

FOR IRAQ



الأمم المتحدة - العراق
United Nations Iraq



THE UNITED NATIONS IN IRAQ IN 2020

UNAMI Public Information Office

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**SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE OF THE UNITED NATIONS
SECRETARY-GENERAL FOR IRAQ**
Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert

FOREWORD

The global pandemic wreaked havoc across the world in 2020, and Iraq was no exception. COVID-19 compounded political, security, economic, humanitarian, health and other challenges, including an economic and financial crisis amid tumbling oil prices, continued social unrest and simmering regional tensions.

The UN family in Iraq has also been affected, but staff have worked tirelessly, braving global, national and local restrictions to be present across our duty stations in Iraq, away from family and loved ones for extended periods of time. Others have had to adjust to new working arrangements from afar to provide uninterrupted support to the field.

Our engagement with a wide spectrum of Iraqi interlocutors, in person and online, and our robust presence on the ground in the midst of COVID-19 demonstrated our steadfast commitment to Iraq and the Iraqis.

In all my engagements, I have called on national stakeholders to come together in a spirit of unity, build domestic resilience and take concrete steps towards a durable de-escalation of tensions, shielding Iraq from all kind of power competitions.

We engaged with Iraqi interlocutors on the implementation of the governmental programme; Baghdad-Erbil relations; dialogue on Sinjar and Kirkuk; women, peace and security, youth and human rights inter alia. After the government announced early general elections for 2021, we moved quickly to provide additional advisory and technical support to Iraq's electoral stakeholders, primarily the Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC), including by addressing urgent capacity requirements. We also addressed the human rights aspects of COVID-19 and its impact on people while promoting containment and mitigation measures. We continued to call for greater accountability and protection of human rights, in particular in the context of public demonstrations and the accompanying violence, which left close to 500 people dead and about 8,000 injured, as well as judicial and legal reform. In workshops across the country, we engaged Iraqi youth, providing a valuable platform to make their voices heard.

In addition to addressing the public's needs during COVID-19, and in light of the pandemic's heavy toll on the economy, UN Agencies, Funds and Programmes

completed a socioeconomic response plan (estimated at \$1.4 billion) for Iraq to harmonize between humanitarian, development and peacebuilding efforts.

With vaccines rolling out in 2021, I very much hope that the health crisis will soon be behind us, thereby giving space and time to tackle problems and seize opportunities that lie ahead. Important work awaits us as we continue to assist more than a million Iraqis who remain displaced and/or in acute need of humanitarian assistance, and as we work towards improved governance, promoting constructive dialogue among Iraqi actors. A key milestone on this journey will, of course, be the holding of credible elections, which is key to rebuilding public trust and re-energizing democracy.

We will not waiver in our efforts to support Iraq. In 2020, the UN celebrated its 75th anniversary in the service of humanity. Iraq is a founding member of the United Nations: our partnership today is stronger than ever as we work together to meet the people's aspirations for a safer, more prosperous and just society.

**Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert,
UN SRSR Iraq**



Diversity in Iraq: a timeless source of national pride and vitality

My years in Iraq have reinforced the conviction that tolerance and inclusiveness are not only moral and political imperatives: they are a precious source of national vitality, of cultural and indeed economic wealth. A society in which diverse groups peacefully coexist is not only a secure society, but also a dynamic, prosperous and self-confident one.

It is at once a cliché and a fundamental truth that Iraq is, and has always been, a rich mosaic of cultures. Some of the greatest inventions in human history were created or perfected here: the wheel, the written word, algebra, and countless more.

Crucially, these were not the innovations of one community, speaking one language, sharing one culture. Instead, they are the products of diversity, of ideas and viewpoints being exchanged. The communities who gave humanity these legacies embraced and benefitted from their differences.

And Iraqis should take just as much pride in their current diversity. Not only does it offer immense cultural beauty, it can also provide a competitive edge in the global knowledge economy.

A strong House of Wisdom, however, requires solid foundations. Sadly, these have recently been shaken to their core. Mismanagement, geopolitical tensions, callous communitarianism, incitement and hate speech, the horror of Da'esh,

have all conspired to render many people in Iraq extremely vulnerable.

Displacement, rights deprivations and poor access to essential services disproportionately affect Iraq's minorities, along with women, the young, the elderly, and those suffering from disabilities. This has only worsened with the economic downturn.

In one of my recent briefings to the UN Security Council, I emphasized that combatting divisive muhassassa, fighting corruption, building domestic resilience and more inclusive forms of development, are not just economic necessities: they offer political alternatives to constant crisis management. Moreover, cohesion weakens those pursuing private gains rather than the national good. And unity strengthens sovereignty: the more Iraqis speak and act as one, the less vulnerable they are to external meddling.

Conversely, a community that is united will be best positioned to defend its interests at the national level: therefore, intra-community reconciliation is just as important as the work at the inter-community level.

We all agree that that defending diversity is imperative, but the question is: how? The key is respect for fundamental rights and the rule of law, applied to all without exception.

Like a physical crossroads, a crossroads of civilizations offers multiple options,

and allows us to go in different directions. But properly navigating a crossroads requires rules, and for these rules to be respected. Anyone who has driven in Baghdad will agree that very few adhere to any rules in sharing the road!

Respecting multiple identities, which can combine and complement each other rather than suppress, exclude or supersede each other, requires the recognition of every citizen's equality before the law.

Political and community leaders must step up, join hands and serve the interests of the Iraqi people, never engaging in or condoning inflammatory actions and statements that stigmatize, blame or dehumanize.

Just as Iraq must be treated as equal and sovereign within the international community, so must all Iraqis be treated as equal citizens at home. The UN is based on the sovereign equality of all members, and Iraq's sovereignty is strongest when the equality of all its components is assured.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities are fundamental texts which assert that States have a responsibility to protect and promote the identities of minorities, and may not discriminate against them.

Of course, individual and collective identities intersect in complex ways. But there can be no superior or separate rights for any group that would place its members outside the rule of law. Social, cultural or religious identity should never be invoked to justify any form of oppression or rights violation.

And just as diversity plays a role in building citizenship, citizenship rights are essential to the preservation of diversity: it's a two-way road.

The promotion of human rights and the rule of law is central to the UN mandate in Iraq. Our work in this field includes the following efforts:

- We monitor and report on human rights - including those of minorities.
- We help strengthen government institutions to ensure these rights are realized for all - we have a strong partnership with the Iraqi High Commission for Human Rights, and hope that the draft law on Anti-Discrimination and Protection of Diversity will soon be finalized.

- We advocate extensively for the protection of minorities, including their languages and rights: two recent workshops in Baghdad and Erbil focused on these very issues.
- We facilitate and participate in community reconciliation initiatives throughout Iraq.
- We seek to tackle root causes of inequality and issues such as hate speech, against which UNAMI adopted a Plan of Action and we will continue advocating for rights-based measures, including with regards to the draft law on combating cyber-crime.
- We support the safe return of displaced persons to their communities of origin, especially when they are in a minority situation.
- We emphasize the need for justice and accountability for crimes affecting Iraq's communities as well as greater public awareness of Iraq's troubled history vis-à-vis minorities.

In recent conversations with minority representatives and young demonstrators, I strongly felt their great disappointment and despair. I explained that change requires time and hard work by many, and that a collective understanding on the way forward cannot be imposed by the UN: Iraqi ownership is essential.

Iraqis have overcome immense challenges in the past, and should not despair today. In October 2020, the UN celebrated its 75th anniversary in the service of humanity. Iraq is a founding member of the United Nations - and we will continue our partnership, working together for a safer, more prosperous and just Iraqi society.



Sinjar Agreement

Towards a better future for its beleaguered community

When an agreement was announced on the status of Sinjar district in Ninewa between the Federal Government of Iraq and the Kurdistan Regional Government in October 2020, UNAMI was quick to welcome the breakthrough. Indeed, the Mission had been a vocal proponent of an arrangement seeking to secure a better future for the aggrieved Sinjaris.

Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General (SRSG) for Iraq and head of UNAMI Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert has worked tirelessly on this file since she assumed her post in December 2018, using her good offices to facilitate discussions between Baghdad and Erbil and bring stakeholders closer to an agreement that had thus far proven elusive.

Ms. Hennis-Plasschaert has described the agreement as “a new chapter for Sinjar, one in which the interests of the people of Sinjar come first.” This achievement helps pave the way for displaced people to return to their homes, accelerate reconstruction and improve public service delivery.

The SRSG has consistently advocated for dialogue and reconciliation in her multiple visits to Sinjar, Mosul and beyond. On the ground, she witnessed firsthand the devastation wreaked by Da'esh (ISIL), and called for stepped up efforts to rebuild while offering continued UN support to the government's drive to alleviate the hardships of the community.

Sinjaris suffered horrific ordeals and heinous crimes in 2014, as Da'esh (ISIL) ravaged the district, killing and destroying, singling out Yazidis in their systematic campaign of destruction. Thousands upon thousands of people fled to the mountains. Many were killed. Women and children were kidnapped and enslaved, subjected to horrendous sexual crimes. Many remain missing, and the survivors continue to bear the scars of this collective trauma. Stigma and rejection afflict women in particular. Since the military defeat of Da'esh, victims and survivors have faced obstacles due to discord on security arrangements, public service

provisions and the lack of a unified administration.

Much work remains today. With the security elements of the agreement being implemented, efforts must also focus on establishing stable and sustainable governance through a unified administration.

“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. Whether on Mount Sinjar, where many residents have stayed in tents that have replaced their destroyed dwellings nearby, or my visits to other camps for the displaced, I sensed the Sinjaris' resilience in preserving their culture and land, and their determination to pursue their rights for freedom and justice despite the odds. This is their ancestral homeland and they would not want to trade it for anything else.”

But they need support from all of us. Effective governance through a unified administration and stable security structures are essential prerequisites for the community to rebuild and prosper. The completion of the security arrangements and the implementation of other parts of the agreement must be expedited in order to ramp up critical reconstruction work and service delivery. Conditions on the ground must further improve to facilitate dignified, voluntary returns.

UNAMI, together with all stakeholders, will continue to pursue these goals with renewed vigour, supporting the community as it forges a more just and peaceful future.



Tapping the power of youth

a UNAMI priority

National youth workshops call for greater youth participation in charting country's future

Youth are the pounding heart of society and its future. In Iraq, almost 70 percent of the population is under the age of 25. With this in mind, and in line with UNAMI's engagement to expand civic space, the Office of Political Affairs has embarked on an ambitious set of outreach activities to gauge the views of youth and encourage them to participate in charting the country's political, economic and social development trajectory.

Eighteen youth workshops, one in each governorate, convened in the space of 18 months since early 2019. Organized by UNAMI in coordination with the Committee for Coexistence and Societal Peace in the Prime Minister's Office and the Iraqi Al-Amal organization, under the theme "Iraqi Youth: Pioneers for Dialogue and Stability", these workshops culminated in a national conference in Baghdad on 22 November 2020.

Students, young professionals, social activists and unemployed youth, all aged between 18 and 30, participated in these workshops, in person pre-COVID-19, then virtually or with appropriate prevention measures during the pandemic. The background of these 334 men and 246 women was diverse, yet the message throughout all workshops was consistent: the youth want their voices heard and want to have more say in running their country.

"What was interesting is that we were able to break the barrier between the government of-

officials and the youth," said a participant in her late 20s. "We spoke openly. They listened to the issues we are facing. We hope that there will be solutions in the future and greater collaboration between the youth of civil society and the government," she added.

Hanaa Edwar, President of Iraqi partner NGO Al-Amal, noted that these activities are aligned with UN Security Council Resolution 2250 (2015) on Youth, Peace and Security, and are a necessary avenue to tap the energies generated by the youth and redirect them towards the betterment of their lives and their country.

She added: "Youth are enthusiastic and they have a realistic view. They don't only expect the government to implement certain policies, but to take into account their initiatives and involve them in the policy-making and project development processes. This is in addition to facilitating youth contribution in the economic activity, ensuring political empowerment and addressing social issues like drugs and placing all weapons under state control."

The national conference in Baghdad presented conclusions and recommendations from the governorate workshops to senior officials and government representatives, who listened attentively and later spoke of the importance of youth involvement in the country's affairs. These recommendations included enhancing the role of youth in decision-making processes; fostering young people's political participation

and economic empowerment; strengthening the rule of law and law enforcement; improving local employment and investment opportunities; asserting state control over weapons; protecting women from domestic violence; protecting the environment; and overcoming tribal conflicts.

Deputy UN Special Representative for Iraq Alice Walpole said at the closing conference: "It is my hope and conviction that this ending is in fact a beginning. Your presence here today and your inspirational contributions throughout our youth workshops, give me confidence that the youth of Iraq is ready for the challenge of finding collaborative, creative ways to address the challenges facing your country."

The fora provided the youth with a platform to air their concerns and present their ideas, in itself a small but important step in a bottom-up approach not common in society, said the director of the Office of Political Affairs Manoj Mathew. He noted that youth representatives have had several face-to-face meetings with government officials since then to follow up on the recommendations.

"These workshops provided something different, a forum for the youth to talk and engage government officials, share their concerns with them and together try to find solutions," he said.

"For the youth, it is a welcome development: They have an international body to listen to them. Their voice is heard by their government. Such activities increase their sense of confidence in raising the issues directly with senior government officials and provide hope for the young generation, enhancing their leadership skills and encouraging them to be a building block in their society. All of this was facilitated by UNAMI and we are delighted to have been part of it."

The United Nations in Iraq

Fast Facts about the United Nations in Iraq



What is UNAMI's mandate?

The Security Council resolution 2470 (2019), adopted on 21 May 2019, reaffirms the independence, sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity of Iraq, and emphasizes the importance of the stability and security of Iraq for the people of Iraq, the region, and the international community, particularly in light of Iraq's victory over the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL, also known as Da'esh), and supports Iraq in addressing the challenges it faces as it continues its post-conflict stabilization efforts and increasingly turns to the task of recovery, reconstruction and reconciliation, including the requirement to meet the needs of all Iraqis, including women, youth, children, displaced persons, and persons belonging to ethnic and religious minorities.

UNAMI's mandate includes 1) advising, supporting and assisting the Government and people of Iraq in advancing inclusive political dialogue and national reconciliation; developing elections and referenda processes; advancing constitutional provisions and reforms; facilitating regional dialogue; conducting a census; 2) promoting, supporting and facilitating, in coordination with the Government of Iraq, humanitarian assistance, the implementation of the International Compact, improvement of basic service delivery, economic reform and sustainable development; and 3) promoting the protection of human rights and judicial and legal reform in order to strengthen the rule of law in Iraq.

Mandate implementation

UNAMI is fully engaged with the Government, and in close partnership with Iraq's political leadership is providing advice, assistance and support on a range of issues such as, among others, institution-building, legislative reform including in the security sector.

UNAMI is also working in close coordination with Iraqi institutions, including media, civil society and academia, in promoting the values of national reconciliation, tolerance and co-existence as part of a process to build an enabling environment for reconciliation. It focuses on ensuring national ownership and buy-in from components of Iraqi society, including at the political, community, and regional levels.

Since its inception in 2003, UNAMI has played a crucial role in providing support to the drafting of Iraq's 2005 Constitution and assisting in ten elections. UNAMI's electoral assistance to Iraqi institutions is in a fully integrated manner with other electoral projects implemented through UNDP, UNOPS and IOM. Support includes capacity-building of and advisory to the Independent High Electoral Commission on operations, information technology and new voting technologies, election logistics, procedures and training, strategic communications and legal drafting/electoral complaints. UNAMI's Electoral Assistance also provides legislative support to various expert technical committees in the Council of Representatives.

UNAMI undertakes a range of activities aimed at promoting respect for and protection of human rights in Iraq. These include monitoring and reporting, advocacy, advice and assistance to the authorities on implementation of Iraq's human rights obligations, and capacity building of the Government and civil society on human rights issues. Activities are aimed at enhancing respect for the human rights of Iraq's people and their full and equal participation in economic, social, cultural and political life, ending violations and ensuring accountability for perpetrators of human rights violations, providing redress for the victims and empowering Iraqis to claim and maintain respect for and protection of their human rights.

As per its mandate on neighbourhood relations UNAMI is continuously engaged in advancing Iraq-Kuwait cooperation and also supports both sides in the search of missing persons and on the delicate issue of missing Kuwaiti property.

How does the UN implement its projects in Iraq?

UNAMI works with government, development and humanitarian partners, UN Agencies and civil society to facilitate and support humanitarian, recovery and critical assistance for the execution of the mission's development strategy, planning and coordination. UNAMI facilitates UN system efforts to foster coherence and continuity between hu-

manitarian action, peace and the transition to sustainable development.

Through an extensive field network, UNAMI facilitates multi-stakeholder partnerships and forums supporting UN system efforts mandated during the post-ISIL transition including return of displaced populations, stabilization of newly liberated areas, gender equality, social cohesion and inclusion, structural reforms and community reconciliation.

Where does the UN work in Iraq?

The United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) and the UN Country Team (UNCT) work in all the 18 governorates of Iraq and operate at the community, governorate, regional and national levels. National and international staff are deployed throughout the country and work in partnership with their local, provincial, regional and national counterparts.

Which UN organizations work in Iraq?

The UN Country Team has 23 members, including 15 resident and 3 non-resident agencies: FAO, ILO, IFAD, OCHA, OHCHR, UNICEF, UNCTAD, UN WOMEN, UNDP, ESCWA, UNESCO, UNEP, UNHCR, UN-HABITAT, UNIDO, UNFPA, UNODC, UNOPS, WFP, WHO, UNMAS and IOM. (UN-ESCWA, UNEP and UNCTAD are the non-resident agencies.) In addition, the UNCT includes the World Bank Group.

The United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/ISIL (UNITAD) was established pursuant to the United Nations Security Council resolution 2379 (2017), with the mandate to support domestic Iraqi efforts to hold Da'esh/ISIL accountable for their crimes committed in Iraq through collecting, preserving and storing of evidentiary material for crimes that may amount to war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide.

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

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

The presence of the UN organizations in Iraq is established on the basis of bilateral agreements with the Government of Iraq.

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

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

Does the UN have any alignment with particular groups or factions?

The UN is an impartial organization working in Iraq at the request of, and in partnership with, the Government of Iraq. The UN does not favour any political, sectarian or ethnic groups or factions. It upholds the highest standards in fostering equal opportunity among all Iraqi people, respect for human rights and enhanced empowerment to achieve a successful, dignified and sustainable future for the people of Iraq.

How is UNAMI managed?

UNAMI is headed by the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Iraq, who is supported by two deputies, one who oversees political affairs and electoral assistance, and one who oversees UN humanitarian and development efforts and performs the functions of Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator in Iraq. The Mission is administered by the UN's Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and supported by the Department of Operational Support.

Through its resolution 2522 (2020), adopted on 29 May 2020, the Security Council extended the mandate of UNAMI until 31 May 2021.

UNAMI has an authorized strength of 807 personnel (306 international, 501 national).

The Mission's budget for 2020: USD 100.5 million.



UNAMI pressed ahead on various issues, including combating hate speech and gender-based violence, supporting women's role in politics, and youth empowerment

MS. ALICE WALPOLE

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

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2020 has been a busy year for UNAMI, with several substantive achievements on which we can look back with pride as we continued to deliver on our mandate with the same enthusiasm

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2020 has been a year quite unlike any other, in the wake of the global spread of the COVID-19 health pandemic. My colleagues and I started the year with many exciting projects and visits in the pipeline but the need for social distancing made several of our intended events and meetings impossible. This was a source of deep frustration to us. We learned, however, to adapt rapidly to what was being called 'the new normal': finding ways of holding meetings remotely, chairing workshops and seminars online, paying virtual visits to our stakeholders

around the country. The UN Secretary General sent out a message to all United Nations field missions, including UNAMI, to “stay and deliver” on our mandates from the UN Security Council, and that is what we have done - continuing our assistance to Iraq during this year of momentous domestic political change, regional security developments and an economic crisis arising from plunging global oil prices.

Although we have been able to continue with many of our activities in a different form, it has been a disappointment to me not to have been



able in 2020 to meet more of our Iraqi partners in person. But I have been privileged to chair a series of excellent virtual workshops with young people from individual governorates across Iraq, hearing them discuss, with vigour and insight, the key challenges that affect their communities. I have participated in valuable online conferences with Iraqi parliamentarians, senior decision-makers and civil society activists on important issues such as combating domestic violence, support for Iraqi survivors of conflict-related sexual violence and the urgent need to open up Iraq's political sphere to talented female candidates for office. And, throughout 2020, I have enjoyed regular, socially distanced contacts with the members of our Women's Advisory Group – female human rights defenders, civil activists and former politicians who have given UNAMI valuable advice and insight into the political and social developments and helped us shape our response.

A particular highlight of the year for me was the visit to Iraq in early March of the UN Special Advisor on Genocide, Mr. Adama Dieng, with whom I co-hosted a lively meeting of government communications experts and press, digital and broadcast media representatives to discuss how best to combat hate speech

in Iraq. Another memorable event was my visit in January (pre-Covid-19) to the University of Mosul to hear from its leadership team about its ambitious future plans as a regional centre of learning and research excellence. A key focus throughout the year has been UNAMI's work in support of the Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC) as it starts preparations for the national elections announced for 2021: UNAMI's electoral affairs team and I have been working closely with IHEC's Board of Commissioners to support capacity-building and expertise within the organisation.

Meanwhile, I am proud that, thanks to sustained cooperation between the Iraqi Ministry of Defence and Kuwaiti experts, we have seen concrete advances on a dossier that I hold close to my heart: the search for the remains of Kuwaiti nationals who went missing during the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1990. 2020 has been a year of genuine progress, with the discovery in January of two mass burial sites in Muthanna governorate, the transportation of remains from those sites by UN plane to laboratories in Kuwait City, and then, in November, formal confirmation from the Kuwaiti authorities that human remains from a previous discovery in Muthanna in August 2019 are indeed those of some of the Kuwaiti missing. In-

formation that I hope will bring closure to some of their grieving families.

2020 has been a busy year for UNAMI, with several substantive achievements on which we can look back with pride as we continued to deliver on our mandate with the same enthusiasm. But we have missed some of our personal contacts with our Iraqi friends and partners due to COVID-19. I hope that in 2021 we will be able to strengthen those face-to-face relationships as the pandemic recedes.

“

UNAMI's electoral affairs team and I have been working closely with IHEC's Board of Commissioners to support capacity-building and expertise within the organisation

”



Interview with

Deputy Special Representative for Iraq of the United Nations Secretary-General/Humanitarian Coordinator/Resident Coordinator

MS. IRENA VOJÁČKOVÁ-SOLLORANO

In which priority areas were most of UN's 2020 humanitarian and development projects implemented?

The UN's Humanitarian Country Team's priorities in 2020 continued to focus on providing lifesaving support to the remaining most vulnerable internally displaced population in and outside of IDP camps

In this context, due to the Government's sudden closure of IDP camps in the 4th quarter we have experienced challenges in continuing to provide the required lifesaving support, through the humanitarian community's well-established clus-

ter support system. Nevertheless, we were able to adjust to the situation and shifted partially our humanitarian support to the return communities or informal settlements where the most vulnerable IDP have settled. This shift of humanitarian support is expected to continue well into 2021 with more IDP camp closures to be expected and durable solutions to be thought.

At the same time, UN's humanitarian response continued to be carried out in the conflict-affected governorates that still host large numbers of displaced persons, both in and out-of-camps, continue living in areas of high severity of conditions. These governorates

include Duhok, Erbil, Sulaymaniyah, Ninewa, Anbar, Diyala and Baghdad.

Concerning development activities of the UN Country team in 2020 the focus was on the implementation of the new Cooperation Framework which was designed to support Iraq's national development plan and Iraq's Vision 2030. Though the carrying out of the planned activities was challenged by the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the fact that a new government was formed only in the second half of the year. In response to the pandemic induced challenges Iraq was facing the UNCT developed the Socio-Economic Response Plan (SERP) which laid out



new pandemic related activities and adjustments of already existing projects.

