UNITED NATIONS
IRAQ

ANNUAL RESULTS REPORT 2024

Mangrove seedling from WFP's Mangrove project in Basra.
Credit: WFP/ Murtadha al-Toblani

CONTENTS

Foreword by the UN Resident Coordinator 1

United Nations Country Team in Iraq 2

Key development partners 3

Chapter 1. Country context 4

Chapter 2. UN Cooperation Framework results 6

Overview of the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework in Iraq 7

Strategic priority 1. Achieving social cohesion, protection and inclusion 8

Strategic priority 2. Growing economy for all 16

Strategic priority 3. Promoting effective, inclusive and efficient institutions and services 24

Strategic priority 4. Promoting natural resource and disaster risk management, and climate change resilience 32

Strategic priority 5. Achieving dignified, safe and voluntary durable solutions to displacement in Iraq 40

One UN Iraq: Coherence, effectiveness and efficiencies 48

Business efficiencies 48

Communicating as One UN 48

Youth 2030 50

Disability inclusion 51

Prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse 51

Human rights 52

Partnerships and financing the 2030 agenda 53

Financial overview and resource mobilization 54

Chapter 3. UNCT key focus for 2025 59

CREDITS

© 2025 United Nations Iraq

Cover photo: UN Youth Advisory Council launched in collaboration with the Iraqi Ministry of Youth and Sports and the UN Youth Office
Photo © UN Iraq

Celebrations of Yazidi New Year at Lalish Temple, the holiest site of the Yazidi faith, nestled in a valley in Duhok in northern Iraq
Photo © IOM/Anjam Rasool

FOREWORD
BY THE UN RESIDENT COORDINATOR

On behalf of the United Nations Country Team in Iraq, I am delighted to present our Annual Results Report for 2024.

This report reflects the collective achievements of 23 UN entities in Iraq that are signatories to the United Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework 2020–2024, in partnership with the Government of Iraq. In the final year of the framework's implementation, the UN worked closely with the Government and other partners to advance Iraq's journey towards peace, development and prosperity.

Our shared commitment is underpinned by a unified approach to sustainable development, humanitarian and peacebuilding activities. This approach guided UN efforts across the five strategic priorities of our Cooperation Framework, aligned with Iraq's national development objectives.

In 2024, we achieved tangible progress on social cohesion. Collaborative efforts fostered community-led peacebuilding, empowered women and youth as peacebuilders, and aided the safe return and dignified reintegration of displaced families. UN initiatives contributed to the protection of minority rights, including the land rights of the Yazidi community, financial assistance for people in vulnerable situations, and assessed displaced persons' eligibility for social security.

The UN has also supported the Government of Iraq to conduct the 2024 Iraqi Census – the first national population and household census in over three decades.

Assisting policy development, strengthening the TVET sector, and promoting entrepreneurship and job creation fostered a more resilient, inclusive economy. The UN supported national policies on employment, MSMEs and green businesses, helped set up a job-matching platform, and facilitated access to finance and business development services – especially for women and people in vulnerable situations – creating pathways for sustainable livelihoods and economic empowerment for all.

Support for more responsive public services included assistance for legislative reforms, strengthen institutional capacities, and digital governance strategies. The digitalization of the Water Safety Plan was a major achievement, as was the "Back-to-Learning" campaign with the Ministry of Education and the Prime Minister's Office, which helped reintegrate out-of-school children in education. By facilitating customs automation through the Automated System for Customs Data (ASYCUDA), UN support helped boost trade in Iraq – benefitting businesses, the Government and people nationwide.

UN support also contributed to strengthening environmental management and climate resilience in Iraq. Key achievements included the development of a National Environmental Strategy and the adoption of biodiversity goals. These efforts, among others, were showcased at the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP29).

This global platform was an opportunity for Iraq to significantly contribute to global climate discussions and advance its national priorities on building climate resilience.

Supported by the UN through capacity strengthening and logistical support, Iraq highlighted its efforts towards a green transformation, while young Iraqi delegates served as the voice of the country's future at the global forum. They brought forward innovative ideas and practical solutions to the global climate dialogue, reflecting the aspirations of Iraq's youth.

Alongside these achievements, in 2024 the UN made significant strides in supporting durable solutions for displaced populations in Iraq and returnees from Syria. Key achievements included rehabilitating housing, facilitating returns and relocations, supporting access to documentation and legal assistance, and providing support for sustainable livelihoods. Collectively, these efforts with key partners – in the government, civil society, private sector, academia and the donor community – testify to the UN's unwavering resolve to assist a more cohesive, just, inclusive and prosperous future for Iraq.

While the current UNSDCF cycle concludes, the UN's commitment to supporting Iraq's development journey remains unwavering. The UN will continue to work collaboratively with the Government of Iraq and other partners to address emerging challenges and leverage new opportunities.

Together, we can ensure that no one is left behind in Iraq's pursuit of sustainable and inclusive development.

Ghulam Mohammad Isaczai
United Nations Resident and
Humanitarian Coordinator in Iraq

UNITED NATIONS COUNTRY TEAM IN IRAQ

The United Nations Country Team (UNCT) in Iraq, composed of 23 UN agencies, funds and specialized programmes, is dedicated to supporting Iraq's journey towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Guided by the principle of leaving no one behind, and led by the Deputy Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General and the UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator, the UN in Iraq delivers evidence-based action and specialized expertise to enhance the lives and livelihoods of all Iraqis, with a focus on the most vulnerable and marginalized communities.

The United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) 2020–2024 is the operational blueprint of the UN in Iraq, outlining our five shared strategic priorities. These range from achieving social cohesion, protection and inclusion to supporting inclusive economic growth, advancing effective services and institutions, enabling natural resource management and climate change resilience, and achieving durable solutions to displacement.

Integrating the humanitarian, development and peace nexus within its collective work, UN priorities in Iraq are fully aligned with Iraq's Vision 2030, the Kurdistan Regional Government's Vision for the Future and the National Development Plan, and other strategic documents. This synergy ensures that UN efforts are harmonized with national priorities and strategies, seamlessly moving from humanitarian assistance to sustainable development and peacebuilding, firmly rooted in the commitment to leave no one behind, and to reach those furthest behind first.

UNITED NATIONS IRAQ

ESCWA · Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations · International Labour Organization · IOM UN MIGRATION · International Trade Centre

UNITED NATIONS HUMAN RIGHTS OFFICE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER · UN trade & development · UNDP · UN environment programme · unesco · UNFPA

UN-HABITAT FOR A BETTER URBAN FUTURE · UNHCR The UN Refugee Agency · unicef · UNIDO UNITED NATIONS INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT ORGANIZATION

UNMAS · United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime · UNOCT · UNOPS

UN VOLUNTEERS · UN WOMEN · WFP World Food Programme · World Health Organization

KEY DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS

Partnership lies at the very core of UN support for Iraq's achievement of the SDGs. Recognizing the pivotal role of coordination and collaboration among development partners, the UN in Iraq champions a unified approach to realizing the ambitions of the 2030 Agenda. Alongside the support of our donors and the collaborative efforts of Iraqi government counterparts, partnerships with the private sector, civil society, international financial institutions and academia are fundamental pillars of our collective endeavour to build a brighter future for all the people of Iraq.

FUNDING PARTNERS

- Government of Iraq
- Australia
- Austria
- Belgium
- Canada
- Commission for Gender Equality
- Czech Republic
- Denmark
- Estonia
- European Union
- Finland
- France
- Germany
- Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization
- Global Environment Facility
- Internal Displacement Solutions Fund
- Ireland
- Italy
- Japan
- Republic of Korea
- Kuwait
- The Netherlands
- New Zealand
- Norway
- Nutrition International
- Saudi Arabia
- Slovak Republic
- St. Jude Children's Research Hospital
- Sweden
- Toyota Iraq
- United Arab Emirates
- United Kingdom
- United States of America

Chapter 1

COUNTRY CONTEXT

Iraq is home to 46.11 million people according to the 2024 national census, the first census in nearly 40 years.[1] Projections suggest this number will increase to 74.5 million by 2050. This poses a critical task for the country: harnessing its demographic dividend while ensuring sustainable resource management and equitable access to services.[2]

The census also highlights regional disparities. The Kurdish region has higher urban residency, employment rates and school enrolment, while federal Iraq leads in home-ownership and access to basic utilities. These insights are vital for crafting policies that drive inclusive growth and address regional inequalities.

In 2024, Iraq's governance landscape saw significant developments. The National Development Plan 2024–2028 was introduced, prioritizing economic growth, infrastructure development and the enhancement of social services, signalling Iraq's commitment to long-term stability and sustainable development. Iraq launched its National Strategy for Environmental Protection 2024–2030 to address challenges like desertification and water scarcity. Legal reforms sparked discussions, particularly amendments to the Personal Status Law (Law No. 188/1959), the General Amnesty Law (Law No. 27/2016) and the Property Restitution Law (Law No. 3/2025).

Iraq's socio-economic landscape reflects a mix of challenges and opportunities. Iraq's economy is expected to grow modestly in 2024 by 0.1%, after a contraction in 2023. The economy remains heavily dependent on the oil sector, contributing to both its strength and vulnerability.[3] The Government is working on infrastructure development, including new cities and the Grand Faw Port project. The unemployment rate stands at 16.2%, and poverty impacts a significant portion of the population.[4] Multidimensional poverty affects 47% of Iraq's children and an ongoing learning crisis limits children's productivity potential to just 41%.[5] Tackling this crisis will require real investment in education to help children reach their full potential, alongside investments in social protection and greater access to other social services. Environmental concerns, especially the impacts of climate change, add another layer of complexity to Iraq's development, making sustainable natural resource management a top priority.

To tackle the challenges it faces, Iraq is focusing on key areas like economic diversification, social cohesion, participatory governance and environmental sustainability. By tapping into its human and natural resources, building resilience, and fostering inclusive growth, the country aims to create a better future for everyone, with the support of the international community to help make these ambitious goals a reality.

IRAQ AT A GLANCE

Total population of Iraq (Census 2024)
46.11 million

Projected population by 2050
74.5 million

Urban population 2024 (Federal Iraq)
70.2%

Urban population 2024 (Kurdistan Region)
84.6%

Internally displaced Iraqis (UNHCR estimate, Dec 2024)
1 million

People in need of food & livelihood assistance (WFP estimate)
2.5 million

Households with access to water from safely managed sources
59.74%

Maternal mortality rate (deaths per 100,000 live births)
66 deaths

GDP growth rate 2024
0.1%

Unemployment rate 2024
16.2%

Youth (15–24) unemployment rate
35.8%

Out-of-school children (6–11)
10%

UNDP Human Development Index ranking
128th of 185 countries

Notre Dame Climate Change Vulnerability Index
120th of 187 countries

IEP Global Peace Index
151st of 163 countries

GIWPS Women, Peace and Security Index
168th of 177 countries

[1] Commission of Statistics and GIS report.
[2] Projections of the population in 2025 come from UNDESA, *Population Estimation Report 2022*.
[3] Government of Iraq, *Iraq Household Socioeconomic Survey* (IHSES III).
[4] "Iraq's unemployment rate set to hit decade high in 2024", *Kurdistan24*, 15 November 2024.
[5] UNICEF, *Climate Landscape Analysis for Children and Youth People in Iraq: An Education Reform Path*, July 2021.

Date palms with protective bags, part of FAO's sustainable agriculture innovations in Iraq Photo ©FAO/Reem AlSadoon

Chapter 2

UN COOPERATION FRAMEWORK RESULTS

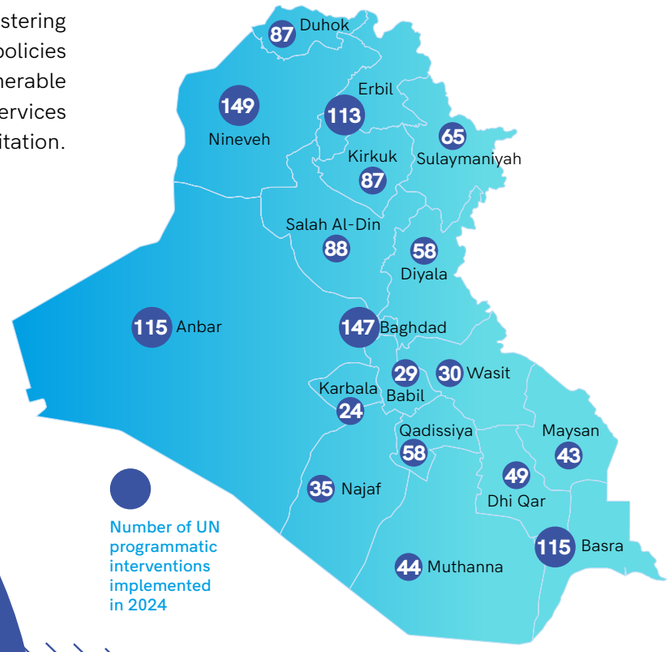
Throughout the five years of the implementation of the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) 2020–2024 in Iraq, the UNCT collaborated closely with the Government of Iraq to align its efforts with national development priorities and the SDGs. This report encapsulates the collective achievements of 23 UN entities working across five strategic priorities: social cohesion, economic growth, efficient institutions and services, natural resource management, and solutions to displacement.

