translate the UN Secretary-General’s call to action into improving outcomes for those at risk during this pandemic, which include survivors of domestic violence and members of minority groups. Many of these are women. Our efforts have aimed at strengthening the Iraqi government’s efforts to counter the effects of COVID; supporting civil society organizations working to create public awareness of the risks posed by the virus; promoting adherence to

measures which can curb the spread of COVID; and calling attention to the particular impact of the pandemic on women.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Allow me to cite some specific examples of UN efforts to mitigate the impact of the COVID pandemic on women in Iraq. During an assessment last May, 65% of service providers for survivors of gender-based violence reported an increase in one or more types of violence against women, with 94% of those reporting a sharp increase in domestic violence, perpetrated by a spouse or other family member within the household. // In April 2020, UNAMI, UNICEF, UNFPA and UNWomen issued a joint statement urging the Iraqi Parliament to expedite passage of domestic violence legislation; calling for the establishment of shelters for at-risk groups; and reiterating the UN Secretary General’s call to governments to prioritise the protection of women and children as an integral element of their national COVID response.

UN bodies in Iraq developed six key messages on domestic violence and shared them through social media and text messaging with the public. In June, working closely with local NGOs, UNAMI developed 15 cartoons, shared on social media and printed on posters, as part of the COVID awareness raising campaign. Additional campaigns involved the distribution of 27,000 posters by volunteers, including policemen and children, at popular markets, doctors’ clinics and security checkpoints. Murals in key locations in Baghdad, painted by Iraqi artists with UNAMI’s support, have continued to raise awareness on the human rights impact of COVID, including gender-based violence and other effects on women.

In May 2020, UNWomen issued a document, ‘A Gender Response to COVID-19 in Iraq: A Guidance Note on Actor Engagement’ with a set of recommendations for health, education and economic actors on how to mitigate the impact of COVID - and putting women at the heart of those responses. UNDP has trained 225 social workers from NGOs across 15 governorates to provide online psychosocial support for more than 18,000 isolated women and victims of violence. And it is estimated that women comprise nearly half of the



30 million people reached by a UN information campaign, “Let’s Beat Corona”, in over 5,000 neighborhoods, hospitals and public places throughout Iraq. An online campaign reached 2.7 million people of whom a quarter were women.

UNHCR has provided assistance, initially through remote mechanisms, to female internally displaced persons since early in the pandemic. Now service providers have resumed some activities such as case management, psychosocial support, awareness raising, women’s empowerment, health and legal support, as well as the regular provision of sanitary kits. Efforts have also been made through the mobilization of community outreach volunteers and mass information campaigns to provide information to vulnerable people, many of them women, on COVID prevention. UNHCR has served over 560,000 people in Iraq (refugees and IDPs) through COVID cash, multipurpose cash assistance, and winter cash assistance; again, many of them are women.

Last August, the UN developed a Social and Economic Response Plan to counter the pandemic. The plan offers an integrated support package to protect the needs and rights of people suffering under the pandemic, with a particular focus on the most vulnerable groups who risk being left behind, including women and girls.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Allow me to say, in conclusion: as we work together to mitigate the impact of COVID on women in Iraq, let’s also use the opportunity to work together to reduce gender inequalities for Iraqi women not just in this time of pandemic but in the longer term, too. Thank you.”

Silence and inaction are not an option - Female Genital Mutilation continues to risk the lives of girls and women

8 February 2021

By Dr. Luay Shabaneh, UNFPA Arab States Regional Director

A year ago, I had higher expectations and brighter hope that no more girls will die due to Female Genital Mutilation. I then believed no women or girls would undergo the vicious circle of torment due to the inhuman, illegal and harmful practice. I hoped that reaching the zero gender-based violence and harmful practices against women and girls is in hand by 2030.

I prayed that the fate of Iman, Badour, Suheir, and Mayar al-Luti, who were killed by a medical practitioner during female genital mutilation, would be from the history. I thought no more girls would endure what Shaima went through since her tenth year, when she was exposed to this harmful practice. These hopes and expectations have been hit hard by COVID-19. The pandemic and its related restrictive measures, such as lockdowns and curfews, are likely to further worsen the situation.

Every year on February 6, the International Day of Zero Tolerance for Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) reminds us that prior to the eruption of COVID-19, an estimated 200 million women and girls worldwide have been mutilated, and are living with the physical and mental consequences of this grave human rights violation. While this number is already shocking – 200 million cases means that around 5% of the world's female population are affected.

FGM is widely prevalent in some Arab countries: In Yemen, 19% of women and girls aged 15-49 have been subjected to the practice, while in

Egypt and Sudan the rates are as high as 87%, and even 94% in Djibouti and 98% in Somalia.

A UNFPA analysis carried out at the onset of COVID-19 has projected that the global health crisis might result in an estimated 2 million more cases of FGM over the next decade than would otherwise have occurred. This is because the implementation of programmes to end this harmful practice will most likely be delayed due to the pandemic.

While some gender-specific effects of the pandemic have been recognized, such as an increase in domestic violence and an additional burden on women in terms of unpaid care and domestic work, the impact of the pandemic on FGM has received relatively little attention. Yet, anecdotal evidence suggests that COVID-related restrictive measures have led to a rise in the practice. In Somalia, for example, a UNFPA assessment has shown that FGM cases increased likely due to girls dropping out of school during the pandemic and cutters actively approaching families.

In order to counteract this horrifying trend, we must intensify our efforts to eradicate FGM. UNFPA has set an ambitious goal of reaching zero FGM by the year 2030, and we will work tirelessly to achieve it even in the face of unexpected setbacks. To do so, we not only need to invest funds that mirror our commitment, but we also need to engage all stakeholders to collaboratively work on this mission. This includes policymakers from the global to the local level; civil society from grass-roots organizations and women's rights groups to international NGOs; agents of change from health workers to religious leaders; and the



law enforcement and judicial sector.

Men and boys also have a crucial role to play, as we aim to change the social norms that encourage FGM. UNFPA Arab States Regional Office has therefore launched a “Men Engage” Campaign, featuring men speaking out against FGM and debunking some of the most common misconceptions surrounding FGM, such as the false notion that FGM can be safe when carried out in a medical setting. Only if we also engage men and boys we can effectively work to end FGM and ultimately achieve a more gender equal world, overcoming the additional challenges posed by the COVID-19 crisis.

Silence and lack of action are not an option. Girls and women must be protected. Men, youth and boys must be the voice of change and support local and regional initiatives. Their obligation is to reject female genital mutilation. FGM is of nothing of any religion; FGM is a threat to health women and girls' health and harms survivors, their families, their surroundings and their societies.

Human Rights

UNAMI Human Rights Office meeting convenes to discuss draft law on cybercrimes

Baghdad, 7 January 2021 – UNAMI Human Rights Office met with Civil Society representatives and journalists to discuss the draft law on cybercrimes currently pending before the Council of Representatives. The technical level meeting was carried out in line with UNAMI's mandate to promote human

rights and its ongoing work related to the protection of human rights in the online space. Discussion focused on the potential human rights implications of the bill. The UNAMI Human Rights Office will share a written input with the Council of Representatives highlighting the key

topics raised in the meeting as well as its own human rights-related observations and written submissions prepared by the attendees.



Residents of Wasit’s al-Kut City and Baghdad welcome evocative murals on COVID-19 prevention and human rights

Baghdad, 10 January 2021 - Murals painted in al-Kut City, Wasit Governorate, reflecting the theme of Human Rights Day 2020 - ensuring human rights are central to the response to COVID-19 and recovery efforts – were welcomed by residents as a colourful and effective information campaign to raise awareness about the pandemic.

“Educating the public on how to protect human life is crucial. Sharing information on COVID-19 through murals can help save lives,” said local resident Sajjad Al Shemmary, a local journalist. The murals were painted using designs by artists from different



communities and governorates across Iraq. A particularly evocative design depicting a health care worker as a winged angel is the creation of Valantina, an artist from Ninewa.

Other murals were painted using designs by “Graffiti Hasan” from Najaf, Aryan Abdel Rahman Mohamed from Halabja, and Hazhar Mohammad from Sulaymaniyah.

“Art is the easiest way to reach the public mind – including children. Access to health care is a human right,” said Hamza Majid Hamid Al Hachami, another local resident who heads the Aba'ad Association for Development Civil Society Organization.

While COVID19 cases continue to be registered in Iraq’s capital Baghdad, artists have joined forces to bring the human rights impacts of the virus into the public consciousness. Across ten Baghdad neighborhoods, some 20 murals each between 20 and 45 meters, were painted on more than half a kilometers of walls in medical clinics, schools, a university, a local government building and on the side of a bridge. They bring a number of issues to the fore, with a particular focus on access to healthcare, and are encouraging a ‘collective responsibility to speak up.’

In collaboration with UNAMI Human Rights Office, Supreme Judicial Council launches “Know Your Rights” campaign to promote the guarantees for the suspects

Baghdad, 28 January 2021 - Did you know that everyone has rights in case of arrest? A poster campaign visualizes the main procedures and rights of suspects during criminal investigations in line with Iraqi laws.

The Supreme Judicial Council, in collaboration with the United Nations and the coordination of the Media Center in the Supreme Judicial Council, launched the advertising campaign “Know Your Rights”, promoting the guarantees for the suspects in the criminal investigations. The posters of the campaign included promotion of the guarantees for the suspects via the websites of the Supreme Judicial Council and the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), as a first stage. The promotional posters included brief explanations related to the guarantees for the suspects, stipulated in the Iraqi laws in force in terms of the legal basis for arrest, detention and search, in addition to the reasons for arrest, its location, notification to the family, and

the right to appear before the investigating judge within 24 hours, as well as information about the charges, rights and some guarantees and rights at the trial stage such as the right to remain silent and the freedom to testify, the right to appoint a lawyer or an assigned counsel/legal representation, sufficient time and facilitation necessary to prepare the

defense, and the right to be released with or without bail depending on the charges.

It is noteworthy that the second phase of the campaign will include printing posters related to the same matter and distributing them to all relevant courts, which are the criminal courts throughout the federal courts of appeal in Iraq and other relevant bodies.



UNHCR assists displaced persons in obtaining civil documents

Baghdad, 26 February 2021 - Zahra is a mother of four, she lives with her husband and children in Debaga, a camp for displaced Iraqis in Nineveh.

A recent agreement between UNHCR and the government of Iraq has allowed for mobile teams from the Ministry of Interior visiting camps to receive the applications of people who have lost important documents. Such documents can include nationality cards, ID cards, birth certificates. The protection provided to displaced people through this form of legal assistance cannot be underestimated.

Zahra is happy all her children will now have national identification cards and can feel like normal citizens. "When you don't have any document at all, you are nobody, you are without status. I am grateful to UNHCR, the European Union □□ EU Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid - ECHO and SWEDO - The Swedish Development Aid Organization for making this possible."

For 38-year-old Qais, the past few years living in a camp have been tough. Life as a displaced person is far from

normal and the future uncertain.

Like many other Iraqi families who had to flee their homes, Qais lost important documents and never had the chance to obtain birth certificates or identification cards for his children Dalal, 7, and Omar, 6. As a consequence, they were never enrolled in school.

The children were still young when they fled the fighting four years ago and Qais never gave much thought to their education, until recently.

Thanks to the humanitarian funding of the European Union some 2862

families like Qais's have received much needed documentation. More than 46,430 individuals received legal assistance also in 2020.

"Now that my children can enroll in school, they will stand a better chance in future, and we can now travel and move freely without worrying about identification cards at check points," Qais explained.

Civil documentation and legal assistance not only supports people in practical ways but also protects displaced people and shields them from the risk of becoming stateless.



UNAMI Human Rights Office meets with Iraqi High Commission for Human Rights in Diwaniya

Diwaniya, 24 February 2021 - UNAMI Human Rights Office met with the Iraqi High Commission For Human Rights (IHCHR) in Diwaniya to discuss the current human rights situation in the governorate and opportunities for collaboration in the future.

Photo courtesy of Iraqi High Commission For Human Rights.



Living with Disabilities

Girls with disabilities received sexual and reproductive health services at eight UNFPA supported disability-friendly clinics

Baghdad, 21 January 2021 - In three months, 1,500 women and girls with disabilities received sexual and reproductive health services at eight UNFPA supported disability-friendly clinics, funded by the Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

For the first time, they didn't have to worry about being carried to the examination bed or up the stairs.

They, with ease, received gynaecological consultations, got medical check-ups and referrals.



Power of community support in overcoming mental health challenges

Kirkuk, 27 January 2021 - With support from the Govt. of Germany German Embassy Baghdad, IOM worked with a Kirkuk-based DPO and a group of volunteers from Wahed Huzairan district and surrounding communities to put on a social theater event/play under the theme “Nothing About Us Without Us”.

This slogan urges humanitarian agencies and governments to ensure the active participation of people with disabilities in all stages of programming. The play, titled “Searching for Reality”, focused on the power of community support in overcoming mental health challenges.

It also highlighted the role people with disabilities have in society and urged all to persevere in advocacy for their rights. IOM supports disabled peoples organizations (DPOs) in raising awareness of the challenges they face and increasing their agency in society.

“All actors in my play ‘Searching For Reality’ are persons with disabilities. The main idea behind the play is determination; we shouldn’t give up on life even if we face difficult obstacles or if we feel hopeless.



We just hope that the government will pay more attention to persons with disabilities; as you can see we have many talents. We have great potential but we are always marginalized by society. We need support in order to develop their talents and skills, for instance the construction of a theatre especially made for us,” says Qasim Younis Aziz, a director, playwright and actor, whose play was recently premiered at Kirkuk Youth Center.

Displaced persons with disabilities encounter physical, environmental and

societal barriers to accessing specific displacement-related information, humanitarian assistance and services, and barriers more generally to the full enjoyment of their human rights — including the right to participate in society on an equal basis with others and without discrimination.

IOM is proud to work with local organizations of persons with disabilities that support those with diverse disabilities across Iraq — no effort towards disability inclusion is complete without their input.

WHO maintains support to conflict-affected communities in Ninewa with delivery of 150 wheelchairs



Mosul, 24 February 2021 - The World Health Organization (WHO), in collaboration with Directorate of Health in Ninewa, distributed 150 wheelchairs to people with disabilities including children below 14 years of age. Assistive technologies such as wheelchairs are essential to improve individuals’ functioning, independence, and well-being, and enable people with disabilities to carry out their daily activities and participate actively in their community.

Since the liberation of Mosul, WHO

worked alongside the Ministry of Health to support three physical rehabilitation units in west Mosul, Talafar, and Sinjar districts. Through this partnership, quality services are provided to over 2000 people with special needs and of different age groups in the governorate.

“Access to assistive technologies is essential for people with special needs and the benefits of these devices have been increasingly recognized worldwide,” said Dr. Ahmed Zouiten, WHO Representative and Head of Mission in Iraq. “Without these devices, these vulnerable persons with special-needs may never be educated adequately or be able to work,” he added.

“WHO renews its commitment to working with the Ministry of Health, partners and donors, to maintain comprehensive physical rehabilitation services including an adequate provision of assistive technologies to women, men, and children with physical impairments in the most conflict-affected governorate of Ninewa and all over Iraq,” Dr. Zouiten explained.

Over the past two years, WHO, in

collaboration with the national health authorities expanded the range of specialized health services for people with physical disabilities to ensure easy access to physiotherapy and psychosocial support programmes, especially for those who have been internally displaced. In 2019, a survey was conducted to identify people with disabilities (PWDs) in and out of the displacement camps. The survey findings revealed the presence of 1300 new PWDs, of which 95% were living in internally displaced population (IDP) camps, 58% were male, and 61% were in need of assistive devices and required wheelchairs.

“Seeing the smiles on the faces of the children while they climb on their first wheelchairs, fills our hearts with joy, and gives us the energy and the drive to continue supporting these initiatives” concluded Dr. Zouiten.

This initiative would not have been possible without the generous contribution from USAID’s Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (BHA). Together we made a step in the right direction to alleviate the suffering of people with disabilities in Ninewa Governorate.

Special Adviser Khan meets Foreign Minister Hussein

Baghdad, 31 January 2021 - Special Adviser Karim A. A. Khan QC was pleased to meet with H.E. Iraqi Minister of Foreign Affairs Fuad Hussein. He provided an update on UNITAD's support to the Government of Iraq in returning identified Yazidi remains to their families in Kojo. The Special Adviser also welcomed the offer of assistance from Minister Hussein to help advance the draft legislation in the parliament of Iraq, so that ISIL perpetrators of such crimes can be held accountable in fair trials before Iraqi courts for war crimes humanity and genocide.



Iraq commemorates victims: funeral for Yazidis killed by ISIL

Baghdad/Kojo, 06 February 2021 – Special Adviser Karim A. A. Khan took part in the ceremony at the Martyr's Monument in Baghdad honouring Yazidi victims of ISIL prior to the return of their mortal remains to Kojo: a poignant and solemn occasion for the Yazidi community and the people of Iraq.

Special Adviser Karim A. A. Khan QC also met with families of Yazidi victims before the start of the return of the remains ceremony.

On February 6, the remains of 104 victims of the Sinjar Massacre were reburied in Kocho. This was the first set of remains returned to Sinjar after DNA testing that would allow surviving family members to identify and bury their loved ones according to Yazidi traditions. Led by Sheikh Nayef Jasso of Kocho, UNITAD Iraq, Yazda, the International Commission on Missing Persons - ICMP and other local organisations, arrangements were put in place to welcome up to 15,000 individuals that are expected to visit Kocho and pay their respects during a 7-day mourning period that will conclude on 12 February.

Yazidi families from inside and outside of Iraq converge on the Kojo school for the arrival of the coffins of their loved ones, victims of ISIL in 2014. A religious ceremony was held for the victims before their burial.

During the ceremony, Special Adviser Karim A. A. Khan QC assured families of Yazidi victims that the return of remains is only one part of accountability efforts, adding that UNITAD remains committed to assisting in the prosecution of ISIL for atrocities against Yazidis and all Iraqis.

UNITAD is working in partnership with the Government of Iraq and



Kurdistan Regional Government, as well as international partners, as part of investigations to satisfy the demands of justice, to ensure that every last victim of ISIL is found, identified and returned in dignity to their families.

Special Adviser Karim A. A. Khan QC also said that the monumental task of excavating mass graves of ISIL victims had been supported by the generous financial contributions of the U.S. Embassy Baghdad.

Special Adviser Karim A. A. Khan QC thanked UNITAD partners IOM Iraq, Yazda Organization, Free Yazidi Foundation and Emma Organization for providing psychosocial support today to the grieving families. Psychosocial support is so important for all those who suffer the ongoing trauma caused by ISIL's widespread brutality.

The February 6 ceremony marked the beginning of what will be a long process of healing and reconciliation for the community. IOM Iraq collaborated with the organisers to provide lunch to all of the mourners, as well as in kind donations and operational support. A

safe space was also secured at the venue for individuals requiring on-site counselling and psychological first aid; IOM Iraq's Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) team has been and will continue to be present at the site during the entire mourning period.

IOM Iraq's in-kind support for the mourners and MHPSS services are provided with generous support from USAID - US Agency for International Development.

SA Khan joined Nobel Prize laureate and Goodwill Ambassador Nadia Murad Basee on her visit to her home in Kojo following the burial ceremony for 103 identified Yazidi remains.





Baghdad, 16 February 2021 - Special Adviser Karim A. A. Khan QC met today in Baghdad with H.E. Archbishop Mitja Leskovar, Apostolic Nuncio to Iraq. They discussed the highly anticipated visit of His Holiness Pope Francis to Iraq.



Baghdad, 21 February 2021 - Special Adviser Karim A. A. Khan QC met with Staff Lt. Gen. Saad al-Allaq, Head of the Iraqi Defense University, in Baghdad today. The Special Adviser received a briefing on the university's structure and curriculum. They also discussed areas where UNITAD can lend expertise, including training in forensics and international humanitarian law.

Baghdad, 17 February 2021 - UNITAD provided equipment to the Mass Graves Directorate of the Martyrs Foundation in support of their efforts to record, securely store and analyze evidence from mass grave sites related to crimes committed by ISIL against all communities in Iraq.

UNITAD's forensic archaeology expert delivered a training to the Mass Graves Directorate staff on the application of 3D scanning technology for the accurate recording of complex crime scenes of mass graves and incorporating new technologies with existing Iraqi national expertise.



Baghdad, 22 February 2021 - Special Adviser Karim A. A. Khan QC met with President of the Supreme Judicial Council Judge Faiq Zidan. They discussed ongoing cooperation between UNITAD and Iraq's Supreme Judicial Council.

Baghdad, 24 February 2021 - UNITAD, in cooperation with the National Coordinating Committee, welcomed the Iraqi security technical focal points for the digitization and archiving project. They discussed leveraging UNITAD capacity building to help preserve evidence for holding Daesh accountable for international crimes.

Investigations into ISIL crimes affecting children: UNITAD-NGO dialogue forum convenes its second thematic roundtable

Baghdad, 25 February 2021 - As part of its ongoing effort to further strengthen its engagement with the NGO community, UNITAD organized today a thematic roundtable discussion addressing the topic of “Investigations into ISIL Crimes Affecting Children”.

The virtual roundtable, which was held as part of the recently-established UNITAD-NGO Forum, brought together representatives of more than 50 national and international NGOs, who joined members of the Investigative Team to consider the ways in which UNITAD can strengthen its work with NGOs to enhance its investigations into ISIL crimes affecting children. The discussion explored challenges and potential avenues to further mutual partnerships.

Special Adviser and Head of the Investigative Team, Karim A.A. Khan, underlined that investigating ISIL crimes against or affecting children has been a priority for UNITAD’s work since its establishment in 2018.

“ISIL crimes had a disproportionate impact on children. UNITAD, Iraq and the wider international community must ensure that children are enabled to give their accounts and add their voices to the process of accountability with full regard to the welfare of the child and each child’s individual right to justice,” said the Special Adviser.

During the plenary discussion, UNITAD’s Gender Based Crimes and Crimes against Children Unit and the heads of Field Investigative Units responded to pressing issues raised by the NGO partners, and encouraged



input on two questions: How could UNITAD better work with the NGOs on investigations concerning children? And what can be done to ensure the participation of children in accountability processes in a manner sensitive to their specific needs and experiences?

The UNITAD-NGO Dialogue Forum and its thematic roundtables are part of UNITAD’s engagement activities to strengthen partnerships with all relevant actors in Iraq, in order to support the delivery of justice for survivors of ISIL crimes.

Following the event, UNITAD will continue to work with participants on a set of observations and recommendations based on points raised during the discussion and subsequent written input. This will include good practices and possible

enhancements to working modalities to ensure crimes against children are addressed effectively as part of accountability processes. UNITAD will then seek to incorporate these outcomes into the work of all of its relevant units, as well as the Special Adviser’s biannual report to the Security Council.

In October 2020, the first thematic roundtable discussion discussed “Empowering Community Members and Victims of ISIL”. In follow-up to that meeting, UNITAD has worked with NGOs in order to strengthen engagement in supporting witnesses and survivors to come forward with their accounts. UNITAD also worked with NGO partners in considering how trainings, and relevant legal frameworks can be harnessed in this regard.

Karim Khan was elected to be the next Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court

New York, 13 February 2021 - Criminal lawyer and human rights expert Karim Khan of the United Kingdom was elected on Friday to be the next Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court (ICC). He will take office on 16 June, replacing Prosecutor Fatou Bensouda of Ghana. In 2018, UN Secretary-General António Guterres appointed Mr. Khan as Special Adviser to head a UN investigative team assisting the Iraqi Government to hold ISIL terrorists accountable for war crimes and crimes against humanity and genocide, in accordance with Security Council resolution 2379 (2017).



An interview with UNODC Goodwill Ambassador Nadia Murad



Vienna, 24 February 2021 -The UNODC Goodwill Ambassador for the Dignity of Survivors of Human Trafficking and Nobel Peace Prize co-winner, Nadia Murad, talks to us about her plans for the year ahead. In 2014, ISIS attacked Nadia's homeland in Sinjar to ethnically cleanse Iraq of all Yazidis. The then 21-year-old was kidnapped by Islamic State fighters along with thousands of other Yazidi women and girls. Now, as President of Nadia's Initiative she advocates globally for survivors of sexual violence and for the rebuilding of communities in crisis.

Why did you decide to launch Nadia's Initiative?