UN agencies, funds and programmes are heavily involved in the reconstruction efforts of the liberated areas. Can you tell us more about that?

The impact of stabilization activities has been significant and enormous progress has been made in the liberated areas.

One of the UN's flagship programs is the Funding Facility for Stabilization (FFIS) which supports five governorates of Anbar, Diyala, Kirkuk, Ninewa and Salah Al-Din in the physical reconstruction of housing, government and infrastructure facilities contributing to the stabilization of communities and enabling the return of displaced Iraqis, laying the groundwork for recovery after the ISIL conflict. Through the work of TFFS and an increasing number of other projects of UN country team agencies, hundreds of thousands of houses, hundreds of schools, agricultural lands, places of worship, major universities, more than a hundred healthcare facilities and dozens of police stations and courts have been

rehabilitated in Ninewa, Salah al-Din and Anbar. Creating livelihood opportunities and building more robust and more cohesive communities under its social cohesion programming was also a critical part of the programme in 2020.

In addition, we prioritized on providing:

- community assistance projects and livelihoods opportunities, assistance to returnees, displaced and vulnerable host communities through supporting SMEs in expanding their businesses to create new jobs, and supporting employability skills through conducting vocational training and micro-entrepreneurship, and by providing Cash for Work.
- Rehabilitation of shelters for returnees and host communities, including debris removal and recycling, as well as rehabilitation of infrastructures to revitalize the local economy and increase access to basic services (rehabilitation of markets, electrical networks, water networks, health facilities, municipalities, etc.)

- Restoring agriculture and rehabilitate water infrastructure were key components of reconstruction efforts since agriculture is the second largest contributor to Iraq's GDP, agriculture-driven growth is not only economically essential, but has the potential to improve food security, increase self-sufficiency and benefit poor populations in both rural and urban areas.

UN also focused on reconstruction and rehabilitation of historical sites and buildings in Mosul as a tool to foster social cohesion and community reconciliation like Al Nouri Mosque and its Hadba Minaret, AL Tahera Church, Al Sa'a Church, and Al Aghwat mosque.

Mine Action cleared more than 135,000 m² of land in agricultural areas of Anbar and Ninawa contaminated with explosive ordnance.

Many other UN agencies are also involved in the stabilization projects as well, such as WHO, UNICEF, UNFPA are very active in supporting the health systems.

UN family continued with deliveries of aid to those affected in the liberated areas. Are you satisfied with



what has been achieved/accomplished so far?

Yes, I am satisfied with what has been accomplished despite severe operational and logistical challenges and difficulties due to COVID-19 pandemic including curfews, movement restrictions, closure of many government offices and community centers, and social distancing measures which have led to some interventions being disrupted and delayed.

Despite these conditions, UN agencies still managed to deliver substantial results in 2020 and are ready to continue to do so in the coming year in support of those affected in the liberated areas and far beyond.

In 2020, humanitarian partners alone reached more than 1.5 million people with humanitarian aid.

On few occasions in 2020, the UN launched appeals for funds to assist those affected by developments in Iraq. How would you evaluate donors' response to the humanitarian appeal?

While each individual agency launches their own appeals for bilateral funding for certain programming, the humanitarian response in Iraq is coordinated through the annual Humanitarian Re-

sponse Plan (HRP). For 2020, the humanitarian community in Iraq sought \$662 million to meet the needs of beneficiaries (including for COVID-19 response) and received 92% of what we asked for from the donor community. This indicates that our planning has been realistic and that there is a strong support from donors for humanitarian assistance in Iraq.

We trust that international cooperation and solidarity will continue in the humanitarian as well as in the development field to provide support in 2021 to leave no one behind during these difficult times for the people of Iraq.

In 2020 you joined UN family in Iraq. How do you see your role as the DSRSG/RC/HC overseeing the UN's humanitarian and development efforts in this country? How does it compare with your previous posts?

2020 has been an unprecedented year bringing with it a new set of challenges to Iraq related to COVID-19 pandemic.

In Iraq, was already facing multiple challenges such as IDPs, economic and social crisis, the 2020 has evidenced even further the nexus between the peace, development and humanitarian actions and the need to coordinate

actions in these fronts.

Under the leadership of the SRSRG my role as DSRSG RC/HC, is to assure and facilitate stronger coordination and coherence of UN activities to respond to the humanitarian and development needs of people in Iraq. While the UN management structures are set, my role is to adopt flexible ways of operating and to adapt to the ever-changing environment with its economic, health and long-term environmental trials.

I've had a long career with IOM, an agency that has joined the UN family only in 2016 and has grown exponentially due to increasing global migration challenge. My new role as RC since 2013 and now as RC/HC in Iraq is very rewarding as it allows me to have a wider perspective on the challenges people in Iraq are facing and to be able to influence and lead the UN's response accordingly.

In 2020 we have witnessed the decision of the Iraqi Government to accelerate the closure of IDPs camps. What has UNAMI and UNCT done to help Iraqi IDPs in need?

The UN, together with the broader humanitarian community in Iraq, has been advocating for finding durable



solutions for IDPs and therefore making IDP camps obsolete. Adhering to this goal we remain committed to the principles that returns shall be voluntary, safe, dignified and informed. These core principles are at the center of the work of the UN globally as well as in Iraq. Facilitating return, local integration, and settlement elsewhere is supported by the UN on these principles only, including by facilitating go and see visits.

In terms of activities, the list is broad. To mention a few: monitoring during camp closures, while in transit, and in return or secondary displacement areas were conducted to support Iraqi IDPs affected by camp closures. Messaging, departure tracking, referral and service provision were also at the core of the response alongside tremendous coordination and advocacy effort.

We are working to ensure that vulnerable IDPs who left camps, and families in displacement outside of camps, in areas of return, or elsewhere in the country have their needs clearly identified and receive the necessary support based on these needs and in accordance with humanitarian principles.

In the longer term, the successful implementation of the durable solutions

strategy in Iraq is a key step in ensuring that IDP/returnee families will be freed from the impact of displacement and can resume a dignified and self-sufficient lives.

With COVID-19 Pandemic, 2020 was a challenging year for Iraq and for the UN family in the country. What were you most proud of in 2020?

The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic posed an unprecedented challenge for the World and Iraq, and as the virus spread, the UN family strived to adapt its existing programming activities and to develop adequate responses in facing the emerging needs and realities in Iraq. We were able to put together a COVID-19 Socio-economic Response Plan and shift our activities to assist the Iraqi population and Government in the height of the crisis. This was a major success as the Response Plan not only tackle the immediate health crisis, but also plans for necessary recovery activities, notably in the economic and job creation sector.

What will be the main challenges ahead in 2021?

The challenge will be to develop joint responses with the humanitarian community and the government to the

IDPs situation in the face of potentially premature camp closures. Our joint response shall be based on needs of the IDPs as well as of the needs of local host communities. Strengthening coordination and cooperation, but also information sharing will be central to the achievement of durable solutions. The political, security and economic situation is naturally an important aspects that impacts the achievement of durable solutions for IDPs especially at the local level. It is essential to create well informed and robust systems, that are flexible to respond to the needs in a timely manner, which shall be addressed through the newly formed Area Based Coordination (ABC) system.

Regarding the COVID-19 pandemic, the UN will focus on preparedness and response by supporting the Government of Iraq building a comprehensive strategy to prevent infections, save lives and minimize health and economic impact.

Longer term goals like addressing climate change, the needed the economic recovery and job creation will also be critical in the current context of economic crisis in Iraq. This will be instrumental to maintain stability and peace in the country.



Electoral Assistance

Credible elections key to rebuild public trust: UN expands electoral support as IHEC commences preparations

UNAMI has supported Iraq's electoral institutions since 2004 in the form of advice and technical assistance. Since the finalization of the electoral legislation and the onset of electoral preparations, UNAMI started to ramp up the technical assistance and to deploy additional expertise to support IHEC at its headquarters and field offices.

The Government of Iraq has placed priority on conducting early elections that are free, fair, transparent and inclusive, and within specified timetables. In line with the Mission's mandate, UNAMI's Electoral Assistance Office is spearheading UN efforts to expand the provision of technical assistance and advice as the Independent High Electoral Commission prepares for the elections.

The election date has now been firmed up for 10 October 2021, or four months later than originally planned. These elections come at a critical time for Iraq, for they were called following heightened public demand for change. These elections will thus give the Iraqi people the opportunity to have their voices heard as they chart their political future, and credible elections are key to rebuild public trust. So, it is essential to create

a conducive environment that allows electoral preparations to be conducted in an effective and transparent way.

UNAMI has supported Iraq's electoral institutions since 2004 in the form of advice and technical assistance. Since the finalization of the electoral legislation and the onset of electoral preparations, UNAMI started to ramp up the technical assistance and to deploy additional expertise to support IHEC at its headquarters and field offices. Our support to Iraq's electoral stakeholders, primarily the Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC), includes addressing urgent capacity requirements.

It is important to emphasize that the United Nations supports a process that is Iraqi-led and Iraqi-owned. However, public perception and some political spin by critics has suggested elections will be conducted or supervised by the



United Nations, a claim that is not only false but dangerously misleading. The Government of Iraq, in seeking to rebuild public trust and to promote participation, has sent a letter to the UN Security Council requesting electoral observation for the Iraqi elections. Election observation is considered the mildest form of international presence in Iraq and globally is a widely known and accepted tool that serves as an additional safeguard to protect the integrity of an electoral process.

Other elements should be in place to ensure a credible process. Electoral preparations must remain free from political interference, at all stages. IHEC must be insulated from political interference in undertaking its work.

In order to address electoral challenges and build public confidence in its impartiality and technical capabilities, IHEC should take practical measures in: preparing a comprehensive and inclusive voter register; adopting an election results management system that is transparent, reliable and tested; adopting a

judicious framework to handle electoral complaints and appeals; keeping electoral stakeholders well-informed about electoral preparations and processes.

On UNAMI's part, and to strengthen the capacity development support to IHEC, a UN-led electoral project with contributions from several countries was launched in late 2020. It shows the strong international support for Iraq and for UNAMI's role. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) is responsible for the financial management of funds.

The project, entitled Support to Iraq's Electoral Process, consist of 2 phases corresponding to the requests from the IHEC and the Iraqi authorities for support in building IHEC's institutional capacities and for direct assistance in the organization of early parliamentary elections. Under the project, UNAMI will deploy electoral staff to provide technical and advisory support in key areas jointly identified with IHEC. Several activities will also be implemented to support civic and voter education initiatives

and to enhance IHEC engagement with electoral stakeholders.

"The expert advice and technical assistance we have been providing IHEC is being augmented by additional support from a larger team that we are assembling for the 2021 elections. We are geared up and ready to assist our Iraqi counterparts in holding a credible and inclusive election that they can be proud of," said Dr. Aamir Arain, UN Principal Electoral Adviser and Director UNAMI Office of Electoral Assistance.

Although the UN and the international community are supporting strengthening Iraqi capacities, they cannot take the place of the Iraqis themselves in making the upcoming elections a success. The responsibility for credible elections lies not only with the Iraqi authorities, but with all Iraqi electoral stakeholders, with all political actors and with all Iraqi citizens - who are called upon to play a greater role in the public sphere, whether as voters or candidates or simply as ordinary citizens keen on seeing their country advance and prosper.



Human Rights Office

Q&A with

Chief Human Rights Officer

MS. DANIELLE BELL



What was your assessment of the human rights situation in Iraq during 2020?

The evolving political, economic, health and security situation significantly affected the ability of many Iraqi citizens to fully access their human rights in 2020.

The large-scale popular demonstrations that began in 2019 continued into 2020, and UNAMI Human Rights Office (UNAMI HRO) remains concerned over the continuing lack of accountability for demonstrations-related human rights violations, together with the increasing restrictions on freedom of expression for those expressing criticism of the authorities.

COVID-19 also had a huge impact on the human rights landscape in Iraq during 2020. In response, UNAMI HRO increased its monitoring, reporting and advocacy on human rights concerns in the context of COVID-19, focusing in particular on the effects of COVID-19 restrictions on vulnerable populations, including women and girls, minority communities, and

those deprived of their liberty.

In 2020 UNAMI HRO strengthened its partnership with the Government in support of its efforts to promote and protect human rights. During 2020 the Government engaged constructively both with UNAMI HRO and with the United Nations Treaty body mechanisms, and in 2021 UNAMI HRO will continue to work closely with the government to assist their implementation of UN Treaty Body recommendations, to continue to implement the comprehensive set of recommendations made during the Universal Periodic Review which took place in 2019.

How did you ensure the protection of human rights during demonstrations?

The protection of demonstrators and activists exercising their rights to freedom of assembly and freedom of expression remained a serious issue in 2020. In May and August UNAMI HRO issued two separate public reports documenting serious human rights abuses and violations by security forces, and by groups referred to as militia, during the demonstrations. These reports, which we shared with the Government, documented the use of live ammunition against peaceful demonstrators, and the targeted killings, abductions, torture, disappearances and arbitrary arrest and detention of those linked to the demonstrations. In its reports UNAMI HRO called for accountability and provided concrete recommendations to the Government aimed at ensuring the necessary protection measures for demonstrators and activists and providing redress for victims.

In 2020 UNAMI HRO also documented increasing limitations on the freedom of expression of those voicing criticism and dissent towards the authorities. HRO has also expressed concern regarding the restrictive measures taken in the Kurdistan region against individual activists and media outlets and has encouraged the Government of Kurdistan to ensure that the right to freedom of expression is upheld and that journalists and media outlets can operate freely without interference or intimidation.

How did UNAMI support the government's efforts in the promotion and protection of human rights in the administration of justice?

In 2020 UNAMI HRO continued its systematic detention and trial monitoring programme. UNAMI HRO engaged in advocacy and provided technical assis-



tance to the relevant officials to promote the rights of detainees, including children, and to uphold fair trial guarantees and due process. Throughout 2020, HRO conducted 97 monitoring interviews in places of detention, and in December was granted full access to monitor Nasiriyah Central Prison for the first time in accordance with its mandate.

In January 2020 UNAMI HRO jointly with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human rights published a report, Human Rights in the Administration of Justice in Iraq; Trials under the anti-terrorism laws and implications for justice, accountability and social cohesion in Iraq in the aftermath of ISIL. The report identified concerns that basic fair trial standards were not being respected and highlighted lack of equality before the courts. Following the publication of the report, and as a result of UNAMI advocacy and engagement, the High Judicial Council agreed to jointly develop guidelines for the conduct of judicial investigations and trials in accordance with international standards. In November 2020, in the first of a series of discussions to develop these guidelines, HRO organized a two-day online workshop with the High Judicial Council, attended by 16 Iraqi judges from different courts in Baghdad and international human rights and judicial experts.

What is being done to promote the right to education?

On 17 February 2020, UNAMI released 'The Right to Education: The legacy of ISIL territorial control on adolescent's access to education in Iraq', a special report based upon consultations, interviews

and focus groups conducted between November 2018 and January 2019. The report highlights several challenges, including children having missed years of formal education, insufficient numbers of school or accelerated learning programmes, inadequate teaching hours, movement restrictions and access to civil documentation to enable school enrollment. UNAMI HRO is currently finalizing the second report examining access to education in Iraq 'Part Two: Obstacles to Girls education after ISIL'. The report identifies obstacles which continue to hamper girl's access to education, embedded in traditional gender roles and norms, family level of education, poverty, protection and trauma. The report is planned for release in late January 2021. Both the reports offer targeted recommendations with concrete measures to address societal gender norms and call for an enabling environment for girl's education.

How does UNAMI HRO work to promote equality and prevent discrimination?

Enhancing equality and countering discrimination is one of the core priorities for the Human Rights Office. In this area, the work focused on protecting the human rights of ethnic and religious minorities, promoting protection for vulnerable groups, including women, girls, disabled and members of minorities, and promoting equitable and non-discriminatory access to resources and public services through engagement with UNCT partners, including the rights to education and health for all Iraqis.

During 2020 UNAMI HRO completed the collection and documentation of local peace narratives from across the country. These peace narratives, which highlight actions taken by Iraqi youth to protect human rights, tackle discrimination within their communities, and act as agents of social change, will be included in a UNAMI HRO public report which is planned for release in early 2021. In a related initiative, UNAMI HRO is establishing a multi-media platform to promote cross-community dialogue using the positive examples highlighted by the local peace narratives.

In December, UNAMI HRO jointly facilitated a first of a series of meetings to discuss the importance of the preservation of minority languages in protecting minorities' history and cultural diversity. Around 70 participants from the Faili Kurd, Arman, Sabeen Mandean, Zaradashti and Chaldean minority groups attended the event, including 28 women, along with representatives of the Ministries of Education, Planning, Culture, Tourism and Heritage, the Iraqi High Commission for Human Rights, civil society organizations (CSOs) and Members of Parliament. The United Nations Special Rapporteur on minority issues addressed the meeting online.

During 2020 HRO also engaged in monitoring, reporting and advocacy for the protection of human rights of LGBTI community in Iraq, including outreach and engagement with various CSOs. LGBTI community faces widespread discrimination and has been subjected to hate speech. HRO, in collaboration with civil society and other stakeholders, continues its engagement for the protection of LGBTI community in Iraq.

What was done in 2020 to address sexual and gender-based violence?

HRO engaged in advocacy to promote measures for the protection of women and girls from domestic and gender-based violence. To promote protection from domestic violence, and in view of increased reports of domestic violence during the COVID-19 pandemic, in June 2020, HRO jointly with UN agencies and the international community engaged in advocacy to expedite the adoption of the draft Anti-Domestic Violence Law. In support of this ongoing engagement with legislators and civil society, UNAMI HRO also released a short film to raise awareness and strengthen protection for victims of domestic violence. Following advocacy by HRO and UN



Country Team partners, the President of the Supreme Judicial Council issued a directive instructing the competent courts to take action against the perpetrators of domestic violence and to enable support to victims.

What are you doing to help victims of enforced disappearances?

In August 2020, UNAMI/OHCHR published a special report 'Enforced Disappearances from Anbar Governorate 2015-2016: Accountability for the victims and the right to truth'. The report called for independent and effective investigations to establish the fate of approximately 1,000 civilian men and boys who disappeared during military operations against ISIL (Da'esh) in Anbar Governorate in 2015-2016, and recommended that the government adopt necessary measures to ensure accountability of perpetrators and redress for victims of enforced disappearances. Though focused on Anbar as a case study, the report's recommendations are valid countrywide and can help address other cases of enforced disappearances. In this context UNAMI HRO advocacy during 2020 led to the formation by the Government of a joint committee to intensify the search for Yazidis who remain missing following their abduction by ISIL.

In 2020 UNAMI HRO continued to promote the engagement of Iraq with relevant United Nations human rights mechanisms including the Committee on Enforced Disappearances (CED) and the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances (WGIED). In September and October 2020, UNAMI facilitated the online engagement of civil society, the Iraqi High Commission for Human Rights (IHCHR) and the Government delegation with the Committee on Enforced Disappearances (CED) during its 19th Session. On 27 November 2020, the CED issued its Concluding Observations on Iraq which provided concrete recommendations, particularly in the areas of legislative reform and accountability.

What specific steps have you taken to address the human rights impact of COVID-19?

Throughout 2020 UNAMI HRO engaged in advocacy to promote adoption of legislation to enhance protection of women and girls from domestic violence and increase measures for their access to health services in the context of COVID-19.

Since February 2020 UNAMI HRO, in close collaboration with UNAMI Public Information Office, implemented an



illustration-based campaign to raise awareness of the human rights impact the pandemic in Iraq, and to promote compliance with COVID-19 prevention measures. The campaign, which will continue through into 2021, is built on several mutually reinforcing elements, including cartoons, murals, posters, videos and postcards which are disseminated on various social media channels, in person and on information boards. Published in three languages, Arabic, Kurdish and English it has reached over half a million viewers on UNAMI social media alone.

To implement the campaign, UNAMI HRO worked with over 20 Iraqi NGOs, 7 Iraqi artists, 140 volunteers, including 30 women, in remote and densely populated areas in all 18 Governorates, disseminating 28,500 posters, illustrating 13 cartoons and finalizing 20 murals, raising awareness on the increase in gender based and domestic violence, stigma and discrimination, protection of minority communities, access to education and health care and disseminating the health care measures. The campaign has been developed in support of the efforts by the Government of Iraq to contain the spread of COVID-19.

To mark 16 Days of Activism against

gender-based violence, UNAMI HRO in collaboration with three Iraqi artists launched a social media awareness raising campaign on domestic violence in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. The graphic images depicted stigma that female family members face while seeking health care and highlighted the contribution of women healthcare workers as a vital part of the COVID-19 response. The images, also aimed at promoting public dialogue about the consequences of gender-based violence and to reinforce collective responsibility to end violence against women, were shared widely through social media.

HRO also engaged in advocacy with the Government to implement immediate measures in places of detention and concerning arrest and detention practices, including for children. HRO recommended the release of prisoners and reduction in overcrowding, through increased use of discretionary powers of release by the judiciary, a special Presidential pardon and ending mass arrests for violations of the curfew, and measures to limit the spread of COVID-19.

UNAMI HRO also engaged with members of minority communities to assist

them in making online applications for Government grants intended to assist families during the COVID-19 pandemic

To mark International Human Rights Day on 10 December, UNAMI launched three rap songs, written and performed by the Assyrian rapper "The Golden Nenous", by Kurdish artist "Raz" and by "Mr. Legendary" from the Arab community. These songs put human rights and health of others at the centre of our response to the pandemic. UNAMI also supported a display of murals on the human rights dimensions of COVID-19 in Mosul city and al-Kut city, and with support from local partners distributed 10,000 'information postcards' in three densely populated neighbourhoods of Baghdad, raising awareness of the human rights impact of COVID-19.

What are the UNAMI Human Rights Office Priorities for 2021?

In 2021 UNAMI HRO will continue to support the efforts of the Government of Iraq to promote and protect human rights in accordance with its obligations under national and international law.

UNAMI HRO priorities in 2020 include:

- Promotion and protection of freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly, and widening democratic and civic space;
- Promotion of accountability for human rights violations, including addressing cases of enforced disappearances, abductions, targeted killings, torture and arbitrary arrest and detention;
- Strengthening the protection of human rights in the administration of justice;
- Supporting social diversity and cohesion, promoting non-discrimination and protecting the rights of members of religious and ethnic minority communities;
- Enhancing gender equality and strengthening the protection of women's rights including advocating for the elimination of domestic violence;
- Combating impunity and strengthening support to survivors of conflict-related sexual violence;
- Reinforce the protection of children, including children affected by conflict and children deprived of their liberty.



UNITAD in Iraq

Highlights:

- In cooperation with the Iraqi Government, UNITAD conducted an initial visit to a mass grave site north of Ramadi in July, to survey the crime scene and discussions on approaches to victim identification, using equipment the Team previously donated to Medico-Legal Directorate and Mass Grave Directorate that facilitates rapid DNA analysis.
- Supported by UNITAD, Iraqi authorities, including the Medico-Legal Directorate and Mass Graves Directorate, resumed excavations in Kojo and Sinjar.
- UNITAD provided psycho-social training to multiple Iraqi NGOs working with ISIL/ Da'esh victims on necessary skills and knowledge to strengthen support for survivors without causing further harm.
- UNITAD-NGO Dialogue Forum was launched in December, as part of the ongoing commitment to strengthen UNITAD's engagement with the NGO community
- Special Adviser Karim A. A. Khan QC briefed the UN Security Council on UNITAD's 5th report in December.

UNITAD Response to COVID

UNITAD has adopted an innovative approach for implementing its mandate during the coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19). The Investigative Team has continued to work closely with UNAMI, which has led country-wide mitigating measures, thus allowing UNITAD to continue its investigative activities where possible.

The Team has actively engaged in crisis management mechanisms to ensure the health and safety of its staff and witnesses while pursuing prioritized excavation and investigative activities within an 'active risk reduction' stage, requiring elevated risk mitigating measures.