In 2024, the UN's work in Iraq yielded substantial progress in legislative reforms, policy advisory services, and capacity building across diverse sectors. Key highlights include promoting social cohesion by supporting community-based solutions such as Local Peace Committees, fostering economic growth by supporting inclusive policies and providing livelihood assistance to vulnerable households, and improving access to quality services like education, healthcare, water and sanitation.

The UN contributed to environmental sustainability through initiatives focused on renewable energy, climate-smart agriculture and commitments to biodiversity conservation. Significant strides towards durable solutions for displaced persons involved facilitating returns, rehabilitating housing and securing land tenure rights.

These achievements reflect the UN's dedication to fostering transformative change in Iraq, promoting equality, and accelerating progress on sustainable development, in partnership with the Iraqi Government and other key partners.

WHERE WE WORK IN IRAQ



OVERVIEW OF THE UN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION FRAMEWORK IN IRAQ

THE COOPERATION FRAMEWORK'S FIVE STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 1 — Achieving social cohesion, protection and inclusion

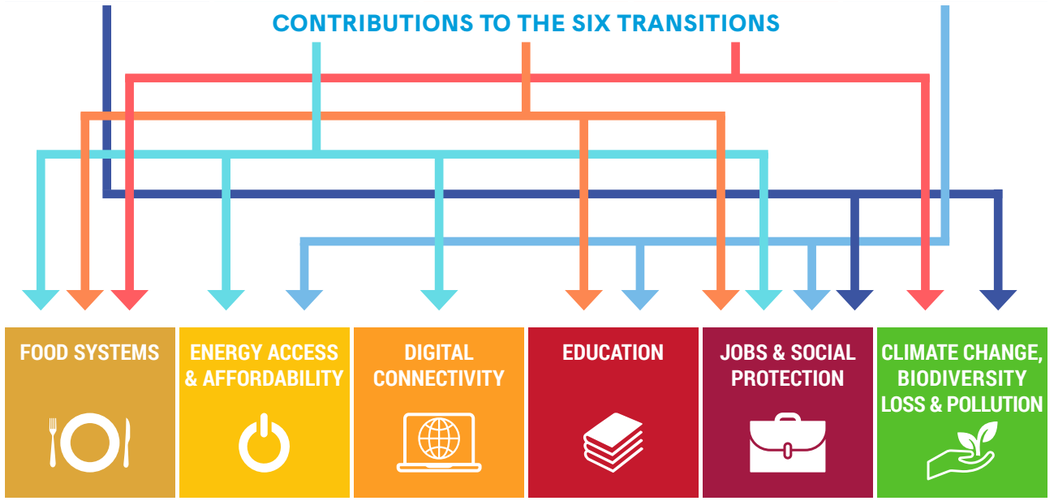
STRATEGIC PRIORITY 2 — Growing economy for all

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 3 — Promoting effective, inclusive and efficient institutions and services

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 4 — Promoting natural resource and disaster risk management, and climate change resilience

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 5 — Achieving dignified, safe and voluntary durable solutions to displacement in Iraq

CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE SIX TRANSITIONS



STRATEGIC PRIORITY

1 ACHIEVING SOCIAL COHESION, PROTECTION AND INCLUSION

SDGS THAT STRATEGIC PRIORITY 1 CONTRIBUTES TO

IN NUMBERS: KEY RESULTS ACHIEVED WITH UN SUPPORT IN 2024

285,000
children, women and families benefitted from child protection and domestic violence response services

500
government staff and community leaders were trained to prevent and respond to domestic violence

2,695
returnee families benefitted from the rehabilitation of housing, facilitating their reintegration and community acceptance

416
women and youth from Local Peace Committees and Groups actively participated in peacebuilding and reconciliation initiatives

209
community policing initiatives fostered social cohesion by building trust between law enforcement and communities across Iraq

The city of Shoura in Mosul unveils a statue of Unity and Resilience in 2024, honouring the lives lost to violent extremism a decade ago, and affirming a commitment to a peaceful and prosperous Iraq Photo © IOM/Raber A. Aziz

UN ENTITIES IMPLEMENTING STRATEGIC PRIORITY 1

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
International Labour Organization
IOM UN MIGRATION
UNITED NATIONS HUMAN RIGHTS OFFICE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER
UNDP
unesco
UNFPA
UN-HABITAT FOR A BETTER URBAN FUTURE
UNHCR The UN Refugee Agency
unicef
UNMAS
United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
UNOPS
UN WOMEN
UN VOLUNTEERS
WFP World Food Programme

1.1. Strengthened policies and systems for social cohesion, protection and inclusion

Social cohesion: Progress on the rule of law

- The UN (OHCHR and UNAMI) provided technical support to the Ministry of Justice on fair trial standards, which contributed to enhancing accountability and the rule of law. This included monitoring the trials of ISIL suspects, anti-corruption trials, and cases involving human rights defenders to ensure that the right to a fair trial is upheld for everyone. The UN also organized a roundtable with representatives of the Human Rights Committee, the Ministry of Justice, the Iraqi Parliament, the Prime Minister's Advisor on Human Rights, IHCHR and the Prisoners Justice Network that enhanced understanding of Iraq's national and international commitments to fair trial standards and due process.

- In collaboration with the Office of the National Security Advisor, the UN (UNDP and UNODC) assisted the creation of seven Preventing Violent Extremism (PVE) sub-committees at the governorate level – in Babil, Baghdad, Diwaniyah, Maysan, Muthanna, Salah Al-Din and Wasit. These sub-committees developed localized Plans of Action aligned with Iraq's PVE Strategy, leading to targeted interventions that effectively and sustainably prevented violent extremism by addressing its root causes.

- The UN (UNDP and UNODC) assisted the launch of the Women Preventing Violence Extremism Working Group to enhance women's participation in government-led PVE efforts. By training 40 local facilitators from across Iraq to implement the Strong Families programme, the UN helped to prevent attempts by violent extremist groups to recruit children.

- IOM supported 209 community policing initiatives and assisted the Ministry of Interior and civil society organisations that are members of the National Advisory Forum to develop and implement the Community Policing Women's Empowerment and Protection Action Plan 2023–2024. This fostered social cohesion by building trust between law enforcement and Iraqi men and women – including migrants, displaced persons and host communities.

- UNODC's assistance for the Iraqi Correctional Directorate at the Ministry of Justice enhanced the capacity of prison authorities to maintain safe, secure and humane custody of prisoners, as well as to prevent the spread of violent extremist ideologies in correctional facilities. UN policy advice and training assisted the digitalization of prison management and record systems – enhancing their efficiency, minimizing security risks and contributing to rehabilitation efforts. The UN also supported Iraqi's correctional authorities to improve conditions for 1,100 juveniles in detention by renovating infrastructure facilities in Baghdad and Mosul – including health facilities, vocational training classrooms, and spaces for social workers to provide psychosocial support – as well as by training 48 correctional professionals (35% women) on child rights, psychosocial assessments and family resilience.

UNODC's Strong Families Programme activity in Iraq to prevent violent extremism Photo © UNODC

Handover of a facility in Baghdad refurbished by UNODC and UN Habitat to enable the rehabilitation and reintegration of children and youths deprived of their liberty Photo © UNODC

- UNODC enhanced law enforcement capacities to strengthen border management, counter trafficking, and combat terrorism financing. For example, supporting the establishment of a Passenger Information Unit (PIU) at Baghdad International Airport contributed to securing air borders by monitoring the movement of high-risk or suspicious passengers, such as individuals engaged in criminal activities. The UN organized a seminal workshop for Iraqi parliamentarians on human trafficking and migrant smuggling which contributed to the Council of Ministers approving a landmark law to combat trafficking in persons. As a direct result of the UN training 168 Counter-Narcotics Officers on specialized investigative techniques, the Iraqi Anti-Narcotic Directorate established two Surveillance Teams in Baghdad – the first of their kind in Iraq – to disrupt and dismantle narcotic trafficking networks. UN research provided evidence to inform Iraq's fight against drug trafficking, including the first situation analysis of the drug problem in the country, and an in-depth report on drug trafficking dynamics. The UN also trained officials at the Financial Intelligence Unit, enhancing their capacities to combat money laundering and terrorism financing.

- The UN (UNDP, UNAMI and OHCHR) trained 40 government officials and organized a national workshop on a human rights-based approach to anti-corruption efforts for the Commission of Integrity, the Supreme Judicial Council line ministries, the judiciary and civil society–enabling these key stakeholders to jointly identify ways to enhance transparency and accountability in governance structures.
.

Held captive by Daesh forces for four years, Maloka has rebuilt her life in Duhok piece by piece and wishes everyone in Iraq will find peace and stability
© IOM/Sarah Al Jameel

SUCCESS STORY

Diyar's story: Empowering women to find their voices

Born in Dhi Qar, Iraq, Diyar Hasan Sharif is no stranger to overcoming challenges. Growing up in a society where women are often relegated to the sidelines, she broke barriers by pursuing a career in legal administration before becoming a media professional at Al-Ahwar TV.

Determined to help her community, Diyar signed up for a programme on peacebuilding, negotiation and conflict resolution supported by UN Women. *"I wanted to not only learn but also become a voice for the women who were often silenced in my society,"* explains Diyar.

Equipped with newfound confidence and expertise, Diyar joined the Council of Leaders and Elders in Dhi Qar. Her first major success was mediating a water-sharing dispute between two tribes.

Using her negotiation skills, she facilitated a resolution that balanced tribal traditions with modern conflict resolution practices. Through her work with the Council of Leaders, as a trainer and via her media platform, Diyar champions women's contributions to peacebuilding, gaining recognition from local and national leaders. She has become a beacon of hope in her community, and a role model for women across Iraq.

Diyar's story shows how one person can make a difference – a testament to the impact of empowering women to inspire communities. Her journey is not just hers alone; it is a movement for change. *"Leadership is not about power; it's about empowering others to find their voice and create change,"* says Diyar.

Protection: Effective, integrated systems protect children and women

- UNICEF supported the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs and the Child Welfare Commission to establish more integrated, effective child protection systems that will enable children nationwide to access vital support. With UN assistance, the ministry launched the National Directorate for Childhood, committed to establishing 44 Childhood Centres, and set up 10 Childhood Care Units in Muthanna, Baghdad, Anbar and Nineveh. In the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, the UN worked with the ministry to support 27 Child Protection Units, equipped with trained social workers to provide a package of child protection and violence response services. Across Iraq, the UN helped strengthen case management and referral systems for children and families in crisis, enhance child protection systems to prevent and respond to violence and exploitation, and support child-friendly reintegration and rehabilitation programmes for children affected by armed conflict, including those returning from Al-Hol camp. To improve outcomes for children, the UN facilitated the integration child protection mechanisms into social protection programmes. This involved facilitating coordination between the child protection, social welfare, health and education sectors, as well as building the capacities of frontline workers on mental health, psychosocial support, case management, and preventing violence.

- With the Ministry of Justice, UNICEF promoted a more child-friendly justice system. UN assistance contributed to the launch of a child-friendly court – designed to respond to children's specific needs – in partnership with the High Judicial Council and the Justice Institute. The UN also supported the Justice Institute to develop a curriculum on child-friendly justice that will enhance the capacities of prosecutors, judges and legal professionals to safeguard child rights.

- Research by the UN (UNAMI and OHCHR) informed government and civil society efforts to combat domestic violence. This research resulted in the report, Accountability for Domestic Violence in Iraq: Promoting Justice and Non-Discrimination, which highlights domestic violence as a key barrier to women's rights and advocates for judicial reforms to protect survivors and hold perpetrators to account. Sustained engagement with key stakeholders – including the Family and Child Protection Directorate of the Ministry of the Interior, the National Directorate for Iraqi Women in COMSEC, the Community Police, IHCHR, civil society organizations, human rights defenders, journalists, and lawyers – supported the implementation of the report's recommendations.

Inclusion: Advancing human rights for all Iraqis, including minorities

- The UN (OHCHR and UNDP) facilitated the Government of Iraq's engagement in the Universal Periodic Review (UPR), contributing to a more thorough national report on human rights developments. UN assistance also enabled organizations representing minorities to engage with global human rights mechanisms, particularly the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination and the UPR. Advocacy by UN agencies supported minorities to access public services, participate in decision-making, and exercise their economic, social and cultural rights.

1.2. Equitable and sustainable access to quality protection and social protection systems and services

Connecting communities to protection services

- ILO strengthened the capacities of government partners to make social protection policies more effective, grounded on better evidence and stronger administrative processes.

- UNHCR assessed the eligibility of camp-based internally displaced persons for the Social Safety Net (SSN) to secure their access to social protection, and provided 15,697 refugee households with multi-purpose cash assistance to help them meet their basic needs.