I decided to launch Nadia's Initiative in 2018 so that my work advocating for Yazidis and survivors of sexual violence could continue. I also wanted to make sure that the Yazidi community living in Sinjar would receive tangible support. The majority of humanitarian aid was being directed at camps for internally displaced people (IDPs), but I knew this was not a sustainable solution. So, I founded Nadia's Initiative with the goal of facilitating community-led, sustainable development that will empower the Yazidi community in Sinjar to rebuild their lives and live with dignity.

What is the main goal of the initiative with regards to human trafficking?

Nadia's Initiative addresses human trafficking through the lens of justice. This means providing tangible support that will improve the daily lives of survivors of ISIS captivity. Survivors

can only begin to heal when their basic needs are met. Justice also means holding perpetrators of sexual slavery and human trafficking accountable. Survivors have been neglected and marginalized by society for too long – they want to see a formal acknowledgment of the harm done to them and know that their abusers will not walk free. Accountability is an essential tool for prevention. It is vital to show past and potential perpetrators that there will be consequences for these crimes.

What have been the main achievements since the initiative was founded in 2018?

Nadia's Initiative has continued its advocacy both locally and internationally on behalf of the Yazidi community and survivors of sexual violence. Since 2018, Nadia's Initiative has launched over 50 projects related to healthcare, education, livelihoods, women's empowerment, WASH, security, public infrastructure, and cultural preservation. We have created COVID emergency response programmes, empowered women with agricultural and entrepreneurial support, reopened health centres, and put thousands of children back in school. I am immensely proud of what we have accomplished over the past two years, but I know our work is far from over.

Which type of activities are you planning for the year ahead?

I am most excited about the implementation of our flagship project: the construction of an entirely new

hospital in Sinjar. This project has been in the works since I founded Nadia's Initiative, and we are now launching it with our partners in the French Government and the NGO Chaîne de l'Espoir. We want to emphasize that Yazidis are worth investing in and that they deserve a brighter, safer, and more prosperous future. Our hope is that our work will encourage other organizations to invest in the Yazidi community to help them recover.

We are also continuing our work to rebuild and reopen schools and health centres, restore clean water infrastructure, and empower survivors and women in general to independently improve their livelihoods.

In your own words, how do you describe your role as the UN's Goodwill Ambassador for the Dignity of Survivors of Human Trafficking?

As a Goodwill Ambassador, I focus on bringing human trafficking to the attention of world leaders and ensure that it stays there. Through our work at Nadia's Initiative, I am also leading by example with a survivor-centric approach that can be replicated on a global scale. I cannot emphasize enough how important it is for survivors to have a seat at the table. From my own experience, I am able to provide a survivor perspective. It is an immense responsibility and not one that I take lightly.

How do you envision your role as UNODC Goodwill Ambassador throughout 2021?

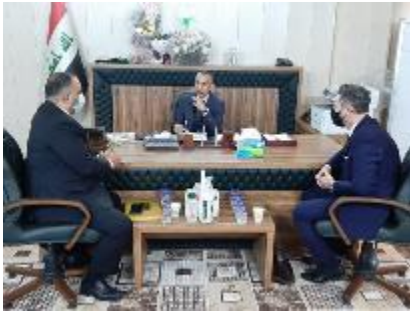
As we continue to face the impact of COVID-19 throughout 2021, human trafficking needs to be at the forefront of our collective consciousness. The pandemic has severely exacerbated vulnerabilities and made it easier for traffickers to take advantage of marginalized people. I plan to continue advocating and encouraging world leaders to prioritize the issue of human trafficking in their COVID response plans.

What are your hopes for the future development of this role?

In the future, I hope to be able to amplify the voices of more survivors from around the world. It is not my role to be their voice. Every survivor has a voice, but I have been granted this platform and I want to share it with other survivors who can help lead the way forward towards more empowering and effective solutions to human trafficking.

By UNODC.

Iraq signs an agreement with the Commission of Border Crossing Points



Baghdad, 5 February 2021 — The International Organization for Migration (IOM) in Iraq has signed a comprehensive Memorandum of Cooperation (MOC) with the Commission of Border Crossing Points. This agreement will lead to stronger migration and border management capacities for the Government of Iraq, through tailored interventions that aim to meet the objectives of the Global Compact on Migration and the national

strategic framework, that includes the National Migration Strategy.

The MOC will be realised as part of IOM Iraq's ongoing support for the Government of Iraq's capacity building efforts in the area of migration management, and through engagement with the newly established National Migration Strategy.

"This agreement represents an important milestone in the longstanding and robust relationship that IOM has progressively built with the Commission of Border Crossing Points and the Government of Iraq as a whole," said IOM Iraq Chief of Mission Gerard Waite. "It complements important efforts to improve migration management and rebuild capacity at border points, to create the conditions for sustainable security as well as safe orderly and regular migration."

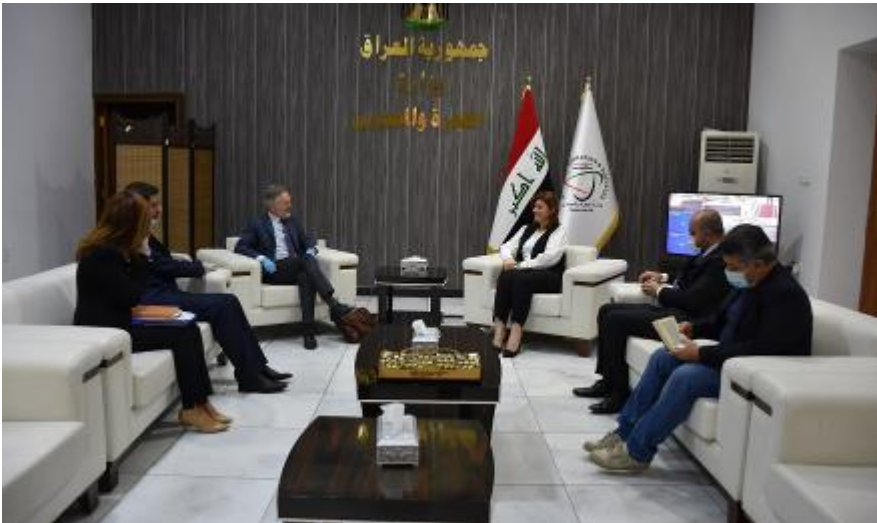
"The agreement between the two sides is concerned with strengthening

capacities for managing migration and borders. It will enhance services provided in this area to make the process more effective," said Brig. Hassan Al-Ghazali, Deputy Chair of the Commission.

Activities carried out under the MOC will build on the community-oriented Integrated Border Management (IBM) model to further promote comprehensive migration management based on the principles of democracy, citizenship and human rights under the rule of law; support for economic development; the prevention and combatting of crime and terrorism; and the effective provision of assistance and services to the public.

IOM Iraq's work in support of the government's migration and integrated border management capacity is funded by the Governments of the United States, Canada and Australia, as well as the European Union.

IOM applauds Iraq's decision to "champion" the Global Compact for Migration



Baghdad, 24 February 2021 — The International Organization for Migration (IOM) welcomes Iraq's decision to express solidarity with the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM) and the United Nations Network on Migration by joining the Champion countries initiative.

The GCM is the first inter-governmentally negotiated agreement covering all dimensions of international migration in a holistic and comprehensive manner. The UN Network on Migration supports the international community's efforts

towards the implementation of the GCM.

As a GCM Champion country, Iraq will demonstrate support for the GCM through leadership and engagement in multilateral processes. Iraq joins a growing list of other countries (18) that have voluntarily joined this initiative; in the MENA region, Iraq now stands alongside Morocco — where the GCM was adopted in 2018.

Iraq's declaration as a GCM Champion country came during the Regional Review of the Global Compact for Migration in the Arab region this week, where governments across the region

took stock of progress in the implementation of the GCM.

The conference was convened by the League of Arab States, IOM and UNESCWA in collaboration with the members of the Regional United Nations Network on Migration and will result in a Progress Declaration highlighting best practices and common challenges in implementing the GCM. The Progress Declarations from regional conferences will set the agenda for a global summit on the GCM, the International Migration Review Forum in 2022.

"The GCM is a crucial framework for migration governance," said IOM Iraq Chief of Mission Gerard Waite. "In becoming a GCM Champion country, Iraq is demonstrating its ongoing commitment to strengthening migration management for the socioeconomic benefit of all."

Under the auspices of the UN Network on Migration, launched in Iraq this month, IOM and other UN Agencies will support implementation, follow-up and review of the GCM through the 2020 Iraq National Migration Management Strategy.

IOM Iraq's work in support of the government's migration and integrated border management capacity is supported by the Governments of the United States, Canada and Australia, and the European Union.

Next steps in the implementation of the National Migration Strategy for Iraq discussed at a workshop in Baghdad

Baghdad, 18 February 2021 - IOM Iraq recently hosted a migration governance Taskforce Workshop in Baghdad for representatives of the Iraqi Government and the Kurdistan Regional Government. The workshop provided an opportunity to discuss and approve next steps in the implementation of the National Migration Strategy for Iraq. To this end, roadmaps were presented to the groups responsible for driving the implementation of the strategy's four

strategic objectives: the Legal Framework Task Force, the Migration Data Task Force, the Return Migration Task Force, and the Economic Affairs Task Force. These discussions will inform the further development of the roadmaps and contribute to the realization of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration in Iraq.

This workshop was funded by the European Union EU International Partnerships.



Humanitarian

UN Calls for increased efforts to achieve durable solutions for vulnerable Iraqis in areas of return

Kirkuk, 11 January 2021 - Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General, Resident Coordinator and Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq, Ms. Irena Vojáčková-Sollorano, visited Hawija district in Kirkuk governorate. She called for scaled up efforts to meet the needs of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and returnees in areas of origin; work with the communities; and support the Iraqi Government in promoting local reintegration of IDPs and effective protection.

“Hearing from returnees in Hawija about their ongoing hardship three years after the conclusion of the military operations against ISIL reinforced how much work remains, both here in Kirkuk and throughout Iraq,” said Ms. Vojáčková-Sollorano. “While the United Nations and humanitarian partners are working to facilitate voluntary, safe and dignified returns and provide support in return areas, it’s evident that we need to redouble all efforts. We are coordinating closely with the Government of Iraq, local authorities, and development partners to help make returns sustainable. However, we will not be able to ensure humanitarian and development services for the people of Hawija without open, unimpeded and sustainable access for our work — to both returnees and the communities to which they return.”

Representatives for OCHA, UNHCR, IOM, and UNDP joined the Humanitarian Coordinator on the mission. During her visit, Ms. Vojáčková-Sollorano met with the Mayor of Al Zab sub-district and returnee families and laid the groundwork for the future collaboration between humanitarian and development actors working in the area — to ensure the scale up of area-based coordination in Hawija.

As of October 2020, over 163,000 IDPs had returned to their areas of origin in Hawija district, according to IOM’s Return Index. Absence of basic services and insecurity continues, however, with over 64,000 returnees living in poor conditions, highlighted by a lack of livelihood opportunities, services, social cohesion and security. Many formerly displaced persons could not return to their homes due to extensive damage or destruction, and ended up renting accommodation, staying in crowded accommodation with relatives or living in unfinished houses. Hawija has also recently received approximately 2,000 IDPs after the latest round of camp closures. Both returnees and IDPs in the district are in urgent need of shelter, cash assistance, sources of income, civil documentation and social cohesion.

IOM, UNHCR, UNDP, and OCHA are engaged in activities to support the urgent needs of IDPs, returnees, host communities and other vulnerable populations in Iraq, in collaboration with the government. UNDP’s Funding Facility for Stabilization has completed 132 projects in Kirkuk to support infrastructure rehabilitation, immediate livelihood support and capacity support to the local municipality. Hawija continues to be a priority area for intervention as the project moves into its

next phase of delivery. UNHCR continues to support vulnerable IDPs and returnees through the distribution of cash assistance to meet their basic needs; 58% of the IDPs targeted for the winter have already received this assistance. UNHCR is also providing legal assistance to families to obtain civil and property documentation and working with partners to rehabilitate infrastructure in areas of return. IOM’s work in Kirkuk has been focused on infrastructure rehabilitation, community engagement and livelihoods — notably through individual livelihoods assistance, cash for work and the Enterprise Development Fund (EDF). EDF encourages private sector job creation and economic recovery and development through tailored support to Small and Medium Enterprises; so far, 93 businesses in Kirkuk have received over USD 1.5 million in funding through this mechanism.

Ms. Vojáčková-Sollorano reaffirmed the UN’s commitment to enhancing humanitarian assistance for both IDPs and returnees, and its readiness to continue collaborating with the Government of Iraq, local authorities and partners in addressing challenges related to stabilization, reconstruction, and development.



Supporting returnees and people living in remote areas is a must

Baghdad, 7 January 2021 - UNFPA mobile teams continue to conduct outreach visits to the returnees in Al-Saadiya in Diyala and Al-Seenia, and Al-Ishaqi in Salahuddin. Each team, which includes one doctor and one social worker offer free of charge medical and psychosocial support services and distribute hygiene kits to families in need.



UNIDO entrepreneurship training gives Syrian refugees confidence boost

Erbil, 13 January 2021 - A group of Syrian refugees in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq are getting the confidence boost they need to secure the financial future of their families through a UNIDO entrepreneurship training programme.

When Nour Wahab first arrived in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, after fleeing her hometown of Amude, Syria in 2013, she was scared in unfamiliar surroundings and painfully shy. It took her several years to settle into her new home in a refugee camp in Akre.

Three years ago, she began to design and make traditional Kurdish dresses for herself, returning to a hobby she had dabbled in when living in Syria. Other women saw Khalil wearing her designs and asked her to make dresses for them. Slowly, she developed a business that grew by word of mouth.

To take her business to another level, Khalil enrolled in the UNIDO training programme, where she has blossomed. "The main thing that was useful for me was to talk to people, to not be shy," the 33-year-old explained. "I have problems to even greet or talk to people from my extended family. I was shy. But this training taught me how to be confident and assertive."

In the training, she is putting together a business plan, designing logos, planning a marketing strategy, and creating a budget. She's also making friendships that will last after the training is finished. "Now, I had the chance to sit and talk with others, and we became good friends," she said.

Ten days into the 15-day training programme, the classroom is a noisy, bustling space as the 15 participants ranging in age from their early 20s to mid 50s talk and laugh during a coffee break. The atmosphere was very different in the first couple of days, explained Rizgar Taha, the UNIDO trainer.



"I noticed that from the first day, they were shy, they avoided eye contact," he said. As refugees, uprooted from their homes, living in a strange place, watching conflict unfold back home and uncertain about their future, they had lost confidence, he explained. Rebuilding that confidence is a key part of the programme.

In his hometown of Hasaka, Syria, Hamed Hashim worked as a day labourer, getting whatever work he could on construction sites and in farmers' fields. Eight years ago, he fled Syria and came to the Kurdistan Region of Iraq as a refugee.

In Akre, the 32-year-old father of four again picked up work as a day labourer. He was able to get regular work with an electrician and learned the trade. He is now self-employed, doing the wiring in private homes, and he wants to grow his business, take on bigger projects and hire employees. To do that, he needs help. "I'm currently working only by myself and sometimes I hire one or two people. But to expand, I need to learn how to manage

employees," he said.

He is getting that help at the UNIDO training programme.

"The main thing that I learned here is how to respect others, how to market my business to others, and how to set a target for myself and plan for it," said Hamed. "I have confidence in myself and Inshallah the business will grow."

With his new-found confidence, the refugee who used to be a day labourer now dreams of a future where his children will become doctors or lawyers. "I started a new life here. People know me and appreciate my work., he said.

The programme, funded by the Austrian Development Agency, includes training in analyzing their personal skills, assessing market needs, developing strategies to reach targets, and financial management. The goal is for the participants to be able to run their own small business. At the end of the programme, they will also receive some financial assistance to purchase equipment or supplies for their existing or new businesses.

France supports UN-Habitat's efforts to assist recent returnees to Salah al-Din

Baghdad, 14 January 2021 -The United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) welcomes a new partnership and contribution of EUR 100,000 from the Government of France to provide support to internally displaced persons who have recently returned to the rural town of Yathrib, Balad District, Salah al-Din and are currently living in critical situations.

Damage to houses remains as one of the main obstacles that prevent many internally displaced persons from returning to their areas of origin. The timely contribution from France will be utilized to provide support to around 600 of the most vulnerable people in Yathrib by providing shelter upgrading assistance and non-food items for 75 households and following verification of housing, land and property rights, will support a further 15 households with housing rehabilitation. With this support, the living conditions of recent returnees will be improved, allowing many who are renting or living with relatives to return to their properties, and to ensure dignified, secure and

adequate living conditions.

H. E. Mr. Bruno Aubert, Ambassador of France in Iraq, commented "One of the very first needs of the people who are returning to their areas of origin is to rebuild safe and durable houses. French support to UN-Habitat in Iraq is part of our commitment to enable all Iraqis to come back home in safe, voluntary and dignified conditions."

"To ensure durable solutions, it is important to help people in their areas of return. UN-Habitat appreciates the support from France to help mobilise a quick response," said Wael Al-Ashhab, Head of UN-Habitat Iraq County Programme.

Located in the rural district of Balad on the western bank of the Tigris River, some 100 km north of Baghdad, the town of Yathrib is surrounded by farmlands, orchards and palm groves. Its estimated population in 2019 was approximately 90,000 inhabitants. UN-Habitat has been working in Yathrib since 2019 on an EU-funded area-based urban recovery programme titled "Supporting Recovery and Stability in Iraq through Local Development" to rehabilitate war-damaged houses, provide upgrades for secondary infrastructure and public facilities, and upgrade public spaces with emphasis on making them Accessible for All.



DSRSG/HC/RC Vojáčková-Sollorano met with the Minister of Planning Al-Najm

Baghdad, 17 January 2021 – The Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq/Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator, Ms. Irena Vojáčková-Sollorano, met today with the Minister of Planning, Prof. Dr. Khaled Battal Al-Najm. They discussed various humanitarian, health and development issues, including measures to enhance private sector activities in Iraq.

Photo courtesy of the Ministry of Planning.



IOM Iraq distributed E-Voucher cards to 375 households in Sinjar

Baghdad, 18 January 2021 - In late December 2020, IOM Iraq distributed E-Voucher cards to 375 households in the Azadi and Qadisiyah neighborhoods of Sinjar, Ninewa Governorate. The E-Voucher cards contained a USD 250 balance, for use in 10 different shops in Sinjar. This allowed the families to purchase non-food items of their choice. The cards were distributed with full and detailed instructions for their use. The E-Voucher card distribution activity was funded by the Government of Germany and the European Union.



Strong social protection system critical to support Iraq's most vulnerable: new UNDP report

Baghdad, 27 January 2021 – Iraq's recovery from COVID-19 should be seen as an opportunity to strengthen the country's social protection system to support the most vulnerable, according to a new report released today by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Iraq in collaboration with the International Labour Organisation (ILO).

Impact of COVID-19 on Social Protection in Iraq examines how Iraq has used its current social protection infrastructure to address the direct and indirect impacts of COVID-19 on poor and vulnerable communities. It considers how these programmes have addressed the needs of the most vulnerable in the past, and whether they would be supporting Iraq's recovery challenges of the country's current twin crises: the pandemic and declining oil revenue, in the 18-24 months ahead.

The report makes key policy recommendations to the Government of Iraq, the United Nations system and development partners to strengthen Iraq's social protection system, ensuring the poorest and most vulnerable populations are central to the socio-economic recovery from the pandemic, while leaving no one behind.

"Almost one year after the onset of COVID-19, Iraq's vulnerable communities – including women, youth, internally displaced, the elderly – continue to be disproportionately affected, not just by the health implications of the pandemic but more so by its socio-economic repercussions," says Resident Representative of UNDP Iraq, Zena Ali Ahmad.

"Iraq's current social protection framework is not sufficiently set up to proactively target all the country's vulnerable groups, which means government assistance and subsidies are not always reaching those who need it most. This is a concerning, particularly as we move towards the global rollout of the COVID-19 vaccine. "The country's economic crisis should be seen as an opportunity to rebuild a more resilient, shock-responsive and agile social protection system – one that withstands future crises, and focuses specifically on the needs of the poorest and most vulnerable communities to build forward better from the pandemic. UNDP and its partners are ready to support the Government of Iraq to bring this critical task to fruition," adds Ms Ali Ahmad.

Impact of COVID-19 on Social Protection in Iraq is the fourth in a

series released by UNDP on the impact of COVID-19 in Iraq. The first paper looked at effects on fragility, the second examined the macroeconomic consequences, while the third reviewed the impact on social cohesion.

Additional thematic policy papers will be released in the coming months focusing on the implications of the pandemic on environmental sustainability and the socioeconomic fallout on vulnerable households. UNDP Iraq is grateful to ILO for its partnership and important contributions to The Impact of COVID-19 on Social Protection in Iraq. The paper is available at

<https://www.iq.undp.org/content/iraq/en/home/library/Stabilization/impact-of-covid-19-on-social-protection-in-iraq.html>



Warm clothes bring cheer to displaced families in Iraq this winter

Baghdad, 18 January 2021 - Thousands of families in Iraq have been forced to flee their homes and leave their cities due to violence.

Many of these families live in camps, where they are exposed to cold, rain and winds during the harsh winter season. Employment is scarce, and even for those who manage to find jobs, they work for very low wages, making barely enough to cover food and other basic needs for their families and children.

"My husband works as a low-wage laborer, his salary is not enough to buy clothes," says Umm Muhammad, who has been living in Baharka camp for the last four years after being displaced from her home in Mosul.

"These clothes bring us happiness. We don't have much that makes us happy these days due to the situation. We are happy with these simple things," she explains.

Muhammad's mother, who has been living in the camp for four years after her displacement from Mosul due to the conflict.

This winter, despite the ongoing COVID-19 epidemic, field workers from UNICEF

and its partner, Public Aid Organization (PAO) more than 30,000 winter clothing boxes to IDP camps across Iraq.

"Before receiving these clothes, my son was shivering from the cold at night, now he is warm," explained Manal who lives in Baharka camp in Erbil, Iraq. "It is very difficult for you to know that your child is cold, and you cannot do anything for him."

Manal's children are currently attending school one day a week because of the school closures due to COVID-19. The rest of the week, Manal helps them study from home.

"I cannot return to my home in Mosul now. The future of my children is where they can be safe. I do not feel safe going to where we fled the fighting," says Manal.

Manal from Mosul has been living with her children for five years in the Baharka camp for displaced people.

Each winter boxes contains boots, a winter jacket, sports suit, scarf, gloves, socks, and a hat.

"I trained at this camp as a seamstress so that I could support my family, because my husband is unable to work,"

says Umm Mostafa who has been living in the camp with her children for five years.

"The quality of the clothes is very good; the thickness is good for this biting cold. When I see my children warm, I feel it too," she says.

Every year, UNICEF distributes winter clothes to thousands of children across Iraq.

This year, UNICEF was able to continue distributing winter clothes due to the generous support of its partners, the Governments of Canada, the Netherlands, Portugal, Germany, Italy and Denmark.

By Anmar Rfaat, UNICEF



Visit to Qahtania in Sinjar, Ninewa - a page from the Iraq Diary

Sinjar, 3 February 2021 - It was still dark outside, and my smartphone was telling me that the temperature was one degree but feels like -3 degree Celsius. My UNICEF colleagues and I were getting ready to go to the Qahtania sub district in Sinjar, which was home to around 7,000 families before the town's Yazidi community was forced out by in 2014. today, Qahtania only has 383 families, and another 1000 are expected to return over the next few months. My UNICEF colleagues and I were to see how the families are faring and how we are able to help them. UNICEF is supporting the returnees by trucking in drinking water and distributing water tanks, prefabricated latrines and showers to families there, and is working with its government partners to rehabilitate the water network so that community can have a permanent supply of safe water. It has snowed lightly the day before our arrival, and I began to see the white flakes on top of Sinjar mountain as we got close to the area. Soon after we entered the town, I met with Hasan and his family. They had returned to

Qahtania a month ago and was still readapting to being back in their village, after an absence of six years. Hasan had been living in a camp for the displaced with 17 members. Speaking to him, I could see hope in his eyes, despite his many wrinkles that bore testament to the hardship he went through. Like many other returnees here, Hasan was able to install a water tank provided by UNICEF on the roof of his home.