UNITAD also devised alternative ways of engaging communities, collecting evidence and ensuring that the accounts of victims are heard. Central to this has been both a deepened partnership with Iraqi authorities and the use of technology by conducting remote interviews and the launch of an online platform to submit evidence by survivors and witnesses. These modalities have proved successful and allowed for the collection of testimonial evidence to continue. The Office of the Prime Minister of Iraq also played an essential role in providing operational assistance to the Team through the National Operations Centre by supporting field missions through the coordination of relevant security assets, including the deployment of armed escorts as necessary.

Innovative Approaches to Investigations

The Team has restructured and expanded its Office of Evidence Management to effectively process the increasing volume of evidence collected. A dedicated team was established to analyze all evidence collected and liaise with the Office of Field Investigations to ensure consistency of evidence holdings.

The Information Systems Unit has further enhanced UNITAD's Evidence Lifecycle Management System (ELMS) to better support the increasingly complex needs of the field investigative teams.

UNITAD also launched SHUHUD (Witnesses in Arabic), an online platform providing a safe, secure and user-friendly mechanism through which survivors, victims and witnesses can submit information related to ISIL crimes.

Cooperation with the Government of Iraq

The Special Adviser and UNITAD continued engaging with senior members of the Government of Iraq. These discussions included high-level meetings with the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Chief Justice and Head of the Supreme Judicial Council. The Special Adviser met on several occasions with the President



and the Prime Minister of the Kurdish Regional Government to discuss the Team's activities and its support to Kurdish authorities in the investigation and prosecution of ISIL crimes. These significant steps in the implementation of Security Council resolution 2379 (2017) represents a joint success of the Government of Iraq and the Investigative Team, drawing on the common will to deliver accountability in line with the mandate provided by the Council.

Looking forward to 2021

(a) Implementing the technical assistance project with Iraqi investigative

judges allowing for the development of case files that can support the prosecution of war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide committed by ISIL before national courts in Iraq.

(b) Finalizing thematic case-briefs relating to the initial investigative priorities of the Team, including crimes committed against the Yazidi community in Sinjar and the mass killings carried out by ISIL in Tikrit in June 2014.

(c) Continue to implement evidence digitization project with Iraqi authorities, as millions of documents will be scanned and archived in line with international standards.





Interview with FAO Representative in Iraq

DR. SALAH ELHAJJ HASSAN



What is the role of FAO in achieving food security in Iraq?

FAO leads collective efforts to achieve sustainable food security and promote poverty reduction in rural areas with respect to agriculture, including livestock, forestry, fisheries and management of natural resources, restoration and improved availability of irrigation water as well as agro-processing and retailing. Given its mandate to raise levels of nutrition, FAO has a significant responsibility to improve agricultural productivity, enhance the lives of rural populations and contribute to the growth of the economy.

FAO also leads alongside WFP, the Food Security Cluster to ensure response capacity is in place and that assessments, planning and programming are carried out in collaboration with partners in a strategic and coordinated manner.

How does FAO fulfill that role?

FAO has a key role to play in facilitating pro-

active engagement of the government institutions that are responsible for food security and agriculture, including the Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Water resources, Ministry of Health and Environment and Ministry of Planning in addition to joining forces with other UN agencies, in particular WFP, IOM, WB, UNDP and IFAD among others. Steps taken by FAO Iraq to promote food security and nutrition include (i) Advocating for food and agriculture policies and programs to ensure sustainable food security concerns are addressed; (ii) Actively engaging with the UN country team to promote efforts to improve agriculture and nutrition and; (iii) Mainstreaming FAO's Country Programming Framework and strategic programming.

FAO's capacity to act is enhanced by its technical expertise, available at headquarters, regional, sub-regional and country offices, which can be tapped to respond to needs. The unique contribution that FAO brings to the agricultural and development sectors

emanates from its well-tested approaches, methodologies, tools, guidelines, and practices. Along with the experience gained and lessons learned, this gives FAO a sense of direction in terms of competence to target -together with stakeholders- priority areas of intervention where its efforts can realize maximum impact.

What are FAO vision and priorities for 2021?

In light of the current COVID-19 pandemic, FAO will continue to monitor the impact of the pandemic on food security, livelihoods and employment and advocate to retain national food supply chain fully functioning while implementing health measures to stop the spread of the pandemic and protect the most vulnerable segments of the Iraqi community.

FAO will also maintain its support to smallholder farmers' food and nutrition security by assessing needs, providing agricultural support services to promote climate-smart approaches, supporting inclusive value chain development for key agricultural commodities and taking a One Health approach to address zoonotic diseases through building the capacity of nationwide transboundary plant and animal disease control services. FAO will build the capacity and knowledge of agricultural research institutes, service providers and farmers and promote sustainable water and Climate smart agricultural practices in degraded areas.

Responding to the pandemic

Since early 2020, FAO has been working to monitor the impact of Corona virus on smallholder farmer's livelihood. From the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Government of Iraq has exempted agricultural stakeholders from movement restrictions, allowing them to continue production and transport of agricultural goods. However, challenges facing the development of major value chains remain, as Iraq is vulnerable to the impact of COVID-19 due to preexisting vulnerabilities, including high poverty rates, dwindling natural resources and ongoing displacement due to past conflicts. In this regard, FAO has been committed to enhancing the socio-economic status of farming communities according to national priorities and plans and in partnership with the relevant Ministries.

Moreover, despite mitigation measures imposed by the government, FAO continued to implement projects to increase agricultural production in rural and peri-urban areas to strengthen national food value chains and rehabilitate rural assets and water infrastructure. FAO has also been supporting production and conducting field awareness sessions for the farmers to slow the spread COVID-19 by practicing physical distancing, sterilizing

tools, wearing masks and gloves correctly as a protection measure, and organizing virtual training sessions through using modern communication applications to exchange knowledge and information. The agency is also providing long-term support to extension services through establishing a digital extension platform (DEP) focusing on farmer-to-farmer (F2F) forum that allows farmers, producers and retailers access online extension information.

FAO is also collaborating closely with its partners, including the World Food Programme (WFP), the World Bank, International Fund for Agriculture Development (IFAD) and the Ministry of Agriculture of Iraq to monitor the impact of the outbreak on availability of farm inputs and food chains. While there was enough supply of food in Iraq due to sufficient production, the COVID-19 outbreak still has the potential to disrupt critical food supply chains, in rural and urban areas. Movement or import/export restrictions caused challenges to the transport of key food items and access to food processing units and markets.

Commitment to sustainable food production

In recent years, and following the conflict with ISIL, FAO have been focused on establishing sustainable agriculture and building resilience as an overarching umbrella for identifying programs in an effort to help mitigate the impact of shocks including political instability, conflicts, environmental and climatic events, water scarcity and economic uncertainty after crises.

The Iraq conflict has resulted in huge population movements and loss of personal assets, crops, livestock production and food supplies. Furthermore, it resulted in physical damage to agricultural land and produce, with crops destroyed, agricultural land and water sources contaminated by explosive remnants of war. Conditions caused by the conflict has also made the country vulnerable to outbreaks of pests and diseases. Additionally, food production and rural livelihoods have been severely affected by damage to agricultural infrastructure including irrigation systems, veterinary services, markets, storage facilities and agricultural extension facilities in addition to disruption to agricultural markets and value chains.

FAO overall programs are aligned with national priorities aiming to rebuild the agriculture sector and ensure access to meet basic needs through the restoration of smallholder farming systems, promoting livestock health and production, increased rural and peri-urban economic growth, diversification and greater opportunities for employment generation. FAO is also supporting the relevant

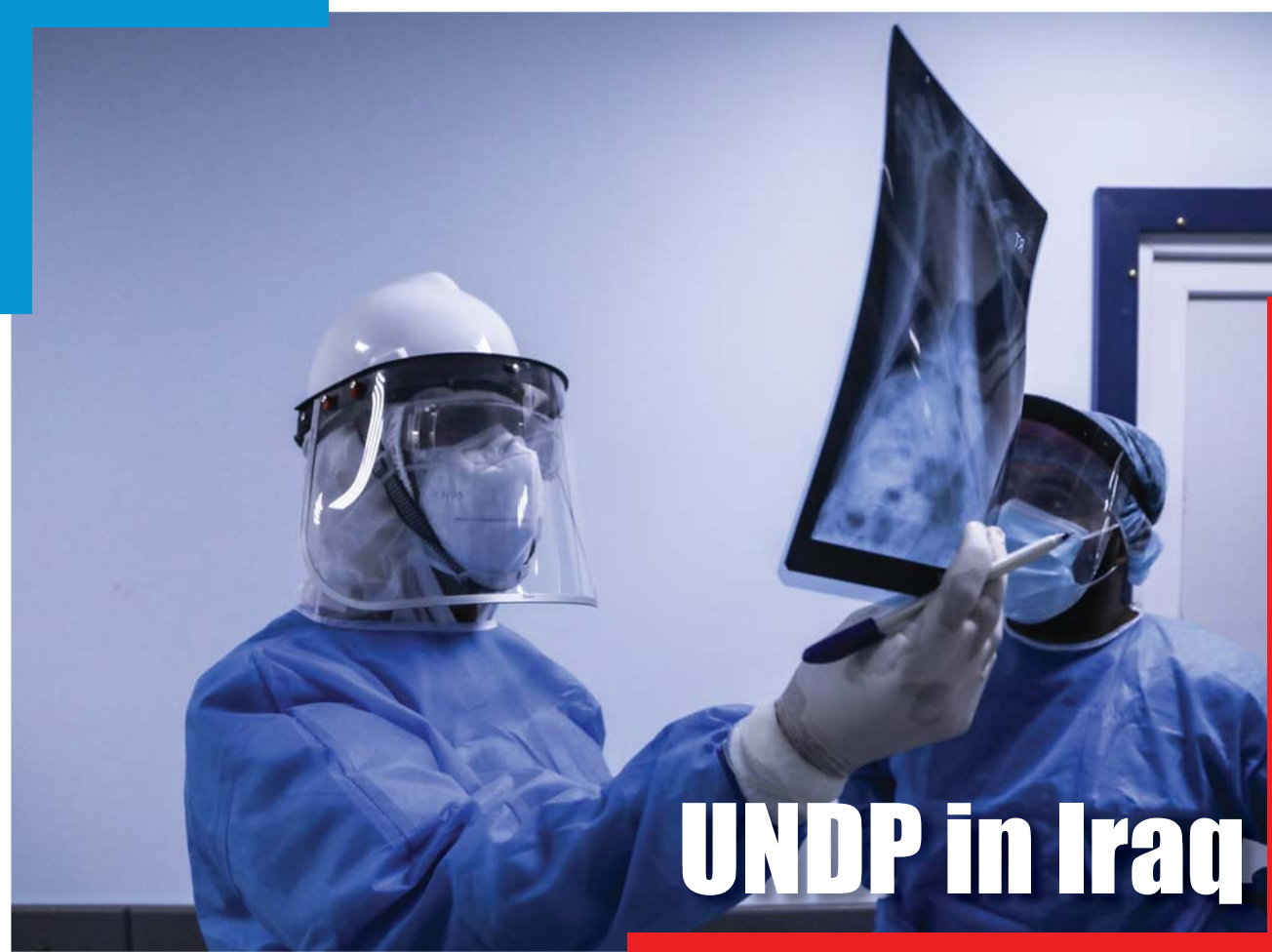
ministries of the Government of Iraq in facilitating the repair, rehabilitation, replacement and strengthening of water infrastructure, value chains and support services in rural and peri-urban areas for climate-smart and conflict-sensitive smallholder crop farmers and livestock keepers.

In response, FAO is making every effort to support rural men and women in Iraq through provision of farming inputs and material as well as immediate support to livelihoods, repair of community infrastructure, replacement of lost and damaged assets and capacity building. These interventions will ensure that people of Iraq do not continue to remain in a vulnerable situation reliant on the support of humanitarian assistance. In addition, FAO is supporting central and local Government entities to restore essential basic services and ensure that sufficient expertise is available to enable an effective approach to reducing risks to people living in affected areas and mitigate the impact of future conflicts and disasters.

Additionally, and in partnership with the Government, FAO is investing in information and early-warning systems; addressing immediate needs in combination with longer-term interventions to strengthen resilience, including through cash transfers and support for to support agricultural systems and agricultural value chains (including support for production, processing, storage, marketing and business development). Assistance is provided to households to enhance nutrition knowledge and skills while promoting improved agricultural practices. Furthermore, FAO is supporting animal husbandry and veterinary services through the training of extension services workers and provision of essential vaccines and improved processing of animal products. This is achieved in line with awareness-raising and capacity building on natural resource management in all the relevant livelihood sectors as an overall priority.

Planning and coordination

FAO has invested in coordination structures with the Government of Iraq and international partners. More specifically in February 2020, FAO in partnership with the Ministries of Planning, Agriculture, Health and Environment and Water Resources established a multi-sectoral platform for the planning, implementation and follow up of agriculture, water and environment programs and policies in Iraq. The initiative improves coordination among stakeholders for planning and implementation of programs aiming at enhancing the socio-economic status of farming communities according to national priorities and plans.



Notwithstanding the difficulties imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, UNDP continued implementing its critical interventions across Iraq, serving millions of Iraqis, from Dohuk to Diyala, and Karbala to Kirkuk.

Supported the Government of Iraq to manage the Coronavirus

UNDP Iraq's COVID-19 response cuts across all portfolios, highlighting our reputation as the development partner of choice amongst the government, international partners, and the communities we serve. We were one of the first responders, and as a result, able to mobilize over \$38 million.

- We rolled out a multi-faceted COVID-19 response to rapidly support 15 governorates' health needs. This includes the development of 16 fully-equipped isolation wards and provision of PPE to healthcare workers.
- Our Let's Beat Corona community awareness campaign reached

more than 31.7 million Iraqis.

- In coordination with the Ministry of Interior, we assisted police officers in Iraq by providing PPE and supporting an e-learning system, ensuring officers can continue to receive training safely.
- We delivered life support packages and sterilized public spaces for more than 88,000 people in acute need in Anbar, Ninewa and Salah Al-Din.
- We ran an online training session for 75 social workers to support 7,500 women who have experienced violence in conflict.
- We coordinated a study by 25 social workers based on telephone surveys with 2,500 women in five Iraqi governorates to document how the COVID-19 pandemic af-

ected women and girls in Iraq with a focus on Sexual and Gender-based Violence.

Reaffirmed our position as development thought leaders

Our socioeconomic policy impact assessment series serves as a critical source of guidance for government and partners in the post-COVID-19 recovery effort. The series is broken down into six key themes; three papers were published in 2020 and another three to be delivered in early 2021.

- Impact of the Oil Crisis and COVID-19 on Iraq's Fragility
- Impact of COVID-19 on the Iraqi Economy
- Impact of COVID-19 on Social Cohesion in Iraq



Continued our commitment to building peaceful and cohesive communities

A critical part of programming in 2020 included supporting economic and social integration and building more robust and cohesive communities through the Social Cohesion Programme. Our community reintegration work targeting ISIL perceived affiliated families helped to reintegrate more than 2,700 families safely back into their communities in Anbar, Ninewa and Salah Al-Din.

"My hope is that this very serious crisis will be resolved, and that life will return to normal. Inevitably, this crisis will end like previous crises. Hope is our goal." Hakim, 62, was interviewed during a distribution in Ramadi, Anbar Governorate.

Four Youth for Peace groups and three Women for Peace groups were established in Anbar, Ninewa, Salah al-Din and Diyala in 2020, benefitting over 11,000 people through their initiatives. Launching another opportunity for youth, UNDP

Iraq in partnership with Tammuz Organization for Social Development, and Sabaq Center for Media Development, initiated a series of training sessions on citizen journalism for peacebuilding and social cohesion for 120 young Iraqi journalists and bloggers.

Community empowerment is a priority within the Social Cohesion Programme. In 2020, over 5,000 people benefited

from skills development training sessions and grants provided to 12 Community-Based Organisations throughout Salah al-Din and Ninewa governorates to support initiatives focused on peacebuilding. UNDP projects and intervention under the Social Cohesion Programme in Iraq are implemented with generous support from the governments of Denmark and Germany.





Strengthened stabilization efforts

In 2020, UNDP extended its Funding Facility for Stabilization (FFS) to 2023. Through its partnership with the Government of Iraq and the international community, by the end of 2020, UNDP mobilized more than US\$1.3 billion for stabilization activities from 27 international partners and the Government of Iraq. Through which, 26,455 houses, 926 schools and universities, 396 health facilities and 379 municipal infrastructure components (including police stations and courts) have been rehabilitated across Iraq.

Approximately 11 million Iraqis now have access to improved infrastructure and services, including electricity, housing, health, water, education, sewage, municipalities, roads and bridges. More than 54,200 vulnerable Iraqis have benefited from emergency livelihood support from cash-for-work opportunities like rubble removal, mural painting and restoring public spaces. The focus is now on fulfilling remaining needs, ensuring our work is closely linked to the Durable Solutions effort, and developing a clear exit strategy.

Supported Recovery and Stability in Iraq through Local Development and Headway Programme

Under the EU-funded programme Supporting Recovery and Stability in Iraq through Local Development, UNDP is implementing nine projects to create jobs, boost urban revival and socio-economic development, and improve the decentralization of local services in the Governorates of Anbar, Basra, Duhok, Erbil, Missan, Ninewa, Salah al-Din, Sulaimaniyah and Thi Qar. Preparations are underway to rehabilitate public infrastructure and establish recreational areas, with a focus on the restoration of cultural heritage, urban beautification, and promotion of local eco-tourism.

Through the Headway Programme's Job Creation in KRI grant scheme, funded by the EU through the EU Regional Trust Fund in Response to the Syria Crisis, 'Madad Fund,' UNDP supported 56 businesses to hire 685 people in Duhok, Erbil, Halabja and Sulaimaniyah. Another 31 businesses were assisted, in response to COVID-19, to adapt to working-from-home environments and business models as well as to improve online sales and presence. UNDP also launched initiatives to support over 100 entrepreneurs and startups in different fields, such as agriculture, livestock, gardening, and fish farming. This is being fulfilled in partnership with the Governorate of Erbil and Rwanda Foundation.

Under both EU-funded programmes, 80 host community members, internally displaced and Syrian refugees have become Community Reporters after completing training on broadcast and photojournalism.



Embraced innovation

We supported the Karbala Governorate to track and trace COVID-19 using modern geographic information system (GIS) Technologies. Additionally, the Smart Karbala system will be launched in January 2021, an interactive application created as an open communication channel for citizens and visitors to Karbala with various government agencies.

Through the Accelerator Lab and in partnership with the Ministry of Higher Education, we launched the blended learning initiative, which facilitates online learning for university students across Iraq, and sensed more than 100 local solutions.

Under Innovation for Development, UNDP implemented, tested and will launch the first Iraqi virtual ecosystem platform in Iraq by January 2021. The platform will be a virtual environment for entrepreneurs, communities, companies, and institutions that provides an innovative space for youth and entrepreneurs to interact with other stakeholders of the ecosystem (private and public sector) based on the gamification system.

Reemphasized the critical role that women and youth play in all facets of development

We developed the Gender Responsive Crisis Chamber to ensure gender-responsive measures are included in



crisis response and recovery efforts. We also established the first-ever Women Against Corruption Forum, and supported almost six million women through the Funding Facility for Stabilization.

Under the Governance Pillar, in coordination with the Women Empowerment Directorate/Council of Ministers Secretariat, gender units previously established with UNDP's support were provided with the tools to conduct gender analysis to ensure integration of gender mainstreaming in policies and programs. Additionally, in collaboration with a national consultant, UNDP and UN women developed an assessment of national SGBV policies, highlighting gaps and suggested steps forward.

The Youth Leadership Programme was rolled out, e-training 1,000 young people and covering all Iraqi governorates for the first time. New tools and techniques have been provided for Iraqi youth leaders, including solutions related to pandemics, climate change, better education and civic engagement.

Established UNDP Iraq as leading partners in the fight against climate change

We signed an MoU with the UN Environment Programme and provided technical support to the Government of Iraq to develop its Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) under the Paris Agreement. Through the Accelerator Lab, we also held the first-ever Future of Climate



Art Exhibition and launched the Mission 1.5 initiative in Iraq.

Advanced Agenda2030 in Iraq

We supported Iraq's Central Statistics Organization to develop the SDG data gap assessment report, strengthening the monitoring of the SDGs in Iraq and allowing decision-makers to prioritize strategic development pathways efficiently. As a result of this research, an online data exchange and visualization platform for SDG indicators is being developed. This will help facilitate the flow of data across different institutions in the country and allow robust analyses and comparative studies.

Supported stronger institutional frameworks in the Kurdistan Region

We helped draft and submit the Electricity sector law, finalize and adopt the Public-Private Partnership framework, and the poverty-based social safety network in partnership with the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs.

Built on our solid partnerships

Signed MoUs with the Ministry of Planning and the Ministry of Youth and Sport. Also, embarked on two joint programmes with UN sister agencies; the

Joint SDG fund with IOM, UNICEF and FAO, and strengthening water infrastructure in Basra with UNICEF.

UNDP was the lead technical agency on the UN Iraq Socioeconomic Response Plan - a roadmap for the United Nations Development System to support Iraq's recovery from COVID-19. We co-lead on the UN Durable solutions strategy, and the Joint Approach to address ISIL perceived affiliated families.

Strengthened security sector reform and rule of law

UNDP supported 178 police officers to receive virtual training in criminal investigations, crime prevention and police management in Ninewa and Anbar. UNDP also supported six local organisations to improve local safety and police-community partnerships, benefiting over 1,000 community members, including local authorities, youth, women, and police officers in Anbar, Ninewa, Salah al-Din, Basra, Karbala and Baghdad. Through the Community Security Integration Pilot, 87 former volunteer fighters in Qurna, Basra were supported through vocational and business development training, psychosocial support sessions, and business start-up grants to help them reintegrate back into the workforce. Four community security investment schemes to upgrade Qurna Preparatory Industrial School will allow facilities to accommodate 200 students to undertake courses.



In 2020, UNEP continued its actions to support Iraq in addressing the environmental consequences of the ISIL conflict, and engaging in international initiatives to address the drivers of climate change, biodiversity loss and increasing pollution.

Highlights

Supporting Iraq transform its methane problem into benefits

While Iraq accounts for around three per cent of global oil and gas production, it is responsible for around eight per cent of world methane emissions according to estimates from the International Energy Agency (IEA). Paradoxically, this wasted gas is estimated to be worth USD 1.5 billion. Specifically, this natural gas can be used to fuel power stations and help Iraq solve its chronic electricity crisis.

Notwithstanding the need to refine methane emission estimates with rigorous field surveys, what is clear is

that emissions from Iraq's oil and gas industry are substantial. Methane is a highly potent climate pollutant that is responsible for 25 per cent of global warming according to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. It has such a huge climate impact because it can trap 84 times more heat than carbon dioxide over the short-term. Most of the methane in the oil and gas sector is released through venting, and leaks from old installations.

The good news is that reducing methane emissions is a low-hanging fruit with zero net cost; that is 40 per cent of emissions can typically be abated with readily available technology whose cost would be balanced by the gains in gas production. And this fruit is even bigger in Iraq's case as it can eliminate

up to 64 percent of emissions at zero-cost according to IEA analysis.

To this end, and in collaboration with the UN Development Programme, UNEP is advising Iraq on integrating methane emissions reduction in its Nationally Determined Contribution (NDCs), which outline the climate efforts of each country under the Paris Agreement to limit global warming. In doing so, Iraq will be one of the few countries to include methane emissions reduction from the oil and gas sector in its NDC, which is expected to be formally endorsed by the government in spring 2021.

To take the methane agenda forward, the Ministries of Health and Environment and Oil established an inter-ministerial technical task force to better understand the nature and scale of methane emissions from the country's oil and gas sector. Through its partnership with Norway's Oil for Development programme, UNEP will help build the capacity of this new



task force on methane management and accessing technical support from international initiatives including UNEP's Global Methane Alliance, and partner organizations like the IEA.