- By supporting access to integrated health services in camps for internally displaced persons and refugees, the UN (UNHCR and WHO) contributed to reintegration and social cohesion in conflict-affected areas.

- UN Women trained 500 government staff and service providers, enhancing their capacities to mitigate risks, prevent and respond to domestic violence. Sessions were specifically held for community leaders (Mukhtars) from across Iraq, recognizing their role as the first point of contact for domestic violence incidents in local communities.

Restoring and expanding affordable housing

- UN Habitat supported the Ministry of Construction, Housing and Public Works to begin drafting a new National Housing Policy and implementation roadmap that addresses implementation challenges faced by previous policies in the housing sector. Strengthening government capacities at the national and governorate levels fostered an enabling environment for affordable housing to address Iraq's housing crisis.

- The UN (UN Habitat and IOM) rehabilitated housing for 2,695 returnee families – including many households returning from Al Hol Camp and households returning to Sinjar – facilitating their reintegration and community acceptance. This included supporting 586 households to rehabilitate destroyed housing through the Owner-driven Shelter Programme, enabling internally displaced persons to sustainably and voluntarily return to their areas of origin. In Mosul and Ramadi, the UN launched pilots of green, social housing – creating a model that can be replicated and scaled up to ensure that Iraqis have access to safe, stable and affordable housing. Preliminary housing unit designs were completed and will be refined in partnership with the Ministries of Construction, Housing and Policy Works, Planning, Environment, and Migration and Displacement, municipal authorities and the Office of the Anbar Governor.

Cultural events supported by the UN in Iraq contributed to peacebuilding and social cohesion Photo © UNDP

1.3. People participate in effective mechanisms that prevent, mitigate and manage conflict, and contribute to social cohesion and peaceful coexistence

Promoting peaceful coexistence

- The UN (UNDP and UN Women) empowered communities to advance peace and social cohesion, in close coordination with the Directorate of Youth and Women's Directorate at the national level and mayors who head Peace Committees at the local level. For example, the UN engaged 416 women and youth from Peace Groups and Local Peace Committees in peacebuilding initiatives, and enhanced the capacities of 16 Peace Committees to accelerate reconciliation, reintegration and the prevention of violent extremism. These include 12 Women and Youth Peace Groups across Anbar, Diyala, Kirkuk, Nineveh, Salah Al-Din and Sinjar, as well as four new Local Peace Committees in Baiji, Tikrit, Hawija and Ba'aj. Another 40 community-led initiatives spearheaded peacebuilding activities with UN assistance, including cleaning campaigns, tree-planting activities and cultural festivals. For instance, a cultural festival in the Anbar Governorate raised awareness of the impact conflict, enabled dialogue on social cohesion, and provided a platform for youth engagement. Local participants plan to replicate this successful model with the guidance of the Chairman of the Anbar Provincial Council and the Governor of Anbar.

- Recognizing the vital role of the media, UNDP trained 87 journalists from across Iraq on ethical reporting, combatting hate speech and promoting social cohesion. These journalists now have the tools to counter misinformation, champion diverse narratives, and act as agents of change in fostering peace and reintegration.

SUCCESS STORY

Hanan's story: Supporting returnees rebuild their lives in dignity

"When I returned and saw my house was ruined, we sat on the dirty ground and my little daughters and I cried our eyes out," recalls Hanan Hameed. Fighting forced her family to flee the village of Albu-Uakash in Al-Saqlawiya, Fallujah. When it was finally safe to return, they struggled to get by without basic supplies or water, sheltering in a single room of their damaged home.

The Local Infrastructure in Rural Anbar (LIRA) project – funded by German's Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) through the KfW Development Bank and implemented by UNOPS in cooperation with the Governor's office of Anbar – has been a lifeline for families like Hanan's.

The project has rebuilt homes, rehabilitated the Al-Rumaila water station, and installed solar-powered streetlights – leveraging environmentally-friendly renewable energy solutions to make it safer to go out at night, especially for women and girls.

"You have changed my life for the better. Now I feel safe with my girls," says Hanan. *"I also have access to water with several water supply hours. This is a blessing."*

Her story mirrors those of 259,000 people in the governorate of Anbar who have benefitted from LIRA interventions. The project has provided vital support to returnees – securing their access to shelter and basic services, ensuring their safety, and enabling them to rebuild their lives in dignity.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY

2 GROWING ECONOMY FOR ALL

SDGS THAT STRATEGIC PRIORITY 2 CONTRIBUTES TO

IN NUMBERS: KEY RESULTS ACHIEVED WITH UN SUPPORT IN 2024

1,300
new jobs and 62,000 worker days were created in Nineveh and Duhok through the Employment-Intensive Investment Programme

8,209
households benefitted from livelihood support packages, bolstering their economic resilience

7,539
job-seekers (29% women) were registered with Employment Service Centres in southern Iraq, connecting them to work opportunities

540
SMEs benefitted from grants worth a total of US$7 million, accelerating business expansion and local economic development in 10 Iraqi governorates

730
jobs were created by renovating 50 dairy centres, helping to boost the productivity of Iraq's dairy sector

465
entrepreneurs were trained to start and expand their businesses by UN-certified trainers from the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs

Workers gain housing-related skills through vocational training in 2024 as part of the UN Habitat Japan Village Project in Mosul
Photo © UN Habitat

UN ENTITIES IMPLEMENTING STRATEGIC PRIORITY 2

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
International Labour Organization
IOM UN MIGRATION
International Trade Centre
UN trade & development
UNDP
unesco
UNFPA
UN HABITAT FOR A BETTER URBAN FUTURE
unicef
UNMAS
UN WOMEN

2.1. Improved economic policies and legislation

Economic policies: Strong evidence-based frameworks and systems

- With the ILO's assistance, the Government of Iraq developed inclusive economic policies that will improve the lives and livelihoods of millions. These include the National Employment Policy (expected to be endorsed in 2025), the National Strategy to Prevent and Reduce Inequalities in the World of Work 2024–2028, the National Public Works Programme Roadmap, the Micro, Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (MSMEs) Development Policy, and the National Green Businesses Plan. A Labour Coordination Council was set up to enhance coordination on labour policies, including a new Trade Union Law.

- The UN (IOM, ITC and FAO) produced trusted research that Iraqi decision-makers can use to inform responsive economic policies and programmes. These include studies on SMEs' business trajectories, MSMEs' financial access, and women's labour market access. A Livelihoods Policy Brief recommended ways to mitigate the impact of regional instability on Iraq's economic recovery, while the Iraqi Youth Entrepreneurship Barometer highlighted ways to boost economic inclusion through technical and vocational education and training (TVET). A socio-economic household baseline survey in seven southern governorates, a nationwide agricultural inputs traders' survey, and an agricultural value chain assessment offer evidence to inform inclusive rural development.

- At the Ministry of Agriculture's request, FAO conducted a market-oriented assessment of the date palm sector and supported the sector's growth through the One Country, One Priority Product initiative. This involved training farmers, distributing inputs and technology, creating 200 new jobs in the date palm value chain, and promoting improved agricultural practices to leverage the sector's economic potential.

- By facilitating customs automation through the Automated System for Customs Data (ASYCUDA), UNCTAD's support helped boost trade in Iraq – benefitting businesses, the Government and people nationwide. The UN assisted the Ministry of Finance and the General Secretariat for the Council of Ministers to procure and install a main data centre, a disaster recovery data centre and communication networks for 19 customs offices, as well as to create a national team of officials to ensure the sustainability of the ASYCUDA system and the Electronic Single Window for External Trade. Training over 5,000 public and private sector stakeholders to use the ASYCUDA system shored up its sustainability, and facilitated the implementation of international agreements and standards on customs and external trade. These efforts enabled the automation of all customs clearance operations – covering 98% of Iraq's external trade – alongside 100% electronic payments for customs operations since the end of 2024. The UN also supported the development of the Harmonized System Code (Customs Tariff) and the development of a new Customs Law that will contribute to increasing trade volumes and government revenues.

Women farmers tend to newly planted trees as part of the ILO's afforestation project under the PROSPECTS partnership, funded by the Netherlands, which is creating green jobs and strengthening climate resilience in Iraq
Photo © ILO

Samir Idris Mohammed-Ali from Baradrash, Duhok has transformed his yogurt factory with the support of UNIDO and the Japanese Government
Photo © UNIDO

2.2. Inclusive access to and engagement in economic activities

Expanding employment opportunities

- In partnership with the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, the Ministry of Irrigation and the Ministry of Agriculture in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, the UN's (ILO and IOM) Employment-Intensive Investment Programme created 1,300 job opportunities for women, youth, internally displaced persons and refugees in Duhok, Nineveh and Erbil. The programme generated over 62,000 worker days by rehabilitating youth centres in Nineveh and through green works in Duhok. For example, rehabilitating irrigation systems in the Bardarash district of Duhok Governorate created 100 short-term jobs, benefitting both refugees and host community farmers.

- The Employment for Public Works (EPW) initiative – implemented by IOM in collaboration with the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, the Directorates of Education, Municipalities, Health, and Heritage, as well as local mayors – secured short-term job placements in public works for 1,691 people in the governorates of Diyala, Salah Al-Din and Anbar. This enabled beneficiaries to meet their immediate needs, learn skills on-the-job, and reintegrate into communities and the labour market.

- ILO connected job-seekers with work opportunities by supporting the creation of a job-matching platform in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq and organizing a job fair in Erbil – in partnership with the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs and the Chamber of Commerce of the Kurdistan Region – that registered 1,000 job-seekers. The UN also assisted the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs to establish four new Employment Service Centres in southern Iraq, registering another 7,539 job-seekers (29% women). These centres will boost economic growth by helping workers find jobs, and helping employers find workers with the skills they need.

- ILO provided technical and vocational training that enhanced the employability of vulnerable groups, including women and youth. For example, 104 people (41% women) gained life-changing skills through vocational training on blacksmithing, carpentry, masonry, whitewashing and solar panel maintenance. Another 80 young people (37% women) benefitted from training on solar-powered systems, equipping them to seek work in the fast-growing field of renewable energy.

- With the Basra Governorate, ILO trained young men and women in specialized skills in demand in the local labour market. They include 50 young engineers, 68 apprentices who participated in rehabilitating public schools in Basra City, and 456 young people (40% women and two persons with disabilities) trained in the fields of plumbing, sewage, decoration, electricity, air conditioning, welding, administrative skills, sewing, cosmetology, food processing, event planning, solar energy and 3D painting.

Supporting sustainable livelihoods

- In collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture, the UN (FAO and UN Women) provided livelihood support packages to 8,209 households in Basra, Maysan, and Dhi Qar – including agricultural tools, equipment, inputs and capacity building – bolstering the economic resilience of farming communities. The UN also contributed to sustainable agricultural livelihoods by enhancing women's and men's skills in key areas, in partnership with the Ministry of Agriculture, the Ministry of Youth and Sports and the College of Agriculture, and local NGOs. This included training 400 internally displaced persons, returnees and host community members on business management and marketing, training 2,210 people on accessing credit, and delivering vocational training for 1,297 women on ecotourism, recycling and horticulture. Providing hydroponic systems to 995 women enabled them to feed their livestock more efficiently and nutritiously – transforming the livelihoods of livestock-rearing households.

- IOM provided individual livelihoods assistance (ILA) to 1,876 internally displaced persons, returnees and members of host communities, enabling them to build sustainable, resilient livelihoods in Diyala, Nineveh, Anbar and Salah Al-Din.

Delivered in collaboration with the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, the Directorate of Agriculture, local mayors, community leaders (*Mukhtars*) and NGOs, this assistance paired vocational training with business support packages to help beneficiaries start and expand microbusinesses. Employing the Graduation Approach to livelihood support, the UN helped 101 women-headed households lift themselves out of poverty. In climate migration hotspots, the UN contributed to sustainable livelihoods by providing climate adaptive grants to 268 farmers, rehabilitating agricultural and water infrastructure, and supporting the agricultural extension service training centre in Dhi Qar.

Boosting business development

- In collaboration with the Ministry of Social Affairs, IOM's Enterprise Development Fund created 2,424 jobs across 10 governorates – Baghdad, Basra, Diyala, Duhok, Erbil, Kirkuk, Nineveh, Salah Al-Din, Sulaymaniyah and Dhi Qar – and provided business expansion grants to 541 SMEs, thereby injecting US$7 million into the Iraqi economy. This strengthened local value chains, as did seven UN interventions that rehabilitated infrastructure critical to Iraq's economy, including markets and irrigation systems.

- The UN (ITC and UN Women) supported Iraqi entrepreneurs to launch 500 new businesses in Nineveh, Basra and Baghdad, and strengthened the capacities of 854 entrepreneurs to set up or expand agribusinesses through training, mentoring and access to finance. This support was implemented in collaboration with the Ministry of Youth and Sports, the Ministry of Agriculture, and the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research. The UN also partnered with the 7th Sense Foundation for Media and Art Production to established four women-led e-commerce cooperatives, benefitting 108 women.