I also life in the town. I couldn't help but think of my visits to Hawija in Kirkuk almost three years ago and how deserted Hawija was, with shops either burned, empty, or without any doors. This time, I could see houses have been recently rebuilt and some security personnel on the ground. But what I noticed the most was how full of boys and girls Qahtania was. Some of them were born in IDP camps, but on that day, there were all happily playing outside, unaware of the struggles surrounding them.

While this was my first visit to Qahtania due to the Covid19 situation, it won't be my last. I left with a sense of



gratitude to our partners, supporters and volunteers without whom we would not have been able to bring safe drinking to Qahtania and making a difference in the lives of Hasan and his community.

UNICEF thanks the Government of Canada for supporting water trucking and the transportation of assets, and the Government of Germany for supporting the rehabilitation of Qahtania's water system.

By Prasad Rasal, UNICEF Iraq.

OCHA assists people in finding durable solutions

Baghdad, 9 February 2021 - On 7 February 2021 the OCHA Iraq Sulaymaniyah field office met with counterparts in Bardaqaraman to learn more about the IDP population and their challenges with finding durable solutions. The town hosts approximately 220 IDP families from Baghdad, Anbar and Salah Al-Din. Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in the region are generally able to find work and can meet basic needs. One notable gap was education for girls: there is no school in the town, and families are unwilling to send girls to schools in other districts. OCHA will reach out to relevant partners for

follow-up.

On 9 February 2021, OCHA Iraq organised an inter-agency mission to Debas district in Kirkuk, with partners from the UN agencies, international and local NGOs. According to local authorities, 16 villages were demolished in 2015-2016 during the conflict against ISIL, and inhabitants were all displaced.

Local counterparts told OCHA and partners that needs included: sanitation, rehabilitation of the agriculture sector, health services, cash assistance, maintenance of the water supply and vocational trainings, especially for women.



However, there were some promising indicators. During group discussions, it was noted there were no tribal conflicts, and the security context was stable in urban/rural areas. Residence permits are issued easily, provided applicants have security clearance.

IMPORTANT: Fraudulent campaign targeting refugees and asylum-seekers

Baghdad, 14 February 2021 - Individuals pretending to be employees of the United Nations, NGOs, or Embassies are contacting refugees and asylum-seekers claiming to offer assistance and services, including immigration and resettlement, in exchange for money. They may also advertise fake services on websites or social media.

Protect yourself and your family from exploitation. Avoid engaging with these

individuals and pages and report to UNHCR.

All humanitarian assistance is available to you for free.

For more information, or to make a complaint or provide feedback on UNHCR and its partners' assistance, call the Iraq Information Centre (IIC) toll-free at 80069999.

All calls are confidential.

The IIC can be reached 8:00am - 6:00pm (Sunday - Thursday) and

9:00am - 3:00pm (weekends and holidays).

You can also request a call-back by sending 'HELP' and your phone number via SMS to 80069999, or via Facebook messenger (IIC) and IIC operators will call you. Do not send details about your situation over the internet.

For general information about asylum-seeker and refugee assistance in Iraq, visit help.unhcr.org/iraq

The European Union supports UN-Habitat to help returnees re-establish their lives in Sinjar, Tel Afar and Baaj Districts

Erbil, 9 February 2021 - Destroyed houses remain one of the main obstacles that prevent many internally displaced persons from returning to their hometowns and communities.

The absence of housing, jobs, and basic services such as water, sanitation, electricity, schools and health clinics, means that displaced people will try to remain in camps as long as possible. Alternatively, returning to their hometowns may mean moving in with relatives, sometimes three or four families in the same house, or renting, establishing temporary shelters in informal sites, or living in unfinished or empty buildings.

More than three years after the official end of war against ISIL, establishing durable solutions for displaced families remains critical.

The United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) recently welcomed a generous contribution of EUR 10 million from the European Union (EU) through the EU Regional Trust Fund in Response to the Syria Crisis, the Madad Fund, for a project titled "Support for Urban Recovery and Peacebuilding in Western Ninewa, Iraq."

On 9 February, UN-Habitat, in cooperation with the EU, brought together the Assistant Governor of Ninewa and representatives from Sinjar, Tel Afar and Baaj districts to discuss urban recovery in conflict-affected communities in western Ninewa to which formerly displaced Iraqis continue to arrive.

"We would like to extend our appreciation to the EU for their generous donation and to UN-Habitat for this initiative, we need their help and we want their support to continue

for rebuilding Iraq," said Mr. Ali Omer Khidr, Assistant of Ninewa Governor, during the press brief.

Mr. Mahma Khalil, Mayor of Sinjar, said "Many thanks for the continued support of our partners and the EU for their generous contribution to help us to stabilize the situation in western Ninewa by helping displaced people to return which is dependent upon livelihood opportunities and rebuilding infrastructure."

"We would like to thank UN-Habitat and the EU for this project, there is a huge need for housing units in Baaj district as it is one of the major challenges for returnees from Hamam Alil, Jaddeh and Salamiyah camps in addition to the lack of health, electricity and water infrastructure," said Mr. Ahmed Youssef, Mayor of Baaj.

Mr. Qasim Mohammed, Mayor of Tel Afar, said "This initiative in Tel Afar is very much appreciated and we as the local government will fully support this initiative that will contribute the stability of Tel Afar and west Nineveh and encourage the resident to return and rehabilitate their areas.

Ambassador of the EU to Iraq, His Excellency Mr. Martin Huth, said: "This project illustrates the EU's continued commitment to supporting the reconstruction of cities and towns, the resilience of communities and individuals, and the sustainable return of Iraqis who were forced to flee their homes. This is especially important at a time when increasing numbers of people are moving back to their communities after years in camps and informal settlements. The EU and its partners are committed to ensuring that people can go home in safety and



in dignity. This initiative will support some of the most vulnerable returnees in Baaj, Telafar and Sinjar and allow communities to heal and rebuild."

"This new project in Sinjar, Tel Afar and Baaj districts of Ninewa Governorate, is designed to take a community approach to recovery, focussing on all aspects needed for people to return home: housing, basic services, livelihoods and housing, land and property rights," explained Mr. Wael Al-Ashhab, Head of UN-Habitat Iraq, during the press brief.

UN-Habitat established a presence in Sinjar in 2016 and is now expanding to Tel Afar and Baaj. With this great support of the EU, the living conditions of recent returnees in project locations will be improved, allowing many who are still in camps, living with relatives or renting to return to their properties, and to dignified, adequate and appropriate living conditions.

IOM organized distributions of emergency cash grants for affected families

Baghdad, 11 February 2021 - Following the closure of several IDP camps across Iraq, IOM organized distributions of emergency cash grants for affected families. The distributions took place in Baaj and Markaz Hatra, Ninewa Governorate, reaching 72 and 33 households respectively. Each household received 448,000 Iraqi Dinars, roughly USD 320, to help them cover their immediate needs. This emergency cash assistance was funded by the European Union EU Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid –

ECHO

IOM Iraq also supported displaced families leaving camps like Al-Wend and Saad with cash grants. A recent distribution of emergency cash assistance this January reached 289 households — it was carried out in Khanaqin district, Diyala Governorate, in coordination with local authorities and the Ministry of Migration and Displacement. These grants will enable the families to cover their immediate needs.



IOM Iraq support returnees to refurbish their destroyed houses



Baghdad, 14 February 2021 - Shayma'a, 35, is a mother of eight, from Fallujah district in Anbar Governorate. When the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) entered Anbar, Shayma'a was displaced; she had to leave her beloved neighbourhood, Al Shuhada'a, with her husband and children. "When we were displaced, I thought that it would be impossible to return. I used to see homes collapsing and everything falling down around me," Shayma'a recalled. "I saw many martyrs and wounded people and I felt

like everything was over for us. [After we left] I thought that life in a camp is all my family would ever know again." Like many families from her areas of origin Shayma'a went to Amiriyat Al-Fallujah camp, and the experience was very difficult. She spent many sleepless nights thinking about her home; she knew it had sustained damage during the conflict with ISIL but she imagined that she would be able to restore it. Shayma'a tried her best to cope with the stress and sadness brought on by her family's situation in the camp. After the liberation of Fallujah district, several families started visiting their areas of origin to inspect their homes and assess the damage. Shayma'a and her husband were greeted by the most unfortunate sight; their house was completely destroyed.

"But I did not give up. I decided to pick myself up again," she explained, after the shock of seeing her destroyed home. "My family and I had a piece of land left behind, and I had an idea that I would build the foundation for a new home. I gathered some money and we started building something simple from it, but it was very difficult to go back to a place where I had so many bad memories from. Also, we soon ran out of funds."

Not long after, International Organization for Migration (IOM) sent field teams to Amiriyat Al-Fallujah camp to assess the conditions for the families living there. IOM Iraq officers learned of Shayma'a's story and encouraged to complete the construction of her new home in a new

neighbourhood so that she could return to Fallujah comfortably.

"I restarted construction of a new house with support from IOM Iraq," Shayma'a said. "They gave me financial assistance in the form of grant payments; at the completion of each stage of construction I would get a grant for the next phase."

"When we eventually returned to Fallujah district, my house was not fully completed yet, so I lived with my sister and obtained a rental allowance as part of a return grant provided by IOM that helped me cover my family's expenses," she added.

With patience and determination, Shayma'a saw through the completion of a new home for her family and came to represent a new start and a chance at a better life for herself, her husband and her children.

"A person should never stop dreaming, but sometimes it takes a lot of support to achieve these dreams," Shayma'a concluded. "Our situation in the camp was so difficult and I knew that no one should spend all of their lives in that environment. I was fortunate enough to get help from IOM and I recovered everything that I lost."

When she was in Amiriyat Al-Fallujah, Shayma'a used to have a small shop; now, near her new residence, she has rented a larger store that is managed by her son. The money earned from sales is used to support the family as they work to rebuild and move forward. These IOM activities were supported by the U.S. Department of State: Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration.



Baghdad, 24 February 2021 - The Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General and Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq, Ms. Irena Vojáčková-Sollorano, met yesterday with the Minister of Migration and Displacement, Ms. Evan Faeq Jabro. They discussed future support programs and ways to empower the returnees as large portion of IDPs are single female-headed households which need targeted support and involving IDPs and their host communities in all decision-making processes that affect their lives on voluntary return, resettlement and planning for durable solutions, including reintegration as well as ensuring women's full and effective participation. Photo courtesy of the Ministry of Migration and Displacement.



Baghdad, 25 February 2021 - WHO Iraq Representative and Head of Mission, Dr Ahmed Zouiten, visited the WHO supported and Hevie run health facility in Ashti camp in Sulaymania where over 9,000 internally displaced populations (IDPs) are sheltered. The facility provides life-saving healthcare services to the camp dwellers (about 130 to 150 consultations a day). WHO is able to maintain its health support to the in-need population in Sulaymania, thanks to the financial contribution of USAID's Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance.

Germany, IOM expand partnership to support economic recovery in Iraq

Baghdad, 23 December 2020 - Small and medium enterprises (SMEs), which employ a majority of Iraq's workers, were severely impacted by the conflict against ISIL. They were gradually recovering when the COVID-19 pandemic struck, further exacerbating vulnerabilities and increasing economic challenges for Iraqi businesses and their workers.

A recent joint study by the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the International Trade Centre (ITC) and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) showed the scope of the problem — as of September 2020, Iraqi SMEs had suffered a nearly 53 per cent decline in production. These economic difficulties, combined with the global public health crisis, have dramatically increased the need for support to Iraqi workers and small businesses. They underscore the need to support domestic industry and increase the competitiveness of local products, on the path towards socioeconomic recovery.

The German Government, via KfW Development Bank, is supporting IOM Iraq's continued efforts to boost economic recovery and sustainable job

creation, by providing a further EUR 20 million in funding for 2020-2024. The contribution was made by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) with financing provided through KfW; from the first grant in 2018, BMZ has now committed a total of EUR 56 million to IOM Iraq through KfW.

"IOM is extremely grateful for the German Government and KfW's continued generous support, and for their partnership in supporting livelihoods and job creation in Iraq," said IOM Iraq Chief of Mission Gerard Waite. "This additional funding will allow IOM to expand its collaboration with the Iraq Government and local communities, to address socioeconomic challenges and advance development objectives."

The project, "Contribute to the economic recovery of Iraq through employment creation and revitalization of local economies – Phase III", will build upon the experience of previous phases, and it will particularly target vulnerable groups including Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), returnees and other conflict-affected populations. Phase III will also have broader

geographical reading — extending to nine governorates from seven reached in Phase II — to ensure inclusion of more diverse Iraqi populations, including increased activity in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq.

"The continuation of this program is vital to ensure that those most vulnerable receive assistance in accessing short, medium and long-term employment," said Marc-André Hensel, KfW's Portfolio Manager. "Looking at the magnitude of displacements and returns across Iraq, providing affected Iraqi citizens with sustainable livelihood opportunities is one of the key cornerstones in rebuilding this proud country."

With this funding from the German Government, IOM Iraq will increase support to the SME sector through the Enterprise Development Fund (EDF) mechanism, which contributes to sustainable job creation and private sector revitalization. IOM will also support efforts to increase women's economic opportunity and participation, and assist individuals with improved employability skills through the provision of business support packages and vocational training. Additionally, the funding will allow for continued rapid cash injections into communities in need, via Cash-for-Work (CfW) programmes which also support reconstruction in affected communities. Finally, IOM will rehabilitate key community infrastructure to enhance businesses consolidation and growth.

Since December 2018, Germany and IOM Iraq have supported a total of 199 SMEs through EDF grants, leading to the creation of 1,037 jobs. A further 886 individuals received microenterprise support packages or vocational training, and 665 individuals have taken part in CfW activities aimed at improving their financial security.



UN-Habitat addresses the urban recovery needs of local populations

Mosul, 5 January 2021 - In addition to the rehabilitation of damaged houses in Mosul city, UN-Habitat also addresses the urban recovery needs of local populations through the upgrade of water infrastructure to enhance the delivery of clean water to the wider community. With funding from the European Union and as part of the Headway Programme implemented in partnership with UNDP, UN-Habitat has completed this month the implementation of upgrading the water

infrastructure in Al-Shifaa and Zanjili neighbourhoods. The project included the replacement of 4,719m length of damaged and non-functional water pipes, the connection of 430 houses to the upgraded network and the creation of 2,142 working days for local skilled and un-skilled workers. The Ninewa water directorate expressed its appreciation to the EU in Iraq and UN-Habitat for their support through this project.



Private investment for public infrastructure in Iraq's Kurdistan Region

Erbil, 10 January 2021 - UNDP Iraq has supported the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) to develop a Public-Private Partnership Framework, which will encourage the private sector to engage and deliver services – such as healthcare, roads, electricity and water - in partnership with the public sector. The initiative was funded by the generous support of the American people through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID)

What is a PPP framework?

A Public-Private Partnership (PPP) refers to the contractual arrangement between a Government contracting authority and a private sector entity to provide public assets, infrastructure and/or public services. Under the KRG's Economic Reform Roadmap 2016 the PPP modality is identified as a high priority to meet increasing infrastructure demands while recovering from economic and financial challenges.

Specifically, the KRG PPP Framework outlines the:

- PPP Policy – i.e., the Government's rationale for pursuing such projects;
- Legal Framework – the relevant laws and regulations supporting PPPs;
- Processes and Institutional Responsibilities - steps for implementing PPPs; and
- Public Financial Management Approach - control and monitoring of PPP-related fiscal commitments.

The Framework includes the creation of a PPP Unit that will be located within the Ministry of Planning. That Unit will serve as a facilitator and as a center of PPP expertise for other ministries and agencies.

Why is it important to engage the private sector?

As suggested in the Roadmap, the "Public Private Partnership (PPP) concept could be one way of bringing in nimble management skills and fresh funds and relieving government of fiscal and administrative burdens," helping to attract Foreign Direct Investment to the KRG. In addition, it will:

- Help the KRG reallocate resources. PPPs offer access to finance, so if the private sector takes on the responsibility of infrastructure development and maintenance, it allows the KRG to distribute limited Government funds to other pressing socioeconomic needs, such as improving systems and understanding community needs more thoroughly;

- Encourage innovation. A PPP can introduce modern technologies, new management styles and processes. It also allows the public sector to transfer new skills to the KRG; and

- Provide a greater return on investment: Within a PPP, innovative financing options are also explored and implemented, which can lead to greater efficiencies and value-for-money.

How was the PPP framework for KRG developed?

Step one: Securing government support. In a KRG Cabinet meeting earlier this year, the Cabinet discussed the PPP Framework and how it can be used to modernize KRG's infrastructure. The KRG Prime Minister of the 9th cabinet of the Kurdistan Regional Government, Masrour Barzani, has expressed his support for the initiative and for the implementation of a pilot PPP project.

Step two: Seeking feedback from wider partners. It was then necessary to bring other Government stakeholders around the table to reach consensus in finalizing the draft PPP framework. UNDP Iraq held a workshop with representatives from Legal and Project Follow-up departments at the KRG Council of Ministers, and all the relevant KRG Ministries including Planning, Construction and Housing, Municipalities and Tourism, Health, Education, Trade and Industry, Electricity and the Board of Investment. In the workshop, the framework's various sections were presented, discussed and debated. The sessions provided a common understanding of PPPs as well as achieving a consensus on moving forward. It also allowed the KRG ministries to suggest projects that could be delivered via public-private partnerships.

Step three: Approving the PPP framework. The final PPP Framework



was submitted to KRG Ministry of Planning in June 2020 and approved by KRG Council of Ministers on 1st July 2020 during the Council of Ministers meeting.

What's next?

UNDP Iraq is currently in discussions with the KRG on the next steps to develop a technical assistance program to support the KRG. This will involve establishing institutions such as a PPP Unit to assist line ministries and providing training to enhance the capacity of PPP staff in areas such as project selection, prioritization, procurement, and contract management.

When partnering with the public sector, companies will have the opportunity to engage in sectors that deliver efficient and quality services, including education, health care, transportation facilities, infrastructure, energy and waste management services. If projects are well designed and run and they achieve their stated results, these partnerships can encourage and enhance investment environment.

The development of the KRG PPP Framework was made possible through the generous support of the American people through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) in coordination with the KRG's Ministry of Planning (MoP).



Empowering societies: Reintegrating former volunteer fighters within society



Basra, 19 January 2021 - As part of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) efforts in the reintegration of former volunteer fighters within the society, the Community Security Integration Pilot project (CSIP) funded by the Government of Japan, has awarded 87 former volunteer fighters vocational training certificates after more than 12 weeks of training in Electrical, Welding, Air-Conditioning and Refrigeration courses delivered between January and November 2020. The certificates were endorsed by the Directorate of Education in Basra.

The Community Security Integration Pilot project (CSIP) supported the former volunteer fighters in Al-Qurna Directorate to reintegrate back to the economic workforce following their extended engagement in the fight against ISIL. During the twelve weeks

of collaborative, team-based practical and theoretical training developed in coordination with Qurna Industrial Preparatory School (QIPS), CSIP also provided financial support to beneficiaries that allowed them to engage in the long training programme while supporting their families, in addition to receiving psychosocial support (PSS) including group and individual sessions provided in partnership with Directorate of Health professionals, and business skills training with a small business start-up grant upon successful completion of the programme. Beneficiaries were also trained to put a business plan and create personal resumes to increase their chances to access job opportunities.

The Director of Al-Qurna Industrial Preparatory School (QIPS), Mr. Raheem Fakhir Hanon, said during the

certificate distribution ceremony said: "We are proud of our former volunteers fighters and are very grateful for UNDP support to reintegrate them within the society. This unique programme has manifested a great deal of success as it has involved trainees from different backgrounds and empowered them to be active individuals in their societies".

The CSIP was launched in 2019 in Al - Qurna, Basra province under UNDP Security Sector Reform/ Rule of Law Programme with generous funding from the Government of Japan. The overall aim of the project was to support the most vulnerable groups in the community to increase their skills and emotional resilience to help them reintegrate back to the economic workforce, and thereby increase their economic stability through a combination of vocational, business training, psychosocial support (PSS) and grant assistance interventions with an emphasis on the security-development nexus.

UNDP will continue working to apply lessons learned in Qurna to support the transition of former volunteer fighters in Sinjar area of Ninevah Governorate to civilian life with additional support from the Government of Japan.

UNDP is grateful to the Government of Japan for its generous funding to undertake this important work.

Promoting inclusive economic growth and job creation in Iraq

Baghdad, 20 January 2021 - Unemployment remains a persistent challenge in Iraq especially for youth and women. Many internally displaced persons are unemployed, underemployed, informally employed, or out of the labour force. The COVID-19 pandemic has further compounded these employment challenges. In this context, providing jobs and livelihoods remains a high priority in order to promote social cohesion and improve resilience.

Agriculture has the potential to make a major contribution to employment in Iraq but is affected by low farm productivity, weak value chains and a challenging business environment. To address this, the EU is launching a EUR 22.5 million project, 'Strengthening the agriculture and agri-food value chain and improving trade policy' (SAAVI). The five year project is being implemented by the International Trade Center (ITC) in close collaboration with the

Government of Iraq and other local partners SAAVI seeks to enhance the competitiveness of agriculture and related activities and improve trade policy in Iraq. It will address farm and firm level challenges and strengthen the value chains in the agriculture sector. This will be done through analysis of the value chain, introduction of new production strategies and training to farmers on product diversification for domestic markets.

It will also build the capacities of micro, small, and medium enterprises and broaden the knowledge and skills base for youth including training on entrepreneurship and business skills. Technical and vocational skills programmes will also be strengthened to better match the needs of the private sector.

Support will also be given to policymakers and key institutions involved in the WTO accession process, including capacity building on trade

negotiation, policy formulation, and coordination. WTO membership will help Iraq to complete domestic policy and reforms for the modernization of its business environment and achieve effective integration into global economy. Since the process of negotiation towards WTO accession is unique to each country, project activities will assist officials throughout the process.

The EU Ambassador to Iraq, Mr Martin Huth said "The EU is committed to supporting efforts to increase economic opportunities across Iraq. Agriculture value chains have the potential to provide decent work to many young Iraqis, men and women. At the same time, the project will support the Iraqi government as it develops its trade policy and progresses towards the country's accession to WTO, which is a key component of economic development and job creation."

The Executive Director of the

Promoting inclusive economic growth and job creation in Iraq (continued)

International Trade Centre, Ms Pamela Coke-Hamilton said, “ITC is committed to assist the government and MSMEs in Iraq to increase the competitiveness and diversification of the economy. We will use our experience in strategy design and value chain development to support MSMEs in the country better realize their potential for job creation

and income generation. Together with our partners, we will strengthen the agriculture and agri-food value chain, and support trade policy interventions aligned with government priorities”. Unlocking the potential of the agriculture sector of the country will lead to the creation of employment and entrepreneurial opportunities for youth

particularly those living in rural areas who have been affected by prolonged conflict. The project will also contribute to mitigating the socio-economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, which is presenting new challenges for Iraq, and help in the reconstruction of the rural economy.

It forms part of the overall EU

International Trade Center is preparing to start operations in Iraq



Baghdad, 27 January 2021 – The Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq/Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator, Ms. Irena Vojáčková-Sollorano, received today the delegation of the International Trade Centre. The International Trade Centre (ITC) is a development agency that is fully dedicated to supporting the

internationalization of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). Established in 1964, the ITC is the joint agency of the World Trade Organization and the United Nations and is preparing to start operations in Iraq.

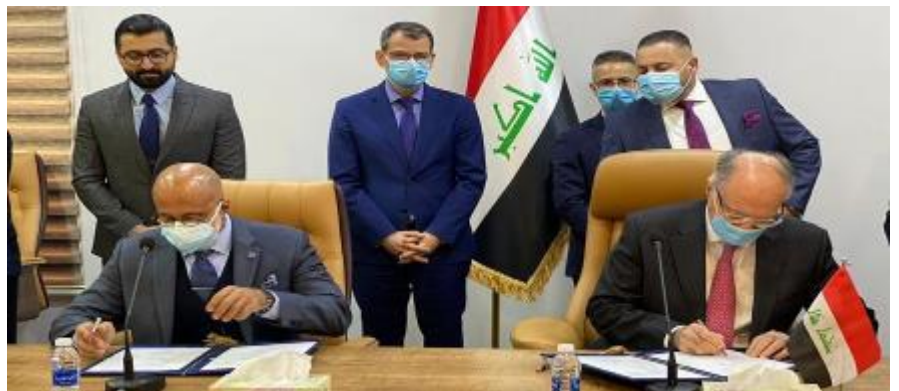
Photo courtesy of the International Trade Centre.