In addition to the climate and economic benefits, reducing methane emissions would also help alleviate Iraq's chronic air pollution. In oil producing regions such as Basra, methane emissions and particulate pollution from flaring is suspected to worsen respiratory illnesses and contribute to some cancers.

Helping the displaced return and rebuild through debris recycling

Buwaiter is one of many villages that was caught along the front lines separating Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) militants in southern Kirkuk from Kurdish Peshmerga forces in the north. This large belt of land, stretching over 65 kilometres and dividing Kirkuk Governorate in half, was until recently a no man's land emptied of its inhabitants as entire villages were levelled.

Between 2014 and 2017, the conflict with ISIL led to the displacement of millions of Iraqis. Less known is that the conflict generated an estimated

55 million tonnes of debris from damaged residential housing alone. And while stability has been returning to Kirkuk governorate, the presence of rubble in people's homes is preventing displaced persons in places like Buwaiter from returning and rebuilding.

After conflicts, rubble is often dumped haphazardly onto open land and in gullies. That is problematic because among the cement and stone can be toxic substances, like asbestos, and dangerous remnants of war, like mines and unexploded ordnance. Kirkuk authorities estimate that around 8 million tonnes of debris were created during the conflict – enough to rebuild the pyramids of Egypt. Around two-thirds of this debris consists of concrete, blocks and stones that can be readily recycled.

To deal with this challenge and thanks to generous support from the Government of Japan, UNEP joined forces with the International Organization for Migration (IOM) to launch an innovative debris recycling project that will help displaced persons in Kirkuk Governorate return to their homes.

By practically demonstrating the potential for debris recycling through this pilot project, the aim is to apply a circular approach and close the loop

on the debris problem, transforming it into part of the solution. This includes not only facilitating safe returns, but also generating livelihood opportunities through Cash for Work activities, carrying out more cost-effective reconstruction by reusing crushed rubble, and better environmental management.

As the reuse of recycled aggregate is little known in Iraq, undertaking material testing of the crushed rubble is key to demonstrating that the end-products comply with national standards for strength and durability. For this purpose, test trials on the use of recycled debris in roads and building blocks are also being carried out. Beyond the immediate aim of facilitating returns and reconstruction, the aim is to insert a life cycle approach in Iraq's construction sector, thereby reducing the depletion of natural resources.

The Buwaiter pilot is the second project of its kind in conflict-affected areas Iraq, following a similar demonstration scheme launched in Mosul by IOM in collaboration with UNEP in late 2018. And plans are currently under way to scale up the Mosul and Kirkuk work and replicate similar initiatives in other conflict-affected areas of the country, such as Sinjar and Hamdaniya in Ninewa governorate.



UN HABITAT in Iraq

Message from the Head of Iraq Programme

UN-Habitat, the United Nations Human Settlements Programme, is mandated by the UN General Assembly to promote socially and environmentally sustainable towns and cities. It is the focal point for all urbanization and human settlement matters within the UN system.

UN-Habitat has been working in human settlements throughout the world since 1975, focusing on building a brighter future for people living in villages, towns, and cities of all sizes. Being the focal point for all urbanization and human settlement matters within the UN system, UN-Habitat is also a custodian of Sustainable Development Goal 11, which calls to “Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.”

UN-Habitat has been active in Iraq

since 1996 under the Oil for Food Programme. After 2003, UN-Habitat was largely engaged in recovery and reconstruction efforts, particularly supporting internally displaced persons (IDPs) and returnees through the provision of shelter and reconstruction planning solutions. UN-Habitat works with national and local governments for development and implementation of various policies, strategies and mechanisms for better urban planning, such as Housing Policy, Housing Reconstruction Strategy, Urban Observatory and City Profiling. Based on the ‘build back better’ principle, UN-Habitat also works with local communities and governments to build the resilience of conflict-affected communities and to prevent development regression.

In 2020, UN-Habitat started to engage in providing durable solutions to conflict-affected people, supporting the governments and people of the affected communities to identify available options using its

urban planning and engineering expertise. UN-Habitat facilitates sustainable, dignified and voluntary returns by rehabilitating and reconstructing houses and infrastructure in the return areas and supporting livelihoods. UN-Habitat also provides technical support to the government by proposing practical methodologies for transforming camps into urban settlements, and ensure protection of housing, land and property rights of all conflict-affected people.

UN-Habitat also responded to COVID-19 with specific focus on vulnerable communities in informal settlements, camps and conflict-affected areas. UN-Habitat continues to support vulnerable people and communities as well as the local authorities in this unprecedented crisis.

Wael Al-Ashhab

Head of Iraq Programme, UN-Habitat



UN-Habitat's core programmes in Iraq

UN-Habitat aims to support the most vulnerable in conflict-affected neighborhoods and informal settlements and develop local capacity for better urban planning and achievement of SDGs. In 2020, UN-Habitat implemented six core programmes to achieve this objective:

1. Area-based urban recovery in conflict-affected cities through rehabilitation of war-damaged housing, public spaces and basic infrastructure such as WASH, schools and health facilities;
2. Construction of low-cost housing units to accommodate returnees whose houses are destroyed beyond repair;
3. Support to livelihoods and local economic opportunities through job creation and vocational training;
4. Protection of housing, land and property rights of IDPs, returnees, and minorities;
5. Emergency shelter and NFI support to out-of-camp IDPs; and
6. COVID-19 response and planning.



UN-Habitat's key achievements

- Rehabilitation of more than 300 houses with major and severe damages
- Rehabilitation of water and sanitation facilities connecting approximately 700 households with clean and regular water supply
- Rehabilitation of Al Yarmouk Park in Mosul, the largest public park in Ninewa Governorate, and engagement of local youth in a series of sports events for social cohesion
- Vocational training and job creation for more than 200 young male and female returnees
- Resolution of 356 land and property disputes through trained and certified community mediators in the districts of Hamdanyia and Telkeif in Ninewa Governorate, with 87% successful resolution rate
- Deployment of mobile handwashing stations in response to COVID-19

“

UN-Habitat responded to COVID-19 with specific focus on vulnerable communities in informal settlements, camps and conflict-affected areas

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UNHCR in Iraq

UNHCR supports the Government of Iraq to respond to the protection and assistance for IDPs, refugees and asylum seekers as well as stateless people in Iraq and to identify comprehensive solutions to help them rebuild their lives. UNHCR leads the Protection, Camp Coordination and Camp Management (CCCM), and Shelter and Non-Food-Items Clusters in support of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and returnees and collaborates with the Government to coordinate the Syrian refugee response through the Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan (3RP).

Facts and Figures

- **Population:** 1.28 million IDPs | 4.8 million returnees | 282,559 refugees | as of the end of November 2020
- Of the 282,559 refugees registered in Iraq, 241,684 are of Syrian nationality.
- **Camps:**
- There are ten refugee camps across KR-I hosting 41 per cent of the Syrian refugee population (over 99,000 individuals), including Bardarash and Gawilan, which host new arrivals from north east Syria. The remaining 59 per cent (around 146,000 individuals) of Syrian refugees live in urban, peri-urban and rural areas.
- UNHCR also manages 29 IDP camps across Iraq that host over 193,000 IDPs country wide.

UNHCR presence in Iraq:

- UNHCR operates out of seven offices countrywide, including the Baghdad Country Office, Basra Field Office, Erbil Sub Office, Duhok Sub Office, Mosul Sub Office, Sulaymaniyah Field Office, and Kirkuk Field Office.
- In addition to the above offices, UNHCR and its partners maintain presence countrywide in Basra, Hilla (Babylon), Ba'quba (Diyala), Kerbala (Kerbala), Najaf (Najaf), Samarra (Salah al-Din), Kut (Wassit), and Khanaqin (Diyala).

Key areas of intervention:

UNHCR Response to the COVID-19 outbreak in Iraq

Through regular contact with authorities at the federal, regional and governorate level, UNHCR has ensured that all Persons of Concern (PoCs) are included in national COVID-19 response plans. However, as the number of cases continue to grow, health facilities across Iraq have been facing increasing pressure to serve all affected individuals, and at the beginning of August, most Directorates of Health (DoH) already indicated that only moderate, severe, and critical cases would be accepted for hospitalisation, asymptomatic cases and those with mild symptoms being advised to self-isolate at home.

Most basic services continued to function (albeit at limited capacity) in camps and areas with a high density of displaced populations. UNHCR has adopted new distribution modalities to ensure the delivery of assistance. The new modalities included door-to-door assistance to avoid mass gatherings and respect physical distancing, and remote protection monitoring, legal counseling, and psychosocial support, among others. In addition, UNHCR continues to implement the following series of measures across the country



to respond to the virus outbreak:

- Access to basic hygiene items: UNHCR provided IDP and refugee families in camps and in urban, peri-urban, and rural areas with cash assistance so they can afford basic hygiene items. A total of 100,335 refugee and IDP families throughout Iraq benefitted from the assistance. In addition, UNHCR distributed over 77,780 sanitary kits to women and girls in camps.
- Health awareness: UNHCR conducted health awareness-raising sessions on transmission and prevention of COVID-19 in refugee and IDP camps, as well as in registration centres and some urban areas. Posters and leaflets have been distributed through camp management, PHCCs, and community outreach volunteers;
- Provision of medical Protective Personnel Equipment (PPE): UNHCR procured medical Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), masks with filters, and disposable shoes to use at borders and in refugee camps. Should funds permit, UNHCR will procure other protective equipment such as surgical masks, gloves, and disposable medical gowns for daily use by medical staff at Primary Health Care Centres in refugee camps and other sanitary items to public health institutions.
- Provision of additional specialized medical equipment: based on consultations with health authorities, as well as other agencies in the country, UNHCR provided material support as needed to ensure public health facilities have the capacity to provide appropriate care and case management of suspected COVID-19 cases on PoCs.





Protection interventions and advocacy

- In line with its core mandate, UNHCR carries out a wide range of protection interventions and conducts substantial advocacy efforts to guarantee the access of vulnerable displaced individuals to humanitarian assistance and to the full exercise of their fundamental rights. This includes the provision of legal assistance and representation; addressing restrictions on freedom of movement; improving access to civil documentation, safety and basic services; psycho-social counselling; identifying and referring vulnerable persons to specialized services; support for survivors of Gender-Based Violence (GBV); and preserving family unity. For refugees, particular emphasis is placed on admission and access to safety, registration and documentation of asylum-seekers, and increased resettlement and other solutions as part of global responsibility-sharing arrangements. For internally displaced persons, UNHCR works with the Government to identify durable solutions, including voluntary, safe, dignified and non-discriminatory returns. Particular focus is also placed in strengthening access to civil status documentation through the provision of legal assistance and support to the Ministry of Interior's Civil Affairs Directorates in order to enable IDPs to access public services, move safely through checkpoints, return to their homes, and secure employment.

- UNHCR protection monitoring and the 2020 Humanitarian Needs Overview reveal that a significant number of IDPs and returnees still lack some form of individual documentation, such as the Public Distribution System (PDS) card, Civil Status IDs, Iraqi Nationality Certificates (INCs), passport, birth certificate, and others. Since 2019, UNHCR has collaborated with the Ministry of Interior (MoI) of the Government of Iraq to implement mobile missions where government officials were deployed to issue civil documentation to IDPs living in camps. The primary focus of the mobile missions is to issue three of the most critical documents for IDPs - Civil Status ID, Iraqi Nationality Certificate, and, wherever available, the Unified National ID Card. As of the end of November 2020, the MoI had issued a total of 8,309 CSIDs, 14,193 INCs and 1,006 UNIDs to IDPs through these mobile missions since the project was initiated. In 2021, UNHCR will focus more on supporting/encouraging the utilization/use of civil affairs offices located in the different districts, including rehabilitation; alongside conducting some mobile missions.
- UNHCR also provides support to the Ministry of Displacement and Migration (MoMD) to establish a database of IDPs and returnees. This database could provide an excellent platform for the distribution of the 1.5 million IQD return grant that the GoI has committed to transfer to returnee households.
- UNHCR builds the capacity of NGO

partners and government officials on GBV prevention and response and the protection of children, including best interests' procedures for children at risk.

Safe spaces for displaced populations

- UNHCR provides a range of services to refugees, IDPs, returnees and stateless persons in Community Support Centres (CSC) across the country. CSCs are safe and public spaces where women, men, girls and boys of diverse backgrounds can meet for social events and share ideas and opinions with each other and with UNHCR and its partners. CSCs are safe spaces where everyone is welcome to meet specialized protection staff and receive counselling, services and assistance. CSCs provide recreational activities such as sports and games for children, adolescents and youth. Key information on different topics, such as child protection, GBV, education, health and legal services, is also available. Vocational trainings are also provided to empower vulnerable displaced individuals and enhance their skills. Due to the COVID-19 health emergency, the CSCs have been working at restricted capacity in line with the GoI and WHO regulations. UNHCR will continue to utilize the CSCs in 2021.

Provision of shelter support and camp coordination

- Through its shelter interventions, UNHCR ensures that refugees, IDPs, and returnees in Iraq have access to adequate shelter and Core Relief Items (CRIs). Shelter assistance by UNHCR includes provision of adequate shelter in IDP and refugee camps as well as the installation of transitional shelter units (Refugee Housing Units) and rehabilitation of damaged houses in selected return areas to facilitate re-integration of IDPs.
- As the Camp Coordination and Camp Management (CCCM) Cluster and Sector lead, UNHCR works with local authorities and humanitarian

actors to improve the living conditions of IDPs and refugees living in camps through the provision of co-ordinated services. UNHCR supports the management of 29 IDP camps and 10 refugee camps across Iraq.

- In October, the Government of Iraq announced a series of sudden IDP camp closures, with 15 camps and informal sites in Federal Iraq, closed by mid-December and affecting thousands of IDPs. The majority of those affected are women and children who are already vulnerable. Two-thirds of the affected people have reached their district of origin but many not in their original homes. They remain extremely vulnerable, without adequate shelter. Social tensions, insecurity, the presence of UEDs, the lack of civil documentation, housing, basic services as well as livelihood opportunities have prevented the other one-third from returning to their places of origin, resulting in secondary displacement. UNHCR continues to monitor the situation of returnees in the areas of return and strongly advocates that the return of internally displaced persons is voluntary, safe, dignified, guided by the endorsed Principled Returns Framework and informed by conducive conditions in areas of origin to ensure a sustainable return.

Supporting families address their most basic needs

- UNHCR assists vulnerable displaced and refugee families to cover their most basic needs through the distribution of cash assistance. In areas where markets are functioning and accessible to beneficiaries, unconditional cash provides an efficient way to meet the needs of those affected by displacement, allowing families to prioritize their own needs while upholding their dignity and making them less likely to resort to harmful coping strategies.

Relieving vulnerable displaced populations from harsh winter conditions

- In some mountainous areas of Iraq,



especially in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KR-I) where 99 per cent of Syrian refugees reside, temperatures can drop to below freezing during winter months. Winterization assistance helps IDPs and refugees to cope with severe winter conditions. Throughout the winter of 2019 and 2020, UNHCR has reached over 666,000 IDPs, 157,000 Syrian refugees, and 16,800 refugees of other nationalities with winter assistance in the form of cash. This assistance remains vital to ensure that vulnerable displaced families are well equipped with the necessary resources to survive winter's harsh conditions.

Strengthening social cohesion while supporting the country in its reconstruction efforts

- UNHCR assists returnee communities with community-focused Quick Impact Projects to foster peaceful co-existence and social cohesion and facilitate the re-integration of displaced persons. UNHCR's strategy aims to foster an enabling environment for IDP returnees to attain self-reliance and strengthen resilience. Projects include the repair of key infrastructure such as civil affairs directorates, schools or health clinics, agricultural facilities (water pumps, greenhouses), and the restoration of services such as garbage collection.

Promoting durable solutions and self-reliance

- UNHCR seeks to reduce dependency and promote self-sufficiency among the refugee population in Iraq, regardless of their chosen durable solution. UNHCR's strategy focuses on ensuring that people of concern are included into existing legal and social systems and works across four thematic areas covering legal, economic, civil, and socio-cultural dimensions. The strategy envisages support to local communities and governments to integrate refugee camps into the host community environment with the vision of camps ultimately becoming built-up settlements that will turn into neighbourhoods of nearby towns, with refugees enjoying equal access alongside the local population to strengthened basic services and access to the job market and education.
- UNHCR works with key government line ministries, UN agencies, development actors, and the private sector to ensure the systematic inclusion of persons of concern into national development plans and long-term development programmes through strategic advocacy, coordination, and evidence-based joint programmes and/or programming. Key partnership areas include protection; social protection, documentation and legal assistance; and (re)integration including access to basic and social services and self-reliance.



Q&A with UNICEF Iraq Deputy Representative PAULA BULANCEA

Hello Paula, can you tell us about your time in Iraq, and how 2020 was 'different' or 'unusual' compared to previous years that you served with UNICEF

I have joined UNICEF Iraq Country Office in April 2019, but it passed like the wind and it's been an incredible journey so far. I enjoy tremendously my time here – I am proud to be able to serve the children in Iraq, I work with smart and hard-working people, I learn something new every day – and I'm even more excited to be here than I was two years ago.

What a year 2020 it has been! We all went through probably the most unusual year of our lifetime so far, a year of many lessons.

We learned the meaning of the word "virtual". The COVID pandemic created additional challenges, which meant we delivered services (including mental health and psychosocial support, outreach etc.) via WhatsApp, U-Report and other online platforms, we conducted trainings online in almost all locations, at all levels (ex. ministries, di-

rectorates, communities), we got the entire UNICEF team and our partners to pivot and adapt their original ideas to the new realities.

We learned to transform the challenges into opportunities. In such difficult times, it's easy to spot negativity, get really down and put everything on hold. But being open, able to change perspectives and ready to step in proved to be the best way to transform our challenges into opportunities. For example, children in 2020 faced the highest risk to their survival, development, and fulfillment of basic rights. However, right at the onset of the crisis, UNICEF advocated closely and supported the Government with evidence and technical assistance to design and implement a one-off ad-hoc cash transfer scheme benefiting 2.1 million households impacted by COVID-19. In parallel, UNICEF continued its support and advocacy to strengthen national social protection system, which led to the development of a joint programme with ILO-WFP and a partnership with EU to support the Government to accelerating the reform of social protection, an area that faced



several constraints and delays before.

Similarly, schools and institutions, including youth centers and non-formal education, remained closed between during the 2019-2020 academic year, at first due to civil unrest and protests in 2019 and then due to long periods of lockdown and curfew in 2020. UNICEF, the two Ministries of Education (Federal Government of Iraq and Kurdistan Region of Iraq) and education partners focused on ensuring continuity of learning through a blended learning approach that included alternative delivery mechanisms using education television, online portals and self-learning materials, benefiting over 2.9 million

Iraqi children to access quality learning and education. The blended learning approach will ensure continuity of learning in formal and non-formal education settings in future similar crisis that will disrupt learning.

Despite the closure of youth centers across Iraq, we saw young people stepping up once more, connecting and creating opportunities for engagement through online channels and platforms. Their dedication and resolute never ceases to amaze us all.

We learned to appreciate what is important to us – at personal and professional level. Professionally, we've refined our programmes and work plans to re-prioritize and de-prioritize our activities and intervention according to the new context, making changes that gave us both clarity and balance while still maintain our team and partners really excited about the work we are doing. At personal level, one thing I learned in this whirlwind year is the importance of taking care of my loved ones and my own mental health, as well as reach out to people to make sure that they are okay.

We learned to stay more connected and focus on the team culture. 2020 has been a year filled with grief and hardship for so many people, and "staying flexible" and "staying connected" are the two principles that have helped me remain positive. Professionally, focusing on team culture is more important than ever now that (almost) everyone is working remotely. Finding the right way to stay connected to supervisees, peers, colleagues, and being supportive in any way I could for the projects we're working on, is something I've been thinking a lot about.

But now that we have officially broken up with 2020, the question is how do we position ourselves for 2021? How do we make sure that we maintain the agility we learned in 2020, how do we apply the lessons we learned so hard, how do we instill in our new generation (children and young people) this ability to adjust and adapt to new realities?

UNICEF talks a lot about 'Reimagining' the world and children's lives, post COVID-19. What does this mean for UNICEF and for UNICEF in Iraq?

Children and young people tend to be forgotten as they are less affected by the symptoms of COVID-19. However, they are most vulnerable to the long-term impact of the virus. With the poverty levels increasing and the loss of schooling, children and young people will suffer the most in the years to come. In Iraq, 2 out of 5 children are living below the poverty line, double the rate in 2018, and 1 in 2 children is deprived in more than one wellbeing dimension.

In education, pre-pandemic, children in Iraq received only an average of 4.0 learning-adjusted years of school. With the long period of school learning space closures due to COVID-19, the learning losses are even higher, with children and young people dropping out of education and in the long run poten-

tially impacting the country's economy. This adds to the existing gender disparities, putting girls at further disadvantage and risk of dropping out.

Right at the onset of the pandemic, UNICEF responded quickly and effectively to the urgent needs of children, young people and their families. In long-term response to COVID-19, UNICEF will continue to protect the most vulnerable children from the impacts of the pandemic and reimagine a world fit for children and young people. REIMAGINE works as an 'umbrella' campaign – our vision for the world as it could be for children – and can define our outreach, global public engagement and fundraising efforts around COVID-19. It serves as a galvanizing force, rallying partners, businesses, foundations and individuals to come together to stop this pandemic becoming a tragedy for this generation of children, young people and generations to come.

In Iraq, UNICEF will continue to work with the Governments, civil society, private sector, influencers and the public to support the delivery of quality services for children and young people and ensure that the most vulnerable ones – including refugees, IDPs and children with disabilities – are not left behind. In addition, we will continue to collaborate with donors – governments, businesses, individuals – to raise funds so that UNICEF can both respond to the crisis and help children and young people recover. In 2020, we, at UNICEF Iraq, raised over 35 million USD for our COVID-19 response. We are grateful to all our donors and supporters – Germany, DFID, Japan, European Union, UK National Committee for UNICEF, UNOCHA and the US Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (BPRM) – and we look forward to continuing our engagement in 2021 and beyond, to ensure we invest in children's and young people's futures and build back better and greener. Together, we can prevent the COVID-19 pandemic from becoming a lasting crisis for children and young people, especially the most vulnerable.

Reimagining our work in Iraq means adopting a multi-pronged strategy that includes the provision of integrated critical services to save young lives and strengthen systems for a sustained impact. Protection will remain central to UNICEF's programme, adopting a holistic/multi-sectoral case management approach, integrating gender-based violence risk mitigation and promoting resilience and recovery.

The prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse will be mainstreamed through awareness-raising activities and by promoting the accessibility of secure and safe reporting channels. UNICEF will improve access to life-saving interventions and essential services in sectors in which it has a comparative advantage, namely health, nutrition, water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), education, child protection and social protection. UNICEF will

also rehabilitate and upgrade physical/digital infrastructure; reach people with messages on prevention and access to services; and provide critical supplies in health care facilities, for high-risk communities and to address waterborne diseases and COVID-19.

We will continue to think outside the box and partner with young people, girls, boys and the disabled, through civic and digital engagement, including social entrepreneurship, to find local solutions to what is perceived as global challenges UNICEF will build the capacities of the Government and civil society partners to identify, prepare for and respond to crises/shocks and integrate an adolescent/youth-centred approach into humanitarian response and development programmes to ensure that youth are systematically engaged. This also means listening to children and young people, working alongside them to design a better future.

What is your message to partners and Iraqis with regards to their role in supporting the rights of children and young people?

All children and young people in Iraq, girls and boys, including the most vulnerable, matter and collectively we need to see them, encourage their role in society and support them to become active and resourceful citizens of their own country.