Share Khamo Alo has improved the quality and production capacity of her small dairy business in Duhok thanks to skills training supported by UNIDO and the Japanese Government Photo © UNIDO

SUCCESS STORY

Hassan Salam's story: Rebuilding Nineveh's economy

Like many Yazidis, Hassan Salam's family were forced to flee their hometown of Bartella, in Iraq's Nineveh Governorate, when ISIS occupied the area. They returned years later to find their once thriving factory badly damaged.

As the Salam family worked to restore their olive production and pickling business, a UNIDO training programme provided indispensable support. With funding from the Government of Japan, and in collaboration with the local government, the programme is helping to revitalize Nineveh's economy by training local businesses on workplace safety, hygiene, marketing, and Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP) certification – vital for food safety compliance.

"I was very happy when the local government in the area contacted me to register for the training," says Hassan. *"In addition to important information about hygiene and safety in the workplace, [we learned] methods of preserving and marketing the product."*

The training and subsequent support, including essential machinery, boosted the Salam family's business efficiency. They now have plans to expand nationally and internationally. As they source raw materials from local farmers, their success is uplifting surrounding communities as well. By supporting local businesses like Hassan Salam's, UN initiatives are enhancing sustainable livelihoods, food security and economic growth in Iraq.

Young women and men in Basra gain the skills they need to secure green jobs via solar system vocational training, delivered by an ILO-UN Habitat project funded by the European Union © ILO

SUCCESS STORY

A story of young entrepreneurs: Leading Iraq's green business movement

With UN support, young Iraqi entrepreneurs are blossoming into business leaders, innovators, and the driving force towards a greener, more sustainable future. The "Rafidain" Green Business Camp is a case in point, implemented by the ILO in partnership with the Central Bank of Iraq, the Government of Italy and key financial partners.

Throughout the three-day camp, participants worked side by side with expert trainers to refine their business models, integrate sustainability principles, and learn how to attract investment. Among the camp's 26 participants from Basra and Muthanna, many were women with a bold vision for a greener Iraq. One participant pitched a solar-powered irrigation system that can help farmers save water and reduce costs. Another, a fashion designer, introduced a clothing line made from recycled fabrics, tackling both waste management and unemployment among women artisans. A third developed biodegradable packaging solutions, aiming to replace plastic in local markets.

For years, women in Iraq's business sector have faced challenges—limited access to finance, societal expectations, and a lack of training opportunities. But at this camp, young Iraqi women and men found a network of mentors, investors and like-minded change-makers. The winning ideas selected at the camp received financial support, mentorship, and access to networks that will help them take their businesses to the next level. By taking these practical, scalable and transformative ideas forward, young entrepreneurs are offering real solutions to Iraq's environmental and economic challenges.

- As part of the guarantee provided to National Bank of Iraq under IOM's Connecting Businesses Initiative (CBI), MSMEs benefitted from 37 loans – 24% for women, 43% for returnees and internally displaced persons and 81% in the agriculture sector – directly enabling them to create 294 new jobs. The UN also provided banking orientation sessions in partnership with private banks and financial institutions – including Ashur International Bank and the First Finance Company – for 104 businesses across four governorates (Baghdad, Erbil, Anbar and Salah Al-Din) that sensitized entrepreneurs on how to access banking services and lending opportunities, including the CBI.

- ILO supported business development and financial inclusion by certifying 14 trainers from the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs as Start and Improve Your Business (SIYB) trainers. They in turn trained 465 entrepreneurs across seven governorates (57% women, 29% internally displaced persons) to set up and strengthen their businesses. Many more entrepreneurs stand to benefit from the ministry integrating SIYB into its curricula.

- By organizing farmers in Nineveh and Basra into agribusiness alliances, the UN (ITC, UNHCR and IOM) and Ministry of Agriculture helped transform isolated producers into cohesive, market-oriented collectives with a clear vision for growth. In 2024, 643 alliance members received block grants to accelerate business development and bolster local economies. Similarly in Duhok, the UN supported the construction of an aggregation hub to help smallholder farmers – both refugees and members of host communities – develop thriving agribusinesses. Another 259 businesses received grants worth US$4 million to improve their businesses, agricultural practices and irrigation systems, creating 1,247 new jobs in Basra, Maysan, Dhi Qar, Diyala, Nineveh, Erbil and Sulaymaniyah. The UN also supported 44 green businesses with grants worth US$0.95 million, enabling them to deliver environmentally-friendly products and services, and adapt their practices to ensure environmental sustainability.

- ITC facilitated 24 private sector partnerships that promoted local economic development by strengthening linkages between producers and buyers in Nineveh and Basra. For example, the UN supported mutually beneficial relationships between buyers and farmers' alliances, enabling 628 small-scale producers to sell 252 tonnes of fresh produce at higher-than-standard rates.

- Coordinated value chain development initiatives supported by FAO enhanced agricultural productivity and livelihoods, focusing on dairy products, fodder, vegetables, rice, date palms and wheat. In partnership with the Ministries of Agriculture, Water Resources, and Education, the UN rehabilitated 50 dairy centres across all Iraqi governorates except for Duhok and Anbar – benefitting 7,334 farmers and livestock breeders, as well as veterinary staff through the provision of agricultural inputs, dairy and IT equipment, and fodder. This contributed to increased milk production, improved product quality, expanded market access for farmers, and the creation of 730 new jobs. The UN also promoted the use of the event mobile application (EMA-i) to monitor and enhance animal health. As a result, the dairy industry has become more resilient and competitive, economically empowering local communities. UN-led dairy production initiatives also empowered rural women's groups, boosting their productivity and access to markets with the introduction of modern machinery.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY

3 PROMOTING EFFECTIVE, INCLUSIVE AND EFFICIENT INSTITUTIONS AND SERVICES

SDGS THAT STRATEGIC PRIORITY 3 CONTRIBUTES TO

IN NUMBERS: KEY RESULTS ACHIEVED WITH UN SUPPORT IN 2024

1.5 million
children (53% girls) benefitted from improved learning conditions thanks to the implementation of the school-based management model

290,418
out-of-school children were identified by the Back-to-Learning Campaign, 47% of whom re-enrolled in education with the campaign's support

158,000
displaced children in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq benefitted from sustainable education solutions

7
national health information and surveillance systems informed decision-making and resource allocations to improve health services across Iraq

200
health facilities utilized the UN's WASHFIT framework, strengthening water and sanitation services in Iraq's healthcare system

Dalia, herself a refugee from Syria, teaches both local Iraqi and refugee students at a public school in Sulaymaniyah Photo © UNHCR/Rasheed Hussein Rasheed

UN ENTITIES IMPLEMENTING STRATEGIC PRIORITY 3

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
IOM UN MIGRATION
International Trade Centre
UNDP
UN environment programme
UNFPA
UN-HABITAT FOR A BETTER URBAN FUTURE
unicef
UN WOMEN
WFP World Food Programme
World Health Organization

3.1. Strengthened institutions and systems to deliver services

Census: A new era of evidence-based planning

- UNFPA supported the Government of Iraq to conduct the 2024 Iraqi Census – the first national population and household census in over three decades. This is a historic milestone, providing comprehensive, accurate data to inform national planning, development policies and resource allocations that address the needs of Iraq's people. The UN is working with the Ministry of Planning to assist the Government in interpreting and utilizing census data to shape national development strategies.

Health: Strengthening services with digital systems and responsive reforms

- The UN (WHO, UNICEF, UNFPA and IOM) supported the Ministry of Health and other partners to implement seven major national health information and surveillance systems whose data informed evidence-based planning, decision-making and resource allocations for better health services across Iraq. These include the District Health Information System 2 (DHIS2) for immunization and tuberculosis, the Maternal and Perinatal Death Surveillance and Response System, Iraq's first digital Emergency Obstetric and Newborn Care Assessment, and the Health Resources and Services Availability Monitoring System (HeRAMS). The UN contributed to the efficient use of these systems by developing operational tools, supporting the creation of a national data centre, and strengthening digital capacities across national institutions – including the Ministry of Health, the IDP & Refugee Health Services Unit, the National Immunization Programme, and the National Antimicrobial Resistance Governance Mechanism. In these ways, the UN supported Iraq to position itself as a regional model for integrated, resilient and sustainable health information systems.

- In collaboration with the Ministry of Health, the UN (WHO, UNICEF, UNFPA, FAO) assisted the development and implementation of Iraq's National Women, Children and Adolescents Health Strategy (NWCAH), the National School Health Strategy, and the National Nutrition Strategy. These game-changing strategies will improve service delivery nationwide, fostering better health and nutrition among women, young people and children.

- WHO partnered with the Ministry of Health to facilitate the implementation of the Iraqi Health Promotion and Community Engagement Strategy 2024–2030 – contributing to greater community trust in public health services, improving risk communication, and catalysing behaviour change for better health outcomes.

- WHO continued to support women's leadership and decision-making in health governance. For example, 65% of stakeholders engaged in policy discussions on the National Women, Children and Adolescents Health Strategy were women, as were 40% of trainees in digital health leadership roles.

.

Dr Amir is among the medical professionals providing vital services to locals and refugees at Domiz Primary Health Centre in Duhok, supported by UNHCR and WHO
Photo ©UNHCR/Rasheed Hussein

A young volunteer trained by WHO and the Ministry of Health shares messages on preventing disease and staying healthy at mass gatherings with pilgrims in Karbala
Photo © WHO

SUCCESS STORY

Hussein's and Yusuf's story: The first breath of life

At the door of the neonatal intensive care unit at Diwaniyah General Hospital in Iraq, Hussein waits for news of his newborn grandson, Yusuf. Inside, doctors and nurses move as a synchronized team, amidst the hum of machines monitoring fragile new lives – machines that were once out of reach for struggling families in this region. The modern equipment at Diwaniyah General Hospital, supported by partnerships with organizations like UNFPA, is a literal lifeline.

A strong, clear cry breaks the silence. A nurse comes to share the good news – Yusuf is well, lying peacefully in an incubator. He is smaller than Hussein had imagined, but stronger than he had dared to believe. ***"I've lived through hard days. Back then, if a child got sick, we would say it was fate,"*** says Hussein.

"But now... science is a gift, and mercy is the work of doctors. You're not just bringing life — you're planting hope in the hearts of families."

Newborns like Yusuf and their mothers are benefitting from life-saving reproductive healthcare across Iraq, thanks to the strong partnership between UNFPA and the Government of Iraq, represented by the Ministry of Health.

Elsewhere in Diwaniyah, for example, this partnership has yielded a rehabilitated maternity ward and a new neonatal intensive care unit at the city's Specialized Maternity Hospital, through a Japan-funded project. Investing in health systems, services and partnerships is transforming lives, and protecting the future of Iraq's women and children.

Water and sanitation: Better management and greater public access

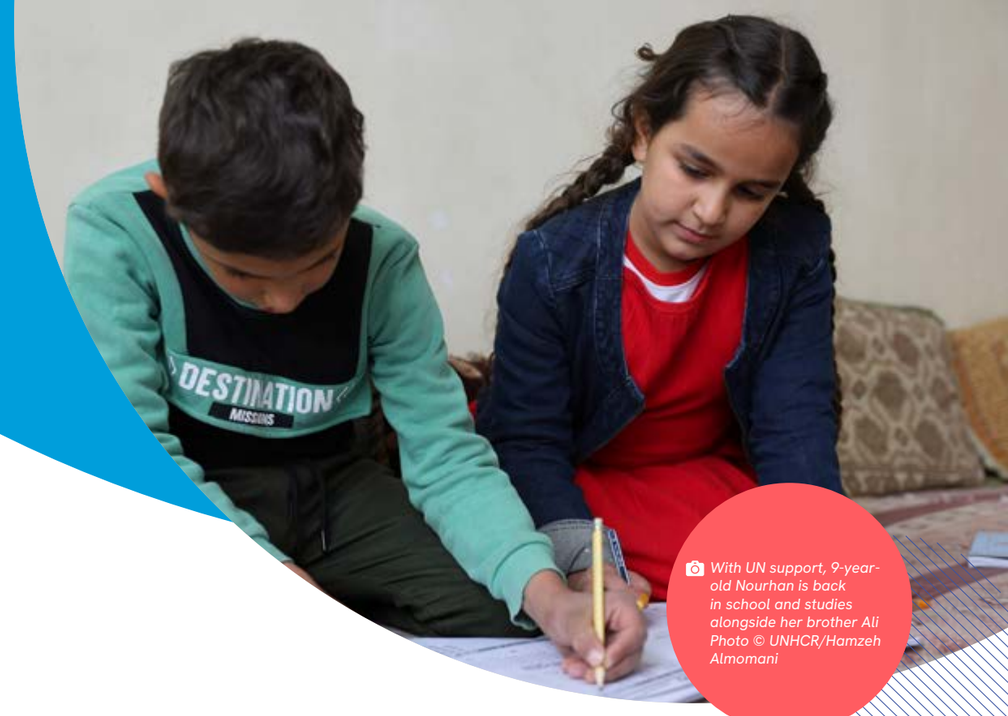
- UN (UNICEF and WHO) support for Iraq's water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) sector contributed to improved service delivery, targeted investments, and greater public access to services in partnership with the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Education, and the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Construction, Housing and Public Municipalities. The UN developed a WASH Bottleneck Analysis Tool in Erbil that informed resource optimization and solutions to expand access to water and sanitation services. Assisting the implementation of Iraq's National WASH Strategy and supporting 200 health facilities to implement the WASHFIT framework contributed to strengthening WASH infrastructure and services across the country. Following sustained advocacy by the UN, the General Directorate of Water allocated US$39 million to enhance water and sewerage infrastructure in seven governorates – Nineveh, Diyala, Anbar, Babil, Salah Al-Din, Basra, and the outskirts of Baghdad. Hygiene campaigns in schools nationwide with the Ministry of Education engaged 244,400 children, fostering healthier practices and reducing the risk of preventable diseases.