World Bank and EU to help Iraq strengthen public financial management oversight and accountability

Baghdad, 24 January 2021 – The Government of Iraq, the World Bank Group, and the European Union signed today a grant agreement aimed at strengthening the Government of Iraq’s institutions and mechanisms of fiscal accountability and oversight at federal and sub-national levels.

The project titled “Strengthening Public Financial Management (PFM) Oversight and Accountability Institutions” will benefit from jointly implemented US\$12.5 million and is part of a technical assistance grant program signed back in September 2018 with the European Union to strengthen public financial management (PFM) oversight and increase the efficiency of public service delivery.

The program aims at improving PFM systems by strengthening payroll management through an IT platform. It will support transparency and accountability in the oil sector through the Extractive Industry Transparency Initiative. It will foster the anti-corruption agency which can help retrieve stolen assets and the auditor general as well as support the reform of State-Owned Enterprises. Other features will be strengthening procurement systems through e-procurement and supporting integrity in reconstruction programs. The project will also assist in further tackling revenue mobilization and fiscal federalism and can be revisited in one year to align further with government



priorities.

This project compliments the ongoing World Bank-financed project titled “Modernization of Public Financial Management Systems” of US\$41.5 million, which aims to improve financial information management and transparency, cash management, public investment management and public procurement modernization at selected federal and governorate agencies.

“Now, more than ever, the importance of a strong public financial management system is critical”, said Ramzi Afif Neman, Head of World Bank Iraq Office. “The World Bank is committed to helping equip the Government of Iraq with mechanisms of fiscal accountability that are essential for sustainable reform, creation of a positive economic impact, and the restoration of public trust in the country’s financial institutions.”

“The efficient management of public finances and the delivery of services is critical in the achievement of public policy objectives, as well as for restoring the trust and social contract between Iraqi citizens and the country’s institutions”, said Martin Huth, European Union Ambassador to Iraq.

The project will support economic governance reforms at the federal level and in the Kurdistan region through technical assistance to many fiscal agencies, under the guidance of the Federal Ministry of Finance and the Prime Minister’s office. The project is in line with the economic reform “White Paper” recently published by the Government of Iraq which supports the overall World Bank Group’s development objectives and portfolio in Iraq. The project is also in line with the SDGs and European Union’s development objectives.

60 trainees completed a training on entrepreneurship and business development at Koya University in Erbil

Erbil, 22 January 2021 - Congratulations to 60 trainees, 50 of whom are females, who completed a four-week training on entrepreneurship and business development at Koya University in Erbil.

The trainees received their certificates last week. They are now preparing to submit their business ideas and plans to a technical committee. The best 20 will be chosen to receive financial grants to implement their ideas.

The training was organized by Koya University under the Entrepreneurship Development Programme (EDP), funded by the European Union (EU) through the EU Regional Trust Fund in Response to the Syria Crisis, 'Madad Fund.' EDP is a sub-project of the



Headway Programme's Job Creation in KRI grant scheme, implemented by the United Nations Development

Programme (UNDP) in partnership with the Governorate of Erbil and Rwanga Foundation.

Restoration and strengthening the resilience of agri-food system in Southern Iraq

Thi Qar, 22 January 2021 – The Food and Agriculture (FAO) Organization of the United Nations in Iraq delegation headed by Dr. Salah El Hajj Hassan, FAO Representative met today with Mr. Nazem Hamid Al-Waeli, Governor of Thi Qar. The discussion focused on the challenges facing Thi Qar in the agriculture sector and FAO activities and programs in the Governorate.

Dr. Elhajj Hassan introduced FAO-EU funded project that will be launched by the EU Ambassador in Iraq and the Minister of Agriculture on 27 January 2021 in Basra city. The project aims to restore and strengthen the resilience of agri-food system in southern of Iraq, it is also expected to greatly support income generation activities and food value chains including buffalo, date palm, and tomatoes.

The Governor discussed measures that need to be in place in order to enhance and strengthen cooperation and coordination with FAO in Iraq. At the end of the meeting, he thanked the

FAO delegation and expressed his office's readiness to cooperate fully with the organization to develop the agricultural sector in Dhi Qar Governorate.



Cash-for-work opportunities launched in Habbaniyah and Hawija

Baghdad, 26 January 2021 - In Anbar, UNDP Iraq has provided over 10,000 cash for work opportunities to Iraqis. Today, at the launch, 110 cash for work employees, along with 17 support staff will receive short-term employment. Another 4600 more employment opportunities are underway.

Over 200 people of which 53 women participated in a recent canal cleaning in Hawija! Now 9 villages including 250 farmers will benefit from improved access to water for cultivation.

These projects were supported by the German Embassy Baghdad.



Launch of UN-Habitat and FAO joint projects

Basra, 27 January 2021 – Under the Patronage of H.E. Minister of Agriculture Muhammad Karim Jasim AlKhafaji and the presence of the UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator in Iraq, Ms. Irena Vojáčková-Sollorano, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the United Nations Human Settlement Programme (UN Habitat) officially launched two projects funded by the European Union in Iraq as part of the EU Action Document for “Support to Governance and Sustainable Job creation in Iraq”. The event brought together representatives of the Government, the European Union, as well as representatives of the diplomatic community and the UN system.

In her opening remarks at the press conference in Basra, UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator in Iraq, Ms. Irena Vojáčková-Sollorano, said: “We are grateful for the partnership with the European Union and local communities. Their combined support enables the south of Iraq to work towards sustainable development and support to disadvantaged communities,” adding “This is of particular importance considering the economic difficulties brought on by the pandemic and the climate crisis”.

FAO project under the title “Restoration and strengthening the resilience of agri-food systems in Southern Iraq” was launched during the event. Commenting on the agreement signed with the EU today, Dr. Salah ElHajj Hassan, FAO Representative in Iraq said “This project is an important milestone towards the achievement of the FAO mission of reconstructing and rehabilitating the rural sector in Iraq. The needs in South Iraq are immense, and FAO recognizes that responses to food and nutrition security and income challenges, resulting from climate change and years of poverty and conflicts, require long term interventions and greater coordination. Therefore, FAO is thankful to the EU for its financial support and the opportunity this provides to partner with the Government of Iraq and other stakeholders to improve development and resilience building of rural communities in South Iraq.”

Dr. AlKhafaji, Minister of Agriculture stressed on the importance of this assistance that targets sustainable development of the agriculture sector. He also expressed the Ministry’s readiness to collaborate with FAO and

the EU to restore food production and water system, and revitalize rural communities in South of Iraq. In their keynote address, the Governors of Basra, Missan and Thi Qar also emphasized the importance of such initiative as a valuable step in investing in the capabilities of the agriculture sector, pointing out that the potential of this project can leave a positive mark in the Iraqi society in general and advance economic reality in the South in particular.

The significance of this project stems from the fact that it targets poor smallholder farm families and unemployed landless rural households; in addition to private sector value chain actors of selected agri-food commodities in rural and peri-urban areas of Basra, Missan and Thi-Qar Governorates.

The UN-Habitat project titled “Increasing Access to Employment Opportunities for Vulnerable Urban Population in Basra City in Response to the COVID-19 Crisis” was launched today as well. This project will provide support for vulnerable populations in underserved neighbourhoods in Basra City which aim to increase access to employment opportunities in basic services and waste management sectors for unemployed youth, women and vulnerable urban population. This project received generous contribution of EUR 10 million from the European Union.

Mr. Hayder Al-Mayali, Director General of Housing Directorate, Ministry of Construction, Housing, Municipalities and Public Works, stated that this new project will address many of the serious challenges faced by people in Basra, and that the Ministry will continue to guide and support the Governorates to provide services and build trust among people

in Iraq.

H.E. Mr. Martin Huth, the European Union Ambassador to Iraq, highlighted that the European Union has been supporting the Government of Iraq to achieve more inclusive urban development and to provide better services for people in Iraq, and is now engaging more strongly in the south and Basra in particular. His Excellency also emphasized the important role of the central and local government in Iraq to ensure urban growth and sustainable development.

Mr. Mohammed Tahir Al-Tamimi, Deputy Governor of Basra, spoke about the current challenges in Basra including increasing numbers of informal settlements and lack of basic infrastructure and services, and expressed his hope that this project will help the Governorate tackle these challenges.

Ms. Irena Vojáčková-Sollorano, Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General/Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator, reiterated that inclusive and sustainable development in Basra and wider Iraq cannot be achieved without addressing the basic needs and aspirations for a more dignified life of millions of poor people living in informal settlements and underserved neighbourhoods without access to basic services and employment opportunities.

Mr. Wael Al-Ashhab, Head of UN-Habitat Iraq, explained that this new project will build on UN-Habitat’s substantive experience and expertise working in Basra and on urban issues, aiming to serve vulnerable urban population in Basra who are suffering due to their unsanitary living conditions, makeshift shelter, vulnerable livelihoods and dependency on daily wages.



UN Resident Coordinator and Humanitarian Coordinator visits community projects in Basra and Thi-Qar and discusses support needed



Basra, 29 January 2021 -The Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq and the United Nations Resident Coordinator and Humanitarian Coordinator in Iraq, Ms. Irena Vojáčková-Sollorano visited Basra and Thi-Qar this week. Ms. Vojáčková-Sollorano was accompanied by Mr. Abdirahman Meygag, Representative of the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP), Dr. Rita Columbia, Representative of United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), Dr. Salah ElHajj Hassan, Representative of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), Mr. Paolo Fontani, Director and Representative of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), and Mr. Wael Al-Ashhab, Head of Country Programme of United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat).

During her four-day visit, from 26 to 29 January 2021, the Resident Coordinator and Humanitarian Coordinator met with and was warmly welcomed by the Minister of Culture, Mr. Hassan Abed Hammadi, the Minister of Youth and Sports, Mr. Adnan Darjal, the Minister of Agriculture, Mr. Muhammad Saleh, the Deputy Minister of Planning, the Deputy Minister of Culture, the Director General of Housing Directorate of Minister of Construction, Housing, Municipalities and Public Works, Governors of Basra, Missan and Thi-Qar, civil society, and local sheikhs, and conducted joint site visits to several projects.

Ms. Vojáčková-Sollorano, along with Mr. Meygag visited the Kerdlan

Primary School in Basra, to meet the children benefitting from the National School Feeding Programme relaunched by WFP and the government. “The UN and partners will continue their efforts to achieve the vision of having universal school feeding for all children in all schools across Iraq and are working to hand over the School Feeding programme to the government in the coming years.” said Ms. Vojáčková-Sollorano. WFP is poised to launch a joint project in Basra with UNICEF, working together to help girls from financially struggling families continue their education.

The RC also visited the UNFPA-supported youth centre in Basra and met with the UNFPA-supported Youth Advisory Board (YAB). The young people shared with Ms. Vojáčková-Sollorano and Dr. Columbia their vision of what their city should look like and how they can contribute to its socio-economic development. The YAB asked

the UN officials to help them be heard and raise their voices so that their ideas reach officials in the Governorate and country. The meeting also included discussions on youth and women empowerment projects, gender equality, climate change and environment, good governance and social responsibilities.

The RC reiterated the UN support to young people across the country and promised to work closely with them to ensure they have a solid platform to advocate for livelihood and human rights. The RC also highlighted the partnership between the UN and local authorities to advance the youth agenda in Iraq and invest in them. Ms. Vojáčková-Sollorano urged for more efforts in employing youth “When young people are active members of their communities, society can really thrive.” she said, adding “The UN is committed to the youth.”

Ms. Vojáčková-Sollorano, accompanied by Mr. Wael Al-Ashhab also visited Al-Qibla informal settlement, where UN-Habitat has recently implemented activities to connect vulnerable households to the new potable network, door-to-door waste collection campaigns, and created jobs for unemployed youth. Good practices and lessons learned from this intervention will be incorporated into the newly launched project to be implemented by UN-Habitat and funded by the European Union to increase access to employment opportunities in basic services and waste management sectors for unemployed youth, women and vulnerable urban population in Basra City.

Along with Mr. Fontani, she met with



UN Resident Coordinator and Humanitarian Coordinator visits community projects in Basra and Thi-Qar ... (continued)

the Minister of Culture, the Deputy Minister of Planning, Deputy Minister of Culture, and the Governor of Basra to discuss the latest developments on the rehabilitation works in the old city of Basra, that is implemented jointly with job creation and skills development. The Resident coordinator stated that Reviving Basra's old city and safeguarding the remaining elements of the important rich cultural heritage of Basra is one of the UN main priorities. The UN rehabilitation programmes in Basra, funded by the European Union, help to alleviate the economic hardship caused by past conflict and the current COVID-19 crisis and aim at promoting social cohesion and reconciliation.

Ms. Vojáčková-Sollorano along with Dr. Columbia, Dr. ElHajj Hassan and Mr. Fontani met separately with the Governor of Basra to share the joint UN intent to increase its footprint in

the South of Iraq aimed at supporting local communities in finding local solutions to the impact of the climate crisis, youth unemployment, and strengthening agriculture.

Before departing, Ms. Vojáčková-Sollorano, together with the Deputy Minister of Culture, and Mr. Fontani

also visited the ancient Sumerian city of Ur in Thi-Qar province. "It was impressive to see these beautiful ancient ruins, the birthplace of writing, agriculture and codified law," she said, adding, "I was intrigued by the history behind these foundations. Iraq is steeped in history."



FAO organized a training workshop in Basra

Basra, 28 January 2021 - FAO will organize a training workshop in Basra for staff from the Directorates of Agriculture in the Governorates of Basra, Missan, and Thi-Qar. The workshop brought together more than 30 male and female engineers who received training as enumerators to undertake a "verification of needs exercise" in the field with mainly smallholder farmers to better understand the value chains of buffalo, dates, and vegetables. The exercise is planned for February. The insights gained from the survey will help develop specific work plans for a new EU/FAO project entitled: "Restoration and Strengthening the Resilience of

Agri-Food Systems in Southern Iraq". This project was officially signed by the Minister of Agriculture, H.E Muhammad Karim Jassim Al-Khafaji,

and the FAO Representative in Iraq, Dr. Salah ElHajjHassan in the Basra International Hotel on Wednesday, 27 January 2021.



Bridging the digital divide has never been more critical

Baghdad, 29 January 2021 - Aside from its on-going urban recovery interventions in Yathrib Sub-District in Salah al Din Governorate, UN-Habitat is contributing to closing the digital divide vital to attaining sustainable development in Iraq's rural areas by supplying state-of-the-art fiberoptic equipment and materials to Yathrib's Post and Telecommunications Directorate so that it can repair its lines and connect its administrative offices and public facilities to the national network – including schools and clinics.



A Special interview with UNHCR Representative in Iraq, Philippa Candler - winter and COVID-19 challenges in Iraq



Baghdad, 5 February 2021 - The past year has been exceptionally challenging for refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Iraq. The escalation of hostilities between major actors in the region, coupled with the ongoing protests, resulted in a fragile security and political context that compromised the stability, transition, and reconciliation efforts achieved thus far. UNHCR's access to people of concern in certain locations was affected as a result of these events. Moreover, following military operations in the north-east of Syria in mid-October 2019, more than 17,000 Syrian refugees fled into Iraq, requiring the operation to redirect significant resources to address this emergency.

Today, and as the country faces the most difficult winter months coupled with the implications of the Covid-19 pandemic, protection risks for the displaced families remain acute, with many IDP and returnee families affected by physical insecurity, limited freedom of movement, confiscation of documents, detention, forced evictions and an increased risk of sexual and gender-based violence. Poor economic conditions further hindered the access of many families to medical care, adequate shelter and other basic essentials, occasionally leading to resort to negative coping mechanisms.

UNHCR is on the ground in Iraq providing shelter, water, sanitation, cash assistance, healthcare, education, livelihood support and protection services, as well as winter assistance when temperatures plummet across northern Iraq. But as the years go by when Iraq does not often reach the headlines, our support for vulnerable families is nonetheless just as important.

An interview with UNHCR's representative in Iraq, Philippa Candler, explains the role of UNHCR in protecting displaced families and how the operation is responding to the

needs of refugees and displaced families amid confinement.

Could you tell us about the situation in Iraq right now?

Iraq hosts over 283,557 refugees and still has over 1.2 displaced persons, with over 4.5 million returnees, a majority still in need of assistance. According to the Global Humanitarian Overview for 2021, there are 4.1 million people in need in Iraq. Recently and due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the restrictions and lockdown, there has been a huge impact on livelihoods for most people including refugees, asylum seekers and displaced persons. Many were not able to go back to their work and students are not back in schools yet. The pandemic took a toll on the country, the economy and the people. UNHCR and its partners are on the ground providing awareness raising, protection services, cash assistance among other services to our persons of concern. It is heartbreaking to see vulnerable families who lost their livelihoods, struggling to make ends meet on a daily basis with living. When I go to visit refugee families in the camps, I am always impressed when I see their resilience and that they have not given up hope for a better future.

Now that country is experiencing the coldest months of winter, what preparations are in place this year and what does the winterization programme cover for families in need? For many refugees and IDPs, this is the tenth consecutive winter in displacement. Yet, even greater hardships are being faced this year due to the socioeconomic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Most of the interventions within the winterization programme are in the form of cash assistance allowing families to decide for themselves how to spend the money on their most urgent needs during the difficult winter months. Significant investment was also made in preventative measures, such as insulating and repairing shelters and improving drainage in camps.

In its response, UNHCR coordinated closely with all UN agencies and other humanitarian actors through the inter-agency working groups, as well as with government authorities, to maximize the efficiency of the assistance provided and to avoid duplication of activities.

UNHCR's winterization assistance programme was vital this year to

ensure that over 474,000 vulnerable IDPs (79,000 families), 187,500 Syrian refugees (37,500 families), as well as 17,500 refugees of other nationalities (3,500 families) in Iraq are well equipped with the necessary resources to survive the harsh winter conditions.

Please let us know, in your view, why is cash assistance important to displaced families? How is it impacting their lives?

Cash assistance helps families buy what they need, when they most need it. It is most helpful at times when the economic situation is dire- or like currently with the impact of COVID-19 and the economic aftermath on people, especially vulnerable persons like refugees and displaced person who lost their livelihoods, or female headed households and elderly. UNHCR and during the lockdowns distributed cash assistance for hygiene to vulnerable refugee and displaced families all over Iraq which helped to ease their suffering and improve their conditions. We started cash assistance for winter, and multi-purpose cash assistance for vulnerable families. In addition, there are the regular range of humanitarian assistance that we provide in cooperation with our partners that includes, food, water, nonfood items, shelter, healthcare, education, and other protection services. The assistance and services provided during these difficult times help to support families in need.

How is UNHCR Iraq responding to the current health crisis, the COVID-19 pandemic? (Any preventive measures taken regarding refugees and displaced families?)

In its efforts to support refugees and IDPs and as part of the Corona response, UNHCR has taken several measures to raise awareness among refugees, volunteers, health workers and our staff members handed out brochures and answered questions and went door to door to ensure that people are aware and know how to protect themselves. Together with partners, UNHCR is reinforcing systems to communicate with refugees. Helplines, such as the Iraq Information Centre (IIC), used by refugees, IDPs and IDP returnees, and outreach programmes are being strengthened with the aim to ensure challenges faced by persons of concern are identified quickly and appropriate responses are put in place.

A Special interview with UNHCR Representative in Iraq, Philippa Candler - winter and COVID-19 challenges in Iraq (continued)

As a humanitarian community what can we do to improve the lives and living conditions of refugees and displaced people. It's not only providing them with assistance, but also investing in their future by creating opportunities and better livelihoods for them so they can help themselves to stand on their feet again.

In most camps provisions of medical Protective Personnel Equipment (PPE) were distributed at health clinics, registration centres, border points, as well as to the Ministry of health and its department. Health workers were trained and equipped to handle emergencies.

Then we have the cash assistance for basic assistance which helped most refugee and displaced families to obtain the necessary disinfectants and the necessary means to access adequate basic hygiene items. In addition, we distributed sanitary kits to women and girls in camps.

Training of health workers and medical staff in camps on case definition and detection, as well as on management of suspected COVID-19 cases. Cooperation with health authorities proved effective when it came to identification of infected cases, tracing contacts and isolation of areas to contain the spread, especially in the camp settings.

Ongoing distribution of assistance and registration activities: new modalities have been established to continue ensuring the distribution of assistance,

this includes door-to-door distribution to avoid mass gatherings. Registration activities continue to be implemented remotely and through limiting the number of individuals in registration centres that are still open. Isolation areas have been identified inside camps to be used as quarantine spaces in the event that public hospitals are overwhelmed.

How does UNHCR select the most vulnerable among Syrian refugees in Iraq and Iraqi displaced families? What is the selection criteria being followed?

Through protection assessments that take place regularly with the help of our protection partners, families are assessed and persons with special needs are identified by community-based outreach structures (outreach volunteers, community representatives, community-based organizations who may identify them during home visits, calls, or daily engagements with the community), as well as through complaint and feedback mechanisms (help desks/information feedback points, complaint boxes, calls to the Iraq Information Centre, emails to UNHCR designated email accounts). On the outreach side, there are also specialized Community Protection, Gender Based Violence and Mental Health Psycho-Social Support community workers of various forms who also work within the community for those types of cases. Through assessments, we determine

vulnerable families by knowing the household structure, working family members, the presence of special circumstances, like sick family members, elderly or people with special needs. In addition to this, camps have management committees usually elected by camp residents and community volunteers that help address their concerns and are considered the voice of camp residents that connect them with the UN teams and NGOs working to aid and support them.

What is the message you would like to voice on behalf of those in need in Iraq? Especially for refugees and displaced families?

The needs are still enormous, refugees, asylum seekers, displaced persons and the host communities that received them all are considered people in need according to the United Nations Humanitarian Response Plan. The crises in this region are protracted, we would like to see more people returning to their homes, restoration of peace, trust and security among communities. What is needed is more investment in the resilience and strength of refugees and displaced persons so that they can change from recipients of assistance to active members of their societies contributing to its growth and development, while paving the road towards their own well-being and prosperity.

WFP and the World Bank partner on socio-economic research in Iraq

Baghdad, 8 February 2021 - The United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) and the World Bank are partnering on gathering key data on the impacts of COVID-19 on households, including people who are displaced, in camps, and those who have returned to their areas, as well as host communities.

The surveys and analysis use WFP's mobile Vulnerability Analysis and Mapping (mVAM) system; going beyond food insecurity and regularly collecting vital information on labor markets, access to health services and child education, providing up-to-date snapshots of people's socio-economic status on the ground during the pandemic. Beside collaborating on the design of the study, the World Bank have contributed financially to sustain the data collection.

"Iraq's multifaceted crisis has severely impacted the livelihoods of the Iraqi people," said World Bank Iraq Representative Ramzi Neman. "The

continuation of this study will provide a better understanding of the socio-economic impact of the crisis on the living conditions of households and thus better inform social protection programs aimed at bringing immediate relief to the most vulnerable."

With ongoing economic pressures and the resulting devaluation of the Iraqi currency, prices of some essential food items have risen, and families are further impacted. The research is being used for multiple purposes and provide the government, humanitarian and development communities with information to allow for evidence-based decisions on their pandemic response and support for the most vulnerable families. Additionally, the study supports a sustainable system to help monitor socio-economic changes and household needs.

Once analyzed, the data and findings will also form the basis of key bulletins and reports, such as the ongoing series

published by WFP and the World Bank in partnership with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD).

"WFP thanks the World Bank for its generous contribution towards this important research partnership, which is supporting informed planning and decision-making by key actors in Iraq," said WFP Iraq Representative Abdirahman Meygag. "Knowing more means being able to do more and do it right. Together our work can help vulnerable families in the most effective way possible."

WFP and the World Bank both continue to work with the government on social protection efforts as well as the design of major reforms in the sector, to best meet families' needs now and in the long-term.

Download WFP's latest data at: <https://dataviz.vam.wfp.org/Dashboards/Hunger-Snapshots-Countries>

UNDP supports Iraqi governorates to build their local capacities and enhance their emergency response preparedness

Erbil, 9 February 2021 - The United Nations Development Programme supports Iraqi governorates to build

their local capacities and enhance their emergency response preparedness in the event of disasters.