Now, more than ever, in the context of epidemiological crisis and constraint fiscal space, we need to encourage young people to design entrepreneurial solutions, we need to give children and youth a voice and an opportunity to reach out to and mobilize their communities, we need to empower them to engage in decision making processes at all levels. In addition, we will continue to work with the Government of Iraq to strengthen national systems and engage in influencing public domestic finance for children. As the Government takes progressive steps towards different areas of reform (in line with its Vision 2030), efforts need to be made to at least maintain, if not increase, its investments in children and assess the impact of key public investments and vital outputs on social outcomes.

To all our donors and development partners, I would like to thank them for their generous contributions. We are thrilled to have their support and we value their partnership to co-create a vision of a better world for children and continue working towards fulfillment of children's rights.

Children, adolescents and youth in Iraq are the true agents of change with immense potential to contribute positively to their families, communities and nation.

UNICEF is committed to giving every child in the Iraq a fair chance to be healthy, educated, protected and included, we reaffirm our commitment and take pride in bringing children's voices to the fore and helping fulfil their dreams for a better future for Iraq.



UNESCO in Iraq

Within culture activities, UNESCO focused on reconstruction and rehabilitation of historical sites and buildings in Mosul as a tool to foster social cohesion and community reconciliation like Al Nouri Mosque and its Hadba Minaret, Al Tahera Church, Al Sa'a Church, Al Aghwat mosque and houses in old city.

Additionally, within Education activities UNESCO focused on reconstruction/ rehabilitation of schools, providing furniture and WASH facilities in liberated areas including Ninewah, Salah Al Din, Anbar. Total funding of the activities around \$100M contributed by the following donors: United Arab Emirates, European Union, Qatar, Germany and Italy.

UNESCO will continue to provide support to those affected in the liberated areas. We have provided various kinds of educational support to more than 100,000 students in the liberated areas. Even amid COVID we were able to provide educational support to ensure access to education.

UNESCO's key achievements for 2020:

- Providing educational support to students amid the COVID -19 pandemic through distance learning benefiting 4.5 Million students who were unable to go to schools;
- Providing sanitary kits to 40,100 students before exams to ensure their safety;
- Conducting several trainings to 280 journalists and media actors on Covid 19 misinformation to raise awareness on the pandemic;
- Rehabilitation of historical city centre in Mosul and restoration/conservation of landmark monuments.

Some highlighted activities:

UNESCO, with the generous support of Germany, initiates the first phase of activities at the Al-Aghawat Mosque in the old city of Mosul

The restoration and rehabilitation of the Aghawat Mosque Complex in the Old City of Mosul is well underway.

In close coordination with the Iraqi Armed Forces, UNESCO initiated the first phase of activities by clearing the rubble and UXOs from the complex as well as securing the project site for reconstruction.

The mosque, which dates from the 18th century, is situated beside the historic bridge over the Tigris River. With its white dome, it is one of the most striking sacred buildings in the city of Mosul. The project serves to protect cultural diversity and co-existence between the religions, as Mosul represents Iraq's religious and ethnic diversity.

The first step in the restoration will be to take an inventory of the damage and the surviving historic architectural element of the mosque complex. At the same time, local experts will be trained in restoration and conservation techniques. The project includes skills development and job creation components to provide young men and women from Mosul with a source of livelihood through the heritage rehabilita-

tion sector, highlighting the rich cultural diversity embodied in Mosul's old city.

This initiative is made possible with the generous support of the Government of Germany and coordinated work with the Government of Iraq, local partners and international experts. It is being undertaken as a major part of UNESCO's Initiative to Revive the Spirit of Mosul. This initiative includes three main strategic areas: education, cultural life and heritage.

The primary goal of the Aghawat Mosque project is to contribute to the safeguarding of Mosul's cultural diversity, both in terms of human fabric and surviving cultural heritage. UNESCO has undertaken the delicate task of reconstruction from amidst the ruins, while ensuring strict adherence to the historic integrity of the structures.

In February 2018, the Director-General of UNESCO, Audrey Azoulay, launched the flagship initiative "Revive the Spirit of Mosul" as the Organization's response for the recovery of one of Iraq's iconic cities. Reviving Mosul is not only about reconstructing heritage sites, it is about empowering the population as agents of change involved in the process of rebuilding their city through culture and education. It is with a strong message of hope and resistance to Iraq and to the world, a message that an inclusive, cohesive and equitable society is the future that Iraqis deserve, that the "Revive the spirit of Mosul" Flagship Initiative was born.

UNESCO with the generous support of the European Union announced the launch of the TVET Reform Project 2

UNESCO with the generous support of the European Union announced the launch of the TVET Reform Project 2.

The program is being executed in close partnership with the Iraqi government and the private sector, with an effort to work on the implementation of a Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) reform program.

This program was initially launched in its first phase in 2014 through a signed partnership agreement with the Iraqi government. TVET creates employment by helping Iraqis acquire the necessary knowledge and skills to be more competitive in today's labor market, serving today's market demands using today's solutions.

The event was attended by UNESCO Representative to Iraq, Mr. Paolo Fontani, and Ms. Barbara Egger, Head of Cooperation,

represented the European Union, the Deputy Minister of Education and Deputy Minister of Higher Education, several Iraqi technical university Presidents, representatives from the private sector and more.

The TVET Reform Program aims to improve the effectiveness of the TVET system in Iraq by equipping youth and adults with the required skills for employment, entrepreneurship and lifelong learning. Additionally, the project contributes to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and in particular Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 4.3 and 4.4.

SDG 4.3 – ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable quality TVET and higher education
SDG 4.4 – substantially increase the number of youth and adults with relevant skills, including TVET, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship objectives.

The TVET Reform Project is working on four objectives:

- The implementation of the revised TVET governance model
- Increasing the employment of young Iraqis through the establishment of Centres of Vocational Excellence (CoVES) in Dohuk, Mosul, Karbala, Baghdad and Basra in the Ministry of Education's Vocational schools
- Setting up 4 Sectorial councils (Hospitality, Agriculture, Construction, IT) to better link the Private Sector with the TVET Institutions
- Helping the 4 Technical Universities align their curricula and quality control processes with international standards using the Bologna process

UNESCO and the SBAH have begun stabilization measures on the historic Sulaiman Al Saigh house and Zyada house in Mosul

UNESCO and the State Board of Antiquities and Heritage in Mosul have begun stabilization measures on the historic Sulaiman Al Saigh house and Zyada house in Mosul as part of an EU funded project to conserve, safeguard and reconstruct heritage houses and buildings in Mosul and within the framework of UNESCO's Revive the Spirit of Mosul Initiative. The EU supported project for the Old City includes the reconstruction of a combination of public and private houses, schools, and public buildings of heritage value.

Fadhel Mohammed Khuder, Head of the Supervision and Follow-up Committee, SBAH, said "we are currently undertak-

ing the delicate task of stabilizing the two houses". A representative from AMAC – rubble removal added, "we are pleased to be undertaking this important work. It gives companies and workers in Mosul a chance to participate in the important step to rebuild our city, building by building and house by house".

UNESCO Engineer, Omar Alswaff said, "I'm really pleased to be working for UNESCO on this project. The two houses have unique characteristics that demonstrate the architectural and artistic traditions of our city. We are currently working on around 50 other houses in Mosul on this UNESCO / EU project, each one preserving a part of our cultural traditions that were damaged by the conflict"

The purpose of the project is to promote livelihood opportunities for youth in Iraq and in particular among the communities of the Old City of Mosul and Basra, to contribute to the restoration of the historic urban landscape while contributing to social cohesion and inter-community reconciliation.

UNESCO in collaboration with the High Commission for the Erbil Citadel Revitalization (HCECR) reopened the site for public visitors

UNESCO in collaboration with the High Commission for the Erbil Citadel Revitalization (HCECR) reopened the site for public visitors. This effort comes within the framework of the project, "Support to Livelihoods through Cultural Heritage Development", funded by the European Union.

The Erbil Citadel closed in the middle of March 2020 due to the lockdown imposed by COVID-19 and precautionary steps were taken by the Kurdistan Regional Government in Iraq in response to the pandemic.

The Erbil Citadel, a World Heritage Site since 2014, is a fortified settlement on top of an imposing ovoid-shaped tell (a hill created by many generations of people living and rebuilding on the same spot) in the Kurdistan region, Erbil Governorate. A continuous wall of tall 19th century facades still conveys the visual impression of an impregnable fortress, dominating the city of Erbil.

For more information on UNESCO's projects in Iraq please visit:

 /UNESCOIraq

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UNMAS in Iraq

Foreword by

UNMAS Iraq Senior Programme Manager

MR. PEHR LODHAMMAR

“To say that 2020 was a transformative year, is perhaps, a major understatement. The emergence and swift transmission of the COVID-19 pandemic took the world by a storm. Most countries, prepared for many different types of disasters, both natural and manmade, were not prepared for this...Many never envisioned that such a powerful type of respiratory infection would shut down the world for nearly a year.

However, as I look back at this year, I cannot help but feel pride at what UNMAS Iraq and staff have achieved – remotely and on-ground, working non-stop to compensate for lost time and overcome daily challenges. Beyond the hardships we face routinely

in mine action, the additional challenges brought forth by COVID-19 were as difficult as they were unprecedented, and yet, UNMAS Iraq remained resolute. Even as we temporarily halted field operations in accordance with Government of Iraq health and safety curfew measures, we enhanced our coordination with the Government of Iraq to initiate a resumption strategy, to ensure gradual resumption of operations as soon as possible. Sure enough, less than four months after operations were halted, UNMAS Iraq continued its operations in July 2020.

When I think of this year, a few pivotal moments come to mind to formulate the sequence of this year’s trajectory.



Flashback to:



1. January 2020, when a delegation from the Finnish embassy visited UNMAS operations in Mosul. Unbeknownst to us, this would be the last donor visit of the year, due to strict health and safety measures impacting travel, movement, and gatherings as mitigations efforts to combat COVID-19.

Sites visited included the Al Shifa Hospital Complex, the former headquarters of Da'esh in Mosul, where thousands of explosive ordnance were found. In addition, delegates were able to attend an interactive risk education session for children living in adjacent neighborhoods, as well as visit an active UNMAS clearance site nearby. They were also able to meet the local commander of the Civil Defense in Ninewa, who works in coordination with UNMAS to respond to critical public and residential contamination.

2. March 2020, when Iraq joined the world in the fight against COVID-19 by imposing strict health and safety measures, which included severe travel restrictions, a national curfew, among other mitigation efforts to contain the pandemic. This led UNMAS to temporarily suspend its field operations, shifting to a remote work modality that ensured an enhanced liaison with Government of Iraq entities, online training and technical support offered to national and local actors. UNMAS adapted Explosive Ordnance Risk education activities developing digital and no-contact methodologies to ensure continuation of

the life-saving support. UNMAS has provided risk education messages to communities through billboards messaging, TV stations spots, and a social media campaign "Safe Step". In addition, during the pause in operational activities, UNMAS Iraq completed 27 standard working procedure documents reflecting learning and experiences across the spectrum of explosive ordnance clearance management and delivery activities that will be a cornerstone of future nationalization processes and training. Furthermore, in close liaison with the Government of Iraq, UNMAS Iraq drafted plans to resume operations once restrictions were lifted. These plans included: the mobilization of explosive hazard management (EHM) teams with 48h notice; the development of a COVID-19 Operational Guidance Note for operators to implement infection control measures; and the necessary contract and

grant amendments.

3. July 2020, when UNMAS Iraq steadily resumed clearance operations following instruction from the national authority, the Directorate of Mine Action. By October, EHM teams were fully opera-

tional in the following cities: Fallujah, Mosul, Ramadi, Sinjar, and Tel Afar. The teams are varied, including several mixed-gender deminer teams.

4. November 2020, when UNMAS Iraq management team and I visited Basra on an exploratory visit to meet with representatives from the Regional Mine Action Centre – South (RMAC – South) and visit prospective operational tasking sites for possible future activity expansion to the Iraqi South.

The visit comes in answer to Government of Iraq's request for UNMAS to expand its operations beyond areas retaken from ISIL. As the country faces economic struggles, further exacerbated by #COVID-19 and prospective austerity measures, UNMAS expansion of clearance operations to the South of Iraq, including the commercial city of Basra, will ensure release of prime investment land that will assist in reinvigorating the local economy. This, in turn, will have a positive economic effect on communities in addition to saving lives.

This year was, without a doubt, exceptional. The challenges were unprecedented, yet there were important takeaways, lessons learned, and opportunities to accompany the hardships. It may be optimistic to claim, but this year reinforced the idea that in spite of our differences, we are all the same. Only in working together can we overcome these difficult times. Dedicating most of my professional life in mine action, and in Iraq in particular, has taught me this. With duress, comes relief. This, I know for sure.





UNFPA supports strengthening the capacity of state institutions, human rights organizations, local civil society organizations and communities to prevent and respond to gender-based violence, including in humanitarian settings.

UNFPA supported GOI with developing the National GBV Strategy, ensuring an inclusive and participatory approach.

2020, a challenging year for women in Iraq

2020 was marked by one of the most dangerous public health crises seen in modern history due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The impacts of the outbreak proved again that women are the most at risk yet are absent in pandemic responses. In Iraq, the Government imposed lockdowns and travel restrictions which led to increased violence against women and further limited access to reproductive health services amid a weak health care system.

Lockdowns contributed to increased domestic violence cases, especially against women, and the pandemic affected women's wellbeing significantly. Women are the main health resource at primary health care; the first care-givers when one of their family members is ill. In addition to that, women faced a higher burden of un-

paid care during lockdowns. Given overburdened health-care systems, reproductive rights, whether to access contraception or give birth safely, were constrained.

UNFPA worked with the Iraqi Government and implementing partners to continue providing reproductive health and GBV services during the pandemic.

"During these challenging times, women must have free access to quality maternal and reproductive health services, as well as GBV prevention and response services, including mental and psychosocial support services. The pandemic, lockdowns and quarantine continue to affect girls' and women's wellbeing and health directly," says UNFPA Representative to Iraq, Dr Rita Columbia.

COVID-19 RESPONSE

As the immediate response to COVID-19, UNFPA with partners delivered Personal Protective Equipment (PPEs) worth US\$357,007 to the Ministry of Health in the Kurdistan Region. This equipment enabled front line health workers to maintain the quality of services while protecting themselves. UNFPA built two isolation units in Soran and Zakho Maternity Hospitals. These isolation units provide safe space and quality care for pregnant women infected with COVID-19 to have safe childbirths. This measure ensures prevention of COVID-19 dissemination and safety for all women who are seeking maternal health services. In Garmian and Sulaimani regions, UNFPA equipped maternity wards to improve access and quality of maternal health services. More than 300 women infected with COVID-19 received services in the isolation units for three months.

To reach out to communities directly, UNFPA distributed 73,500 hygiene kits that included masks, gloves and hand sanitizers in ten IDP camps and five host communities. In collaboration with the Ministries of Health, youth volunteers and CSOs, UNFPA raised awareness of 131,554 women and 1,162 men about preventing COVID 19 and the increased risk of violence during the pandemic.

In October 2020, the Ministries of Health



and UNFPA successfully launched adolescent and youth helpline where young people could receive quality counselling services on health and COVID-19 issues. Sixty-seven thousand young people benefited from COVID-19 awareness campaigns throughout Iraq.

With the support of UNFPA, the Ministry of Planning and Health in the Federal Government and Kurdistan Regional Government conducted a Rapid Assessment on the impact of COVID-19 on the reproductive health services in Iraq in September 2020. The assessment cov-

ered 107 health centers at primary and ten hospitals at secondary and tertiary levels in Baghdad, Basrah, Erbil, Najaf and Salahuddin governorates and conducted by 27 physicians and 16 statisticians trained on data collection. The assessment found 20% of the decline in antenatal care and 80% reduction in family planning services delivery. The majority of interviewed women did not access the services due to fear of infection and curfew. Health clinics experienced lack of health providers and limited space to follow social distancing as a preventive measure.

END GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

UNFPA supports strengthening the capacity of state institutions, human rights organizations, local civil society organizations and communities to prevent and respond to gender-based violence, including in humanitarian settings. UNFPA supported GOI with developing the National GBV Strategy, ensuring an inclusive and participatory approach.

In 2020, UNFPA continued policy advocacy and capacity development of the Iraqi Government to strengthen laws, policies and strategies that contribute to prevention and response to GBV and protect survivors' rights including access to essential gender-based violence services. UNFPA, in partnership with other UN Agencies, provided technical support to relevant authorities in drafting the anti-domestic violence law. The Council of Ministers approved the draft and submitted to the Iraqi Parliament for

review and ratification. The Federal Anti-Domestic Violence Law holds perpetrators of GBV accountable throughout the country.

Throughout the year, 47,035 women and girls received hygiene kits. Dignity kits were delivered to women and girls of reproductive age in camps and non-camps settings to meet their reproductive health hygienic needs. Dignity kits protect women's dignity and enable women and girls to access services and perform their daily tasks.

Moreover, UNFPA reached 158,703 women and girls with GBV information and services in humanitarian and development settings. Four thousand fifty-five cases were monitored in 2020, in which 3,035 remote cases were managed during the pandemic. Additionally, 11 Mental Health Psycho-Social Support (MHPSS) training was conducted for 127 service providers in the shelters and women spaces to ensure GBV services are available at all times during the pandemic.





SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH

UNFPA's humanitarian interventions focused on sexual and reproductive health contribute to saving women's lives and building the health sector's resilience. UNFPA works to strengthen

national capacities, particularly health systems and women machineries, to address emerging development and humanitarian needs and ensure that no one is left behind.

UNFPA supported capacity development of health providers to deliver integrated Sexual Reproductive Health

(SRH) services at primary and secondary health care levels.

In 2020, UNFPA organized numerous awareness sessions on preventing COVID-19 in camps and non-camp settings targeting pregnant women, midwives and nurses. Health workers received online training on managing pregnancy and childbirth during contraction of COVID-19. Despite the lockdown, UNFPA's support to health facilities continued without interruption. As a result, more than 603,619 women and girls received SRH services.

To ensure that no one is left behind, UNFPA supported eight health facilities to provide SRH services to women with disabilities. Seven of these facilities are in KRI, in which 737 women and 202 girls benefited from the services, and 407 women and 65 girls with disabilities received SRH services in a clinic in Ninawa.

UNFPA supported the GOI to develop a national family planning strategy. In 2020, the Ministry of Health of Iraq launched the National Birth Spacing/Family Planning Strategy (2021-2025). The strategy aims to improve access and quality of family planning services nationwide, including contraceptives, raise people's awareness about family planning and its impact on social and economic development of their communities and society at large.



YOUTH EMPOWERMENT AND PARTICIPATION

UNFPA strives to empower young people, particularly adolescent girls, to make informed choices about their sexual and reproductive health and rights, exercise leadership and participate in sustaining peace and social cohesion.

In 2020, the Government of Iraq, with the support of UNFPA and UNICEF, unveiled the results of the National Adolescent and Youth Survey. The survey was comprehensive and captured the state of adolescents and youths, aspiration and perceptions about their lives. The purpose of the study was to provide reliable and complete data to the Federal Ministry of Youth and Sports and Ministry of Culture and Youth KRI for developing evidence-based and youth-



centered policies and programmes for youth socio-economic empowerment.

In 2020, UNFPA provided technical support to the Ministry of Youth and Sports and Ministry of Culture and Youth to develop evidence-based Youth Vision 2030 to address young people's current challenges and strengthen their role in all sectors. To ensure an inter-sectorial approach for the Youth Vision implementation, UNFPA supported the Ministry of Culture and Youth in KR-I in

establishing the Inter-Ministerial Committee that advocates for and coordinates youth-focused interventions among the line ministries in KRG. With UNFPA support, the Youth Ministries developed an action plan on youth volunteering for civic engagement, enabling young people to build their leadership skills and become volunteers for various community initiatives.

In collaboration with the Ministry of Youth and Sports of Iraq and the Min-

istry of Culture and Youth in Kurdistan Region, UNFPA conducted a capacity assessment of the Youth Centers (YC) in November 2020. The assessment findings are to be used by the Government and partners to strengthen the youth sector by increasing Youth Centers' capacity to be a leading agency for youth empowerment and participation and contribute to the National Youth Vision implementation.

To promote youth participation in decision-making processes and building capacity in leadership roles, UNFPA established 3 Youth Advisory Boards in collaboration with the Ministry of Youth and Sports in three governorates: Basra, Najaf and Diyala. The boards intend to advise the Directorates of Youth & Sport in planning, monitoring, and implementing youth programmes.

Moreover, on the fifth anniversary of the UN Security Council Resolution 2250, the Ministry of Youth and Sports launched the Iraqi Youth Coalition on Peace and Security with the support from UNFPA and Folke Bernadotte Academy, the Swedish Government. The Iraqi youth coalition would lead the development of an action plan on UNSC Resolution 2250 to engage youth for peace processes, conflict resolution and recovery from protracted crisis and sustainable development.

POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT:

UNFPA works to improve the national population data systems for better availability, analysis and accessibility of evidence-based information on population dynamics to formulate rights-based policies.

UNFPA supported the Iraqi Government to strengthen the national capacity of the Government in conducting the e-Census. The Ministry of Planning contributed IQD 6 billion (US\$ 5 million) to UNFPA in support of the technical and procurement requirements for the Census in Feb 2020. The General Population and Housing Census of 2020 was one of the commitments Iraq conceded to, to provide comprehensive and updated statistical data on the characteristics of individuals, buildings, housing and families. Due to the pandemic, the Government of Iraq postponed the census to 2021.





UNOPS in Iraq

The Iraq Information Center

In 2020, with current funding from USAID, OCHA IHPF and WFP, the Iraq Information Center (IIC), run by UNOPS on behalf of the Humanitarian Country Team, continued to respond to the critical needs of affected populations in Iraq.

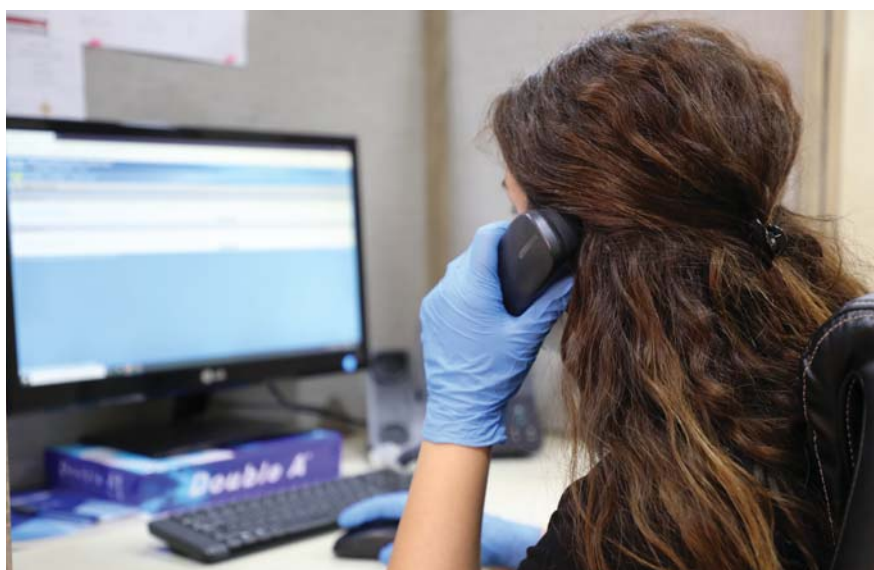
The IIC has improved the quality of accountability and humanitarian response to the affected populations by collecting and sharing information about the populations' needs and directing them to the specialized humanitarian actors. In 2020, IIC has received 136,552 calls with 39.14% increase in the number of calls compared to 2019. 76% of calls were from male callers and 24% were from female callers with a decrease by 3% in number of calls received from female callers compared to 2019. 32.11% of these calls were received from IDPs, 22.46% from returnees, and 45.43% from refugees."

In 2020, IIC developed a software and

started introducing it to clusters and various organizations in Iraq. The new software will enable the wider referral to more service providers in Iraq and will speed up the response time and services

delivery to affected populations.