- The UN (UNICEF and WHO) partnered with the Ministry of Construction, Housing and Public Works, and the Ministry of Municipalities and Tourism to modernize water management by digitalizing Iraq's Water Safety Plan and launching an online platform for water services. The platform gives the public access to information on water services and a grievance mechanism for submitting complaints on service quality. This enhanced transparency, efficient water resource management, and consumer trust in public utilities.

Education: Improved systems and learning conditions

- The UN (UNICEF and UNESCO) partnered with the Ministry of Education, General Directorates of Education and Governors' Offices to strengthen Iraq's education system by expanding the use of the Education Management Information System (EMIS). Three governorates are now fully using the system across 5,279 schools – a 17% increase compared to 2023 – enabling evidence-based planning and monitoring. With UN assistance, 15 governorates implemented targeted Governorate Education Sector Plans that enhanced policy coordination and budget allocations to improve education services.

- With UNICEF's support, the Ministry of Education enhanced school governance by adopting the school-based early childhood education (ECE) model and expanding the school-based management (SBM) model across formal and informal schools. The UN trained 22,500 members of school management committees to implement the SBM model at 5,692 schools, improving learning conditions for 1.5 million children, including 800,000 girls.



With UN support, 9-year-old Nourhan is back in school and studies alongside her brother Ali Photo © UNHCR/Hamzeh Almomani

3.2. Improved capacity to lead, participate in and contribute to the delivery of equitable and responsive services

Getting children back to school

- Through the Back-to-Learning Campaign, UNICEF partnered with the Ministry of Education to identify 290,418 out-of-school children (29% girls), 47% of whom re-entered education with the campaign's support. UN advocacy successfully secured government investment of US$2 million for the campaign in 2024, with an additional US$5 million pledged over the next five years.

- UNICEF supported the education of girls, undocumented, displaced and refugee children. Advocacy by UN agencies contributed to policy change, with the Government of Iraq allowing undocumented children to enrol in schools, and advanced sustainable education solutions for 158,000 displaced children in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. The UN supported the reintegration of 11,774 girls into lower secondary education and assisted the implementation of the Refugee Education Integration Policy, enabling the integration of 45,000 Syrian refugee children into host community schools.

Expanding responsive health services

- The UN's (UNFPA and WHO) H6 Partnership for maternal, newborn, child and adolescent health fostered collaboration for integrated health service delivery across Iraq. The UN also enhanced capacities for responsive health services by training 150 health professionals on health governance, mental health and psychosocial support, One Health and digital transformation (30–40% women).

Asmaa Khalaf is among thousands of students who have returned to education thanks to the Government of Iraq's Back to Learning Campaign, developed with UNICEF's support
Photo © UNICEF/Beshad

SUCCESS STORY

Lawand's story: Getting children back to learning

Now 18 years old, Lawand dropped out of school in Sulaymaniyah, Iraq, when he failed Grade 8. Opportunities for learning seemed few and far between until the Back-to-Learning campaign – led by the Ministry of Education in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq with support from UNICEF, and funded by the United States Government and Germany through KfW Development Bank – paved his way back to education.

Lawand's story took a positive turn when a team from the Directorate of Education visited his home as part of the door-to-door Back-to-Learning campaign. Their intervention helped Lawand enrol in a new school – Mateen Elementary School for Boys, where he joined the 8th grade.

With the unwavering support of his mother and his new school, which supports students facing diverse challenges, Lawand has completed Grades 8 and 9, and is en route to pursue further studies.

"Embracing the journey back to school, I've found profound happiness," says Lawand. *"Witnessing friends progressing while I stood still, battling both bullying and harsh words, I persevered. Today, I stand triumphant, grateful for the opportunity to complete my studies and secure a meaningful job."* His story highlights the transformative power of education, the crucial role of support structures, and the positive impact of the Back-to-Learning campaign in providing second chances for education for Iraq's children.

Alaq Muhammed is a graduate and grant recipient of SAAVI Tadreeb – Iraq's e-learning platform, developed with ITC's support. SAAVI delivers education and training that enables emerging agri-entrepreneurs to start and develop their businesses
Photo © ITC

STRATEGIC PRIORITY

4 PROMOTING NATURAL RESOURCE AND DISASTER RISK MANAGEMENT, AND CLIMATE CHANGE RESILIENCE

SDGS THAT STRATEGIC PRIORITY 4 CONTRIBUTES TO

IN NUMBERS: KEY RESULTS ACHIEVED WITH UN SUPPORT IN 2024

548,714
smart water meters – installed with the Ministry of Housing, Construction and Public Works – improved water efficiency across 15 governorates

2,700
dunums of drought-affected farmland were reclaimed through water efficiency solutions, increasing crop yields by 20%

56,000
health workers and patients benefitted from improved sanitation and environmentally-friendly wastewater treatment at 11 health facilities

1,812
farmers and officials benefitted from training, equipping them to advance sustainable natural resource management

1,000
young people engaged in climate research, devising community-led solutions to water scarcity and climate change

2,500
farmers were supported to adopt conservation agriculture and agroecology practices, bolstering food security and environmental sustainability

Marwa Raed's IOM-supported business in Baghdad, Green Gold, turns food waste into eco-friendly compost
Photo © IOM/Saad Almeriwani

UN ENTITIES IMPLEMENTING STRATEGIC PRIORITY 4

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
IOM UN MIGRATION
International Trade Centre
UNDP
UN environment programme
UNFPA
UN-HABITAT FOR A BETTER URBAN FUTURE
unicef
UN WOMEN
WFP World Food Programme
World Health Organization

4.1. Strengthened policies and frameworks for managing natural resources, developing renewable resources and increasing resilience

Policy progress on environmental protection, renewable energy and climate resilience

- The UN (UNDP and FAO) supported the Ministry of the Environment to develop the National Strategy for the Protection and Improvement of the Environment, the National Sustainable Land Management Strategy, the National Agriculture and Marshland Conservation Action Plan, and the National Food Security Strategy and Action Plan. These frameworks will have an important impact by guiding government efforts to protect the environment, conserve ecosystems, mitigate the effects of climate change and increase community resilience.

- With UN assistance (UNDP and FAO), the Government of Iraq also adopted biodiversity goals which it submitted to the Convention on Biological Diversity, and participated in the Conference of the Parties (COP16) of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) – reflecting Iraq's commitment to halting biodiversity loss and addressing land degradation. A new knowledge management platform boosted government capacity for land use monitoring and evidence-based decision-making.

- UNDP assisted the Government – including the Ministries of Electricity, Education, and Oil, as well as all Governorate Offices – to develop an Energy Transition Framework to expand the use of green renewable energy across Iraq. This contributed to the approval of a mandatory policy with a budget of US$68 million for solar energy projects and the annual retrofitting of government buildings to enhance their energy efficiency. Training 200 government officials on ISO 50001 and ISO 14001 standards strengthened capacities to implement energy and environmental management systems.

- The UN (UNDP, IOM and FAO) supported the Government of Iraq's participation at the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP29), where the country hosted 40 sessions, engaged in 12 high-level negotiations, and presented its first National Health Adaptation Plan to integrate climate resilience into the health system. With UN assistance, the Ministry of the Environment and other government partners also developed a Climate Investment Plan and presented investment cases at COP29 and the Hand-in-Hand Initiative Investment Forum to attract funding for climate projects, particularly in the agri-food sector.

- With WHO's support, the Ministry of Health set up a Climate Change and Health Steering Committee and five technical committees addressed pressing environmental issues related to heat, water, food security, air pollution and vector-borne diseases.

Protecting Iraq's biodiversity will benefit ecosystems and livelihoods, including communities that depend on livestock like water buffalo
Photo © WFP

Volunteers in Erbil collect litter during the Earth Day Clean-up Campaign 2024
Photo © UN Volunteers

4.2. Enhanced the engagement of people, subnational institutions, civil society and the private sector for the management of natural resources and the environment

Water management: Monitoring and conservation contribute to water security

- FAO leveraged the global WaPOR system to improve water monitoring across Iraq in partnership with the Ministry of Water Resources. This publicly accessible database uses satellite data to monitor agricultural water productivity – contributing to sustainable crop yields and reducing strain on freshwater resources. The UN supported the system's use by 14 national institutions, including the Ministries of Water Resources, Agriculture, the Environment, Planning, Higher Education and Scientific Research.

- UNICEF helped reduce reliance on groundwater by introducing new technologies as part of the Net Zero Water Consumption Project, in partnership with the Iraqi Ministry of Municipalities and Tourism and the German Development Bank (KfW). This shored up water security in water-scarce areas, such as Erbil, building a sustainable water management model that can be replicated across Iraq.

- The UN (UNICEF and UN Habitat) supported water conservation by partnering with the Ministry of Construction, Housing, Municipalities and Public Works, the Mayoralty of Baghdad and local authorities to pilot a WASH Smart City initiative and invest in smart water meters in Baghdad and Kirkuk. With UN assistance, the ministry installed 548,714 water meters across 15 governorates financed by a build-operate-transfer (BOT) contract with an investor bank that promoted private sector engagement in modernizing Iraq's water sector. By monitoring consumption and detecting leaks in real-time, these meters improved water efficiency and minimized wastage, while generating US$27.5 million in revenue for the water sector.

Volunteers Abdulbari Abdulkhaliq and Sana Qubad plant saplings at Sami Abdulrahman Park in Erbil
Photo © UNICEF/Dlshad Aziz

SUCCESS STORY

Sana's and Abdulbari's story: Empowering youth to tackle water scarcity

The Sami Abdulrahman Park, one of the largest and most iconic public spaces in Erbil, Iraq, is facing an escalating challenge – water scarcity. Five of its 20 groundwater wells have run dry, and its outdated irrigation systems are straining Erbil's limited water resources.

A new wastewater treatment system project is transforming the park into a model of sustainability – led by the Kurdistan Regional Government, funded by the German KfW Development Bank, and implemented by UNICEF in partnership with the Hasar Organization. The system uses cutting-edge recycling technology to treat and reuse wastewater for irrigation. But what makes the project truly transformative is its focus on engaging young people as drivers of change – with over 1,000 young volunteers working together on the project.

"This project goes beyond just treating wastewater," explains 26-year-old participant Sana. *"We're shifting mindsets. By involving young people, we are creating a ripple effect that will drive lasting water conservation."* Abdulbari Abdulkhaliq, 27, is equally effusive. *"Recognizing how technology can solve real-world problems has inspired me to explore how we can implement these solutions across Erbil,"* he says.

Through community outreach, young people like Sana and Abdulbari are gaining hands-on experience in water conservation and sustainability, while raising awareness about the impacts of climate change. The project is a strong example of the power of partnerships and youth-led climate action.

Agriculture: Climate-smart solutions benefit the environment

- UNDP leveraged renewable energy and capacity building to advance climate-smart agriculture across Iraq. For example, in partnership with the Ministries of Water Resources and Agriculture, the UN installed 116 solar systems and 77 water-efficient sprinkler systems at farms across eight governorates that reduced water consumption by 50% and reclaimed 2,700 *dunums* of drought-affected land for farming. The UN also supported the solarization of the Al Aksha Canal in Muthanna Governorate, the American University of Baghdad and the Iraqi Home Foundation for Creativity. Collectively, these interventions reduced annual CO_2 emissions by 1,233 tonnes.

- FAO assisted the establishment of 41 Conservation Agriculture and 25 Agroecology Farmer Field School plots in southern Iraq, helped over 2,500 farmers to adopt these practices, and set up two gene banks in central and northern Iraq. Training 60 government staff on climate-smart agriculture, and 1,812 farmers and officials on natural resource management, laid the foundation for further progress. These efforts enhanced conservation agriculture, agroecology and agrobiodiversity – contributing to food security, climate resilience and environmental sustainability.

- The UN (UNICEF and FAO) promoted environmentally-friendly solutions for public services, such as integrating solar-powered renewable systems in 105 schools in Basra, Kirkuk, Nineveh and Duhok. Improving wastewater treatment at 11 health facilities in Baghdad, Duhok, Nineveh, Kirkuk and Sulaymaniyah reduced contamination in rivers, while benefitting 10,000 health workers (45% women) and 46,000 patients (46% children).