A three-day training session was held in Erbil with the presence of academics and representatives of the concerned emergency authorities and service providers in Salahuddin Governorate. Training highlighted different aspects of emergency preparedness and response and involved local academic institutions to build local capacity. The training was organized under the Mosul dam emergency preparedness project of the United Nations Development Programme in Iraq with the generous support of the American Agency for International Development.



Supporting skills development of youth and job creation in Heet

Heet, 10 February 2021 - Conscious that the current pandemic is having devastating reverberations on youth seeking jobs in Iraq, UN-Habitat has recently delivered, through its implementing partner OROKOM, a two-week intensive training on how to lay concrete interlocking pavers and curb stones for 20 unemployed and vulnerable youth from Al Baker in Heet, Anbar Governorate.

A blended theoretical and practical curriculum was designed in coordination with the Vocational Training Centre (VTC) of Heet. As part of their course, trainees spent a day in a local construction industry, where they learned how the concrete paving blocks are manufactured, and then visited a paving project in Heet where they observed the skilful art of a professional paving installer at work. Upon completion of the course, trainees



received their training certificates and a set of work tools in an event organized by Ms Suhaila Al-Mowla, Director of the Heet Youth and Sports Center. This initiative targets specifically unemployed youth who were not fortunate enough to complete their academic studies and/or who did not find suitable work opportunities. Their newly acquired skills will improve their employability beyond the

cash-for-work schemes supported so far by humanitarian projects. For starters, the newly trained workers will be employed by OROKOM to pave the sidewalks of Al Nejoom Park that is being created in Al Baker, as part of the European Union funded programme 'Supporting Recovery and Stability in Iraq through Local Development', implemented by UNDP in partnership with UN-Habitat.

UNDP stands committed to working with the people of Iraq

Erbil, 21 February 2021 - UNDP stands committed to working with the people of Iraq, leaving no one behind! UNDP Resident Representative, Ms. Zena Ali Ahmad, met recently with key religious leaders to discuss UNDP Iraq's focus towards rehabilitating critical infrastructure, working with communities to build social cohesion and creating sustainable livelihood opportunities in areas affected by the conflict with ISIL.

Bishop Boutrous Mushi in Hamdaniyah, Bishop Mousa Shamani along Father Polis and Father Daniel in Bashiqa and Archbishop Nicodemus Daoud Sharaf, and Archbishop Bashar Matti Warda in Erbil met with UNDP leadership.

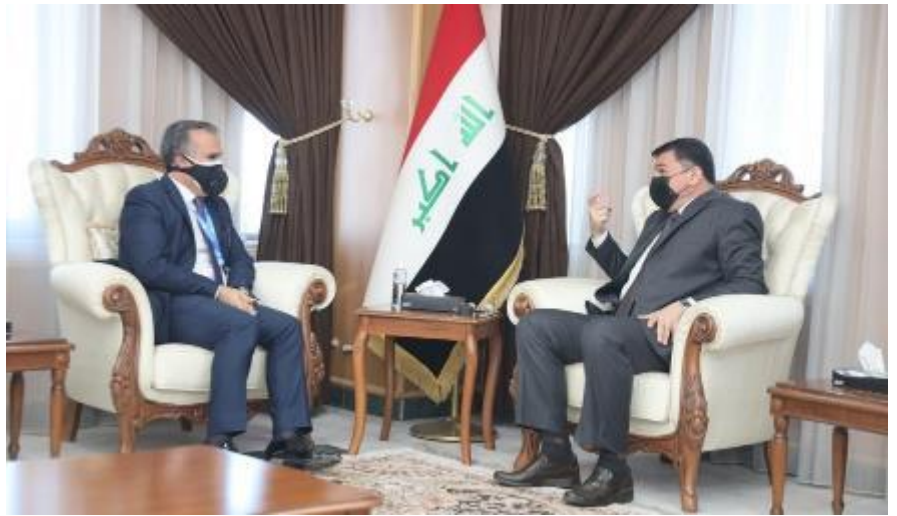


FAO signs a Letter of Agreement with the Ministry of Water Resources to provide financial and technical support to the first Water Conference in Baghdad

Baghdad, 14 February 2021 - Dr. Salah Al Hajj Hassan, FAO Representative in Iraq, met H.E. the Minister of Water Resource Eng. Mahdi Rashid Mahdi at the Minister's Office in the Capital Baghdad. The meeting focused on the cooperation between FAO and the ministry in the water sector especially in regard to the rehabilitation of irrigation infrastructure and sustainable management of water resources in Iraq, as well as FAO's on-going projects that focuses on the rehabilitation of irrigation systems and efforts taken by the organization to revitalize the Iraqi marshlands.

Dr. Elhajj Hassan presented to the Minister FAO-E.U. funded projects in support of farmers' livelihoods through revitalizing food production, development of strategic value chains, support to income generation, in addition to the maintenance of irrigation systems through the rehabilitation of the Al-Jazeera Irrigation system in Ninawa governorate. Dr. Elhajj Hassan also briefed H.E. on FAO-Japan funded project that aims to provide farmers with solar energy pumping systems in Salah al-Din Governorate and expected impact of this initiative.

The Minister reiterated his appreciation for FAO's efforts to restore



Al-Jazeera Irrigation scheme in Ninawa governorate and other programs that focuses on the development of the water sector across Iraq. Dr. El Hajj Hassan assured H.E. that FAO will be providing the necessary support to strengthen national capacities in the field of water management in general and addressing the agricultural aspect of water scarcity in particular.

After the meeting, FAO Representative and H.E. signed a letter of agreement to provide financial and technical support to the 1st Baghdad water

conference that is scheduled to take place on the second week of March 2021 under the title "Planning and Good Governance of Water Resources to Achieve Sustainability." The event is organized under the patronage of H.E. the Prime Minister, Mr. Mustafa Al-Kazemi, with the participation of international and Arab governmental bodies, United Nations Organizations involved in the water sector, civil society organizations and the League of Arab States, in addition to official representatives from Neighboring countries.

FAO provides the Ministry of Agriculture with Information Technology tools

Baghdad, 15 February 2021 - Within the framework of the joint cooperation between the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the Iraqi Government for the achievement of sustainable agricultural development, and in an effort to support coordination and joint cooperation between relevant ministries and FAO, the organization provided video conference systems and a license for voice/video call program (Zoom) in addition to ICT tools to the Ministry of Agriculture. This step will enable continuity of coordination and virtual meetings as a way to overcome the restrictions imposed due to the spread of Covid-19 virus on social gatherings. The provision of these equipment is a paradigm shift in the way in which FAO and its partners are responding to the emerging COVID-19 pandemic, while at the same time provide modern equipment in a



convenient and cost-effective manner. From his side, Dr. Salah ElHajj Hassan, FAO Representative in Iraq, confirmed that the organization is working in partnership with the Ministry of Agriculture and local partners to understand and address the social and economic impacts of the

pandemic and reduce its effects on the agricultural sector and farmers, in addition to finding ways to mitigate it in innovative ways through the use of modern technologies, in order to ensure FAO goals are met in ensuring food security and sustainable agricultural development.

IOM supports livelihoods and job creation in Iraq

Mosul, 16 February 2021 - IOM Iraq was pleased to visit the Ein Dijla juice factory in Mosul with German Ambassador Dr. Ole Diehl. The factory received a grant from the Enterprise Development Fund, with support from Bundesministerium für wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung (BMZ)/KfW, that allowed the owner to buy new machines and hire 14 employees.

IOM is grateful for the German Government and KfW's continued generous support, and for their partnership in support of livelihoods and job creation in Iraq.



IOM and Toyota leverage public-private partnership in support of vulnerable populations in Iraq

Erbil, 17 February 2021 - The International Organization for Migration (IOM) and Toyota Iraq Corporation recently signed a partnership agreement to provide vocational training and improve employability for young people in Iraq.

Iraq is grappling with the cumulative effects of past conflicts on its development, which has left the country vulnerable to renewed conflict. The COVID-19 pandemic and falling oil prices further exacerbated the existing economic and political challenges in the country, pushing vulnerable populations into even more delicate situations. IOM supports the Government of Iraq in promoting stabilization in some of Iraq's most vulnerable communities, including through livelihoods opportunities.

Through this partnership with Toyota Iraq, 10 young people will receive training as part of efforts contributing to long-term economic recovery; individual and community resilience; and community stabilization in areas affected by the ISIL crisis.

IOM and Toyota Iraq will work together to expand the scope of potential work or training opportunities available to young jobseekers. Beginning in February 2021, youth from Najaf governorate will receive up to three months of training in three specialized programs: Automotive Technician Development Program; Auto Parts Development Program; and Customer Relations Development Program.

"IOM has long supported the Government of Iraq in finding solutions to economic recovery, including through individual and community-level livelihoods assistance programmes,"



said IOM Iraq Chief of Mission Gerard Waite. "The partnership with Toyota Iraq will further mutual efforts in support of vulnerable populations and seek to improve private sector capacity to accommodate local labour market demand."

The sessions will be led in Erbil Governorate, by Toyota Iraq staff. Through this program, the trainees will learn about the Toyota Way, Kaizen (continuous improvement) and the Toyota Production System; they will also gain technical knowledge and professional skills related to the auto industry and sales. They will learn transferrable skills for the automotive industry and be better equipped to access job opportunities that will lead to sustainable income. At the end of the sessions, some trainees may join a Toyota Authorized Service Centre or set up their own businesses as automotive technicians.

"This is part of our [support of the]

Sustainable Development Goals and Corporate Social Responsibility — to share our expertise and technology with Iraq youth, so that they can gain equal opportunities for employment," said Toyota Iraq President Sardar Al Bebany.

The partnership with Toyota Iraq is part of a larger project, "Leveraging the Security Development Nexus in Iraq: Support for Community Stabilization in Conflict Affected Communities", supported by the Government of Japan.



Access to clean water and other basic services is a right for everyone



Baghdad, 12 February 2021 – Access to clean water and other basic services is a right for everyone, and few UN agencies in Iraq got involved in securing it.

IOM Iraq, with support from the U.S. Department of State (Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration), funded Al-Kudair Water Purification Centre in Al-Kudair community, Baghdad. IOM installed water purification machines donated by Baghdad Department of Water (DoW), as well as electrical transformers and water networks to bring water directly to the community. This will give more than 20,000 people access to clean water.

An electrical network was also established to equip the water station, in coordination with the Baghdad Water Department. This station will provide water for drinking and daily use by the formerly displaced families returning to Al-Khudair village.

Without water, there can't be good hygiene, sanitation, and protection from many diseases. UNICEF trucked in water to camps in Nineveh, Sulaimania, Kirkuk, and Erbil governorates in Iraq, thereby ensuring that over 160,000 internally displaced Iraqis have access to clean and safe water. UNICEF couldn't have done it without the support of Canada's International Development – Global Affairs Canada.

Thanks to Auswärtiges Amt UNHCR



have been able to bring safe drinking water to close to 33,000 Syrian children and their families in refugee camps in Erbil. With the support UNHCR received, it purified water and ensured that water supply systems are maintained to the highest standards. As the old Water Compact Unit (WCU)



in Basra was not functional, the new one was installed providing safe drinkable water to +20,000 people. This project was implemented by UNDP Iraq's Crisis Response and Resilience Programme, with USAID support.

UNICEF is providing safe clean drinking water, including water quality monitoring and distribution, to 22,500 people living in Jeddah and Salamiya camps for displaced populations.

With its partner Pekawa UNICEF is also running daily hygiene promotions focusing on COVID-19 prevention measures such as maintaining social distancing and wearing masks. This project is implemented with the generous support from the Government of Italy and EU Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid – ECHO.

UNICEF is committed to ensuring that displaced children and their families have access to safe water, especially during the pandemic. In 2020, over 67,000 people living in IDP camps in Erbil and Ninewa were able to access

safe water, thanks to UNICEF's work to maintain water distribution and hygiene facilities with the generous support of the Korean government.

Water is also a key for agriculture and plays an important role in food security!

While in Kirkuk on 7 February 2021, UNDP Iraq's Resident Representative, Zena Ali Ahmad, visited the river irrigation facilities that will provide water to farmers in 235 villages reaching 235,000 people.

Supporting the farmers of Kirkuk to build back their livelihood, UNDP Iraq is rebuilding warehouses, irrigation facilities and agriculture processing systems to increase access to farming.

UNDP Iraq's Resident Representative Zena Ali Ahmad also visited the three warehouses in Hawija, Kirkuk along with the Governor of Kirkuk. This will benefit 4,000 farmers by storing their crops.

Both projects are possible thanks to generous support from German Embassy Baghdad!

Improved access to basic services is also essential for the return of IDPs. IOM Iraq, with support from U.S. Department of State: Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration, installed new electric transformers, cables, poles and recycled parts to rehabilitate electrical networks for three communities in Fallujah. More than 1,550 people, mostly returned IDPs, will have improved access to reliable electricity.

"For years, we struggled with unreliable electricity and we were trying to solve the problem by ourselves but, unfortunately, we couldn't do it, until IOM came and fixed it. Thank God, we now have a stable and safer electrical network... This project also allowed the irrigation and pumping systems to be restarted, resulting in the creation of jobs," said Waleed Al Isawi, father of eleven.

Rehabilitated public spaces can be powerful generators of social inclusiveness and greener recovery in war-affected Iraqi cities

This story reflects some of the work delivered by the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) under the programme Supporting Recovery and Stability in Iraq through Local Development, funded by the European Union (EU) and implemented by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

Baghdad, 9 February 2021 - With the onset of the winter and temperatures dropping during the night, the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) has paused until next Spring its ongoing landscaping activities in Al Yarmouk Park to focus instead on the installation of solar lamp posts along the perimeter wall and the layout of a new irrigation system. Idle children unable to go to school because of the ongoing pandemic, gaze with curiosity from the other side of the fence the bulldozers preparing the trenches and the trucks transporting the soil across the park. Solitary runners brave the chilly air in the morning to train along the route that next year will accommodate a brand-new running circuit in tartan.

Even before the ousting of ISIL fighters, which brought about the destruction of a substantial part of the city's built fabric and basic infrastructure, Mosul was notoriously poor in public green spaces. Measuring 67,000 sqm, Al Yarmouk Park is one of the largest public spaces of the west bank of Mosul, a city known for its limited 1.4 sqm of green space per capita – far off from the minimum of 9 sqm of urban green space for each person recommended by the World Health Organisation (WHO).

The rehabilitation of Al Yarmouk Park as a multi-purpose public space is a critical component of the area-based integrated project funded by the European Union that UN-Habitat is implementing in west Mosul [under the UNDP programme Supporting Recovery and Stability in Iraq through Local Development], aimed at restoring essential public services disrupted by war and conflict. Once the project is completed, the park will serve at least half a million people living in the west bank.

With this ambition in mind, over the past three months, the team has led the construction of three new multi-purpose sports courts and an open-air gym, repaired the boundary wall and gates, rehabilitated the damaged guard

rooms, excavated a new well and installed ten large water storage tanks for irrigation fed by water pumps powered to a new solar panel system. So far, these constructions works have created 236 jobs for unemployed residents of the area (including 10 women), recruited on the basis of a roster set up in coordination with the Al Rabee sector municipality responsible for the park.

Upon the completion of the football pitch and multi-sports field, in October 2020 UN-Habitat launched a 15-day long “Al Yarmouk Youth Athletics for Peace Initiative” which included a Football League Championship, as well as basketball, volleyball and Taekwondo matches, and running races among 200 vivacious children from the neighbourhood. In consideration of the on-going pandemic, health precautionary measures were taken very seriously.

In the meanwhile, UN-Habitat announced the launch of a female-only horticultural training and gardening jobs opportunities for unemployed women of the area. Out of the 410 residents who applied, 30 amongst the most vulnerable yet fittest candidates were enrolled in an intensive 10-day long horticultural training course. Many of them are destitute widows whose families survive on charity and food provided by the local mosque.

“I was jobless, sitting at home depressed with no plans. – confessed Nafla Mohammed Ali – This training brought back hope in my life. I have learned new skills that will help me to find a job in the park or elsewhere”. The course, designed to blend theoretical and practice-oriented sessions held within the Park, was organised through the Engineering Association for Development and

Environment (EADE), a national NGO implementing partner. The sessions were delivered by hand-picked local experts in this field, led by Mr. Hussamaddin Thanoon, lecturer at the College of Agriculture and Forestry at Mosul University.

Once they completed their training, the 30 female gardeners were recruited on a rotational basis to work under the watchful eye of Mr. Yasir Salih Al-Badrany, Head of Ninewa's Forestry Directorate. In the month of November, they collectively planted over 260 new trees, including 45 mature Iraqi and Washingtonia palm trees, local Cypress trees, pomegranate trees, Jasmine climbers and shrubs.

On the occasion of the International Day of Persons with Disabilities, on 3 December 2020, the park hosted two friendly sport events involving the renowned Mosul-based volleyball team known as the “Sitting Players” and the acclaimed football team of hearing and speech impaired players, known as the “Champions”. Disability inclusion is an essential condition to upholding human rights, sustainable development, and peace and security.

UN-Habitat has engaged Mosul Municipality since the inception of the project by setting up a dedicated Technical Committee tasked to support the rehabilitation process, review draft plans and endorse designs, approve Bill of Quantities and help to solve problems encountered during the project. Mr. Muhammed Abdullah, Deputy Head of Mosul Municipality for Services Affairs stated: “We really appreciate activities and initiatives that involve women, enhance their skills and promote their role in the reconstruction and rebuilding the city and its public facilities.”



Diplomats witnessing UNDP work in Mosul

Mosul, 24 February 2021 - In February 2021 UNDP was excited to host in Mosul, the British Ambassador, Stephen Hickey, and Ambassador of the Netherlands, Michel Rentenaar. They visited Nineveh University's

science laboratory and Mosul University's central library. Through the Funding Facility for Stabilization, UNDP Iraq is currently rehabilitating the central library in Mosul University.

The Ambassadors also sat down with students and had an in-depth chat on their vision for Mosul's future. Finally, they stopped by West Mosul's High Courthouse which is also being rehabilitated by UNDP.



UNDP embedding innovation in the academic institutions in Iraq

Basra, 28 February 2021 - As part of embedding innovation in the academic institutions in Iraq, The UNDP Iraq represented by the UNDP-Accelerator Lab and Iraq Crisis Response and Resilience Programme has participated in the International Conference of Sustainable Agriculture and its Role in Economic and Human Development by College of Agriculture – University of Basra.

The aim was to discuss how we can innovate in "Sustainable Agriculture" in three dimensions of sustainability; economic, social, and environmental.



Mine Action

UNMAS requested to expand its operations beyond the areas retaken from ISIL

Basra, 5 January 2021 - UNMAS Senior Programme Manager in Iraq, Mr. Pehr Lodhammar, recently made an exploratory visit to Basra.

Mr. Lodhammar met with representatives from the Regional Mine Action Centre – South (RMAC – South) and visited prospective sites for possible operational expansion to southern Iraq.

The visit was in response to a request from the Iraqi government for UNMAS to expand its operations beyond the areas retaken from ISIL.

As the country faces economic struggles, further exacerbated by COVID-19 and prospective austerity measures, the expansion of UNMAS clearance operations into southern Iraq will ensure release of land that will

help revitalize the local economy. This will not only save lives but also have a positive economic impact on communities.

UNMAS would like to thank the Iraqi government, the Directorate of Mine

Action (DMA) and RMAC – South in particular, for enabling the rapid resumption of mine action activities in Iraq, a crucial precursor to any rehabilitation and reconstruction works in contaminated areas.





Baghdad, 7 January 2021 - UNMAS Senior Programme Manager in Iraq, Mr. Pehr Lodhammar, recently met with Mr. Dhafer Mahmood, the newly appointed Director-General of the Directorate of Mine Action (DMA), to discuss UNMAS activities and progress made during the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak.

Mr. Lodhammar also briefed the Director-General on the work that UNMAS has been doing in the past five years in support of the Government of Iraq and the national mine action response.

Mr. Mahmood thanked UNMAS and other Iraqi mine action stakeholders for their support to DMA and their efforts in addressing explosive ordnance contamination in the country.

“UNMAS work is crucial in ensuring the safe and dignified return of displaced people to their homes. I commend UNMAS for its continued effort to advocate for an Iraq free from explosive ordnance.”



Erbil, 9 January 2021 - UNMAS Senior Programme Manager in Iraq, Mr. Pehr Lodhammar, recently met with Mr. Jabbar Mustafa, the new head of the Iraqi Kurdistan Mine Action Agency (IKMAA) to provide an update on present areas of cooperation and enhancing mutual support for a more streamlined output at the field level.

Discussion included a briefing on UNMAS current operations in the country, ongoing nationalization efforts, and status update on the challenges and opportunities facing the mine action sector during COVID-19.

UNMAS would like to thank IKMAA for facilitating and supporting the mine action sector in Iraq.

The Humanitarian Coordinator in Iraq, Ms. Irena Vojackova Sollarano, expresses sorrow over the death of a humanitarian deminer in Iraq on 7 January 2021

Baghdad, 10 January 2021 - The Humanitarian Coordinator in Iraq, Ms. Irena Vojackova Sollarano, expresses sorrow over the death of a humanitarian deminer in Iraq on 7 January 2021. The deceased had worked for the Mines Advisory Group (MAG) for six years and was killed in an explosion in Telefar District in Ninewa Governorate. An additional MAG staff member and three other individuals were injured during the

incident.

On behalf of the United Nations, the Humanitarian Coordinator conveys her sincerest condolences to the family, friends and colleagues deeply affected by this loss. She also extends her wishes for the speedy recovery of those that were injured.

This tragic incident underscores the dangers that explosive hazard contamination continue to pose in Iraq. Clearance of explosive ordnances is an

essential step in the recovery from years of conflict. No critical infrastructure can be rebuilt, basic services restored, or displaced families return home safely until such explosive clearance activities take place. The Humanitarian Coordinator commends the humanitarian mine action community in Iraq for their dedication in carrying out such dangerous yet crucial work, in service of a safer future for humanity.

Noor enter mine action to ensure that vulnerable populations were aware of the dangers posed by explosive ordnance

Baghdad, 3 February 2021 - As a Risk Education Officer with UNMAS in Iraq, Noor works alongside her colleagues and implementing partners to disseminate key life-saving messages to vulnerable communities through the use of innovative tools and methods tailored to specific target audiences.

Noor fondly recalls her childhood days, young and carefree, initiating pranks with her friends in the lively Baghdadi neighborhood she grew up in. To them, their neighborhood was an oasis for their ritual games of hide-and-seek, and every nook and cranny was fair game.

The wars in Iraq came with a heavy cost. The political instability created a vacuum for armed groups to rise,

leading to severe civil unrest that took the lives of thousands of Iraqis, peaking in 2014 when key Iraqi cities and towns were lost to ISIL.

Now, three years after their defeat, the presence of armed groups continues to haunt Iraq – through the thousands of explosive ordnance items left behind. This makes Iraq one of the most explosive ordnance-contaminated countries in the world, where many residential areas, particularly in former ISIL enclaves, are not safe.

This means that children can no longer safely play hide-and-seek in their local neighborhoods. It means that families are not able to return home; farmers can no longer safely work their lands; and herders and their livestock are



under continuous threat when grazing vacant land.

Noor couldn't accept that Iraqis were and are still at risk from explosive ordnance. She was inspired to enter the humanitarian field, particularly mine action, to ensure that vulnerable populations, especially children, were aware of the dangers posed by explosive ordnance.

Belgium provides additional USD 1.8 million for UNMAS activities in Iraq

Baghdad, 27 January 2021 – The United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) in Iraq welcomes an additional contribution of EUR 1.5 million (approximately USD 1.8 million) from the Government of Belgium that will play a pivotal role in supporting the Government of Iraq to assist those impacted by explosive ordnance. The Government of Belgium will contribute to strengthening national capacity in the mine action sector, thus enabling stabilization and humanitarian efforts through the support of explosive hazard management and delivery of life saving risk education messages to affected communities in the retaken areas of Iraq.

More than three years after the Government of Iraq declared victory over the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), their presence continues to haunt innocent civilians, particularly through the swathes of explosive ordnance-contaminated land left behind in the wake of their defeat.