The IIC received a call in September from an adult male IDP who mentioned that he was a survivor of gender-based violence, psychological/emotional abuse



and physical assault. The survivor requested help with ensuring his personal safety and was seeking a shelter. After he gave consent to the IIC to share his personal information with partners, his request was referred to the relevant clusters. A gender-based violence service provider and other clusters contacted the survivor and he was provided with assistance in close coordination with the relevant agencies within ten days. When the IIC followed up on the case, the caller informed the IIC that the agencies contacted him to assist with resolving the issue.



The fight against the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) across Iraq has resulted in a protracted humanitarian crisis and devastation of several areas. Infrastructure has been destroyed, leaving territories without access to services and full of solid waste. The new returnees remain vulnerable, given that they are now trying to re-establish their livelihoods and consolidate their households. In addition, in areas where ISIL held control, there was a significant number of people who were wounded or injured, increasing the number of people with disabilities, orphans, and widows who are now in need of support. Damage assessments indicate a high degree of interdependence amongst the following affected sectors: tertiary municipal services and solid waste management, urban water and sanitation, and urban roads and energy.

With Funding from the Government of Japan, the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) supported the Government of Iraq in improving the living conditions of the returnees in the liberated areas under the project “Restoring Access to Critical Urban Services in Liberated Areas”. Restoring access to critical urban services in liber-

ated areas is critical to allowing the return of the displaced population and ensuring that they are provided with decent living conditions.

During the project implementation, UNOPS undertook the following project activities that were implemented in Al Ramadi, Anbar Governorate in Iraq:

1. Solid Waste Management through provision of solid waste compactor trucks, wheel loaders and excavators; provision of solid waste garbage containers; and provision of training on modern waste disposal systems.
2. Urban Water and Sanitation through expansion and rehabilitation of storm water network; replacement of potable and storm water damaged assets and rehabilitation of main water pipe in a storm water lift station.
3. Urban Roads were rehabilitated including rehabilitation of secondary roads; electricity for critical services; and provision of solar street lights

All the project activities were completed and handed over to Anbar Governorate by 31 December 2020.

Under another project funded by the Government of Japan, namely “Restoring Access to Critical Community Services in Diyala Governorate in Iraq”, the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) supports the Government of Iraq to improve living conditions of the returnees in the liberated areas. Using an integrated approach in selecting and implementing activities, the project will restore access to community services in Diyala while maximizing cost effectiveness and ensuring complementarity across sectors.

The project ensures that people in Iraq, civil society and communities, particularly women, have improved capacity to lead, participate in and contribute to the design and delivery of equitable and responsive services, especially for the most vulnerable populations. In addition, the project will improve access to critical community services for targeted communities in Diyala.

The project is under implementation and UNOPS will undertake the following project activities in Al Khaless in Al Mansouriah District in Diyala:

1. Waste Management including provision of solid waste garbage containers and provision of training on modern waste disposal systems.
2. Urban Roads through rehabilitation of secondary roads; electricity for critical services; and provision of solar street lights.

All the project activities are expected to be completed by the end of 2021.



The pandemic resulted in lockdowns and losses in livelihoods, eroding households' ability to meet basic needs

The situation in Iraq continued to present a challenging and fluid context for WFP's humanitarian and development work in 2020. While the need for life-saving food assistance to vulnerable populations persisted in many areas, some Iraqi families returned home where they and host communities could participate in livelihood-oriented

activities, supporting families' self-sufficiency and resilience to future shocks. Given the COVID-19 pandemic, and uncertain security environment, WFP employed a dynamic response aligned with its humanitarian-development mandate which also facilitated response to the diverse needs of the Iraqi population and Syrian refugees. Despite challenges, including bank liquidity constraints due to the pandemic, WFP successfully supported 898,000 women and men, girls and boys across its activities in Iraq in 2020, the first year of the Country Strategic Plan (2020-2024).

The pandemic resulted in lockdowns and losses in livelihoods, eroding households' ability to meet basic needs. WFP responded to emerging needs by reintegrating tens of thousands of Syrian refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) into relief assistance, who had become food insecure. This allowed WFP to provide emergency food assistance to more than 371,100 IDPs and refugees.

Under WFP's resilience-building portfolio, food assistance for community assets creation and rehabilitation (FFA) and food assistance for training supported





39,000 people in rural areas. These are a key part of durable solutions, both for families who return home from camps, and their host communities who continue to require support. New Urban Livelihoods activities were also introduced in response to COVID-19 to help participants get back to work, supporting 42,800 people who had lost sources of income. WFP's award-winning 'EMPACT' – 'Empowerment in Action!' digital skills and English training innovatively moved online due to the pandemic, supporting over 10,900 vulnerable youth and their families.

Notably, in partnership with the Ministry of Education (MoE), WFP expanded the School Feeding Programme significantly in 2020 in recognition of its multidimensional nature furthering food security, nutrition, education and gender equality objectives, reaching 321,800 children. As consequence of movement restrictions, schools closed and School Feeding paused from April 2020. During Ramadan, WFP supported nearly 112,800 of the children's family members with 'take-home' food baskets. Since late 2020, WFP and MoE have been developing a National School Feeding Policy, with the vision of universal school feeding for all children in all schools.

Despite the pandemic, WFP was able to maintain operational flexibility and readiness to mobilise alternative modalities such as virtual cards, activate contingency plans and diversify the delivery mechanisms for cash-based transfers (CBT). To better meet people's needs, the use of CBT in 2020 significantly scaled up to nearly 100 percent of assistance, although in-kind food remains in place for contingency use.

WFP's provision of common services was an important enabling element of the COVID-19 response, with WFP establishing passenger flights in Iraq when commercial options were grounded. This supported humanitarian-development partners in the country. From 2020, WFP has been the chair of the interagency Logistics Working Group in Iraq.

WFP continued to work closely with the host and donor governments, UN partners, World Bank and NGO partners, to ensure ongoing capacity strengthening and complementarity of interventions. Through the work of the WFP-co-led Food Security Cluster, WFP continued to cement its role as an enabler and partner of choice for the wider humanitarian and development community. In November, WFP and UNICEF signed a Joint Work Plan to enhance the wellbeing of school children in Iraq. The two agencies are launching a joint initiative in Basra in 2021, to help girls from financially struggling families continue their education.

From April, WFP pioneered a Hunger Monitoring System of data collection and analysis on the impact of COVID-19 on food security in Iraq, alongside weekly and monthly price and market monitor reports. Together with the Food and Agriculture Organization, International Fund for Agricultural Development and World Bank, WFP used the analysis to publish regular joint reports, supporting the government and humanitarian-development actors with programmatic decision-making. WFP also contributed to the development of the Iraq Socio-Economic Response Plan.

A vital part of WFP's social protection work in 2020 remained the partnership with the Ministry of Trade (MoT) to digitalise and reform the national Pub-

lic Distribution System for food rations (PDS). The 'Tamwini' ('My Food Ration') smartphone application was launched in July, helping families stay home safely and update their data remotely. At MoT's request, the digitalisation initiative continues to expand in 2021.

2020 also began a transformative phase for the mainstreaming of gender-responsive and conflict-sensitive programming for WFP in Iraq. The Country Office began to implement the WFP Gender Transformation Programme, alongside conflict analysis research, to further successfully integrate gender equality, women's empowerment, social cohesion and conflict sensitivity in all aspects of WFP's programme of work. In October, WFP received the Nobel Peace Prize for its efforts to combat hunger, and contribution to bettering conditions for peace in conflict-affected areas. WFP continues to champion women in all its activities, with half of all places on its projects dedicated for women.

WFP continued to work closely with the host and donor governments, UN partners, World Bank and NGO partners, to ensure ongoing capacity strengthening and complementarity of interventions



WHO in Iraq

Introduction

WHO contributed to, activated and scaled up emergency response mechanisms, as well as pandemic preparedness plans. These included inter-agency plans such as the Strategic Preparedness and Response Plan (SPRP) and inter-cluster documents, such as the COVID-19 Addendum to HRP 2020

On 24 February 2020, Iraq recorded its first COVID-19 cases in the country. This follows the World Health Organization (WHO) declaration of the novel coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2) as an outbreak of a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC) on 30 January 2020. In response to the pandemic, Iraq effected a total lockdown including all its border closure on 14 March for more than one month. These measures included restrictions on commercial activity as well as civilian movements across the country, and at international airports and Points of entry (POEs).

As of the end of December 2020, more than 593 000 COVID-19 cases had been reported, with more than 12800 deaths. Throughout this period, WHO worked closely with health authorities at the national level and in the Kurdistan region, in collaboration with other partners, to support the response of the Government in limiting transmission of the virus and containing the outbreak. This report highlights challenges and progress and showing what has worked best to limit trans-

mission of COVID-19.

Iraq's response was unique because, in addition to dealing with COVID-19, the country continued to respond to the humanitarian emergency. Thousands remain displaced in internally displaced persons camps and refugee camps. These individuals are vulnerable and are at high risk of COVID-19 due to less than ideal living conditions. Some cases have been reported in the camps. As a result of WHO leadership and coordinated efforts with partners (United Nations sister agencies and local and international organizations), outbreaks in camps have been successfully contained.

This support provided a well-coordinated approach with all partners, thus avoiding duplication of efforts, and has led to an increased number of people being tested with high detection rates, a high detection rate of cases, and more identification of community cases. More than 534 800 COVID-19 patients had recovered and were discharged from various health facilities across the country by the end of December 2020.

Key strategic activities and accomplishments

Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, WHO has worked with the Ministry of Health and Environment and partners to contain the epidemic by establishing a coordination mechanism and infectious disease outbreak response activities and ensuring that those infected with COVID-19 are treated. WHO's key areas of support to Iraq to flatten the curve include.



1. Preparedness and response:

In line with the International Health Regulations (IHR 2005), WHO encouraged the Ministry to adopt a “whole of government/society” approach in responding to COVID-19. It promoted the development of a comprehensive national strategy to reduce the number of infections, save more lives and minimize the impact of COVID-19 on the country.

WHO, in collaboration with the Ministry, developed a strategic preparedness and response plan that outlined public health measures to minimize and control the spread of the virus. The plan supported the Ministry and directorates of health in preparing for, and responding to, COVID-19 and slowing down its transmission within Iraq, as well as halting its spread to other countries.

WHO mobilized rapid response teams to respond to the surge in the number of cases and provided technical guidelines, tools and supplies for surveillance and laboratory verification. It also provided training and developed educational materials for dissemination in community awareness campaigns that targeted schools, market places, mosques and other public places.

2. Coordination and collaboration:

As the Health Cluster lead, WHO has, and continues to play, a significant role in leading COVID-19 response efforts in the country. From the onset of the outbreak, WHO has been a member of the Humanitarian Operations Cell (HOC), a forum including the Humanitarian Coordinator, United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), NGO Coordination Centre in Iraq (NCCI), heads of United Nations agencies and nongovernmental organizations, and the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). In addition, WHO was also part of the Committee 55 during the early stages of the pandemic, providing technical advice on the appropriate measures the Government of Iraq should take in order to minimize spread of the infection.

WHO contributed to, activated and scaled up emergency response mechanisms, as well as pandemic preparedness plans. These included inter-agency plans such as the Strategic Preparedness and Response Plan (SPRP) and inter-cluster documents, such as the COVID-19 Addendum to HRP 2020, guidance on establishment and operation of Quarantine/Isolation areas in camps, the Allocation Strategy for the 1st

Reserve Allocation of the Iraq Humanitarian Fund that focused on COVID-19 response, etc. Additionally, WHO/Health Cluster regularly provided strategic and technical guidance and updates to members of the Humanitarian Country Team and the Inter-Cluster Coordination Group (ICCG).

In collaboration with the Water and Sanitation (WASH) and CCCM clusters, the Health Cluster developed a 4W partner capacity-mapping template to map available partner capacity to respond to the COVID-19 epidemic in areas requiring humanitarian response. This includes geographical presence, lead-time to mobilize resources, duration of planned implementation. The data are updated monthly. Subsequently, mapping of services and supplies provided by humanitarian partners to the Ministry and different The coordination and leadership roles of WHO/Health Cluster prevented the spread of COVID-19 among camp populations. However, sporadic cases were later reported in IDP camps.

In collaboration with the Gender Based Violence sub-cluster, WHO identified an increase in gender-based violence resulting from movement restrictions and the socio-economic impact of COVID-19, the Mental Health and Psychosocial Support Working Group, headed by WHO and reporting to the Health Cluster, conducted several trainings for front-line health and security personnel to identify and refer potential GBV survivors to facilities where services are available.

In order to facilitate monitoring of COVID-19 in camps, the Health Cluster coordinated initially with the CCCM Cluster and then with UNHCR to obtain information on the number of cases and deaths in the IDP/Refugee camps and in urban settings, which is updated on a weekly basis on pg. 21 of the WHO Iraq COVID-19 Dashboard.

3. Active surveillance and contact tracing

WHO supported the Ministry and directorates of health to strengthen surveillance in all areas, including selected hospitals, points of entry (POEs) and IDP camps, by providing standard case definitions, reporting formats, line list formats and electronic reporting formats, updated guidelines, protocols, and training. WHO also provided guidelines on quarantine and laboratory verification, in addition to laboratory supplies to verification of confirmed cases for isolation and treatment.

WHO also supported surveillance efforts through contact tracing and community

surveillance initiatives, which sought to isolate, test and treat every case and trace every contact. These initiatives improved detection, verification and response to the COVID-19 epidemic until rates of community transmission increased substantially following the Eid celebrations in May. The Ministry's surveillance system enabled the public health department and WHO to create dynamic dashboards to predict the epidemiological trend of COVID-19 to inform decision-making on mitigation and response efforts.

WHO created a unique reporting link through the Early Warning Alert and Response Network (EWARN) system to report suspected cases of COVID-19 in humanitarian response areas. The reporting enabled timely detection, verification, and control of cases in IDP and refugee camps and returnee locations. A total of 650 EWARN alerts were detected in 2020; of these, 630 were suspected COVID-19, and 25 laboratories confirmed as COVID-19 outbreaks. Other diseases detected were suspected cholera (1), measles (1), meningitis (14), TB(1), Brucellosis(1), Typhoid(1) and Anthrax (1). On average, 129 health facilities submitted weekly reports with 2 667 753 consultations reported during the year; of these, 976 122 EWARN targeted diseases were recorded. More than 110 incidence-based outbreaks were notified from relevant facilities for verification and response using the EWARN system.

4. Risk communication

In partnership with the national Communications and Media Commission (CMC) of Iraq, health partners, and media companies, WHO and the Ministry reached more than 120 000 people by disseminating more than one million various information, education and communication materials, and bulk messaging. To ensure coordinated messaging for all partners involved in the response and counter misinformation, a media crisis cell comprising WHO, CMC, and 30 media outlets was formed to educate society on COVID-19 and prevent transmission. Traditional and social media channels, including WhatsApp, Viber, Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, were used to reach communities.

Also, 17 educational videos were produced and broadcasted in 30 Iraqi satellite channels countrywide. To ensure effective communications on risks and prevention of COVID-19 infection, published and distributed hundreds of thousands of information, education, and communication materials in Arabic, English, and Kurdish to

different communities in the country. These areas included, among other Ministries of Health, Hospitals, and Airports.

Also, numerous television interviews totaling 75 were conducted countrywide to raise public awareness. WHO's social media channels widely broadcasted and amplified more than 900 tweets on key preventive messages.

WHO, the Ministry, and other partners communicated risks and educated communities on basic public health measures to prevent transmission, especially during mass gatherings.

Mental health and psychosocial support/gender-based violence awareness-raising materials were also printed and disseminated in Arabic and Kurdish. WHO also translated mental health and gender-based violence materials into Kurdish Sorani.

To respond to the increasing rate of community transmission of COVID-19, WHO and the Ministry, in partnership with the United Iraqi Medical Society, the Ministry of Youth and Sports and community police, the Ministry of Health in Kurdistan Region organized an awareness-raising campaign during this reporting period. The campaign targeted more than 10 million people in various densely populated and COVID-19-affected districts in Baghdad, Missan, Basra, Karbala, Najaf, Erbil, Sulaymaniyah, Dahuk, Erbil, and Mosul with health promotion and awareness messages to limit transmission of COVID-19. The campaigns dubbed "Your health is important" were conducted in each of the ten districts for three days. More than two thousand five hundred (2500) volunteers in different locations used booths, mobile screens, and mobile clinics to display educational videos and play audio messages on various protective measures. They also distributed facemasks, hand sanitizers, and flyers and informed the public of the importance of wearing facemasks, practicing physical distancing, and washing hands frequently. The campaign included support from the media, religious leaders, athletes, artists, and other professionals.

In collaboration with UNICEF, WHO supported the Ministry of Health to develop a National Risk Communications and Community Engagement Strategy to help and guide not only COVID-19 response but also the response to all other future disease outbreaks and emergencies that require risk communications and community engagement interventions. This document is currently being used to guide the response to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic in Iraq.

5. Mass gatherings

WHO worked with the Ministry to limit/prevent the holding of religious mass gatherings. Key events included Al-Kadhmiya in Baghdad (21 March 2020), which limited attendance to 10% of previous years. An event planned for 8 April 2020 in mid-Shaaban was cancelled following meetings between the WHO Representative and top religious scholars in Najaf and Kerbala. Friday prayers were cancelled following meetings between the Minister of Health and religious scholars.

Technical guidance and training

WHO Expert Mission, 9-12 March 2020

WHO led an inter-agency team review mission from 9 to 12 March 2020 to rapidly assess core elements of the Government's response, provide technical guidance as needed, and support the scaling up of operational readiness and response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The team also assessed national capacity on COVID-19 disease detection, verification, and case management and issued findings and recommendations.

Training

Training was provided to several national staff in relevant departments within the Ministry of Health and Environment. WHO delivered orientation sessions on prevention to authorities in Baghdad, Basra, Sulaymaniyah, Erbil and Al Najaf airports. Additionally, WHO provided guidance and training for health care workers on standard surveillance, verification, infection prevention and case management activities. Six hundred and fifteen (615) health care workers from all governorates benefited from face-to-face training in the Kurdistan region. Training materials were also provided to the Ministry, who, in turn, were expected to cascade this to other governorates. WHO also supported training on infection prevention and control and case management in all governorates. WHO technical teams provided technical guidelines to the Ministry and directorates of health. To support the local RT-PCR laboratories in the southern region, a capacity-building workshop was conducted for eight laboratory specialists and technicians from Basra, Muthana, Missan and ThiQar.

6. Testing and verification

In anticipation of an increasing number of cases, WHO worked with the Directorates of Health to identify three public health laboratories as testing facilities in Baghdad,

Erbil, and Sulaymaniyah. By the end of December, WHO had supported the Ministry of Health at the central level and Kurdistan regional Ministry of Health with more than 65 800 test kits to ensure prompt testing of COVID-19. This resulted in more people being tested for COVID-19. Since 24 February 2020, more than 120 000 persons (3000 per million population) had been tested for COVID-19, including two negative tests for confirmation that an individual is free of the virus (each case needs at least two tests). The test positivity rate in the country was at 14%.

By 31 December 2020, WHO had supported the Central Public Health Laboratory at the national and Kurdistan Regional level with diagnostic investigation kits including 80 000 PCR test kits, 93 000 laboratory enzymes, and 120 000 swabs and media. Other laboratory detection materials and training and 78 850 extraction and reaction kits were also provided to the two ministries of health.

To further reduce the gap caused by shortages of test kits, WHO worked with Basrah University to produce swab and viral transport media (VTM) by financing this innovative solution. This resulted in the distribution of 38 995 VTMs and 77 999 swabs distributed to 13 Directorates of Health, procured, and supplied another 46 420 VTMs. To broaden testing, WHO assisted the Ministry and governorates to open four new laboratories in Najaf, Basrah, Medical City, Muthana, ThiQar, Missan, and Baghdad-Karkh.

7. Provision of medical devices and supplies

WHO worked with the Ministry to maintain essential supplies for frontline workers responding to COVID-19 cases by supplying thousands of Personal Protective Equipment including 368 000 surgical mask, 45 400 respirator mask N95, more than 1.2 million gloves, 40 000 gowns, 32 000 protective goggles, and 101 200 face shields. Hundreds of other hospital and medical supplies, such as fifty-three Intensive care unit (ICU) patient monitors, three ICU ventilators, 362 oxygen concentrators, two electrocardiograph, one defibrillator and two suction machines, ambulances, IV stands, and ICU beds were also procured and delivered to different health facilities across the country. In Kirkuk, WHO procured and delivered ten caravans to the Department of Health in Kirkuk to strengthen the response to the pandemic. These were distributed to the following referral hospitals to facilitate

screening triage and laboratory investigations; Hay Al Sinaei Hospital received one caravan, Kobani isolation unit got one caravan, Daquq Hospital also received one caravan. Others are Hawija Hospital, two caravans, Al-Jumhuri Hospital, one caravan, and Azadi hospital, four caravans. WHO financially supported Basra University to manufacture two models of patient isolation chambers supplied to Basra Directorate of Health for use at the intensive care units. Ambulances were also provided to support patient transportation to treatment sites.

To ensure that health facilities were equipped to handle COVID-19 patients, WHO facilitated the provision of offers to purchase real-time PCR for Kerbala Directorate of Health while guiding internal donations. As a coordination partner, WHO provided specifications to donors that guided them on the procurement of the much-needed devices and PPE for hospitals.

The organization also supported the Ministry and Directorates of Health nationwide with 65 800 test kits, 78 850 extraction and reaction kits, distributed 85 415 viral transport media, and 77 999 swabs procured. Also, WHO provided 105 intensive care unit hospital beds, hospital beddings, bedside cabinets, and 28 intravenous mobile stands. More than 150 000 people were reached with information, education, communication materials, and community sensitization campaigns.

8. Case management

Proper administration and management of COVID-19 cases reduces the daily number of fatalities in the country. The quality of care provided in isolation wards is not well perceived by the population due to many reasons. This makes many suspected cases refuse to take a PCR test or admit themselves to isolation units and/or treatment in public facilities. They prefer to be diagnosed in private clinics using only imaging

techniques (which has low specificity to the disease) for the purpose of staying at home, which has resulted in the non-recommended administration and management of many moderate and severe cases at home.

The way forward

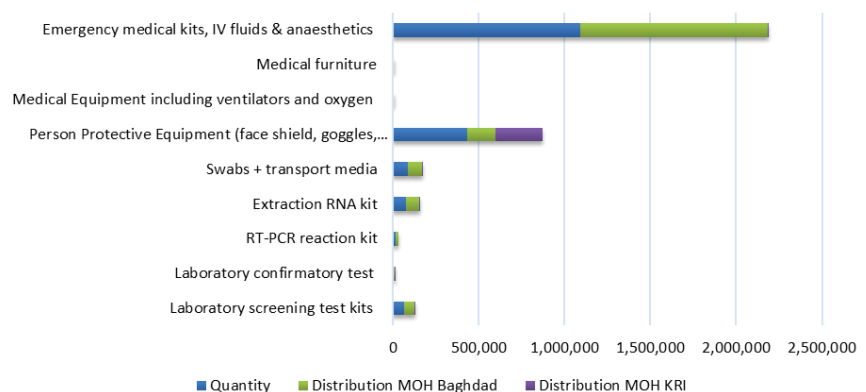
WHO recommends the following measures to continue the response to the wave of new infections:

- Wearing masks:
- Mass gatherings:
- Border control:
- Laboratory tests and active surveillance:
- Infection prevention and control (IPC):
- Risk communication and public awareness:
- Surveillance and data management:
- Isolation and management of cases:

Although the pandemic is far from over, WHO is confident that with an effective combined response of all partners and the Iraqi population and implementation of preventive measures, the country can continue to bring the pandemic to manageable levels.

The WHO country office is grateful for all of its partners and donors who have helped WHO reach all communities and provide much-needed support to health facilities treating COVID-19 patients. Without this support, WHO efforts to deliver medical and laboratory supplies, disseminate educational materials, and conduct community sensitization campaigns would have been severely undermined.