- In partnership with Duhok University, the UN (UNICEF and FAO) engaged 1,000 young people in climate research to devise community-led solutions to water scarcity and climate change. UN support for 83 local networks – including Water Users Associations, Farmer Field Schools and Women's Groups – further promoted sustainable practices and disaster risk reduction at the community level.

WFP supports the Sarchanar Tree Nursery in Sulaymaniyah Governorate as part of UN assistance for afforestation efforts in Iraq Photo © WFP

A farmer picks fresh tomatoes in a greenhouse as part of FAO's smart agricultural initiatives in southern Iraq Photo © FAO/Reem AlSadoon

SUCCESS STORY

Abdul Amir's story: Cultivating climate-smart economic resilience

In southern Iraq, dwindling water resources and soil salinity make traditional livestock feeding practices increasingly untenable. For communities whose livelihoods depend on livestock, the situation is critical. An innovative initiative by FAO – funded by the European Union and implemented in partnership with Iraq's Ministry of Agriculture and local partners – is overcoming these challenges by providing climate-resilient fodder crop varieties to farmers, paired with capacity building and support for climate-smart irrigation practices.

Abdul Amir Salman Aissa is one of the initiative's beneficiaries. Cultivating rye grass for the first time in the village of Nahr Alsabe, in the Basra Governorate's Midaina District, he produced 34 tonnes of fodder using a drip irrigation system that conserves water efficiently.

Rye grass is a superior feed that keeps animals healthy and fertile, at minimal cost to farmers and the environment. Farmers like Abdul Amir have seen milk production increase by 37%, boosting profits from dairy and cheese processing. After feeding his own buffaloes and cows, he sells the rest of his rye grass for US$2,000 per season.

Inspired by the initiative's impact, Iraq's Ministry of Agriculture has established a programme to promote local seed and feed production. This is a testament to the ways in which UN initiatives are transforming livelihoods by empowering communities at the grassroots level, while catalysing broader systemic change in agricultural practices and policies – all towards a greener, more resilient future for Iraqi communities and ecosystems.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY

5

ACHIEVING DIGNIFIED, SAFE AND VOLUNTARY DURABLE SOLUTIONS TO DISPLACEMENT IN IRAQ

SDGS THAT STRATEGIC PRIORITY 5 CONTRIBUTES TO

IN NUMBERS: KEY RESULTS ACHIEVED WITH UN SUPPORT IN 2024

40,099
displaced Iraqis obtained civil documentation, securing their access to vital public services

6,110
persons from minority communities (48% women) secured land tenure, safeguarding their housing, land and property rights

1.4 million m²
of land was surveyed and cleared of explosive ordnance, restoring land for farming, housing and infrastructure development

39,231
returnees received livelihood assistance (36% women, 32% youth and 5% persons with disabilities), contributing to their resilience and reintegration

2,364
households were assisted to voluntarily return, relocate or reintegrate in Mosul, Sinjar, Ba'aj and Amiriya Al Fallujah

Yahya Mustafa and his family are among the refugees registered by UNHCR's community services centre in Baghdad in 2024
Photo © UNHCR

UN ENTITIES IMPLEMENTING STRATEGIC PRIORITY 5

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
International Labour Organization
IOM UN MIGRATION
UNDP
unesco
UNFPA
UNHCR The UN Refugee Agency
unicef
UNMAS
UNOPS
UN WOMEN
WFP World Food Programme
World Health Organization

5.1. Stabilization, development and peacebuilding initiatives to enhance durable solutions

Stabilization: Upholding rights to civil documentation, land and safety

- In partnership with the Ministry of Interior, UNHCR assisted 40,099 internally displaced persons in Iraq to obtain civil documents in Erbil (East Mosul Camps), Nineveh, Baghdad, Kirkuk and Anbar. This transformed lives by securing their access to essential services like education, healthcare and social protection, facilitating their freedom of movement and employment, and enabling them to exercise their civil, economic and political rights. UN support included delivering legal counselling to 27,281 people, providing legal representation to 10,294 people to overcome administrative and legal challenges, and facilitating 34 mobile missions to expand access to documentation. The UN also supported the first Unified ID Card (UID) mobile mission of 2024, which processed 1,013 applications.

- The UN (UNDP and UNFPA) assisted the Ministry of Migration and Displacement to develop the National Reintegration Strategy – a major step towards social cohesion and stability for the people of Iraq. This landmark strategy will guide the safe return of displaced Iraqis to their homes, their reintegration and social cohesion across their communities.

- UNDP provided capacity building support to the Office of the National Security Advisor, the Ministry of Migration and Displacement, and the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs to strengthen the institutional capacities necessary for ensuring the safe and dignified return and reintegration of displaced persons. As part of these efforts, the UN trained 21 local NGOs to support the Office of the National Security Advisor in advancing peacebuilding, social cohesion, reintegration and preventing violent extremism in Babil, Baghdad and Diwaniyah.

- The UN (IOM and UNHCR) advanced durable solutions to displacement in Iraq by supporting the voluntary assisted return (VAR), relocation or integration of 2,364 households, mainly to Mosul, Sinjar, Ba'aj and Amiriya Al Fallujah. Following 85 social cohesion initiatives at the community level – implemented by the UN with the Ministry of Migration and Displacement, and the Joint Crisis Coordination Centre (JCCC) in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq – 87% of returnee households reported positive community relations. For those who remain displaced, the UN continued working with the JCCC and the Directorate of Migration and Crisis Response to support 109,000 internally displaced persons at 21 camps in the Kurdistan Region.

A women-only and child-friendly session in Dugrey Mujama'at, led by a female trainer, on housing, land and property rights in Sinjar
Photo © UN Habitat

Students in Mosul pose after attending a UN-supported explosive ordnance risk education session in 2024
Photo © UNMAS

- UN Habitat supported the Government of Iraq to advance the recognition of Yazidi land rights – a historic step towards justice and durable solutions for social cohesion. Decades of discrimination and violence by ISIL have prevented Yazidis from returning to their communities, especially because they lack official documents proving land ownership. In October 2024, the Cabinet issued a decision amending the legal decrees approved by the Council of Ministers in 2022 and 2023 – decrees that were jointly drafted with the Prime Minister's Office and the UN. The amendment recognizes occupancy certificates issued by the UN in coordination with government authorities as valid documents to prove occupancy rights. This will enable Yazidis to claim their land rights for the first time in generations.

- By addressing housing, land and property (HLP) issues, UNHCR supported internally displaced persons to return home and returnees to reintegrate into their communities. For example, in Sinjar, the UN helped secure land tenure for 6,110 persons from minority communities (48% women) by facilitating the HLP claims of 1,313 households. With UN assistance, 571 Yazidi families obtained land ownership letters, and 1,176 internally displaced persons accessed legal representation to restore their HLP documentation. HLP awareness raising sessions benefitted 1,497 people (30% women) including Yazidis. These are especially important for providing women safe spaces to learn about their HLP rights and access legal support.

- UNMAS supported the Government of Iraq to protect communities from explosive ordnance contamination, particularly in the Sinjar, Mosul and Tel Kaif districts of Nineveh. Survey and clearance operations made 1,442,810 m^2 of farmland, infrastructure and residential areas safe for communities by clearing 3,592 explosive devices. Assessing another 1.2 million m^2 of land helped the Government to identify and map hazardous areas. An evaluation of 2.6 million m^2 of land cleared of hazards in 2023 confirmed the impact and sustainability of clearance operations. These have contributed to community well-being, facilitated the safe return of internally displaced persons, and enabled the productive use of cleared land for farming, housing reconstruction and infrastructure development in Basra, Makhmour, Mosul and Tel Kaif. The UN also contributed to safety in return areas by organizing 1,341 awareness raising sessions that sensitized 16,112 people (59% women and girls) on the risks of explosive remnants of war and improvised explosive devices, as well as by training 17 police personnel on explosive ordnance disposal.

Farmers resume agriculture activities in lands cleared of explosive ordnance with UNMAS support in Tal Kaif
Photo © UNMAS

SUCCESS STORY

Noor and Safa's story: Empowering Iraqi women in mine action

After a conflict, after the guns fall silent, the legacy of war remains hidden beneath the soil. Landmines and explosive remnants of war are left behind, threatening communities as they seek to rebuild their lives. Clearing Iraq of explosive ordnances is painstaking, dangerous work. But it is vital to facilitate the safe and dignified return of internally displaced persons. Noor and Safa are two pioneering Iraqi women taking on this challenge to keep communities across the country safe.

Noor joined an explosive ordnance risk education (EORE) team nine years ago, educating communities about explosive hazards. To advance her expertise, she pursued Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) Level 1 and 2 certifications supported by UNMAS in Iraq, and Level 3 at the Ministry of Interior's EOD training school in Basmaya, Baghdad.

Noor is now a certified team leader with UNMAS' national partner, the Shareteah Humanitarian Organization, leading a team of five – four de-miners and one medical specialist in Sinjar, Nineveh Governorate.

Safa spent 12 years working in Iraq's humanitarian sector before bringing her rich experience to bear on the world of mine action at UNMAS Iraq. Safa ensures that UNMAS programme management efforts align with humanitarian mine action goals, while Noor guarantees the technical aspects of mine action meet community needs and the necessary quality standards through collaboration. Working in different roles and with different organizations, their journeys are a testament to the importance of cross-functional collaboration to achieve an explosive ordnance-free Iraq.

5.2. Policies, strategies and plans to achieve durable solutions

Development: Restoring livelihoods and infrastructure for durable solutions

- The UN (UNDP, UNHCR and IOM) supported government efforts to enable dignified, sustainable solutions for displaced and returnee families by restoring 138 service infrastructure facilities across Iraq – including electricity, health, education and agricultural facilities. For example, in partnership with the Prime Minister's Office, the Council of Ministers Secretariat and the Ministry of Planning, local authorities and communities, the UN implemented 62 community infrastructure rehabilitation projects that re-established basic services in areas of return in Nineveh, Anbar, Salah Al-Din and Diyala. Building two new primary healthcare facilities in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq supported the provision of 177,000 medical consultations that benefitted both refugees and host communities. Delivering mental health and psychosocial support services to 27,490 people strengthened reintegration and reconciliation efforts.

- By providing livelihood assistance for 10,030 households – including income generation opportunities, skills development and the provision of assets – IOM contributed to the economic stability of 39,231 returnees (36% women, 32% youth and 5% persons living with disabilities). The UN also provided multi-purpose cash assistance to 2,500 internally displaced persons departing from informal sites and camp settings, enabling them to meet their immediate reintegration needs.

Enhancing policies, analysis and coordination for durable solutions

- The UN (IOM, UNDP and UNHCR) partnered with the Federal Government of Iraq, represented by the Ministry of Planning and the Ministry of Migration of Displacement, and the Kurdistan Regional Government to develop the Durable Solutions Roadmap and Implementation Plan. This will accelerate the implementation of Iraq's National Plan to Resolve Displacement – in line with the Council of Ministers' Decision No. 24007 in 2024, and the Prime Minister's priority to end protracted displacement – by advancing durable solutions for displaced populations across Iraq. The UN also assisted the development of area-specific frameworks with the same aim. For example, the Salah Al-Din Durable Solutions Roadmap, launched with the local government, provides a strategic framework to support conflict-affected populations. It will enable greater support for return, reintegration and long-term stability through improved services, housing, livelihoods and social cohesion.

- IOM supported the development of the Return and Readmission Framework with the Government of Iraq and the Kurdistan Regional Government, reinforcing Iraq's commitment as the first MENA champion country for the Global Compact for Migration. Conducting studies using the Displacement Tracking Matrix helped identify climate vulnerabilities in the Kurdistan Region, evaluate progress on durable solutions and monitor areas of blocked returns. The UN also strengthened the Ministry of Migration and Displacement's capacity to refer returnees to services through the National Referral Mechanism, and government data analysis capacities to inform responsive service delivery for internally displaced persons.

- UN Habitat organized the first policy dialogue on land management and governance reforms in partnership with the Government of Iraq. This secured consensus on legal amendments, digitalization, and the establishment of a Working Group to streamline land registration processes and ensure long-term impact.

- By training 218 national and local officials, and producing 87 assessment reports, the UN (IOM, UNDP, UNOPS, UN HABITAT and RCO) contributed to evidence-based monitoring to inform durable solutions. This approach will ensure a coordinated response aligned with local and international efforts to support Sinjar's recovery from conflict.

- The government-led Joint Coordination Forum (JCF) strengthened coordination on durable solutions for displacement in conflict-affected areas – including Nineveh, Kirkuk, Salah Al-Din, Diyala, Anbar and Basra Governorates, as well as the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. Set up in early 2024 under the Resident Coordinator's supervision, the JCF brings together 18 government directorates and departments, 15 international NGOs, nine local NGOs and six UN entities (UNAMI, WFP, UNDP, IOM, OCHA, UNHCR and RCO). Together through the JCF, these partners facilitated strategic field missions to support internally displaced persons and returnees, worked on needs assessments, and contributed to the IDP Returns Framework. Local authorities actively participated in 38 JCF meetings convened across governorates, laying a solid foundation for collaborative, localized solutions. The UN also supported other forums that contributed to a cohesive, coordinated response to displacement and reintegration among 64 partners, such as the Durable Solutions Technical Working Group, the Returns Working Group, the Durable Solutions Task Force and the Sinjar Area-Based Coordination (ABC) Group.