UNMAS is adapting its strategy to ensure optimum and sustainable

support to the Government of Iraq, particularly through the focus of its assistance to sustainable national capacity inclusive of national authorities and national operators. As part of this strategy, UNMAS has rolled out a new partnership model bringing together international mine action organizations with local NGOs, paving the way for national ownership and localization of the mine action response in Iraq.

In addition, UNMAS is also advocating for gender mainstreaming and equal opportunity across all its activities as well as the overall mine action sector in Iraq. This means that UNMAS encourages the hiring and training of capable women and men from the community itself, providing critical livelihood opportunities to vulnerable communities.

“Belgium is very happy to continue its support for UNMAS activities in Iraq in the context of its policy of contributing to the stabilization of the country,” said Mr. Filip Vanden Bulcke, Ambassador of the Kingdom of Belgium to Jordan and Iraq. “We are very impressed with

the results of recent clearance activities in spite of the pandemic, as well as UNMAS focus on strengthening national capacities in mine action and on gender mainstreaming. This approach will enhance ownership and strengthen local communities while achieving demining objectives.”

“This generous contribution from Belgium will significantly further UNMAS mine action activities in Iraq, and will enable the safe, dignified, and voluntary return of displaced communities to their homes,” stated Pehr Lodhammar, UNMAS Iraq Senior Programme Manager. “As the impact of the coronavirus pandemic continues to reverberate across the country, the additional support will also provide much-needed economic relief to struggling communities by providing access to lands previously contaminated by explosive ordnance that can be utilized for farming, grazing of cattle and other livelihood activities. I thank the Government of Belgium for their unceasing support to the mine action sector in Iraq.

UNICEF is carrying out awareness campaigns against the dangers of war remnants

Baghdad, 1 February 2021 - With support from the Norwegian Government, UNICEF, in cooperation with Al-Ghad, is carrying out awareness campaigns against the dangers of war remnants left after the conflict in Iraq. The campaign has reached more than 20,000 people, most of them children and youth, in Ninawah.



UNMAS provided explosive ordnance risk education training to 40 cash-for-work employees

Mosul, 4 February 2021 - UNMAS continues providing support and assistance to the stabilization and rehabilitation efforts in cooperation with the United Nations Development Programme - UNDP in Mosul, northern Iraq.

Through its local implementing partner, the Health and Social Care Organization in Iraq, UNMAS provided explosive ordnance risk education training to 40 cash-for-work employees from UNDP.

The purpose of the training was to raise awareness of the threat posed by

explosive ordnance in Al Shifa'a Hospital's complex in western Mosul.



Training programmes on EOD and IEED for the Iraqi Ministry of Interior resumed in Baghdad

Baghdad, 5 February 2020 - Due to the COVID-19, the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) in Iraq temporarily suspended its in-person training. However, training programmes on explosive ordnance disposal (EOD) and improvised explosive device disposal (IEED) for the Iraqi Ministry of Interior have recently resumed in Salman Pak, Baghdad. The primary goal of such initiatives is to further develop national expertise in the field of EOD/IED and thus enhance the operational capacity.



UNMAS organized a workshop on gender mainstreaming of explosive hazard management and planning in Baghdad

Baghdad, 7 February 2021 - In collaboration with the Iraqi Directorate of Mine Action (DMA), the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) in Iraq recently organized a workshop on gender mainstreaming of explosive hazard management and planning in Baghdad, Iraq. The workshop aimed at creating a more effective and inclusive mine action response plan in Iraq by including women in: technical positions and planning processes, decision-making and mine action planning and operations. 18 senior-level representatives from various Government entities, including the DMA, the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Defense, attended the event.



The Federal Republic of Germany provides additional contribution to UNMAS in support of the Mine Action sector in Iraq

Baghdad, 15 February 2021 – The United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) in Iraq welcomes an additional contribution of USD four million from the Federal Republic of Germany for the provision of clearance operations in support of stabilization and reconstruction efforts, and the safe, dignified, and voluntary return of internally displaced persons (IDPs) to their homes.

The presence of explosive ordnance, particularly improvised explosive devices (IEDs), left behind by the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) continues to threaten the lives of innocent civilians, as well as the first responders from the local police providing initial response.

The legacy of ISIL will continue to live on and destabilize communities as long

as explosive ordnance are scattered in houses, neighbourhoods, farmlands, posing a threat to civilians set on rebuilding their lives post-ISIL occupation.

This contribution from Germany will enable UNMAS to continue providing direct clearance to affected communities in retaken areas. UNMAS is coordinating with the Government of Iraq to prioritize residential area clearance, critical to ensure the safe and dignified return to home and communities.

On the occasion of Germany's contribution German Ambassador, Dr. Ole Diehl, said: "German continuous support for UNMAS in Iraq contributes to our joint – Iraqi and international – efforts in stabilizing and reconstructing areas liberated from ISIL. Since IEDs

continue to endanger the lives of civilians living and working in the liberated areas, clearance of explosive hazards is the precondition for stabilization, safe returns of IDPs and livelihood."

Commenting on the contribution, Pehr Lodhammar, UNMAS Iraq Senior Programme Manager, said: "The presence of explosive ordnance will continue to impede the safe and dignified return of displaced communities and the resumption of livelihood activities until cleared. As UNMAS prepares to launch residential area clearance, it brings me great comfort to know that this will ease the fears of many IDPs living in camps, who have cited booby-trapped residences as one of the primary reasons curtailing their return."

Iraq's Ministry of Interior and UNDP launch E-Learning platform for Iraqi local police



Baghdad, 22 February 2021 - The Iraqi Ministry of Interior and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Iraq today launched an E-Learning Platform for the Iraqi local police to improve opportunities for training, career development, and specialised education. The Platform offers easy access and enrolment to all police officers in Iraq and is the first of its kind initiative in the Ministry of Interior.

The first course available to users is a training programme on standard operating procedures for criminal investigations for police officers of

various functions including first response, crime scene management, forensics, and lead investigators.

Zena Ali-Ahmad, UNDP Iraq Resident Representative, states, "Thanks to the generous support from the Netherlands - we were able to collaborate with the Iraqi government to establish this ground-breaking E-learning platform in Iraq. The Ministry of the Interior can now engage with a large number of police officers to facilitate their professional development as front-line people-oriented service providers, and will ensure government business continuity during COVID-19 lockdowns."

According to Major General Ziad Al-Abbasi, Head of the Training and Qualification Directorate of the Ministry of the Interior, "With this new platform, the Ministry now has improved means to reach out to all Iraqi police, wherever they are based, and whatever their functions are, to develop their skills according to a pace they can choose and their work obligations and time constraints."

Ambassador Michel Rentenaar of the Netherlands emphasizes, "We are pleased that the Ministry of Interior will utilise this e-learning platform extensively, develop more courses and make the platform a central place for all police schools, academies and institutes to spread knowledge to local police officers across Iraq."

Work is in ongoing to incorporate additional resources into the e-learning platform, including courses on knowledge-led policing (IELP) and mid-level police management.

This initiative is implemented through the UNDP Iraq Security Sector programme, supported by a number of donors in Iraq. The programme aims to strengthen security and justice sector governance in Iraq.

IOM Iraq is supporting the work of Community Policing Forums

Baghdad, 24 February 2021 - "In Najaf Governorate there have been several success stories achieved [thanks to] the efforts of community police. We have received several appeals for help through the hotline or direct visits to our division; [by December 2020] we had received 377 requests for assistance.

We are proud of the spirit of cooperation that exists between everyone who works for the Community Police. The Community Policing Forum has also strengthened the spirit of local cooperation, especially with the many civil society organizations in Najaf Governorate that work and interact with us," said Lieutenant Colonel Dhiaa Kadhim, Director of the Community Policing Division in Najaf Governorate.

Community Policing Forums are open, inclusive spaces for members of the community to share safety and security concerns and work together with community police officers to come up with solutions. IOM Iraq is supporting the work of Community Policing Forums in Najaf and Ninawa Governorates, with funding from the Government of Japan.

"Recently we have had many security and social problems in Najaf. As women, we used to find it difficult to enter police stations.

After the opening of the Community Policing Forums, I helped many women raise their concerns to the competent authorities. Thanks to the community police's efforts many important things happened; trust has been restored between the police and the community, and this a very important link in our governorate.

The members of the Community Policing forums are from Najaf's general population, like the sheikhs and the tribal support units; they are considered as important and influential voices in Najaf's society.

This will help the community police have a stronger influence, that will lead more problems to be referred to us; cases of electronic blackmail, for example, they will not have to go to court and they can be resolved amicably.

The community has become more cohesive, as we have become a link between the local community and the police, and there has also been a lot of coordination with the relevant security forces.

One of the most important things that has developed is increased confidence among women. We are now solving problems amicably and providing psychosocial support for those who need

it - as they need to feel comfortable to speak up in order to help them solve their problems and have their cases looked into.

The Community Policing Forums in Najaf have brought about major changes, solved many problems, and improved their reputation; this has helped stabilize the security situation in Najaf," said Marwa Rasim is a member of the Al-Rased Center for Human Rights and a member of the Community Policing Forum in Al-Askari neighborhood, Najaf Governorate.

The International Organization for Migration in Iraq supports the work of community police forums in Najaf and Ninawa governorates, funded by the Government of Japan.



Videos called “A Day in My Life” document life of various people who have been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic in Iraq

Baghdad, 6 January 2021 - “This series reflects the importance of human solidarity as one of the basic and universal values on which relationships should be based to solve problems, end crises, and strengthen social cohesion.” – the Anbar Youth Group for Peace.

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected people across the world, including those in every occupation imaginable. The Anbar Youth Group for Peace, supported by UNDP and in partnership with the Wasel Tasel Humanitarian Foundation, has produced a series of videos called “A Day in My Life” that document a day in the life of various people who have been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic in Iraq.

The campaign aims to shed light on members of Iraqi society who have not

stopped their work and continue to provide services during the pandemic. All 10 videos have been released on

UNDP Iraq social media this month. Read more about the video series here: <https://bit.ly/2XeYcHt>



UNDP Iraq completed construction of a 20-bed isolation ward in Dohuk

Dohuk, 6 January 2021 - UNDP Iraq has recently completed construction of a 20-bed isolation ward in Dohuk which will provide the necessary health care for COVID-19 patients, thanks to the generous support of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The facility also includes lifesaving medical equipment. To date, 50 patients were treated in this isolation ward. Healthcare workers will receive personal protective equipment to ensure their safety while serving the patients. With USAID’s support, UNDP is establishing nine isolation wards in Babil, Basra, DhiQar, Dohuk, Karbala, Kirkuk, Missan, Najaf and Ninewa. Another



seven wards are being established across Anbar (Fallujah and Ramadi),

Diyala, Diwaniya, Erbil, Muthanna and Salah al-Din.

IOM Iraq organized a training on psychological first aid for frontline healthcare staff

Kirkuk, 20 January 2021 - In support of the Government’s COVID-19 response efforts, IOM Iraq’s Mental Health and Psychosocial Support team organized a training on psychological first aid for frontline healthcare staff at Al Askary Primary Healthcare Centre, Kirkuk Governorate, funded by USAID’s Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance.

Participants learned how to respond to the emergency psychosocial stressors faced by patients who are seeking services in the Primary Healthcare Centres (PHCs). A follow up session was hosted in Panja Ali PHC, also in Kirkuk Governorate.



Anbar Rappers “Mr Legendary” and “IQ Kid” offers “Final Advice” on curbing the spread of COVID-19

Anbar/Erbil, 20 January 2021 - Historic Erbil Citadel is the stunning backdrop for “Final Advice”, the latest video by Anbar rapper Mr Legendary, Leader of the Hip Hop Unleashed (HHU) Crew. “Our song reminds everyone that we need to be leaders.

We need to rise to the challenge presented by Covid-19”, said Mr Legendary who dispenses his advice with the help from fellow HHU Crew member IQ Kid. “It has been inspiring to work with creative artists and technicians from different parts of the

country to influence others in a positive direction through our art. Our lyrics and music are our way of encouraging society to work together across different regions, cultures and backgrounds, to do what is necessary to fight this pandemic as a cohesive whole. We need to unite in our response while staying apart. We need to support the most disadvantaged among us to exercise their human rights. Hailing from Heet in Anbar, the rappers worked with a production team of Arabs, Kurds and Assyrians from Anbar, Erbil and Ninewa governorates. Whilst the number of confirmed COVID-19 cases continue to decrease in Iraq, many countries have seen a resurgence of the virus to record levels, highlighting the need for us all to continue following COVID prevention measures.



Sulaymaniyah rapper Raz Zeki urges listeners to take COVID-19 seriously in her latest release “Together”

Sulaymaniyah, 27 January 2021 - An innovative new rap song, “Together”, on COVID-19 awareness targets youth but carries a message for all age groups. Performed by Raz Zeki, a Kurdish recording artist from Sulaymaniyah and commissioned by UNAMI Human Rights Office, the rap song reminds listeners of their vital role in containing the spread of COVID-19 while highlighting the importance of helping each other during these tough times.

“After seeing people in public who don’t take COVID-19 seriously, I decided to use my music as a platform to raise awareness”, said Raz. “People need to be constantly reminded and motivated to stay safe. Music is one way to do that”, she added. Now more than ever we need the creativity of artists to inspire us to do better.

The video and sound studio production crew, which includes Arabs, Kurds, Assyrians and Turkmen, reflects the



unity and creativity of Iraq’s artistic youth. By listening and sharing “Together” you can support young artists, inspire hope, and raise awareness about health protection measures we all need to continue observing.

Whilst the number of confirmed COVID-19 cases continue to decrease in Iraq, many countries have seen a resurgence of the virus to record levels, highlighting the need for everyone to keep following the prevention measures.

WHO refutes claims of unveiling information on COVID-19 vaccination plan in Iraq

Baghdad, 31 January 2021-- The World Health Organization (WHO) in Iraq on Sunday denied claims from a local media source that it disclosed information on the COVID-19 vaccination plan in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq.

In a post for Al Shafaq News, the media misquoted a WHO technical employee

and posted a misleading statement describing details on the type and plan for the COVID-19 vaccination in Iraq, the fact that contradicts the role of the organization in all member state countries.

The Organization would like to emphasize that WHO is a technical agency concerned with providing Iraq’s

Ministry of Health on both Central and Regional levels with the technical advice required and do respect the sovereign decision of the Central as well as Kurdistan Regional Ministries of Health on all health issues including the COVID-19 vaccine and national inoculation plans.

IOM Iraq has been running awareness campaigns for displaced children focused on combatting COVID-19



Baghdad, 4 February 2021 - IOM Iraq has been running awareness campaigns for displaced children in Amiriyat Al-Fallujah camp, Anbar Governorate, focused on combatting COVID-19. IOM designed coloring books for children that contain instructions about proper hand washing; protecting against illness during winter season; and maintaining health and personal hygiene; presented in an educational and entertaining format. These coloring books and pens

have been distributed to 623 children in the camp.

IOM Iraq has also been running awareness campaigns for displaced children in eight informal sites in Tal-Abta, Nineveh Governorate, focused on combatting COVID-19.

Coloring books and pens have been distributed to 1450 children in the informal sites.

These campaigns are supported by EU Civil Protection & Humanitarian Aid – ECHO.

Local Peace Committees on the front-line: over 100,000 reached in Iraq

Baghdad, 6 February 2021 - When coronavirus pandemic restrictions started in March 2020, movement in Iraq on the ground became difficult for many service providers and aid organizations. To reach vulnerable populations, 19 Local Peace Committees (LPCs) supported and empowered by UNDP Iraq to respond to community needs and mitigate conflict sprung into motion in April to help families and individuals cope with



the impacts of the pandemic. LPC members, community-based organizations, and volunteers worked

tirelessly to identify vulnerable families, assemble and distribute food and hygiene packages, educate the public about COVID-19 prevention, and sanitize public spaces.

During the first campaign launched in Spring 2020, LPCs in Salah al-Din, Anbar and Ninewa reached 64, 181 beneficiaries. During the second campaign, from December 2020 to January 2021, 47, 473 beneficiaries were reached, for a total of 111, 654.

Ministry of Health Kurdistan, UNFPA open COVID-19 isolation unit at Soran maternity hospital

Erbil, 8 February 2021 - The Ministry of Health of the Kurdistan Regional Government through the Directorate of Health in Erbil, with support from UNFPA opened a COVID-19 isolation unit at the Soran Maternity hospital in Erbil on 3 February 2021.

The isolation unit has the capacity to treat up to six women at once. It was equipped with medical supplies, Personal Protective Equipment, six examination beds and two delivery beds worth US\$ 100,000. The facility that provides daily around-the clock care, is fully equipped by UNFPA and the Soran hospital administration. The staff are also provided with PPEs and medical supplies and have been trained on national guidelines on management of pregnancy and child birth during COVID19.

In addition to the isolation unit at Soran maternity hospital, UNFPA, with funding from the Swedish Government, supported the establishment of isolation units for COVID-19 at maternity hospitals in Zakho, Sulaymaniyah and Halabja. UNFPA Deputy Representative, Mr.



Himyar Abdulmoghni spoke on the occasion and said: "All childbirths should be safe at all times and no woman should be denied quality reproductive health services under any circumstances, including crises and pandemics. We are working with the Ministry of Health in the Kurdistan Region to ensure quality services to all pregnant women and safe deliveries despite COVID-19."

Dr Mahabad Dilawar, the Head of Soran Maternity Hospital, thanked UNFPA for the efforts in building the

isolation unit saying: "We are saving time and cost for pregnant women who had to travel long distances to deliver their babies. Through this isolation unit, we serve quality services to pregnant women with COVID-19."

UNFPA supports the Kurdistan Regional Government to strengthen the health system's capacity, provide essential supplies, improve access to sexual and reproductive health and gender-based violence services, and promote risk communication and community engagement.

WHO commends the Supreme Health and Safety Committee decisions made to cut down COVID-19 flaring infection rates

Baghdad, 15 February 2021 - The World Health Organization (WHO) welcomed the new set of resolutions announced by Iraq's Supreme Health and Safety Committee on the 13th of February, aiming to halt the recent increase in the numbers of COVID-19 cases reported by health institutions in the country.

The steady increase in the number of cases over the last 5 to 6 weeks is a concerning development that requires vigilance and strengthening of the preventive measures at individual and community levels. The World Health Organization urges all Iraqi citizens to adhere to the committee new resolutions to protect themselves, their families, and beloved ones, and keep utmost attention to individual prevention measures such as physical distancing, wearing a mask when around other people, keeping rooms well ventilated, avoiding crowds and gatherings, cleaning hands frequently, and coughing into a bent elbow or tissue.

"Amid increasing concerns over a

recent noticeable spike in the number of COVID-19 cases in Iraq, WHO would like to stress the importance of the new resolutions issued by the health and safety authorities on COVID-19 infection rates in the country," said Dr. Ahmed Zouiten, WHO Representative and Head of Mission in Iraq. "We second the voices of the Ministry of Health and the Supreme Committee and urge all citizens to show responsibility by adhering to the individual and community preventive measures. Only through a social pact between Iraqi people and the health authorities, we can win the fight against this pandemic in Iraq," Dr. Zouiten added.

The new Supreme committee resolutions included [1] evening lockdown excluding health, security forces, media professionals, service departments, and vegetable stores. They also included the re-activation of online education for all levels except for the final stages of medical colleges, in addition to the closure of parks and the banning of funeral councils and

wedding parties for two weeks starting Thursday 18 February this year.

On the 14th of the current, the Iraqi Ministry of Health reported 2,224 new confirmed cases with 15 fatalities bringing the overall nationwide pandemic figures to 643,852 confirmed cases and 13,179 associated deaths.

"We must unite efforts and join voices to support the Ministry of Health and national health providers at this critical stage of the pandemic. Let's all commit to health resolutions and not compromise the safety and wellness of each other; It is the moral and ethical obligation of each individual to use a mask when around other people, clean hands, ensure a physical distance to protect themselves, their communities and country against COVID-19 infection," concluded Dr. Zouiten.



The World Health Organization continues to support the COVID-19 response in Kurdistan Region of Iraq with a new allocation of US\$ 1 million worth of medical supplies and materials

Erbil, 16 February 2021 – The World Health Organization (WHO) today handed over 13 tons of medical supplies and equipment to the Ministry of Health in the Kurdistan region of Iraq. This donation will scale up intensive care capacity to respond to efforts aimed at controlling the recent increase in the number of COVID-19 cases in Iraq.

The medical consignment worth US\$ 1 million will support health facilities in the Kurdistan region with personal protective equipment (PPE), COVID-19 diagnostic kits, oxygen concentrators, oximeters, intensive care beds and devices, hospital bedding and related medical furniture, patient monitors, and other items. This timely support comes when national health authorities are racing against time to control a new spike in the numbers of confirmed COVID-19 infections, as well as an increase in hospitalized cases. The medical supplies provided by WHO will serve both the diagnosis and the management of COVID-19 patients amid new reports confirming the circulation of a mutant variant of the disease in Iraq.

"Currently, COVID-19 epidemiology is indicating a new spike in the number of reported cases and in view of the confirmation of the circulation of a mutated variant in the country, WHO continues to provide technical and operational support to health authorities at central level and in the Kurdistan region with the aim of scaling up preparedness and response to the pandemic in Iraq," said Dr Ahmed Zouiten, WHO Representative in Iraq. "Challenging times still lie ahead, that is why we need to unite our efforts, mobilize all possible resources and invest in strengthening both prevention and response measures to win this battle," he added.

This consignment, the third of its kind since February 2020 was welcomed by health officials in Kurdistan. "We appreciate WHO's continued support to the Ministry of Health in this region. The supplies provided today will certainly increase our capacity to detect and manage COVID-19 infections, and come at an opportune time to support our efforts while we are battling to reverse the upward trend in the number of COVID-19 reported in the

last few weeks," said Dr Saman H. Barzangy, Minister of Health of the Kurdistan region.

As of 15 February 2021 Kurdistan health authorities reported 106 976 confirmed cases of COVID-19 with 3499 associated deaths and 102 335 recoveries.

WHO gratefully acknowledges the generous contributions from the Government and the people of the State of Kuwait, the Government and people of Germany, and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) which enabled continued WHO support to the people of Iraq through the provision of these life-saving medical supplies and equipment.



IOM Iraq is improving the national response capacity to COVID-19

Kirkuk, 18 February 2021 - With support from Qatar Charity and the Government of Germany, IOM Iraq is improving the national response capacity to COVID-19 through the provision of critical supplies and essential commodities. Infection Prevention and Control (IPC) supplies; cleaning materials for clinic staff;

personal protective equipment (PPE) for health care workers; essential medications; and equipment were recently delivered to a primary care centre in Kirkuk Governorate. With these items, healthcare facilities can ensure continuity of services, at facilities supported by IOM Iraq and partners.



WHO supports the MoH with a vital consignment of medical technologies to boost national COVID-19 containment efforts

Baghdad, 21 February 2021 – The World Health Organization (WHO) today handed over a shipment of medical supplies and equipment to the Ministry of Health in Iraq, with the aim to support the national preparedness and response efforts to COVID 19 pandemic, amid a flare in numbers of infection and concerns over the emergence of a new variant in the country.

The 129-pallet consignment comes to complement 2 other shipments handed over earlier in 2020 worth over US\$5 Million. The new tranche of medical technologies includes intensive care supplies and equipment as well as spare-parts-kits for the oxygen concentrators shipment provided earlier by the organization during the oxygen crisis in July 2020. The consignment also included Personal Protective Equipment, electrocardiograph devices, oximeters, and hospital bedding, furniture, and patients monitors, all of which come as timely support to the Ministry of Health's efforts to contain the new spike in COVID-19 cases and the potential detection of new variants or



mutation.

As of December 2020, WHO has supported the ministry of health in Iraq with over 120 tons of medical supplies, equipment and ambulances for a total of US\$ 4.3 million to equip the Iraqi hospitals and national health services involved with the COVID -19 response. The support facilitated the management of a considerable number of cases hospitalized in critical and intensive care units.

“WHO continues to work in close collaboration with the Iraqi health authorities and provides technical, operational and logistical support to address the increasing needs during this critical phase of the pandemic,” said Dr. Ahmed Zouiten WHO Representative and Head of Mission in

Iraq. “Our main objective is to curtail the transmission of COVID 19, and limit morbidity and mortality associated with the pandemic and scale up preparedness for a successful vaccine rollout to protect the health workers, vulnerable populations, and rest of Iraqi citizens countrywide” Dr. Zouiten added.