WHO will continue working with the Ministry of Health and Environment to ensure children continue receiving vaccination services, women and children can access health services and the health system is strengthened to ensure that all suspected and confirmed cases of COVID-19, as well as all individuals with any health condition can receive treatment.





UNODC Supports Iraq in the Investigation, Prosecution and Adjudication of Crimes Committed by ISIL/Da'esh

In response to Iraq's growing counterterrorism needs, the Terrorism Prevention Branch of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC/TPB) has been delivering technical assistance to reinforce the capacity of criminal justice and law enforcement to prevent and counterterrorism.

In October 2020, two workshops were delivered for 33 Iraqi practitioners in Beirut – the first time that in-person workshops were implemented by UNODC/TPB since the outbreak of the global health pandemic. The first training focused on managing and conducting investigative interviews. The main objective of the workshop was to strengthen law enforcement officials' capacity to collect judicially admissible evidence in terrorism-related cases while complying with human rights standards, especially when interviewing women and children.

One expert noted that “the main message for participants is that if they approach an interview with detailed pre-planning and then treat the suspect with kindness, empathy and spend time to build rapport, they will significantly increase cooperation,

disclosure, evidence, and intelligence.”

The second workshop, built on the outcomes of its predecessor and focused on the investigation, prosecution, and adjudication of crimes committed by ISIL/Da'esh. The event also offered an interactive forum to discuss human-rights and gender-inclusive practices in terrorism-related cases. It also focused on remote criminal proceedings and their processing to ensure respect for the rights of the defendant which would also enable criminal justice institutions to work safely during the pandemic.

The importance of incorporating gender dimensions in criminal proceedings was recognized and underscored in both activities. A female investigative judge who participated in one of the workshops noted that “women have always played a central part in the process of administration of justice and social reintegration in Iraq. It is why their participation in security training sessions is essential to counterterrorism and rehabilitation efforts at the national level.”

Strategic and Tactical Analysis to combat Money Laundering and Terrorist Financing

Terrorist groups require financing to recruit and support members, maintain logistics hubs, and conduct operations. Thus,

preventing terrorist groups from accessing financial resources is crucial to successfully counter the threat of terrorism. UNODC works with Iraqi authorities, such as the Central Bank of Iraq and the Anti-Money Laundering and Countering Financing of Terrorism Office (Iraq's Financial Intelligence Unit - FIU), on the Strategic and Tactical Analysis in the Crimes of Money Laundering and Terrorist Financing.

During 2020, UNODC expanded collaboration with authorities to increase their skills and knowledge on the present International Standards and Protocols of the FIUs' related areas of work. Furthermore, encouraged them to examine the possible strategic and tactical analysis techniques required to properly trace financial transactions back to the suspects and criminals on the operational level, and how to set forth policies based on strategic analysis products.

Addressing Violence Against Women and Girls (VAW&G)

Violence against Women and Girls (VAW&G) is a global phenomenon of pandemic proportions, which has an impact on all societies. It violates the rights and fundamental freedoms of women and girls. Such violence can have a devastating effect on the lives of victims, their families, and their communities. No society can consider itself immune from such

violence. Violent practices that victimize women and girls transcend social, cultural, ethnic, and religious boundaries.

Funded by Japan, UNODC Regional Office for the Middle East and North Africa (ROMENA) and UN Women Regional Office for the Arab States organized in February 2020 a training for 34 Iraqi law enforcement officers in the field of Violence Against Women and Girls (VAW&G). This event is part of efforts to support Iraq in achieving the targets under Sustainable Development Goal 5 to “Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls” and enhancing responses to VAW&G by: promoting access to justice for women and girls; supporting the development of legislation and policies that protect and uphold their rights and prevent violence against women and girls; developing institutional and professional capacities relevant to respecting, protecting and fulfilling the rights of women and girls; and creating positive environments for women and girls to claim their rights and be active agents of change.

Solidarity with Gender-based Violence Survivors

Since the outbreak of COVID-19, emerging data and reports have shown that all forms of violence against women and girls, particularly domestic violence, has intensified. Even before COVID-19, violence against women was one of the most widespread violations of human rights, with one in three women worldwide experience physical or sexual violence mostly by an intimate partner. In response to the issue and supported by the United Nations, renowned advocates from across the Arab States region have joined forces to produce a public service announcement video to raise awareness about the increase in violence against women and girls during the COVID-19 pandemic. Launched on occasion of the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, celebrated globally on 25 November and followed by the global campaign on the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-based Violence, the video production was included UN Women, WFP, FAO, UNAIDS, UNFPA, UNODC, and WHO.

The video starts with a dramatized video call where an unidentified woman experiencing domestic violence asks her friend to help her call a hotline using a coded message as she fears being overheard by the perpetrator. The call is followed by advocacy messages and a call to action for the viewers to support survivors of



violence. The clip, shared via social media and messenger apps, includes a link to a website with information and resources, such as hotlines and shelters, available for women and girls who experience violence in the region, including Iraq.

Amongst other celebrities from across the Middle East and North Africa, the video included a message provided by UNODC Goodwill Ambassador, Ms. Nadia Murad. Ms. Murad was first appointed UNODC Goodwill Ambassador for the Dignity of Survivors of Human Trafficking. In 2014, at the age of 19, Murad, along with thousands of other women, was kidnapped in the village of Kocho in Sinjar, northern Iraq. While held hostage she was subjected to grave abuses at the hands of ISIL fighters. She escaped after three months' captivity. Nadia Murad was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for 2018 along with Dennis Mukwege for their efforts to end the use of sexual violence as a weapon of war and armed conflict.

Towards a Women's Network against Trafficking in Persons and Smuggling of Migrants

The Women's Network of Gender Champions against Human Trafficking and Migrant Smuggling, launched in 2020 under the framework of the Global Action against Trafficking in Persons and Smuggling of Migrants (GLO.ACT-Asia and the Middle East), is an active community of female officials and male champions of women's rights working in policy making, the justice sector, law enforcement, civil society and other relevant local entities. The net-

work was constituted to help address the gendered nature of trafficking in persons (TIP) and smuggling of migrants (SOM), and grave underrepresentation of women working in and/or leading institutions responding to both human trafficking and migrant smuggling.

A key objective of the network is to provide professional training and coaching to its members who work on TIP and SOM cases and, during a consultation process to develop the network's roadmap to action, members had identified the topic of control methods of traffickers as one of the priorities for substantive training. GLO.ACT therefore organized a day two training on 16 and 21 December 2020 on control methods of traffickers. It is crucial to understand that success for traffickers only comes if they can control their victims, as by definition, a victim of trafficking does not consent to what is happening to them. Traffickers use different control methods depending on the individual victim, the type of trafficking, the stage of the trafficking process, the nature of the location, and opportunities presented by circumstances. The Global Action against Trafficking in Persons and the Smuggling of Migrants - Asia and the Middle East (GLO.ACT Asia and the Middle East) is a four-year (2018-2022), €12 million joint initiative by the European Union (EU) and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) being implemented in partnership with the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in four countries: Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, Islamic Republic of Iran, Republic of Iraq and Islamic Republic of Pakistan.



IOM in Iraq

IOM Iraq was established in 2003 and has more than 1,500 staff with offices in Baghdad, Erbil, Basra and Mosul and sub-offices in key locations. IOM works with the Government of Iraq (GoI) to provide support across Iraq's 18 governorates. In 2020, IOM prioritized meeting the critical, unmet needs of those in protracted displacement, vulnerable populations while maintaining programming to achieve long-term impact. IOM is a member of the United Nations Humanitarian Country Team (UNHCT) and the United Nations Country Team (UNCT); chair of the Programme Management Team (PMT) and the "Economy for All" Priority Working Group (PWG); and co-lead for the Camp Coordination and Camp Management Cluster (CCCM), sub-national Central/South Shelter-NFI Cluster and Durable Solutions Task Force (DSTF).

PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE

Shelter and Non-Food Item Kits

IOM provides Non-Food Item (NFI) assistance targeting the vulnerable families that are displaced or have recently returned. IOM carried out NFI interventions in Anbar, Baghdad, Diyala, Dohuk, Erbil, Kirkuk, Ninawa, and Salah Al-Din and provided 210 families with winterization kits, 6,662 families with basic NFI kits, 8,950 families with NFI replacement kits and 1,320 families in camps with packages composed of kitchen sets, plastic mats, mattresses and bed-sheets. IOM also increased e-vouchers, conditional cash and restricted cash for NFI support. By offering these services, beneficiaries have a degree of choice and flexibility in purchasing their basic necessities. Through Cash for Work (CFW), IOM distributed cash to 2,170 families to complete the rehabilitation of 1,145 war-damaged houses in Anbar,

Diyala, Kirkuk, Ninewa and Salah Al-Din. Through critical shelter work, IOM built 122 units which have benefitted 192 in-need families. IOM also supported the reconstruction of internal roads in Jad'ah 5 camp in Ninewa and the access roads to both J5 and J1.

Transportation

IOM provides transportation services to Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and Syrian refugees. In 2020, IOM organized inter-camp transportation for 850 IDPs in Kirkuk and Salah Al-Din. Some of these individuals needed to move to a different camp due to camp closure or consolidation processes. Others needed to travel for family reunification purposes upon the request of the Government or camp management actors. Transportation from Ninewa border checkpoints to camps in Dohuk was provided for 4,004 refugee families (18,954 individuals).

Camp Coordination and Camp Management (CCCM)

IOM's CCCM programme includes four components to support formal IDP camps and informal sites, namely Mobile Response Teams (MRT), camp management support, camp management capacity-building and direct camp management. IOM Iraq's CCCM interventions include care and maintenance activities such as repairing site infrastructures, electrical systems and water pipes and taps in 24 camps and 89 informal sites in Anbar, Baghdad, Ninewa and Salah Al-Din, benefitting approximately 28,014 individuals.

Health

IOM Iraq supports the national health system to address the needs of IDPs, returnees and host communities. Over 139,689 primary health care consultations were provided through five static clinics, two primary health care mobile medical teams (MMT), five TB (Tuberculosis) MMT and one ophthalmological MMT.

Furthermore, IOM scaled up and provided services to address the COVID-19 pandemic. Since May 2020, IOM has supported 23 outpatient facilities and six inpatient facilities including five camp clinics across Erbil, Anbar, Baghdad, Kirkuk, Ninewa and Dohuk governorates. COVID-19 screening and triage was also conducted, screening more than 234,000 patients for COVID-19 prior to their consultations. A total of 180 healthcare facility staff were trained on Infection Prevention and Control, 51 Point of Entry (PoE) Health staff at Baghdad and Erbil Airports and Ibrahim Khalil PoE were trained on PoE Activities in context of COVID-19. Risk Communication and Community Engagement Activities for COVID-19 were also implemented in all six of the aforementioned governorates. IOM coordinated with Department of Health, Ministry of Health and Health Cluster partners to determine key COVID-19 response interventions and identify opportunities to increase disease surveillance.

Communication with Communities (CwC)

IOM promotes two-way communication and disseminates information for crisis-affected populations on a wide range of topics, including health awareness, camp safety, shelter kit set-up and irregular migration. In 2020, 3,784 IDPs participated in awareness raising sessions on subjects including anti-smoking, hygiene, flood, anti-fraud, cash for NFI and suicide. Additionally, 44,371 copies of awareness raising material were distributed, 1,709 IDPs participated in community engagement activities (e.g., Focus Group Discussions), 3,055 winter information packages were distributed, and 6,493 summer information packages were distributed along with NFI kits.

COMMUNITY STABILIZATION AND PROTECTION

IOM Iraq's Community Stabilisation Unit aims to address the drivers of conflict and displacement through a community-driven and led approach to promote resilience, social cohesion and improved mental and emotional wellbeing in target areas. IOM's stabilisation programme supports IDPs and returnees to regain a sense of safety and security, increase self- and community efficacy and develop tools to deal with the past and regain hope. The IOM's approach includes social cohesion programming, housing, land and property (HLP) assistance, mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS), livelihoods activities, community service projects and supporting the reintegration of ex-combatants and persons with perceived extremist affiliations.

In 2020, IOM operated in 62 locations including urban settings, IDP camps, youth and sport centres and informal settlements across 12 governorates: Anbar, Baghdad, Basra, Dohuk, Diyala, Erbil, Kerbala, Kirkuk, Najaf, Ninewa, Al-Qādisiyyah and Salah al-Din. Overall, IOM provided 190,058 services (98,284 to females and 91,774 to males) to 27,837 new beneficiaries (112,253 beneficiaries in total).

With the long-term goal of transferring the management of these services to

local actors, IOM focused on supporting 18 local civil society organizations (CSOs) in Diyala, Dohuk, Najaf and Ninewa with trainings, small grants and on-site guidance and coaching. Additionally, IOM engaged eight organizations of persons with disabilities across the country in consultations and joint programming to increase representation and access to services for persons with disabilities. IOM continued supporting the GoI in developing the Draft Yazidi Survivors Law, which is currently in the penultimate legislative phase.

IOM is coordinating with the GoI's Office of National Security Advisory to provide the Government with technical assistance to build a monitoring and evaluation framework for the National Strategy for Combatting Violent Extremism Conducive to Terrorism. In 2021, IOM plans to support the GoI in holding online exchanges and an in-person exposure visit between the National Security Advisory Follow-up Committee, which will implement the National Strategy, and European government counterparts, who are implementing programs around CVE in their own countries.

Additionally, IOM continued to provide protection assistance to conflict-affected populations, vulnerable migrants and trafficking victims, reaching 4,906 people with protection services. These services included: Gender-Based Violence (GBV) case management, which consists of information counselling, referrals, including emergency cash assistance; provision of dignity and protection kits; protection monitoring and household needs assessments; protection awareness sessions on rights and services in camp settings; trainings on core protection topics including protection and humanitarian principles, protection mainstreaming, GBV, and trafficking; provision of emergency cash assistance for vulnerable migrants/third country nationals and case management to voluntarily repatriate.

RETURNS AND RECOVERY

The IOM Returns and Recovery Programme supports IDPs, returnees and host communities by utilizing a holistic community recovery and stabilisation

approach. This includes providing support for community infrastructure, economic recovery, livelihood assistance and capacity strengthening of civil society to effectively engage communities and stakeholders. This year, IOM's activities had a meaningful impact on improving the conditions for sustainable economic and social inclusion of individuals and communities in 15 governorates in Iraq. IOM's efforts focused on areas with severe living conditions and a high number of returnees.

With the aim of supporting long-term job creation, IOM supported 358 Small to Medium Enterprises (SME) in 12 governorates by providing them with an EDF (Enterprise Development Fund) grant to start or expand their business and created 1,710 new jobs in addition to sustaining 1,932 existing ones. The 358 SMEs were supported with USD 5,930,955. Additionally, medium and short-term employment opportunities were also supported through Individual Livelihoods Assistance (ILA) which enhances employability skills and creates jobs through micro-enterprises. A total of 266 beneficiaries (197 male and 69 female) received ILA services. Of these individuals, 223 received a business support package to start their own business, nine participated in vocational trainings and 34 participated in an on-the-job training. IOM completed 84 projects for the rehabilitation of key infrastructure across communities in 15 governorates. Infrastructures include water plants, electrical networks, schools, markets, hospitals and irrigation and agricultural infrastructure.

In 2020, IOM operated six Community Resource Centres (CRC) in Ninewa, Anbar, Salah Al-Din and Diyala. The CRCs work to support recovery and stabilization approaches and connect communities to humanitarian and recovery activities. Although the CRC buildings were closed due to the pandemic, they played a major role in managing COVID-19 awareness activities and leading outreach campaigns that publicized IOM's activities, services and how to enrol in them. CRCs also leveraged online platforms to introduce a range of remotely managed services, such as sessions about COVID-19, catch-up classes for children, registration of beneficiaries' needs and referrals to service providers. So far, the CRCs have served 11,322 beneficiaries.



DURABLE SOLUTIONS

In 2020, IOM supported sustainable returns and reintegration of returnees. In partnership with the GoI, IOM developed an operational strategy to facilitate the safe, dignified and sustainable returns for IDPs in situations of protracted displacement while also seeking to promote other pathways to durable solutions, namely local integration and resettlement. To achieve this, eight help desks were established where 2,343 households (446 in Anbar and 1897 in Ninewa) registered to receive information about returns, planned visits to their areas of origin and available services. Following their registration, 434 households participated in go-and-see visits where they could observe first-hand the conditions of their area of origin before deciding to return. In 2020, IOM supported 278 households in returning to their areas of origin (40 in Anbar and 238 in Ninewa). The return assistance package consisted of a cash grant of USD 320, NFI and transportation from Al-Salamiya camp (Ninewa) or Amriyat Al-Fallujah camp (Anbar) to areas of origin. Additionally, IOM rehabilitated 149 shelters for returnees (40 in Anbar and 109 in Ninewa) and 76 shelters for host communities in the areas of origin in Ninewa.

MIGRATION MANAGEMENT

Movement and Assisted Migration

In coordination with the GoI, IOM Iraq supports Iraqis who choose to return from abroad to re-establish themselves in their communities. In 2020, under its Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration (AVRR) programme, IOM Iraq assisted 317 returnees in providing reception assistance, 1,554 returnees through cash assistance (including cash upon arrival and reintegration cash grant) and 255 beneficiaries received vocational training, job placement, business start-up and expansion support and/or housing support.

In 2020, 4,073 (1,926 males, 2,147 females) (2,767 adults, 1,193 children, 113 infants) received resettlement services in collaboration with different resettlement countries, Iraqi authorities and United Nations High Commissioner on Refugees (UNHCR). The Family Assistance Project (FAP) provided 23,733 individuals (11,288 families) with support for family reunification. In 2020, 5,219 completed applications were submitted from



the FAP centre in Erbil to the German Consulate. Meanwhile, 51,321 persons received remote assistance via phone calls and emails. This is in addition to the 125 temporary entry visas to Kurdistan Region of Iraq that were sponsored by FAP for Syrian applicants and 146 families assisted by sending the registration file to be legalized by the German Embassy in Beirut.

Community Policing

IOM supports Community Policing (CP) in Iraq to contribute to peace and security. The CP model is central to rebuilding trust between the population and law enforcement. In 2020, IOM supported the establishment of 18 new Community Policing Forums (CPF) and seven new CP Offices. These offices are built next to existing police offices, thus making police stations more accessible and community friendly, as well as providing regional and operational support to the CPFs in the region. Eight of the new CP Offices will contain Referral Guidance Centres, which are spaces where at-risk individuals, such as victims of GBV and Conflict-related Sexual Violence (CRSV), can feel safe, receive immediate assistance from trained professionals and be

signposted to relevant support services while also being provided with the necessary advice to determine whether or not to file a criminal complaint and understand what options are available.

Immigration and Border Management (IBM)

IOM contributed to the strengthening of border management capacities of the Ministry of Interior (MoI), particularly between Fao in Ninewa and Al-Qaim in Anbar, by organizing activities such as training border officials to conduct routine operations and crisis management, refurbishing critical infrastructure and providing mobile border management equipment and software (including IOM's Migration Information and Data Analysis System - MIDAS) to monitor, detect and intercept potential irregular cross-border movements and process individuals crossing the border. IOM supported the Ministry of Migration and Displacement (MoMD) by refurbishing a local branch in Mosul, Ninewa. This branch will support the MoMD in improving their capacities to carry out their duties efficiently and providing support to vulnerable Iraqi returnees. IOM also started the renovation of a second local branch

in Sinjar, Ninewa which is due to be completed in 2021.

Migration Governance

Iraq continued to take important steps in developing national capacities in migration governance. IOM conducted the first Migration Governance Indicator (MGI) process which assessed existing national migration governance capacities and produced evidence for migration policy development. The results were validated by the inter-governmental migration Technical Working Group (TWG) in January 2020, and an assessment was subsequently published in Arabic and English. During 2020, the TWG developed the first National Migration Strategy (NMS) as the main framework for the national implementation of the Global Compact for Migration (GCM) in Iraq. The NMS will inform migration policy for the socio-economic benefit of Iraq and offer guidance to government institutions and international actors involved in migration governance.

Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM)

The Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) is IOM's information management system that monitors population displacement during crises. In 2020, DTM produced: six DTM Master List reports and 12 associated datasets focused on IDPs and returnees; a comprehensive package of ten fact-sheets displaying key findings of an urban displacement study, which consisted of an in-depth overview of data relating to urban centres hosting significant numbers of out-of-camp IDPs; the fifth Integrated Location Assessment; 15 Emergency Tracking reports on the movements of IDPs and returnees to Sinjar and Al-Ba'aj districts in Ninewa; an additional 16 Emergency Tracking reports on the movements of IDPs following the closure and re-classification of camps across the country and four Emergency Tracking reports summarising Syrian nationals fleeing the conflict and crossing into Iraq.



UNIDO in Iraq

In 2020, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) in Iraq focused on promoting economic stability and resilience among some of the country's most vulnerable populations. We worked with refugees, displaced and host communities. UNIDO worked also with through the education systems to boost business skills and foster entrepreneurship.

UNIDO's work in Iraq is designed to achieve Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of ending poverty, providing quality education, building resilient industries and infrastructure, and promoting peaceful and inclusive societies.

The COVID-19 pandemic has added a new layer of challenge to our work. To balance the urgency of limiting the spread of the virus while at the same time recognizing the needs of our beneficiaries who require immediate assistance and income, we continued to hone the strategy that focuses on the scalability of our projects. For the past four years, we have worked within the education systems, local NGOs, and government offices at the district level to improve capacities and now have a cadre of teachers, NGO staff, refugees, and IDPs who are teaching entrepreneurship.

The interventions we have carried out in 2020 have established new and strengthened existing enterprises and these approaches are transferable to other locations using our network of resources and people. These are building blocks to achieve micro and small enterprise development and are laying the foundation of an entrepreneurial society that will contribute to sustainable industrial development and a diverse economy with a dynamic private sector.

UNIDO's work in Iraq is designed to achieve Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of ending poverty, providing quality education, building resilient industries and infrastructure, and promoting peaceful and inclusive societies.

Enhancing self-reliance through entrepreneurship and skills training

Entrepreneurs are key to a vibrant economy. UNIDO engaged with marginalized and under-resourced communities to provide skills training in entrepreneurship and sustainable agri-business.

Nineveh Governorate was devastated by the war with the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). Unemployment, poverty, and food insecurity are high in the province. UNIDO implemented a project to help rehabilitate 16 Tahini factories, many of whom had equipment lost or damaged during the conflict. Tahini is a key industry in Bashiqa and its rehabilitation is vital to Nineveh's economy. Before ISIS, each tahini factory was employing a minimum of 20 people. Along the supply chain, UNIDO provided training to the tahini factory workers on food safety and hygiene and introduced concepts on entrepreneurship and business management. UNIDO worked with sesame farmers, teaching practical skills in agricultural machinery for harvesting and measures to ensure safety of the products harvested. We provided training to the tahini factory workers on food safety and hygiene and how to work in a team environment.

To address the needs of the returnees for

livelihood, we also provided technical training and entrepreneurship to female returnees and IDPs on household poultry operations; and training on dairy processing and marketing to another group with the goal of giving women the opportunity to help provide for the family needs, generate an income and save money.

These approaches will contribute to Nineveh's economic recovery and stabilization.

Mamilyan and Shekhan IDP camps are located in Duhok Governorate. They house mainly persons displaced from Nineveh Governorate, including many Yazidis from the Sinjar region. The majority are unwilling to return home because of insecurity, but have no livelihoods in the camps. UNIDO began assessments with the camp management on the livelihood needs of the protracted IDPs. 300 respondents participated. UNIDO had provided entrepreneurship training to the IDPs to assist in business start-ups. Interventions for these two camps are funded by the Japanese Government.

As the Syrian conflict is about to pass the 10-year mark, UNIDO is working with refugees in Akre and Barderash camps in Duhok Governorate to improve their economic security. UNIDO provided entrepreneurial training to support refugees pursuing self-employment in the camps and to give them life-long transferable skills. After training, qualified participants were eligible for equipment and support in establishing a small business. UNIDO is promoting agribusinesses among the beneficiaries using the available materials in the area: pomegranate, sumac (a spice) and dairy products. Interventions for these activities are funded by the Austrian government.