At a 12-day vocational training programme on glass painting and staining in West Mosul – organised by UNICEF and the Better World Organization – young women affected by conflict gained livelihood skills to support themselves and their families Photo © UNICEF/Dyar Shabaz

Azhar secured Unified IDs for his children in 2024 with the support of UNHCR's partner, the Legal Clinics Network ©UNHCR/Karlo Jeelo

SUCCESS STORY

Azhar's story: From displacement to dignity with civil documentation

Over a decade ago, Azhar's family fled Fallujah and sought safety in Baghdad. Born into displacement, his children had no identity documents. *"I was very worried about their future,"* Azhar explains. *"No one would accept them without documentation. I felt lost."* He was unable to register his children in local schools, or take them to public health clinics.

In 2024, everything changed when UNHCR's partner, the Legal Clinics Network, learned about Azhar's case and stepped into help. Since his children were above a certain age, they needed to go to court to certify their births and family lineage. They also needed a DNA test to prove that Azhar was their father. With the support of Legal Clinics Network and UNHCR, within 12 months, Osama and Dunya received their birth certificates and national IDs.

Their documents are among 40,000 civil records secured for displaced Iraqis in 2024 through UNHCR's close collaboration with Iraq's Ministry of Interior, working with partners like Harikar, Heartland Alliance International, IRC, INTERSOS, the Legal Clinic Network, and Terre des Hommes.

Civil documentation enables families like Azhar's to access education, healthcare and other social services, as well as exercise their basic rights.

"The first thing I did when they got their documentation was take them to school," Azhar explains. *"I had lost all hope for a good future for my children. But now, with their education and rights secured, anything seems possible."*

ONE UN IRAQ

COHERENCE, EFFECTIVENESS AND EFFICIENCIES

BUSINESS EFFICIENCIES

In 2024, the UN in Iraq achieved its highest efficiency gains to date – **record cost avoidance of US$$2,832,218** through the continued implementation of the joint UNCT and United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) Business Operations Strategy's (BOS) Annual Work Plans. This streamlined services, enhanced cost-effectiveness and strengthened operational efficiency through UNAMI's integration into common service provision.

Building on this momentum, the UN sought to **repurpose the UNAMI compound as a sustainable hub** for international organizations post-departure, ensuring security and infrastructure compliance aligned with the recommendations of the UN Department for Safety and Security (UNDSS). This initiative aims to optimize compound usage while enhancing staff safety and operational resilience.

To facilitate a smooth transition, the UN set up a **Common Premises Transition Taskforce** to oversee the transfer and operation of UNAMI-serviced compounds in Baghdad and Erbil, reinforcing inter-agency collaboration and efficiency.

The UN's integrated compound continued to implement a range of **energy efficiency and renewable energy measures to reduce its environmental impact**. These include designing new buildings in line with green building standards and retrofitting existing buildings – incorporating elements like thermal insulation, LED lighting systems and inverter-type air conditioners to enhance energy efficiency. A major milestone was the **installation of a 1,500 kWp solar photovoltaic system**, supported by 1,800 kWh of battery storage. Excess renewable energy generated by the system is now exported to the national grid.

COMMUNICATING AS ONE UN

Through the UN Strategic Communications Group (SCG), the UN Country Team leveraged consistent unified communication to amplify the impact of the UN's work with partners in support of Iraq's development priorities. For example:

The action-oriented **Water is Life campaign** by the UN and the Ministry of Water Resources promoted behaviour change to conserve Iraq's water resources and address water scarcity.

Events commemorating major international days raised awareness of human rights across Iraq, including **International Women's Day**, **International Volunteer Day**, and the **International Day of Persons with Disabilities**.

Media outreach by the Resident Coordinator – interviews, op-eds, speeches, public statements and a roundtable with Iraqi journalists — and **quarterly UNCT newsletters** highlighted sustainable development issues in Iraq and the UN's role in addressing them, such as food security, climate resilience, and durable solutions for displacement.

The **youth-led Arbaeen Health and Climate campaign** mobilized **4,000** youth volunteers and 200 online UN Volunteers to reach over **530,000** people via social media – raising community awareness of heat, hygiene and climate-related health risks.

As part of UN Women's global **16 Days of Activism campaign**, the UN organized awareness raising events in Baghdad and Erbil, amplifying calls to **protect women and girls from violence** and enhance services for survivors in collaboration with the National Department of Iraqi Women in the General Secretariat of the Council of Ministers, as well as with civil society.

The **#PasstheBaton Anti-Corruption campaign** led by UNDP with the Commission of Integrity at both the federal level and in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq promoted transparency, shared accountability and civil responsibility. Garnering **65 million** views on social media, the campaign received the "Best Campaign of the MENA Region Award" from the MENA PR Association.

(Above) UNV outreach sessions inspired students at the University of Basra, the American University of Kurdistan and Erbil Polytechnic University to explore volunteering as a pathway to professional growth and societal impact
Photo © UN Volunteers

(Below) Celebration of International Women's Day in Iraq
Photo © UN Women

UN agencies supported young Iraqis to engage in volunteering, raising awareness at a job fair hosted by Knowledge University, in collaboration with UNV, UNDP and USAID Photo © UN Volunteers

YOUTH2030

In 2024, the UN in Iraq made significant strides in youth empowerment and inclusion by amplifying young people's voices and enhancing programming to meet their evolving needs and challenges. A key milestone was the rigorous and inclusive process, throughout 2024, that led to the establishment of the United Nations Youth Advisory Council (UNYAC), launched in January 2025 in collaboration with the Iraqi Ministry of Youth and Sports and the UN Youth Office.

The nomination of the 13 council members was a meticulously coordinated effort involving multiple UN agencies, the Ministry of Youth and Sports, and youth networks. The process prioritized diversity and inclusion, ensuring representation across gender, geography, ethnicity, religion, socioeconomic status and other groups, such as persons with disabilities and internally displaced youth.

A call for nominations was issued to UN agencies in 2024, followed by a structured evaluation process that included application reviews and online interviews conducted by a multi-agency panel. This extensive effort reflects the UN's commitment to meaningful youth participation and the belief that young people must be at the heart of shaping policies that affect their lives.

In parallel, the UN Country Team strengthened its partnership with the Government of Iraq's Higher Council of Youth and engaged young people in advocacy campaigns and policy dialogues. Iraqi youth were also supported to participate in global platforms, including the high-level meeting on youth education, skilling, and employability, and the COP29 climate conference, where they contributed to international discussions on climate action and sustainable development.

DISABILITY INCLUSION

In 2024, the UN in Iraq strengthened its commitment to disability inclusion by integrating it into operations, policies, and frameworks. To drive this effort forward, a coordination group co-chaired by UNDP and WHO spearheaded a comprehensive consultative approach through the UNCT Disability Inclusion Strategy and Action Plan. Work is also underway on a National Disability Inclusion Strategy, which will enhance collaboration with organizations of persons living with disabilities, focusing on consultation and capacity building efforts. These initiatives have also been embedded in the development of the 2024 Common Country Analysis (CCA) and the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) 2025–2029.

The UNCT actively engaged with organizations of persons living with disabilities in 2024 to improve the accessibility of UN premises and services. Moving beyond physical accessibility alone, these efforts have reinforced the integration of disability inclusion within UNCT coordination mechanisms, joint programmes and humanitarian responses. Through consultations, workshops, and capacity building initiatives, the UNCT laid a strong foundation for sustained progress, involving meaningful engagement with governmental and non-governmental partners while incorporating disability considerations into human resource policies and capacity development strategies.

PREVENTION OF SEXUAL EXPLOITATION AND ABUSE

In 2024, the UN implemented a targeted strategy to manage and mitigate risks and prevent sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA). Leadership engagement reinforced ethical standards and encouraged a culture of reporting, while protection for whistle blowers and victim support networks were strengthened. A structured referral system was introduced to improve assistance and gather feedback.

PSEA efforts included ongoing education, new reporting mechanisms such as a dedicated hotline and accessible community-based complaint mechanisms (CBCMs) tailored for diverse populations. The PSEA Coordinator's oversight ensured timely investigations and victim support. Key policy achievements included the development of the Iraq PSEA Network's Terms of Reference, standard operating procedures for complaint management, and multilingual educational materials. Specialized training on enhanced investigative expertise and PSEA considerations were integrated into the proposed UNSDCF 2025–2029, reinforcing accountability and strategic planning.

HUMAN RIGHTS

In 2024, the UN in Iraq demonstrated **unwavering commitment to advancing human rights**. Key efforts included supporting the development and implementation of inclusive policies and legal frameworks, such as those related to employment, social protection and land rights. The UN also focused on empowering vulnerable groups – including women, youth, minorities and displaced persons – through targeted programmes aimed at increasing their access to justice, education, economic opportunities and other essential services. A **human rights-based approach** was at the core of UN efforts to promote social cohesion, peacebuilding, and protection from violence and conflict, including preventing violent extremism and addressing the challenges that returnee families face. These collective efforts reflect the dedication of the UN in Iraq to upholding human rights principles and fostering a more just and equitable society.

For example, UNDP's **Rule of Law and Security Sector Reform Programme** applied a human rights-based approach (HRBA) to strengthen good governance and policing.

In partnership with the Ministry of Interior, the UN supported the integration of human rights into the ministry's Strategic Plan 2024–2026, with the objective of improving human rights protection mechanisms. The UN also assisted the development of six standard operating procedures (SOPs) to regulate criminal investigations, surveillance, arrest, and public policing – aligning practices in Iraq with international human rights standards. The Handbook of Financial Investigation Procedures developed with UN support mainstreamed human rights safeguards into anti-corruption efforts to ensure that investigations uphold due process and accountability. Facilitating the establishment of model police stations institutionalized transparent, rights-based policing and enhanced oversight by citizens. These initiatives strengthened accountability, reduced abuse, and promoted public trust in Iraq's justice and security sectors.

Residents in Mosul's Al-Azizya neighbourhood receive guidance on responding to climate-related disasters as part of a project funded by the Government of Japan and implemented by UNIDO
Photo © UNIDO

PARTNERSHIPS
AND FINANCING THE 2030 AGENDA

Advancing sustainable development fundamentally depends on collaboration. The **UN in Iraq actively engages with a wide array of partners** across sectors. This collaborative approach underscores a shared commitment to achieving the SDGs and improving the lives of all Iraqis.

Partnerships with the Government of Iraq are central to the UN's work, serving as a vital foundation for policymaking, capacity building and service delivery initiatives. In 2024, the UN worked closely with Iraqi partners at all levels, including with the Government of Iraq through all line ministries, governorates across Iraq, the President and the Prime Minister's Offices, the Office of the National Security Advisor, the Central Bank of Iraq and various relevant governmental institutions and entities. This collaboration ensured that the UN Country Team's support in Iraq is aligned with national priorities and maximized the impact of resources dedicated to achieving the SDGs. For example, UN advocacy efforts in collaboration with the Central Bank of Iraq contributed to the Iraqi Government approving a mandatory policy with a budget of US$68 million for solar energy projects and the annual retrofitting of government buildings to enhance their energy efficiency. UN agencies partnered with the Ministry of Health on an awareness raising campaign on the impacts of health and climate change, engaging over 4,000 volunteers, including 240 online volunteers.

The UN leveraged partnerships with the private sector to drive economic growth and job creation, including with Toyota, Rudaw and Makers. **The UN's partnership with the international community** – including the European Union, the United States of America, the United Kingdom, Australia, Japan, Kuwait, the Republic of Korea, the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia, among others – was critical to advancing progress on the SDGs. These partnerships spanned across different sectors including health, education, economic growth, governance, social cohesion and protection, the environment and climate change, and durable solutions for displacement.

The UN also forged impactful partnerships with universities across Iraq and international academic institutions, such as the University of Baghdad, the University of Basra, and the American University in Baghdad to facilitate skills development programmes, research and strategic planning to address critical societal challenges. For instance, the UN established partnerships with academia to support youth in beekeeping and digital marketing, creating vital employment opportunities for young Iraqi women and men.

Partnerships with national and international civil society organizations remain at the heart of the UN's work in Iraq. These enabled work across a range of sectors, such as basic service delivery for people in need, advancing human rights and social cohesion, creating job opportunities, and promoting culture and education. For example, the UN worked with partners like Harikar, Heartland Alliance International, the International Rescue Committee, INTERSOS, the Legal Clinics Network and Terre des Hommes to provide civil documentation and support to displaced Iraqis.

Financing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Iraq is supported by various sources. The generous contribution of all donors played an essential role in enabling the implementation of the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework. The UN in Iraq continues to support the Government and partners to explore diverse finance avenues, including public, private and blended finance solutions. This includes dialogue on sustainable financing, public finance management, and promoting innovative financing mechanisms aligned with national priorities and the SDGs.