Iraq had reported its first imported case of COVID 19 in February 2020. Since, Iraq witnessed a gradual increase in the number of domestic transmissions which significantly spiked in July of the same year. The numbers began to drop down toward the end of 2020 but hyped up again recently to mark a concerning increase in February 2021. Total confirmed cases stand at 657,453 with 13,220 associated deaths as of 19 February this year.

This timely support in favour of Iraqi people would not have been possible without the generous contributions from the Government and the people of the State of Kuwait, the Government and the people of Germany, and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

UNAMI COVID-19 awareness campaign

Baghdad, 27 February 2021 - Seven Iraqi artists determined to help their country fight COVID-19 joined the response to the pandemic through 13 unique and colorful cartoons that raise public awareness and dispel rumors, highlight human rights issues and salute the courage the resilience of Iraqi healthcare workers. In this video, these four Iraqi men and three women volunteers take us through their thoughts as they explain in their own words the images they drew covering a number of issues, including countering existing stigma and discrimination, raising awareness against domestic violence and the limitations of access to education and highlighting the bravery of the healthcare workers.



Prioritizing environmental sustainability crucial to Iraq's recovery from COVID-19: New report



Baghdad, 28 February 2021 – Effective recovery from COVID-19 requires Iraq to mainstream environmental sustainability from the outset to minimise the pandemic's impact, according to a new report released today by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Iraq in collaboration with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).

Impact of COVID-19 on Environmental Sustainability in Iraq investigates the direct and indirect environmental impacts in Iraq as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, set against the existing situation of environmental sustainability in the country. It makes key policy recommendations to the Government of Iraq, the United Nations system and development partners to strengthen Iraq's

environmental sustainability and ultimately build forward better from the pandemic.

The paper – the fifth in a series released by UNDP on the impact of COVID-19 in Iraq - emphasises how the pandemic has exacerbated Iraq's environmental fragility, which was already affected by legacies of conflict, lack of significant public sector and governance reforms, loss of development gains and illicit activity such as illegal hunting, fishing and logging, amongst other factors. It outlines how the virus has led to some negative environmental impacts, such as increased quantities of medical waste, but also positive impacts, such as temporary improvements in air quality and ecosystems. It also proposes how key drivers of fragility can be addressed over time.

“COVID-19's impact on the environment in Iraq cannot be ignored in recovery efforts. Mainstreaming environmental sustainability is critical to build forward better – and at the same time, the deep-rooted, systemic causes of environmental fragility that are hindering the country's progress and achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals must also be addressed,” says Resident Representative of UNDP Iraq, Zena Ali Ahmad.

“We look forward to working with the Government and key partners like

UNEP on improving the policies, infrastructure and resources needed to strengthen the country's environmental sustainability and recover from this crisis,” adds Ms Ali Ahmad.

UNDP Iraq is grateful to UNEP for its partnership and important contributions to The Impact of COVID-19 on Environmental Sustainability in Iraq. Read the paper at <https://bit.ly/2ZU6WEe>

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

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

<https://www.iq.undp.org/content/iraq/en/home/library/impact-of-the-oil-crisis-and-covid-19-on-iraq-s-fragility.html>

Impact of COVID-19 on the Iraqi Economy

<https://www.iq.undp.org/content/iraq/en/home/library/Stabilization/impact-of-covid-19-on-the-iraqi-economy.html>

Impact of COVID-19 on Social Cohesion in Iraq

<https://www.arabstates.undp.org/content/rbas/en/home/library/crisis-response0/impact-of-covid-19-on-social-cohesion-in-iraq.html>

Impact of COVID-19 on Social Protection in Iraq

<https://www.iq.undp.org/content/iraq/en/home/library/Stabilization/impact-of-covid-19-on-social-protection-in-iraq.html>

Healthcare

Report identifies gaps at reproductive health facilities in Iraq amid COVID-19

Baghdad, 11 February 2021 – The Central Statistical Organization (CSO) and the Kurdistan Region Statistics Office (KRSO), under supervision of both ministries of Health in Federal Government and the Kurdistan Regional Government, unveiled on 10 February, the results of the rapid assessment of the COVID-19 impact on the reproductive health services and facilities across Iraq. The assessment, conducted in collaboration with the Federal Ministry of Health and Environment, the Ministry of Health at the Kurdistan Regional Government and the Iraqi Statistical Association, with technical support from UNFPA and financial support from the Swedish Government, through the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida), provides qualitative and quantitative data on the services provided to women and girls in the health centres and hospitals. The evaluation aims to analyse the impact of the pandemic on the quality of

reproductive health services and the health system in the country. It identifies the gaps in the system, the service provision and the capacity of health providers. The assessment also addresses social protection and reproductive health services at institutional and human resources levels.

The assessment showed gaps in information and awareness related to COVID-19 protection measures, including masks wearing and social distancing. Moreover, it highlighted shortages in the main reproductive health medications, triage measures, as well as Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) in targeted health facilities.

Speaking at the event, UNFPA Representative to Iraq, Dr Rita Columbia said: “This assessment will allow government partners to strengthen the capacity of the health system and health providers to elevate the quality of the services offered to women and girls across the country. No woman should die from

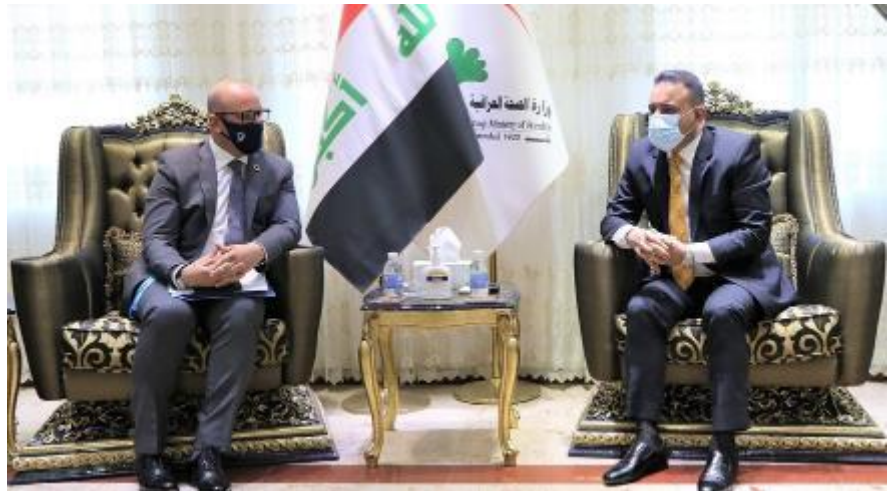
giving birth or from lack of access to services, even during pandemics.”

“UNFPA will continue to work with partners to enhance national capacities to meet emerging development and humanitarian needs, in particular, health systems and women empowerment: we are determined to ensure women and girls have access to quality sexual and reproductive health services,” she concluded.

The assessment covered 107 Health centres and 10 hospitals in five governorates across Iraq; Erbil, Baghdad, Salah Al-Din, Najaf and Basra. Service providers including doctors, 275 health workers, 225 service employees and 185 clients were interviewed. The urgent need to address the shortage of PPE, capacity building of health workers and logistical support for managing the crisis were among the immediate recommendations of the assessment.

New WHO Iraq representative meets Iraqi Minister of Health

Baghdad, 2 February 2021 - The incoming WHO Representative to Iraq, Dr Ahmed Zouiten, paid a courtesy visit to the Ministry of Health of Iraq and was honoured to meet with Dr. Hassan Al-Tamimi, the Minister of Health. Discussions revolved around bilateral cooperation and collaboration between WHO and Ministry of Health. Dr. Al-Tamimi seized the opportunity to appreciate WHO Iraq support to the Ministry of Health and to the people of Iraq, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. Dr Zouiten and Dr. Al-Tamimi also discussed strategies to strengthen the preparedness and response to COVID-19 including vaccination.



WHO Iraq representative visits Shikhan General Hospital

Erbil, 22 February 2021 - During his first visit to Kurdistan Region as WHO Iraq Representative, Dr Ahmed Zouiten visited the WHO supported Shikhan General Hospital in Ninewa serving over half a million people including the internally displaced persons (IDPs) in the three Mosul camps of Shikhan, Asian, and Mamrashan. Gaps in healthcare provision and WHO support were discussed. Dr Ahmed Zouiten said: "Ninewa governorate tolerated tremendous pressure since 2014; it is time for meaningful national and international collective efforts to address both the humanitarian needs as well as strengthening health systems to serve people in need while making progress towards Universal Health Coverage".



WHO Iraq Representative visited Sulaymaniyah Burn and Reconstructive Surgery Hospital

Sulaymaniyah, 24 February 2021 - WHO Iraq Representative and Head of Mission, Dr Ahmed Zouiten, visited Sulaymaniyah Burn and Reconstructive Surgery Hospital accompanied by the Director-General of Sulaymaniyah Directorate of Health. The hospital was recently renovated in collaboration with WHO to provide services to patients from all over Iraq including internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees. WHO is grateful for the contributions from the U.S. Department of State Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration that enabled the rehabilitation and equipment of this vital facility. Dr Ahmed Zouiten met health authorities in Sulaymaniyah. Discussions revolved



around WHO/DoH collaboration in the response to COVID-19, vaccine rollout preparations, the response to Health

Emergencies, Health Systems strengthening, and the joined drive towards Universal Health Coverage.

UNFPA conducted a workshop on developing an action plan for the implementation of the National Family Planning strategy

Baghdad, 8 January 2021 - To reduce maternal and infant mortality and adolescent's pregnancies, the Ministry of Health, with the support of UNFPA and funding from Canada and Sweden, launched the National Family Planning strategy in November 2020.

UNFPA with its partner IHAO conducted a five-day workshop to 20 health focal points at the Directorates of Health from across the country.

The workshop focused on developing an action plan for the implementation of the strategy focusing on the importance of the prevention of unwanted and unplanned pregnancies and its dangers on the stability of families.



UNFPA supported the establishment of isolation units for COVID-19 at maternity hospitals

Baghdad, 8 February 2021 - "All childbirths should be safe at all times and no woman should be denied quality reproductive health services under any circumstances, including crises and pandemics. UNFPA is working with the Ministry of Health in the Kurdistan Region to ensure quality services to all pregnant women and safe deliveries despite COVID-19," said UNFPA Deputy Representative, Mr Himyar Abdulmoghni.

In addition to the isolation unit at Soran maternity hospital, UNFPA, with funding from Sida - Styrelsen för Internationellt Utvecklingsamarbete, supported the establishment of isolation units for COVID-19 at maternity hospitals in Zakho, Sulaymaniyah and Halabja.



Mental Health

IOM needs assessment report: Mental health and psychosocial conditions in Anbar

Baghdad, 27 January 2021 - Iraqis living in Anbar Governorate experienced a myriad of atrocities during the occupation of Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). Although ISIL has fallen, both returnees and others continue to suffer from the consequences of the conflict, including mental and psychological symptoms. This Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) assessment outlines causes of these stressors and necessary steps to improve mental health and psychosocial well-being. It also outlines returnees' coping strategies and current gaps in MHPSS services,



particularly in the Al-Qaim and Fallujah district centres of Anbar Governorate.

You can download the report at <https://iraq.iom.int/file/118883/download?token=IVt5-t->

IOM workshop focused on approaches for providing psychosocial support to school children and their parents

Basra, 29 January 2021 - IOM Iraq organized a 3-day workshop for caregivers in Basra between 26 and 29

January, supported by the European Commission. The workshop, which was attended by 10 teachers and

educational supervisors, focused on approaches for providing psychosocial support to school children and their parents. The participants also shared their ideas and suggestions for practical steps to study the reasons behind psychosocial challenges among children.

“The discussions on psychosocial support were interesting and they will help us understand different ways of providing the necessary support for those who need it,” said Khairiya Kadhem Hassan, an educational supervisor from Basra who took part in the workshop.



IOM continues to support the community in Anbar Governorate’s Al-Qaim district, and recently organized sewing courses for women

Anbar, 31 January 2021 - IOM Iraq’s Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) teams continue to support the community in Anbar Governorate’s Al-Qaim district, and recently organized sewing courses for women. These courses will be focused on building up the participants’ skills, improving psychosocial wellbeing and supporting returnees’ reintegration in their areas of origin after several years in displacement.

IOM Iraq MHPSS teams have also organized English language courses for men and women in Al-Qaim district. These courses will be focused on



building up the participants’ skills, improving psychosocial wellbeing and helping returnees reintegrate in their

areas of origin after several years in displacement. Both activities were funded by the Government of Germany.

UNICEF provided sessions on psychosocial issues and rebuilding social structures in camps for IDPs



Baghdad, 17 February 2021 - UNICEF reached over 5111 children and adolescents with sessions on psychosocial issues and rebuilding social structures in camps for internally displaced populations in Zakho and Sumail districts and 3666 adult caregivers were reached with parenting

programs and awareness creation activities on child protection issues and challenges. This activity was generously supported by the Government of Canada.



Community Music Festival held at Al Qadisiya area of Sinjar city

Sinjar, 18 February 2021 - Sunrise CSO, one of IOM’s local partners in Sinjar, with support of IOM, held a Community Music Festival at Al Qadisiya area of Sinjar city. The Festival aimed to lessen the stress caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, during which most families have stayed home and limited physical and social interactions.

As music positively impacts the listener profoundly and can improve the psychosocial conditions. This project

was funded by USAID - US Agency for International Development.



UNAMI on Twitter

Baghdad, 13 January 2021 - We welcome Iraq's formal accession to the Paris climate agreement. Iraq is one of

the most climate vulnerable countries in the world. The United Nations in Iraq will continue to support national

efforts to safeguard the environment for future generations.

Water, conservation and human rights are inseparable in the Iraq's marshlands: A call for action on World Wetlands Day

Baghdad, 02 February 2021 – Today marks the 50th anniversary of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, which aims to protect water, livelihoods and wetlands. In 2008, Iraq ratified the Convention designating four wetlands of international importance in southern Iraq: Central Marshes (Dhi Qar and Basra governorates), Hammar Marsh (Dhi Qar and Basra governorates), Hawizeh Marsh (Basra, Missan governorates and Iran) and Sawa Lake (Muthanna Governorate). Wetlands are land areas that are saturated or flooded with water either permanently or seasonally. The Iraqi Marshlands used to be one of the largest wetland ecosystems. A rare aquatic landscape in the desert, the Iraqi marshlands were listed in 2016 by UNESCO as a World Heritage Site.

In Iraq's wetlands, the lives of the marsh dwellers, including a small Sabbean Mandeian community, are intertwined with the natural environment: harvesting reeds; weaving mats; building reed houses; fishing; herding water buffalo; making cheese; and running small fish restaurants and boat tours for tourists. During her recent visit to the Hammar Marshes in Thi-Qar governorate in Southern Iraq, Danielle Bell, Representative of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in Iraq noted that: "Conservation and protection of Iraq's magnificent marshlands not only promotes biodiversity and sustainability but is intricately linked to the realization of many human rights concerning environment, health and livelihoods." Thus, the marshes are a critical resource of great economic, cultural, scientific, and recreational value, the loss of which would be irreparable.

This year's theme, "Wetlands and Water", sheds light on the contribution of wetlands to the quantity and quality of freshwater on our planet.

Dr. Salah ElHajj Hassan, FAO Representative in Iraq highlighted the significance of the wetlands in Iraq by saying "The wetlands in Iraq has been inhabited by rural families for centuries, diverse communities have been living and practicing traditional methods of agriculture, and it is critical to address challenges faced in these areas.

FAO is committed to achieve a more resilient food system and support the efforts of the Iraqi Government to improve food security and nutrition and increase the resilient livelihoods for Iraq's



rural population in South of Iraq including the marshlands. This is achieved through improving sustainable local agricultural productivity and income generation in strategic priority value chains for the rural poor while enhancing land and water resources and biodiversity."

The Marshlands of Mesopotamia are a rare aquatic landscape; a biodiversity hotspot for key migratory birds and once the largest wetland in the Middle East. UNEP has been supporting the Government of Iraq since 2004 in its efforts to manage key biodiversity areas in Iraq from the inscription of the Iraqi Marshlands as a World Heritage Site and the development of an Environmental Management Plan for the area. Today, UNEP is working closely with the Ministry of Health and Environment and other key stakeholders on the establishment of a network of Protected Areas in the country with the declaration of two key biodiversity areas as protected sites Dalmaj, a natural wetland rich in biodiversity, and Teeb. "The establishment of a network of Protected Areas in Iraq is a key step towards meeting obligations and targets of biodiversity conservation notwithstanding the positive impact of such a network on livelihoods and human well-being," said Sami Dimassi, Regional Director for UNEP Regional Office for West Asia.

Resident Representative of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Iraq, Zena Ali Ahmad, said: "Historically, these diverse wetlands have played a key role in urban development and the emergence of societies. Preserving this rich part of Iraq's natural biodiversity and cultural history is essential to building forward better. At UNDP, we stand committed to working with local communities in the wetlands to build resilience and adapt to climate change challenges, while also creating

sustainable livelihood opportunities for communities."

With appropriate support the marshes can become a source of development of a tertiary sector based on site management, tourism and hospitality, which in the longer term will contribute to protection and sustainability of ecosystems and the landscape of the marshlands. UN-Habitat will soon be launching a two-pronged initiative: on the one hand it will closely collaborate with UNDP to build community infrastructure and facilities that will improve the accessibility of tourists to the Hawizeh and Eastern Hammar Marshes and provide basic facilities for the marketing of local goods. On the other hand, it will work with local authorities to develop a Strategic Spatial Plan for the socio-economic revitalization of communities living in the marshlands in Maysan Governorate, aimed at increasing the number of visitors to religious and nature sites located south of the city of Amarah and enhance livelihood opportunities in tourism and service sectors.

"Climate change in Iraq is expected to reduce annual rainfall and increase water salination by rising sea levels, which will lead to a surge in dust storms, a reduction in agricultural productivity, and increased water scarcity. All of these challenges will have severe implications for the preservation of the marshlands. The Iraqi marshes are of fundamental importance and their unique environmental space combined with their biodiversity, an international treasure. Without increasing efforts to preserve this UNESCO World Heritage Site, we would be at risk of losing the marshes during our lifetime." says Resident Coordinator for Iraq, Ms. Irena Vojackova-Sollorano. She urged for more protective measures to ensure the sustainability of the marshes and increased efforts to fight the climate crisis overall.

IOM Iraq planted 720 trees to create a green shield in Moqible community

Dohuk, 17 January 2021 - In cooperation with the Municipality of Sumel and the Directorate of Forest and Pastures, IOM Iraq planted 720 trees to create a green shield in Moqible community, Duhok Governorate. Sixty individuals, mostly Yazidi IDPs, participated in a 40-day campaign to create greener and more environmentally friendly roads. The campaign is a part of IOM Iraq's cash-for-work component funded by Bundesministerium für wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung (BMZ)/KfW. The project helps young people earn wages while supporting their communities.



Culture

UNESCO installed a monitoring system to detect the overall structural stability of the remains of the Al-Nouri Mosque in Mosul

Mosul, 15 January 2021 - UNESCO is stabilizing the Al-Hadba Minaret in Mosul! UNESCO has installed a monitoring system to detect the overall structural stability of the remains. This is a big step in rehabilitating the Al-Nouri Mosque complex.



UNESCO and the Ministry of Culture officially launch the EU funded project to Revive Basra Old City

Basra, 27 January 2021 - UNESCO Representative to Iraq, Mr. Paolo Fontani joined Ms. Irena Vojáčková-Sollorano to meet with Mr. Martin Huth, EU Ambassador to Iraq, the Minister of Culture, Dr. Hassan Nadhem, the Deputy Minister of Planning, Dr. Maher Hammad Johan, Mrs. Ivan Faeq Jabro, Minister of Migration and Displaced, Mr. Adnan Dirjal, Minister of Youth and Sports;

Mr. Asaad Al Eidani, the Governor of Basra and Mr. Mohammed Tahir, Deputy Governor, and Dr. Laith Hussein, Deputy Minister of Culture, to officially launch the EU funded project to revive Basra Old City. The project focuses on jobs creation and social cohesion through restoration and rehabilitation of traditional houses and the Al-Ashar Canal in the old city center.

UNESCO Representative to Iraq, Paolo Fontani, the Minister of Culture, Dr. Hassan Nadhem and the Deputy Minister of Culture, Dr Laith Hussein, visited the sites in the old city of Basra for the EU supported project (Reviving Basra Old City). They agreed on priorities for the rehabilitation of Shanashel houses and Al-Ashar canal.



The Minister of Culture visits the Basra civilizational museum and a number of archaeological sites

Basra, 27 January 2021 - The Minister of Culture, Tourism and Archaeology, Dr. Hassan Nazem, visited the Basra Civilizational Museum, accompanied by the director of the UNESCO office in Iraq, Paolo Fontani, experts in the organization and several ministerial directors, as part of his tour in the city of Basra to see heritage places, and check out some

of the sites being qualified in collaboration with UNESCO.

Mr. Minister was briefed on the museum's development work in Basra Region Development Projects, as well as on the laboratory given by the French Government as a gift to the Iraqi government, which was implemented by UNESCO.



The University of Mosul and UNESCO present the results of a public survey on the reconstruction of the Al-Nouri Prayer Hall and Al-Hadba Minaret

Mosul, 8 February 2021 – UNESCO and the Statistics Consultancy Bureau (SCB) of the University of Mosul conducted an analytical survey of the people of Mosul on the reconstruction of the Al Hadba Minaret and the Al Nouri Prayer Hall, destroyed during conflict in 2017. This activity was implemented under a Project funded by the Government of the United Arab Emirates and is part of the UNESCO initiative to "Revive the Spirit of Mosul".

The survey, conducted during the

months of November and December 2020, targeted more than 700 individuals from Mosul of all ages, backgrounds and gender. The Statistics Consultancy Bureau (SCB)'s team, composed of 22 young enumerators and 3 university professors, under the supervision of Dr. Bashar Abdul Aziz al-Talib (head of the SCB), visited Mosul as well as displaced Moslawis.

Survey respondents were asked about how would they like to see their beloved Al-Hadba Minaret and Al-Nouri Prayer

Hall rebuilt. The results showed that 94% of the surveyees would like to see the Minaret with the same decorations and position that it had before its destruction in 2017. In addition, 70% of the people of Mosul expressed their preference to see the Al Nouri Prayer Hall rebuilt as it was in 2017, before its destruction but with some improvements, provided that the essence and main volumes are preserved. By contrast, 28% stated that they would rather see the Prayer Hall rebuilt exactly as it was in 2017. The survey also included an open question where surveyees were encouraged to provide further feedback, clarifications or opinions.

This survey has helped UNESCO, the University of Mosul and the United Arab Emirates to understand better the opinions of the people of Mosul regarding the reconstruction of the Al Nouri Complex. UNESCO is committed to involving Moslawis in the reconstruction of their City.

This survey was conducted as part of the UAE funded project "Reviving the Spirit of Mosul by rebuilding its historic landmarks namely the Al-Nouri Mosque and its Al-Hadba Minaret, as well as the Al-Tahera Church and Al-Saa'a Church."



University of Mosul students visited UNESCO work sites in the Old City to learn about rehabilitating heritage sites

Mosul, 11 February 2021 - Students from the University of Mosul visited UNESCO work sites in the Old City to learn about rehabilitating heritage sites.

UNESCO Expert, Eng. Stefano De Vito, engages with Moslawi students and professors of the University of Mosul to discuss on the structural recovery of heritage buildings.



Jobs, and cultural heritage the focus of new ILO-EU-UNESCO collaboration

Beirut, 24 February 2021 (ILO News) – The International Labour Organization (ILO), the United Nations Education, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the European Union (EU) have launched a new collaboration that will support internally displaced persons, Syrian refugees and host community members to access immediate, short-term decent employment in the cultural heritage sector in Erbil in the Kurdish region in northern Iraq.

The project will integrate employment-intensive approaches into the Conservation of Cultural Heritage Programme in Iraq, implemented by UNESCO under the “Supporting Livelihoods Through Cultural Heritage Development” project, which is supported by the European Union (EU) Regional Trust Fund in response to the Syria crisis.

The collaboration will help generate around one thousand job opportunities for skilled and unskilled workers who will be employed to safeguard and rehabilitate cultural heritage sites, including the Erbil Citadel – a World Heritage site.