Entrepreneurship curriculum (ECP) in secondary vocational schools

In post-conflict Iraq, UNIDO is focused on investing the youth with the skills and support they need as they enter Iraq's developing economy. Providing education in entrepreneurship improves the prospects of the youth as they enter the job market and strengthens the economic resilience of the youth and the nation.

In Duhok Governorate, UNIDO partnered with the Ministry of Education of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq with a pilot project introducing the Entrepreneurship Curriculum (ECP) in secondary vocational schools.

Education in entrepreneurship is vital to the creation of a dynamic private sector. The practical, multi-disciplinary curriculum aims to not just introduce how to establish and manage a business, but also to encourage innovation and competition. The youth graduate with strategic planning and leadership skills, business acumen, self-confidence, and creativity.

The pilot project intends to reach 1,056 students. This is an expansion of a 2019 program when we introduced ECP into the secondary vocational schools in Erbil governorate, benefiting 1,561 secondary school students. The Kurdistan Regional Government has indicated a desire to expand the project to Sulaimani and Halabja governorates as well.

Restoration of Mosul University engineering laboratory

As part of UNIDO's mission to promote the economic recovery of Nineveh Governorate, we worked with Mosul University, providing essential equipment and capacity-building training for university staff.

The university sustained heavy damage during the conflict with ISIL. In a restoration and technical upgrade of the Engineering Department, UNIDO procured and delivered new equipment for the hydraulic lab of the Dams and Water Resources department and the automation lab of the Mechatronics department. This equipment enhances the learning environment in the engineering department and gives the University the capacity it needs to develop and leverage the skills of its students.

Instruction on the operation of the new equipment in the Mechatronics lab was provided by Festo International and Vienna's University of Natural Resources and

Life Sciences (BOKU) provided training on water management.

This project contributes to reviving Iraq's industry and manufacturing sectors and supports meeting the challenges of Iraq's water resources, flood and river basin management and stabilizing it.

“Investment promotion for Iraq – Phase II”,

In 2020, UNIDO started implementing the project “Investment promotion for Iraq – Phase II”, funded by the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation and implemented in collaboration with the UNIDO Investment and Technology Promotion Office in Italy.

The existing Enterprise Development Centres (EDCs) in Erbil, Basra and Thi Qar were assessed and prepared to deliver web-based training and advisory services. The local Iraqi SME training needs and priorities were assessed through a dedicated survey. UNIDO also started an appraisal process of current policies and legislation on industrial zones, starting from the two most advanced ones in Basra and Thi Qar. Finally, UNIDO profiled dozens of companies operating in the environment and energy sector, supporting the virtual participation of some of them in the International Trade Fair Ecomondo held in Italy in November 2020.

In 2021, the project will be fully operational, with the EDCs becoming crucial to stimulate more domestic and foreign investment, the existing and potential industrial zones assisted and improved, and selected local business associations mentored to broaden and enhance their private sector development services fostering international partnerships, mainly with Italian stakeholders.





Dr. Maha Kattaa joined the ILO in Iraq as country coordinator in March 2020, just as the true scale of the global pandemic started to become clear. COVID-19 has had profound impacts on labour markets around the globe, disproportionately affecting some of the world's most vulnerable workers. Dr. Kattaa explains how the ILO in Iraq is working closely with its tripartite partners to address the changing needs of workers and their employers.

Interview with

ILO Country Coordinator for Iraq

DR. MAHA KATTAA

The ILO recently opened its first coordination office in Baghdad. What are the ILO's priorities in Iraq in terms of promoting decent work and increasing employment opportunities for the country's most vulnerable communities?

The ILO's priorities in Iraq stem from the needs of the population and findings from studies and assessments that examine the status of workers and the employment challenges they face.

There is an urgent need to create decent job opportunities, especially for youth and women, as well as develop the private sector to help create these jobs. Secondly, in Iraq, which has experienced decades of conflict and dis-

placement, economic challenges and, more recently, the COVID-19 pandemic, there is a need to strengthen and expand social protection, especially for workers in the informal sector.

Another key priority is tackling the worst forms of child labour amongst forcibly displaced persons and vulnerable host communities, and we are currently implementing a project in partnership with the European Regional Development and Protection Programme for Lebanon, Jordan and Iraq (RDPP II) to find sustainable solutions to address child labour in the country. In addition, our mandate focuses on strengthening labour market governance through improved social dialogue.



These are the key priorities of the Iraq Decent Work Country Programme, which is the ILO's main vehicle to implement its decent work agenda, and which is implemented through close partnerships with the government and with employer and worker representatives in the country.

As part of these efforts, we also look at ways to bridge the divide between humanitarian and development action. In Iraq, there is a large forcibly displaced population, encompassing both the internally displaced and refugees. So there is need to ensure their integration in national systems and services, and this includes access to the formal labour market.

The ILO is partnering with the Central Statistical Organization (CSO) and Kurdistan Statistical Organization (KRSO), to implement the first national Labour Force Survey (LFS) in a decade. The results will help contribute to better design and implementation of appropriate employment policies.

How is the establishment of the office helping the ILO and partners in

achieving these priorities?

The ILO is not new to Iraq. We have been working with our constituents and social partners for many years and Iraq has been a member of the ILO since 1932. We have provided technical assistance and we have implemented a number of projects over the years. But now we have a physical presence in Iraq, allowing the ILO to provide better support to the government, workers and employers.

We are based in two locations: Baghdad, which allows us to improve our coordination and engagement with constituents and with other UN agencies, and Erbil, where we are closer to many of our beneficiaries.

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused an unprecedented socio-economic crisis. How is the ILO in Iraq working with its constituents to address the challenges of the world of work at such a critical time?

My arrival to Baghdad as the ILO Country Coordinator coincided with the outbreak of COVID-19. We were keen to

begin our work on the ground immediately, but the pandemic and accompanying lockdown measures created challenges which were both unprecedented and unpredictable.

We realised quickly that we had to reassess the needs of our support and work. The needs of workers, employers and constituents had changed. We launched a rapid assessment on the impact of COVID-19 on workers and enterprises through a partnership with numerous development and humanitarian agencies who already had a strong presence in Iraq, to help us reach people who have been most impacted by the economic consequences on the crisis.

The assessment showed a significant reduction in jobs and limited financial capacities to cope with the crisis, leading to a deterioration in the living and working conditions of workers. The pandemic has had a profound impact on younger workers and women, many of whom were already unemployed before the crisis. Many of our respondents were the main providers for their



household, and with more than one-third of them being permanently laid-off work, the effect of the pandemic has been substantial for those individuals and for those who are economically dependent on them.

So through this assessment and others conducted recently, we were able to better understand what the current pressing issues were and to adapt programmes and design new ones to address those issues. For example, the ILO recently launched a project with the European Union to enhance labour governance, inspection and working conditions, focusing on the agricultural sector. This programme will work closely with social partners to improve the labour inspection system and occupational safety and health and raise awareness on fundamental principles and rights at work to promote compliance with labour legislations and respond to COVID-19.

In additions, a BMZ-supported project, which aims to improve business development services and entrepreneurship education for micro, small and medium-sized enterprises and youth, has been adapting its activities to respond to the challenges of not being able to deliver face-to-face training programmes due the pandemic. The project has partnered with the ILO's International Training Centre in Turin to develop a set of distance learning tools for the ILO's Start and Improve Your

Business (SIYB) training programme and recently held an online Training of Trainers for providers of business development services in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, to ensure they become equipped with these tools to support potential and existing entrepreneurs in the region.

Despite the difficulties brought about by the pandemic, we have been able to identify new opportunities to build new partnerships with other UN agencies, NGOs and local partners, establish joint programmes, and find ways to work more efficiently to address the labour market challenges imposed by the pandemic, as well as some of the longer-term decent work priorities of Iraq.

Promoting decent work for forcibly displaced persons and host communities is at the forefront of the ILO's Iraq DWCP. Could you give some examples of how the ILO is working with various partners to advance its mandate, especially with the new challenges brought about by COVID-19?

Our Decent Work Country Programme focuses on supporting forcibly displaced persons and host communities and we have specific projects which focus on improving access to employment in the context of forced displacement.

The Partnership for improving pros-

pects for forcibly displaced persons and host communities (PROSPECTS) is one of our main projects in this regard. It is a global partnership, supported by the Government of the Netherlands, which maximises the joint efforts of the ILO, the IFC, UNHCR, UNICEF and the World Bank to address education, employment and protection. The ILO is working on different components, which include job creation support, enterprise and skills development and employment intensive investment programme (EIIP) interventions that support both forcibly displaced persons and host community members.

An important part of these efforts, as previously mentioned, is to try bridge the divide between humanitarian and development action, which will help contribute to the self-resilience and self-reliance of people. For example, our EIIP interventions are not just about giving people short-term employment. We are trying to implement an integrated EIIP approach whereby job creation, skills development, employment services, enterprise development and formalisation are provided to workers in efforts to improve their access to national services and decent jobs in the longer-term.

What is the ILO's plan and vision moving forward and what would you like to see achieved in 2021?

Our plan is to implement the Decent



Work Country Programme, which is still in its early stages. In 2020, we were able to establish the basis for the programme and in 2021 we plan to expand our programme, find additional resources to implement it and identify new areas of work, especially in light of COVID-19 and other crises impacting the country.

We hope that in 2021 the Retirement and Social Security Law will be approved in line with ILO international labour standards, and that Iraq will ratify ILO Social Security Convention No.102, the basis of all ILO social security Conventions which establishes minimum standards for all nine branches of social security.

We would also like to see a new evidence-based National Employment Policy (NEP) developed by relevant tripartite stakeholders in Iraq and submitted to parliament for adoption. This new NEP will look into the immediate needs of livelihoods creation and emergency employment in addition to addressing the medium- to longer-term structural challenges and decent work deficits facing women and men in the Iraqi labour market.

We would like to see a holistic approach developed and implemented for the transition from informal to formal economy to help improve resilience, productivity, structural transformation, labour governance and compliance

with national and international labour standards.

These efforts will pave the way for more and better job opportunities for workers and their families, helping them cope with the new challenges currently facing them. They will contribute to improving working conditions, allowing workers to work in safer environments. We would like to see more workers in formal employment, not having to worry where tomorrow's income will come from. We want more workers to find secure jobs that can help them build a better future for themselves and their families.

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Despite the difficulties brought about by the pandemic, we have been able to identify new opportunities to build new partnerships with other UN agencies, NGOs and local partners
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Overview

UN Women have continued extending efforts during 2020 in Iraq through setting up programmes aimed at enhancing the technical capacities of women in leadership positions. In ensuring buy-in at the highest political level, UN Women has been engaging with the Iraqi leadership and meeting regularly with heads of political blocs to emphasize the importance of supporting the gender equality and women's empowerment agenda, including women's participation in leadership roles.

Iraq continues to suffer political and security instability since the popular uprisings in October 2019. This was further complicated by the rising political tensions early in 2020, followed by the COVID-19 outbreak and the resulting lockdown. In the wake of the protests that occurred in October 2019, UN Women conducted a rapid needs assessment aiming at identifying Iraqi women's

motivations for participating in the protests, assessing their needs, challenges, demands and proposed solutions. The deterioration of the security situation entailed restricting movement of staff, and limitation of access to project locations, imposing challenges at the governorate and community levels where projects were being implemented. With that said, delays in activity implementation could not be avoided; however, UN Women had mitigation measures in place which ensured timely and active response to such developments as they happened. Activities were delivered via virtual platforms such as meetings, trainings and workshops in observance of minimizing gatherings. In case physical meetings had to be organized, preventive measures were applied, and social distancing measures were implemented.

UN Women closely collaborated with Government institutions and bodies for the effective integration of gender equal-

ity and Women Peace and Security (WPS) principles across normative and policy frameworks (including national constitutional review, adoption of Anti-Domestic Violence Law, finalization and adoption of National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325).

UN Women continues to leverage its coordination mandate on gender equality-related matters, including as the Chair of the Gender Task Force, to prepare for the adoption of the new UNSDCF and the mainstreaming of gender throughout its implementation phase, actively engaging and providing specialized expertise to UNCT and UN working groups for the successful implementation of gender-responsive planning, monitoring and reporting frameworks.

With regards to civil society work, UN Women were actively engaged and exponentially expanded its collaboration with civil society organizations (CSO's) to advance the gender equality agenda in Iraq, reaching more than 150 civil so-

ciety actors across the country. This was to ensure that women and girls' strategic and practical needs and priorities are effectively considered for policy and programme development, and that women and youth – including marginalized and vulnerable groups – meaningfully participate in peacebuilding, humanitarian, recovery and development decision-making mechanisms and processes.

Beijing +25

In 2020, UN Women continued to provide technical assistance to the Iraqi Government in fulfilling its reporting obligations on ratified or adopted international instruments. With UN Women's support, the Beijing +25 report had been submitted to the regional commission in May 2019. UN Women supported technically and financially the Iraqi Delegation who attended the Regional Beijing + 25 Validation Report in Beirut in September 2019 which was an opportunity for the Iraqi delegation to share their challenges and lessons learned in the context of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action 12 areas of concern. In 2020, UN Women continued to follow up on this; however, the instability of the security situation in addition to the COVID-19 related restrictions significantly delayed these processes.

United Nations Security Council Resolution UNSCR 1325 & 2nd INAP

UN Women programmatic and normative work in the Women Peace and Security (WPS) sector has had a significant impact regarding the level of awareness of the role of women in peacebuilding at national and community level in Iraq. With the technical, operational and financial support of UN Women, the Council of Ministers Secretariat (COMSEC) adopted the 2nd Iraqi National Action Plan (INAP) for the implementation of UNSCR 1325. The 2nd INAP was officially launched in December 2020 under the patronage of the Prime Minister Mr. Mustafa Kathimi. The launching ceremony was organized by the Directorate for Women's Empowerment of the General Secretariat of the Council of Ministers and was supported by UN Women.

The INAP was developed in a highly participatory manner which included consultations with more than 60 women-led organizations across the country, COMSEC, representatives from both the Kurdistan Region of Iraq and the Federal Government, and Sectoral Committees operating across 33 Ministries and governmental institutions. UN Women has been leading the support of the development of UNSCR 1325 national action plans in Iraq since 2014, along with sister UN Agencies and the international community.

Women Economic Empowerment

Adopting a participatory approach, particularly with community-based partners, allowed UN Women to better respond to actual needs as reflected by beneficiary communities. For instance, some implementing partners in economic empowerment programmes switched their sewing workshops to mask and gown production to support their communities, hence allowing women better income-generation opportunities during times of hardship caused by the pandemic.

UN Women has been engaging with a wider array of national stakeholders at the legislative and policy level to develop an economic empowerment national action plan in partnership with the World Bank (WB). This work is consistent with the Iraq's Second Poverty Reduction Strategy and the Social Protection Strategic Framework.

COVID-19 impact and UN Women interventions

The lockdown and movement restriction caused by the COVID-19 pandemic caused a surge in domestic violence in Iraq. As a result, UN Women led advocacy work for the enactment of the Iraqi Anti-Domestic Violence Law, along with other UN agencies and international actors. At the community level, UN Women provided support to survivors through shelters and mobile teams. Through various projects, UN Women established 7 women centers reaching out to the most vulnerable women, particularly in refugee camps; and supported several other

women shelters with legal and psychosocial training. These centers have been key in responding to COVID-19 in 2020.

As COVID-19 related restrictions were enforced, alternative virtual platforms and systems (e.g. Zoom) were used to conduct meetings at community level. To ensure that the required trainings were implemented as planned, UN Women developed an online learning interactive platform specifically designed to meet the needs of UN Women beneficiaries and partners. The platform includes many features such as online certified courses, live interactive sessions and group meetings. Despite the challenges related to the use of innovative technologies and tools (including for access and use) and particularly for vulnerable population groups, the adoption of online platforms enabled UN Women to expand the engagement and participation of Iraqi women and girls across Iraq and in diaspora.

Coordination with the UN system was fundamental in 2020 to ensure that the COVID-19 response effectively addressed the needs and demands of the Iraqi people and government. Guided by the UN Framework for the immediate response to COVID-19, UN Women, along with other UN agencies in Iraq, developed a comprehensive socio-economic response plan that covered all necessary aspects to alleviate the impact of the pandemic. This was an important lesson learned, not only in terms of coordination but also in terms of the importance of harmonized communication and relation between the UN and the government.

To ensure that gender remains a fundamental component in the response to COVID-19, at the early stages of the COVID-19 outbreak, UN Women developed a guidance note on "Responding to COVID-19 in Iraq from a gender perspective" to guide the engagement of different actors, namely the government, civil society, UN agencies and international organizations.

UN Women was invited to sit on the Constitutional Reform Committee in 2019-2020 and provide substantive technical assistance to the Iraqi constitutional reform process with the objective of mainstreaming gender in Iraqi legislation.



Constitutional amendments proposed by UN Women were based on the recommendations of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), Universal Periodic Review (UPR) Committees, as well as the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, among other international instruments adopted and/or ratified by the Republic of Iraq.

Anti-Domestic Violence Law (ADVL) and Violence Against Women (VAW)

In 2020, UN Women worked closely with the members of the parliament on making amendments to the Anti-Domestic Violence Law, which was presented to the Federal Government Parliament at the end of 2019. By conducting trainings and discussions on the proposed law, UN Women advocated and lobbied for the passing of the law at the Parliament. In parallel, a public campaign was implemented to advocate for the passing of the Anti-Domestic Law through publishing anti-violence messages, raising public awareness on GBV and on the importance of the adoption of the new law.

Work was carried out specifically with justice sector professionals to increase the prosecution of GBV cases and improve judicial responses. Moreover, capacity development training was also provided to the police and security forces on GBV and CRSV.

Partnerships

UN Women has ensured partnership and cooperation with other UN agencies through The Gender Task force (GTF) established in 2005 and led by Irena Solorano- Deputy Special Representative and Resident Coordinator for Iraq. UN Women co-chaired the GTF along with UNDP and UNAMI. Membership of the GTF is comprised of gender focal points working in Iraq from UN agencies including UNHCR, UNFPA, UNICEF, UNODC, WFP, IOM, UNOPS, OHCHR, UN Habitat, UNODC, UNMAS, and FAO. The aim of the GTF is to work together to support the advancement of the gender equality portfolio in Iraq by ensuring effective knowledge sharing, unified messaging, gender responsive planning and joint advocacy work.

UN Women has partnered with the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) and developed three research policy papers analyzing the impacts of COVID-19 from a gender perspective on the political, economic, and social protection sectors in Iraq. The outcomes of these studies will serve as a baseline to support the Iraqi Government, relevant stakeholders, NGO's and the international community in better understanding how the negative impacts of COVID-19 could be mitigated and in ensuring appropriate responses are implemented.

UN Women has maintained strong part-

nerships with the government, NGO's and civil society organizations such as the Women Empowerment Organization (WEO) and Iraqi Women Network (IWN) by supporting them both technically and financially in implementing their advocacy work and in being involved more in the process of the endorsement of the Anti-Domestic Violence Law and the 1325 INAP. Additionally, UN Women has worked closely with the Iraqi Women Department (IWD) and the High Council of Women Affairs-KRG in developing the framework of the INAP leading to its endorsement in 2020.

UN Women in partnership with WFP initiated the process of developing an innovative concept/model for service delivery using WFP's SCOPE card digital platform to increase effectiveness of women's access to financial services, business development, cash assistance and cash for work, and to limit the risk of COVID-19 transmission.

Main 2020 achievements

In an unprecedented step taken by the Iraqi institutions, UN Women was invited to sit on the Constitutional Reform Committee: it was the only UN agency given this honor, and it represented a significant opportunity to provide substantive technical assistance to the Iraqi constitutional reform process for the mainstreaming of gender in Iraqi legislation, delivering on UN Women normative mandate at the highest level possible.

UN Women provided the technical support necessary to lead and facilitate the development and endorsement of the second INAP (2020-2024). This was regarded as an enormous success for UN Women and Iraq as the INAP provides a solid and clear framework for the government to support and implement the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda in Iraq.

In the name of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), UN Women Iraq presented to the Iraqi government a Policy Position Paper on the Iraqi Violence against Women Draft Law. The position paper called for the adoption of the Anti-Domestic Violence Law following the rising rates of domestic violence reported during the COVID-19 related lockdown and movement restriction.

UN Women Iraq contributed, along with other UN agencies, to a study led by UNDP to develop the Socio-Economic Response to COVID-19 pandemic. The primary objective of this study was to assess the impact of the pandemic in Iraq and to provide immediate response for recovery for the next 12-18 months through a coherent and tailored response plan. Besides developing an independent chapter on gender, UN Women's input focused on mainstreaming gender in all the sectors of this exercise.

UN Women was requested by the Iraqi Secretary General's office to support the drafting of the National Women Strategy on the Enhancement of the status of Iraqi Women (2019-2022) developed by the Directorate of Women's Affairs. This work, which started in 2020 and is expected to continue in 2021, will guide the Iraqi government in terms of mainstreaming gender equality across the different ministries and authorities, ensuring that Iraq's gender commitments are fulfilled.

Partnerships with the high judiciary council and recent interventions and work with justice sector professionals has led to the establishment of Anti-domestic violence courts in Iraq. As a result, prosecution of GBV cases are increased and judicial responses are improved specifically regarding cases involving GBV and CRSV. In addition, based on the decision of the Supreme Judicial Council in Baghdad, criminal and misdemeanor courts will be formed as of 7/1/2021 and will be specialized in investigating cases of domestic violence alongside its ordinary cases within each appellate area.

As part of UN Women efforts to support Iraqi Youth, UN Women has supported the establishment of the 21 Youth Alliance. The alliance consist of Iraqi youth women and men activists and leaders representing various parts of Iraq, including the Kurdistan region. Its members work together to build the capacities of women and enable them to take part in decision-making processes and assume leadership positions in various public and private sector organizations.

Finally, UN Women strong collaboration and positioning with the UNCT and GTF resulted in the inclusion of GEWE in the new UNSCDF (UN sustainable development cooperation framework).



Word form Rep. Dina Zorba

"This year, the world marked the International Women Day, the 20th anniversary for security council resolution 1325 on women peace and security and the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence (GBV), under unprecedented circumstances. The COVID-19 pandemic required governments to enact life-saving public health measures, including lockdowns, curfews, and other restrictions on movement, to contain the spread of the virus. For women and girls, however, such measures can also be sources of increased risk of violence and loss of life. Recent global and regional reports have shown an alarming increase in GBV cases during the pandemic, in particular domestic violence. Many of the measures necessary for controlling a viral outbreak have also significantly limited the ability of survivors to shield themselves from their abusers, or access to life-saving support.

Iraq is no exception. The GBV Information Management System (GBVIMS) has recorded a marked rise in the number of reported incidents of violence in 2020. Domestic violence accounted for more than three-quarters of all reported GBV incidents. Given that Iraqi women and children - especially those with disabili-

ties - were already exposed to high levels of risk of domestic violence pre-pandemic, these figures are only the tip of the iceberg. The majority of cases of domestic violence and other forms of GBV cases remain under-reported.

The United Nations calls on the Government of Iraq to address the root causes of violence committed against women and children and to promote women's participation and leadership in decision-making, especially during times of humanitarian crisis and emergency. GBV prevention, risk mitigation and responsive actions should remain the most urgent priority, as many perpetrators continue to exploit the lack of legislation that holds them accountable and protects survivors from violence.

We urge the Iraqi Parliament to endorse the anti-domestic violence law to end GBV, where perpetrators are held accountable, and in parallel, to create protective spaces and environments where survivors of GBV feel safe, are empowered, and can thrive.

We pledge to keep working together as one, with the Government of Iraq and the Kurdistan Regional Government, civil society, the international community and all partners to ensure the protection of women and children across Iraq."



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