Work will include cleaning and maintaining sites, including clearing away vegetation and rubble, landscaping, installing shaded areas, and rehabilitating access roads and parking areas. These initiatives will also contribute to preserving and developing cultural heritage sites, in efforts to support local economic

development and sustainable reconstruction, particularly in the cultural heritage sector.

“This collaboration will ensure that Syrian and Iraqi Workers will have decent short-term jobs associated with labour rights according to the international and local standards. It will also contribute to sustainable tourism that creates jobs and promotes local culture and products, including through the preservation, protection and conservation of all Cultural Heritage”, said Paolo Fontani, UNESCO Representative to Iraq.

In the longer-term, the collaboration aims to provide sustainable decent work opportunities and entrepreneurial activities for both Syrians and Iraqis. Workers will be able to access employment services provided by ILO-supported employment service centres in Iraq, such as career counseling, online job searches, and skills development.

“This collaboration will allow workers to access short-term immediate jobs, which adhere to the principles of decent work,” said Maha Kattaa, ILO Country Coordinator for Iraq. “This includes the provision of contracts and decent wages for workers, implementing Occupational Safety and Health measures, as well as providing opportunities to develop skills and access employment services that can link workers to more sustainable employment and livelihoods opportunities.”

For the ILO, these efforts are part of its key priorities in Iraq under the Decent Work Country Programme to promote decent work and increase employment opportunities. Its three main areas of work in the country are supporting private sector development and job creation, strengthening social protection and addressing child labour, and strengthening labour governance and social dialogue.



Education

UNICEF have supported the establishment of an Innovation Lab under the Prospects Partnership

Dohuk, 7 January 2021 - With support from the Government of Netherlands, UNICEF, together with its implementing partners ACTED, Recorded and the Directorate of Youth (DOY) have supported the establishment of an Innovation Lab under the Prospects Partnership that ensures access to learning and skills for forcibly displaced and host community young people in Dohuk, Iraq.

This innovation lab is expected to facilitate young people’s transition to the world of work and fostering meaningful private sector engagement. This week, UNICEF were joined by a delegation from The Embassy of the

Netherlands in Iraq on a tour to the innovation lab situated in the DOY youth centre and meetings were held

with young people and UNICEF partners in Dohuk, Iraq.



IOM Iraq is delivering two training courses in Basra

Basra, 18 January 2021 - IOM Iraq, in collaboration with the Directorate of Youth and Sports in Basra, is delivering two training courses on English language and computer skills for 25 people in Al Twaisa neighborhood. These courses, which started on 10 January, will last for one month. They aim to enhance young people's skills communication and computer skills and contribute to social cohesion in Basra and are funded by the European Union Commission.



IOM Iraq built ten classrooms for the Kharab Babke School in Zakho, Duhok

Duhok, 20 January 2021 - IOM Iraq, with support from U.S. Department of State: Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration, built ten classrooms for the Kharab Babke School in Zakho, Duhok. The new facilities will increase the school's capacity to 1,750 students, mostly IDPs, and enable students to access online courses through the newly-installed E-Learning equipment. These advancements will improve the learning environment for all students.



UNAMI Human Rights Office jointly with OHCHR published the second report in a series on “The Right to Education in Iraq: Obstacles to Girls’ Education after ISIL”

Baghdad, 24 January 2021 - On the occasion of International Education Day, the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq's (UNAMI) Human Rights Office jointly with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) published the second report in a series on The Right to Education in Iraq: Obstacles to Girls' Education after ISIL. “Measures to ensure equality of access to education engender broader human rights dividends for society as a whole,

including long-term peace and stability”, said Danielle Bell, Chief UNAMI Human Rights Office and OHCHR Representative in Iraq. “The report provides practical recommendations to address specific institutional and societal barriers girls face to access education and aims to promote inclusive and equitable education for all children in Iraq”. You can download the report at English: <https://bit.ly/3c8w7dI> Arabic: <https://bit.ly/3sTKDvR>



UNICEF supported 12,600 children to continue learning through blended learning and home schooling

Baghdad, 25 January 2021 - In 2020, schools and education institutions were closed as part of COVID-19 control measures, putting more than a million children out of school in Iraq. UNICEF and partner Terre des Hommes Italia supported 12,600 children, almost half of them girls, to continue learning in Hamam Al Alil, Jad Ha 1 and 5, Debaga, Hasansham U2 and U3, Salamya and Khazer M1 camps through blended learning and

home schooling. With generous support from EU Civil

Protection & Humanitarian Aid – ECHO



2021 International Day of Education: our shared commitment to build back better learning opportunities in Iraq

Baghdad, 24 January 2021 - Education is a human right, a public good and a public responsibility.

Recognizing the collective responsibilities of governments, civil society and the international community in realizing this right, the United Nations General Assembly proclaimed 24 January as the International Day of Education, to continuously remind us of the role of education in realizing peace and sustainable development.

This year's global theme is 'Recover and Revitalize Education for the COVID-19 Generation'. World over including in Iraq, the COVID-19 pandemic and resulting school closures have shown how central learning is: for social cohesion, wellbeing, and building of a prosperous future. On this day, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) call on the government as well as the international community in Iraq for continued investments towards a more flexible, sustainable education system, that is suitable to the needs of learning in Iraq. The UN in Iraq affirms its commitment to support and work with the government and all partners, on efforts to ensure that every learner has access to quality educational opportunities.

In Iraq, the closure of schools, universities and learning institutions, and the interruption of many literacy and lifelong educational programs have affected more than 11 million learners in Iraq. For children, this impacted not only upon their ability to learn, but also their access to nutritious food and additional health support schemes. Since the start of the outbreak, the UN has worked closely to support the Federal Government of Iraq and Kurdistan Regional Government to minimize the impact of the disruption in schooling, and develop a framework for safe school reopening as part of efforts to ensure that all learning is taking place in a safe manner.

UNESCO and UNICEF have collaborated with the government on establishing an education television channel (ETV), online education portals, production and broadcast of television lessons and self-learning materials. At least 4 million children and adolescents, including some in the most vulnerable communities, have been able to continue access to learning. Together UNESCO and UNICEF have also supported the

government and NGO partners to ensure that 192,312 children in camps for internally displaced people, returnee areas, as well as out-of-school children in the governorates of Anbar, Erbil, Duhok and Salah Al din continue their education through a blended approach, that combines face-to-face learning, remote studying, and home-based learning.

"The COVID-19 pandemic has been a wake-up call – to make education systems more resilient to crisis, and more inclusive, flexible and sustainable. It has forced the systems to innovate to ensure continuation of education, challenged teachers to adapt to distance pedagogical approaches and forced parents to provide learning support at home. In Iraq, besides the provision of sanitizers, gloves and masks for teachers and students for immediate response, UNESCO is supporting training of the trainers and teachers in blended distance learning and strengthening of e-learning platforms. Further, recognizing the limitations and challenges of internet access for online learning in rural and remote areas, UNESCO is working with the Ministry of Education (MoE) and partners to develop and broadcast TV lessons for all subjects for all 1 – 12 grades, and Alternative Learning classes reaching more than 9 million across the entire country", said Paolo Fontani, UNESCO Representative to Iraq.

"Since day one, UNICEF has been working to ensure that the most innovative and up to date learning methods are adapted to children's needs here in Iraq, and that children are able to continue learning in the safest possible way. We also trained educators on delivering blended learning and have equipped studying and taking exams in over 5,000 schools and centres in Iraq with disinfectant and protective gear," explained Dr Paula Bulancea, UNICEF's Deputy Representative in Iraq.

With the reopening of schools, WFP and the MoE worked to re-launch the National School Feeding Programme (NSFP) this past week, which will support 255,000 primary schoolchildren in 11 vulnerable districts across Iraq. Children benefiting from the programme receive a healthy meal at the beginning of the school day. Through the NSFP, WFP and MoE aim to increase enrolment and attendance rates while providing support to the most vulnerable families and communities. During Ramadan when schools were closed, WFP and MoE arranged take-home food baskets for children and their

families, reaching nearly 140,000 people. In 2020, WFP and UNICEF signed a Joint Work Plan to bring together expertise and support to improve education and learning, nutrition and health, for school age children. The joint approach is working to enhance the overall wellbeing of school children in Iraq. With the Directorate of Education in Basra, WFP and UNICEF are collaborating on a pilot project to help around 2,500 girls' transition from primary to intermediate education, through providing cash stipends to support the girls' families during the academic year. "Health and education are interlinked. When we provide the complementary support that children need, from school meals to helping relieve the financial burden on families, we can help them fully realise their potential during their formative years," said WFP Representative in Iraq, Abdirahman Meygag.

And on the occasion of International Day of Education, OHCHR published the second report in a series on The Right to Education in Iraq: Obstacles to Girls' Education after ISIL. The report highlights the indispensable role of educated girls in post conflict stabilization, transition and recovery, and identifies how traditional gender roles and norms, family levels of education, poverty, perceived protection concerns, and trauma continue to create barriers for girls' access to education.

"Measures to ensure equality of access to education engender broader human rights dividends for society as a whole, including long-term peace and stability", said Danielle Bell, OHCHR Representative in Iraq. "The report provides practical recommendations to address specific institutional and societal barriers girls face to access education and aims to promote inclusive and equitable education for all children in Iraq."

The investments made by the government and the partners, in provision of distance and blended learning methodologies in response to the COVID-19 pandemic in Iraq, are also an opportunity for the education system to transform itself towards a more flexible and sustainable system, providing an inclusive and equitable lifelong learning environment in the longer term, for all children and learners in Iraq. The UN in Iraq reiterates its commitments to support this endeavour.



Young girls in Iraq go back to school amidst the new normal

Baghdad, 4 February 2021 - Their schools were damaged severely during the ISIL conflict; the students and teachers missed each other deeply and are delighted to be back. On International Education Day, we hear from them.

An entire generation in Iraq paused their schooling for under a year due to the COVID-19 pandemic. During this period, they continued to study, challenging for students and teachers alike as they missed their in-person interactions. But the pandemic has not been the only reason the students missed their school; their campus was also severely damaged during the ISIL conflict.

To date, through UNDP's Funding Facility for Stabilization, 564 schools across Iraq that were destroyed during the conflict have been rehabilitated. Currently, 156 schools, ranging from kindergarten to secondary schools are in the process of being rehabilitated.

We can relate to the feeling of starting a new school year or going back after a long break, and it comes with mixed emotions of nervousness and excitement. This January, for the young girls from Mosul, going back to school was nothing less than the feeling of excitement. Amidst adapting to the new normal, the girls were eager to meet their friends, teachers and explore their newly renovated school. We asked the young girls, their teachers, and the school administration to share how their lives have changed, how it feels to be back and their aspirations.



Born in Mosul, Zena is happy she is back at Al-Haj Younis secondary school for girls. Having missed her friends and teachers the most, she shares, "Studying remotely was difficult to understand. Now that we are back at school, I can ask questions and understand my subjects better."

Ask Zena what she wants to be when she grows up. With a spark in her eyes, she answers, "I want to be an engineer. I want other young girls like me in Iraq to start studying again. Education will help us build a future."

For schools affected during the conflict, students and teachers were moved to a temporary facility during the reconstruction. Now that the children are back to school, all COVID-19 safety procedures are being observed amidst the new normal. They often wash their hands and wear masks, while authorities regularly sanitize the classrooms.

To ensure social distancing, the schools

are only open for a few hours every day to allow for rotation between batches. This poses new challenges for teachers as they are required to deliver lessons within a shorter duration. "One class a week is not enough for the girls to grasp the concepts thoroughly. At times, we need to shorten the lessons," says Eman.

Despite the challenges, Eman is excited to be back with her students. "Spending my days without meeting my students felt like an integral part of me was missing. The bond we share between students and teachers is like family," she adds.

Eman hopes that his hard work will positively impact the children, nurturing them to become leaders and change-makers.

While being emotional about going back to school, the students and teachers have also found adapting to the new COVID-19 safety measures seemingly easy. Teachers ensure they are wearing masks throughout the day, while also dedicating time to sharing information about COVID-19 and its safety regulations.

Having lived in Mosul all her life, Sana'a started teaching in 1983. "The school was destroyed during the ISIL conflict. Mosul is a city of culture and knowledge. We were left devastated when we lost so much infrastructure." Passionate about her job, Sana'a was more affected by the damage to the school than her house.

As COVID-19 has affected the student's families' economic situation, Sana'a personally bought masks and sanitizers for the students. "Every day, before and after school hours, we sanitize the campus thoroughly. I am aware of the economic situation of our students, so we even bought masks for those who could not afford it," she says.

The school currently has over 190 students, a fraction of what used to be before the conflict. Due to the change in location and limited space in the temporary facility, she explains that many of her students dropped out. "I want to provide internet and electricity services inside the school. Especially to those that cannot attend, I want to take my lessons online and reach them," she says with hope.

For Aisha, who loves all her subjects, she found being away from the school difficult as she missed putting her hand up in class to answer the teacher. "I must be physically present in the classroom, so I can talk to my friends and share my thoughts with my teachers," she says.

Aisha has one clear message for students out of school in Iraq, "Leave what you are doing and come to school. We have a new classroom now." She hopes to be a doctor one day.

Nour seated quietly on the other end of the room with her mask on, bent over her books, loves going to school. Ask her what she loves the most, and she eagerly describes her math classes.

Though she loves math, Nour wants to become a journalist one day. "I want to write stories for people in Iraq to read and be informed," she says.

While Nour loves Math, her best-friend Buthaina's favourite subject is English. Excited to be back with her friends, she says, "I am happy to be back with my teachers and friends; I can now see them and talk to them. I enjoy the breaks the most, where we can play around the new school," she says.

Nour wants to keep studying as it will give her opportunities to read more books and learn new English words.

Batool and the other teachers at Al-Watan had to move to a smaller temporary facility after the school was destroyed. "We were all cramped together in a small facility that was run-down. Especially during the winter and rainy season, it was not easy to work in that environment. We are happy to back at school with improved facilities," she says.

Through the education she imparts, she wants to give as much exposure to his students to dream big and achieve anything they set their minds to.

I want my students to dream big: Batool Talal Hamad, 54, teacher, Al-Watan Primary School for Girls

Batool and the other teachers at Al-Watan had to move to a smaller temporary facility after the school was destroyed. "We were all cramped together in a small facility that was run-down. Especially during the winter and rainy season, it was not easy to work in that environment. We are happy to back at school with improved facilities," she says.

Through the education she imparts, she wants to give as much exposure to his students to dream big and achieve anything they set their minds to.

The rehabilitation of Al-Haj Younis secondary school and Al-Watan primary school for girls was supported by the United Kingdom and United States Agency for International Development (USAID), respectively.

To date, over 163 schools have been rehabilitated in Mosul alone. Currently, 34 are in the process of being restored.

Through Funding Facility for Stabilization, UNDP continues to rehabilitate educational facilities, including kindergartens, primary and secondary schools, technical institutes, and university buildings. Until now, 1009 projects rehabilitating educational facilities have been completed, with another 375 more institutions in the pipeline.



The UNESCO Qualifications Passport to Be Piloted in Iraq: A sustainable pathway to building refugee and vulnerable migrant access to employment and higher education

Baghdad, 04 February 2021 - A opening meeting was held on Monday the 1st of February for a new Pilot project to trial the UNESCO Qualification Passport (UQP) in Iraq. This is the first such pilot project in the Arab World and UNESCO is delighted to see the Government of Iraq leading the way in the region.

This Pilot is the first step to build bridges between the Iraqi qualification authorities and other QAs around the globe, to facilitate mutual-learning opportunities among UNESCO member states.

Ms. Maki Katsuno-Hayashikawa, Director for the Division for Education 2030, UNESCO, opened the meeting by welcoming this important initiative and giving its context. In reply, Dr. Hazim Baqir Tahir, the Director General of Scholarships and Cultural Relations, MoHESR, expressed his thanks to UNESCO, UNHCR and NOKUT for cooperating with his Ministry to make this project a reality.

Further presentations were given by UNHCR and NOKUT representatives on the Pilot and the importance of having a system to enable refugees who did not have all their educational certificates to have their achievements recognised and to progress into further education. NOKUT then presented a general introduction to the series of training workshops that will be held to train up a team of Iraqi Credential Evaluators to participate in the Pilot and ultimately to become the approved



Credential Evaluators for the Ministry. The UNESCO Qualifications Passport is a priority project, it is strongly endorsed by its Member States and recognized as an innovative global tool for the evaluation and recognition of foreign education qualifications in case of missing or insufficient documentation.

In line with the recently adopted Global Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education, UNESCO is convinced that the international recognition of qualifications will facilitate interdependent learning and knowledge development via the mobility of learners and learning, academics, scientific research and researchers, and workers and professionals and will

enhance international cooperation in higher education.

The adoption of the Convention highlights clearly the need to find common, practical and transparent solutions to improve recognition practices globally. We believe, therefore, that this project, to test the UNESCO Qualifications Passport methodology in Iraq, will contribute to facilitate the implementation of the Convention.

Apart from building capacity for national qualifications authorities, the project aims to help the most vulnerable populations to regain their personal and professional dignity.

The Launch meeting concluded with a lively discussion of the project and its upcoming implementation.

A classroom for all

Mosul, 10 February 2021 - UNICEF has provided desks, white boards and hygiene kits to over 5800 internally displaced children in Mosul and other parts of Ninewa, thanks to the support of Germany.

Notebooks with lessons to go! UNICEF also provided self-learning materials to over 5,800 children in refugee camps in Erbil so that they can learn in classrooms and at home. This is part of UNICEF's blended learning strategy to make it easier for all to continue their studies, no matter what, with the generous support of the Norwegian government.

UNICEF provided new school desks, notebooks, disinfectants and other supplies to ensure that children from displaced and host communities in

Dohuk, Kurdish Region of Iraq, can go back to learning in a safe way, with the

generous support of the Norwegian government



IOM Iraq and the Baiji Directorate of Education led a back to school campaign in Baiji focused on vulnerable communities

Baghdad, 12 February 2021 - The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted all aspects of life, including education for young children. At the start of the new academic year IOM Iraq and the Baiji Directorate of Education led a back to school campaign in Baiji focused on vulnerable communities with large returnee populations. Activities were carried out in 2 primary schools to support families and children with their material needs, and offer extracurricular activities for the students — 270 students (155 girls and 115 boys) were reached.

As part of the campaign, school bags

were distributed through IOM Iraq's Community Resource Centre in Baiji, one of several hubs for displaced, returnee and host communities to

receive information, services, and support.

This activity was supported by the European Union.



IOM Iraq recently delivered furniture and equipment to the Department of Education in Sinjar, Ninewa Governorate

Sinjar, 16 February 2021 - During the ISIL crisis, vital infrastructure in Sinjar was destroyed, including homes, hospitals and schools. The donated materials included desks, chairs, tablets, printers and computers will be used to elevate the pressure and needs faced by the Directorate of Education and schools in Sinjar. This donation was part of USAID and IOM efforts to support the Education sector, and improve the educational conditions in Sinjar.

This activity was funded by USAID Iraq.



UNFPA discussed with the Speaker of the Kurdish Parliament the situation of young people in Iraq



Erbil, 25 January 2021 - UNFPA Deputy Representative, Mr Himyar Abdulmoghni, and representatives from the Ministry of Culture and Youth in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq visited the Speaker of the Kurdish Parliament,

Ms Rewas Fayaq, to discuss the situation of young people in Iraq.

During the meeting, Mr Abdulmoghni emphasised the importance of the National Adolescents and Youth Survey conducted by both Ministries of Youth

and Sports in Iraq and the Ministry of Culture and Youth in the Kurdistan Region, with support from UNFPA and UNICEF last year.

"Youth in Iraq represent 40% of the population. The survey is important to Iraq's demographic dividend and economic growth as it's concluded from youth perspectives. UNFPA continues to support youth centres in the Kurdistan Region to encourage young people in civic engagement and peacebuilding", said the Deputy.

For her part, Ms Fayaq thanked UNFPA for its efforts in supporting the survey, the first of its kind in decades. The Speaker requested the Ministry of Culture and Youth to organize a special sitting at the parliament for a presentation of the outcomes of the survey and discuss how to translate the results into action.

ILO and UNICEF collaborate to support vulnerable youth in Iraq to develop skills and transition from training to decent employment, with support from the Government of the Netherlands



Baghdad, 26 January 2021- United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the International Labour Organization (ILO) in Iraq are working together to help young forcibly displaced persons and host community members develop skills and transition from training to decent employment.

The two agencies, with support from the Dutch government, as part of the Partnership for improving prospects for forcibly displaced persons and host communities (PROSPECTS), will coordinate an approach that seeks to transition young people into employment and economic opportunities by directly linking youth aged 18 - 24 who are enrolled in UNICEF-supported skills-building services in youth centres under the Directorate of Youth in Dohuk with ILO-supported employment service centres run by the governorate's Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs.

Under this programme, some of the most vulnerable youth, girls and boys, are taught life, digital and entrepreneurship skills that are in demand in today's employment market. They will then have access to

employment services, and be referred to on-the-job training that will further boost their skills to access paid employment or self-employment.

The majority (eight out of every ten) forcibly displaced persons have been living in Iraq for at least five years, with minimal if any realistic chances of returning home soon. The programme aims to equip the youth among them with the necessary skills to make a living and better integrate into the wider community.

"This ambitious and innovative project aims to improve the employability of youth in Iraq and promote a smoother learning-to-work transition. The aim is to help young people find work in a difficult job market. UNICEF is looking forward to working closely with its partner, ILO, to help young people have better opportunities and a better future", explained Ms Paula Bulancea, Acting UNICEF Representative in Iraq. Once youth complete the skills-development sessions, they will be provided with needed career guidance and job-matching services that will connect them with potential employers. The initiative will also link youth

interested in starting their own business with the ILO's advanced entrepreneurship and financial literacy training programmes and provide them with access to banks and financial institutions, to set up their own businesses. In addition, the ILO will coordinate with local private sector actors to accelerate the "learning to earning" approach of the program.

"Ensuring forcibly displaced persons and host community members have access to more and better decent jobs is critical and we are happy to be working closely with UNICEF under PROSPECTS to support young job-seekers and entrepreneurs to improve their skills using the ILO's well established and tested training tools as well as through financial services and other employment support," said Maha Kattaa, ILO Country Coordinator for Iraq.

The goal is also to broaden the partnership to other parts of Iraq. UNICEF and ILO plan to expand their partnership and programmes to other parts of Iraq. This collaboration is part of the agencies' joint efforts under the PROSPECTS Partnership, to promote protection and inclusion, learning, skills development, as well as access to financial and economic opportunities for forcibly displaced persons and host community members. PROSPECTS is a strategic four-year global partnership, that supports host communities and displaced populations in eight countries across East and North Africa and the Arab States and which also includes the International Finance Corporation (IFC), the World Bank (WB) and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).



When children are supported, they thrive!

Baghdad, 24 February 2021 - UNICEF reached 17,646 children with family-based kits providing information including activities and stories, that family members such as caregivers or adult siblings can use to support children at home. 13,612 people were reached with awareness raising sessions on child protection issues and a further 1,112 caregivers received child protection case management information.



Timeline

“Our Mosul is beautiful”



Mosul, 11 January 2021 – “Our Mosul is beautiful”

UNDP loves this message from Mohammed, a 27-year-old artist and resident of Mosul. He is a part of a crew of artists who painted art across Mosul's city walls.

Nothing like kick starting your Monday with some inspiration from these amazing Moslawis who are brightening up Mosul's city walls with cool art! For instance, Nour, who is also a part of the crew believes that the art will help rejuvenate Mosul's beauty.

Talented Iraqis like Nour and Mohammed, have access to immediate employment through cash-for-work opportunities while also building back Iraq.

This is implemented through UNDP Iraq's Funding Facility for Stabilization and has supported more than 54000 Iraqis to date.

UNAMI on Twitter

Anyone can spread COVID-19. Age and gender are irrelevant. Protect your family by following health measures: wash your hands wear a mask reduce your contacts maintain physical distancing cover your mouth and nose when sneezing.

Don't be the person who spreads COVID-19 unknowingly. Follow the health instructions: reduce your contacts wash your hands wear a mask maintain physical distancing cover your mouth and nose when sneezing.



Human Rights Office
United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI)
بنا الأمم المتحدة العراقية
مكتب حقوق الإنسان

الأمم المتحدة
مكتب حقوق الإنسان
مكتب حقوق الإنسان