Through collaboration with development partners, financial institutions, and the private sector, the UN is contributing to enhancing resource mobilization, improving public spending, and leveraging additional investments for sustainable development. The UN in Iraq remains committed to diverse partnerships to drive forward collective action and inclusive, sustainable development.

FINANCIAL OVERVIEW
AND RESOURCE MOBILIZATION

In 2024, the UN mobilized a total of US$ 424.9 million against the Cooperation Framework's budget of US$544.4 million. Of the resources mobilized, US$355 million was expended, translating to an 83% expenditure rate. The unspent balance of approximately US$69.9 million remains committed to ongoing or planned interventions. These resources are earmarked for multi-year projects or initiatives that experienced implementation delays due to operational constraints or evolving contextual factors. The carry-over ensures continued alignment with the Cooperation Framework's strategic priorities and Iraq's national development agenda.

Strategic priority	Required resources (US$)	Mobilized resources (US$)	Expenditure (US$)
SP 1	154,204,184	143,488,962	129,541,287
SP 2	66,470,356	46,978,184	45,497,737
SP 3	127,242,416	74,980,757	69,932,291
SP 4	37,092,849	23,302,790	18,363,411
SP 5	159,258,459	136,161,419	91,697,329
Total 2024	**544,268,264**	**424,912,112**	**355,032,055**

2024 TOTAL RESOURCES

$544M REQUIRED RESOURCES — $424M MOBILIZED RESOURCES — $355M EXPENDITURE

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 1

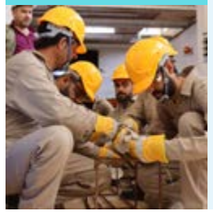
ACHIEVING SOCIAL COHESION, PROTECTION AND INCLUSION

$154M REQUIRED RESOURCES — $143M MOBILIZED RESOURCES — $129M EXPENDITURE

Achieving the highest expenditure among strategic priorities in 2024, this priority channelled US$129.54 million in resources towards community-level peacebuilding, empowering women and youth as peacebuilders, and facilitating the return or relocation of displaced families. Significant efforts were also made to strengthen the protection of minority rights, enhance journalist's capacity to report ethically, and provide legal support to people in vulnerable situations.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 2

GROWING ECONOMY FOR ALL



$66M REQUIRED RESOURCES — $46M MOBILIZED RESOURCES — $45M EXPENDITURE

Expenditure of US$45.49 million under this strategic priority advanced economic resilience by supporting policy development, job creation, entrepreneurship and strengthening the TVET sector. A job-matching platform and employment service centres connected job-seekers with opportunities, while business development services, particularly for people in vulnerable situations and women, created pathways towards economic empowerment for all.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 3

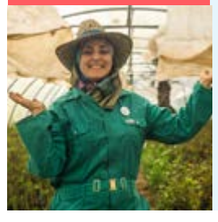
PROMOTING EFFECTIVE, INCLUSIVE AND EFFICIENT INSTITUTIONS AND SERVICES

$127M REQUIRED RESOURCES — $74M MOBILIZED RESOURCES — $69M EXPENDITURE

This strategic priority contributed US$69.93 million to responsive public services by supporting policy progress, strengthening institutional capacity, and digital governance initiatives, such as the digitalization of the Water Safety Plan. New frameworks advanced inclusive health services, while the "Back-to-Learning" campaign facilitated the reintegration of out-of-school children.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 4

PROMOTING NATURAL RESOURCE AND DISASTER RISK MANAGEMENT, AND CLIMATE CHANGE RESILIENCE



$37M REQUIRED RESOURCES — $23M MOBILIZED RESOURCES — $18M EXPENDITURE

With expenditure of US$18.36 million, this priority contributed to environmental management, community empowerment and climate resilience in Iraq – progress showcased at COP29. Key achievements included the development of a National Environmental Strategy, biodiversity goals, enhanced water management, and progress on renewable energy and conservation agriculture.

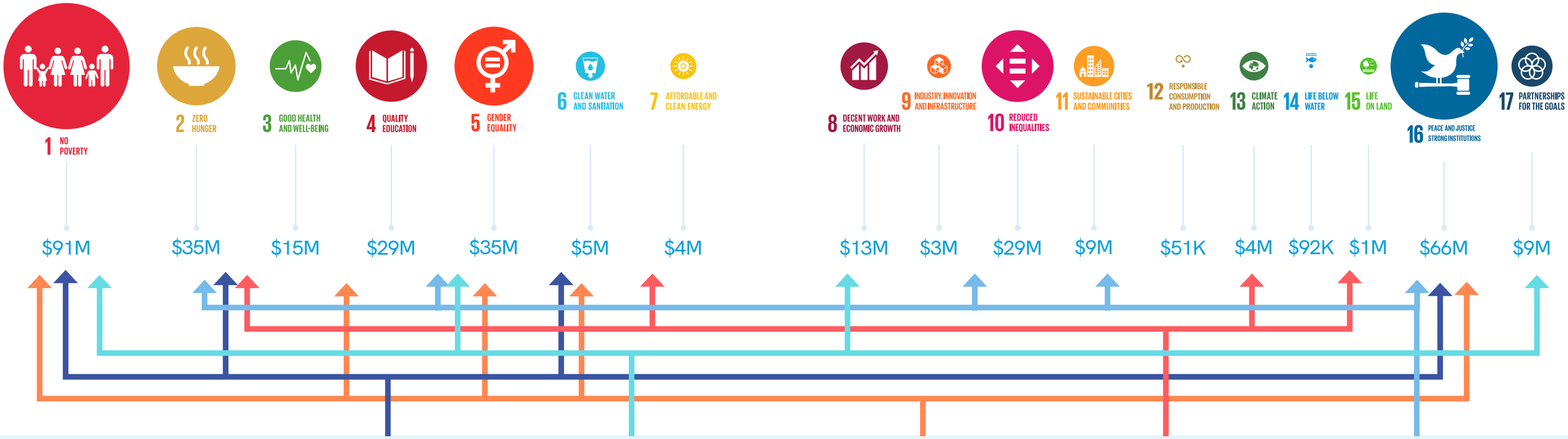
STRATEGIC PRIORITY 5

ACHIEVING DIGNIFIED, SAFE AND VOLUNTARY DURABLE SOLUTIONS TO DISPLACEMENT IN IRAQ

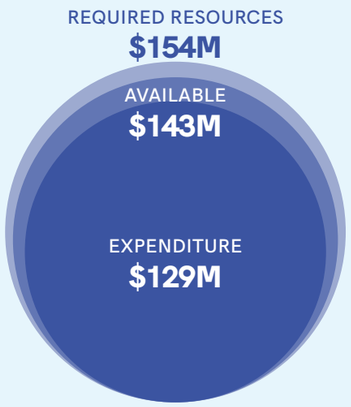
$159M REQUIRED RESOURCES — $136M MOBILIZED RESOURCES — $91M EXPENDITURE

Expenditure of US$91.69 million for this strategic priority advanced durable solutions for displaced populations and returnees in Iraq. Key achievements included rehabilitating housing, facilitating returns and relocations, supporting access to documentation and legal assistance, and fostering sustainable livelihoods and community stability.

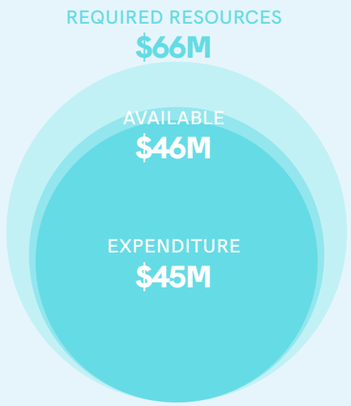
ACCELERATING PROGRESS
TOWARDS ACHIEVING THE SDGS



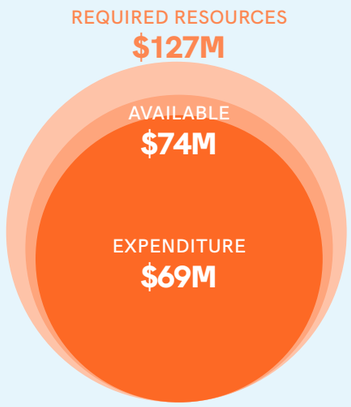
IN 2024, THE UN COUNTRY TEAM CHANNELLED **US$355 MILLION** INTO IRAQ'S SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT



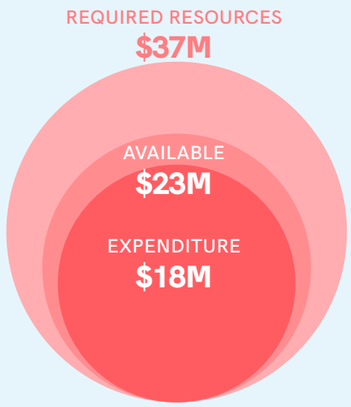
STRATEGIC PRIORITY 1
ACHIEVING SOCIAL COHESION, PROTECTION, AND INCLUSION



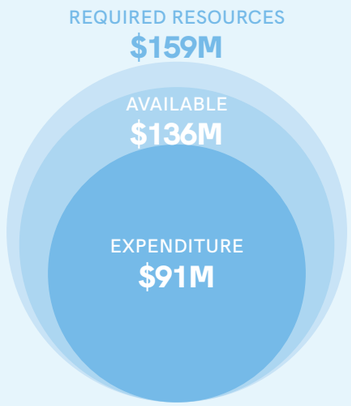
STRATEGIC PRIORITY 2
GROWING ECONOMY FOR ALL



STRATEGIC PRIORITY 3
PROMOTING EFFECTIVE, INCLUSIVE, AND EFFICIENT INSTITUTIONS AND SERVICES



STRATEGIC PRIORITY 4
PROMOTING NATURAL RESOURCE AND DISASTER RISK MANAGEMENT, AND CLIMATE CHANGE RESILIENCE



STRATEGIC PRIORITY 5
ACHIEVING DIGNIFIED, SAFE AND VOLUNTARY DURABLE SOLUTIONS TO DISPLACEMENT IN IRAQ

BETWEEN 2020 AND 2024, THE UN COUNTRY TEAM CHANNELLED

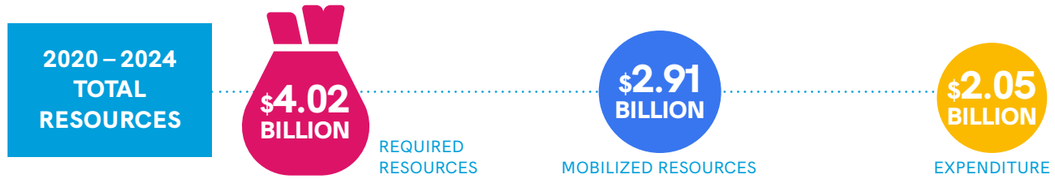
US$2.05 BILLION

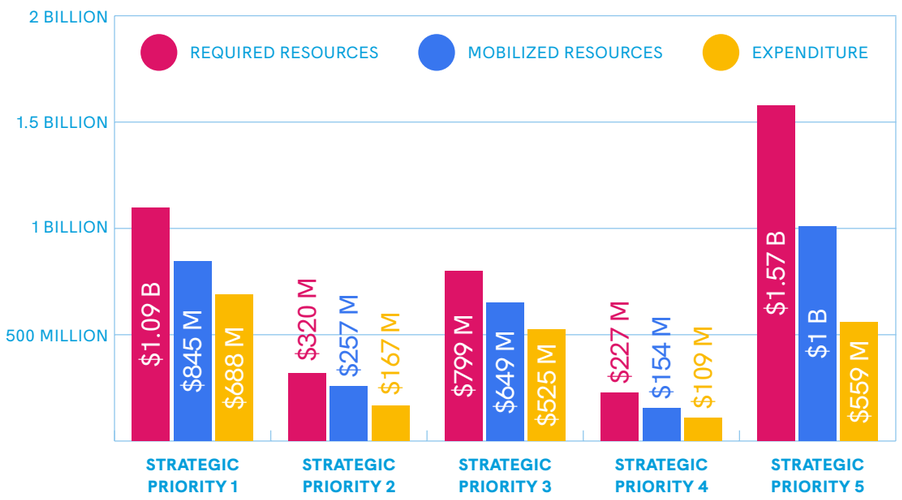
INTO IRAQ'S SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

UNSDCF FINANCIAL RESOURCES FROM 2020 TO 2024

Strategic priority	Required resources (US$)	Mobilized resources (US$)	Expenditure (US$)
SP 1	1,097,741,956	845,460,468	688,278,550
SP 2	320,253,679	257,989,563	167,199,504
SP 3	799,507,680	649,061,712	525,910,946
SP 4	227,646,898	154,998,030	109,127,526
SP 5	1,578,570,232	1,009,943,684	559,640,396
Total	4,023,720,445	2,917,453,457	2,050,156,922

The strategic deployment of funds reflects the focused and effective approach of the UN in Iraq to addressing the challenges facing the country and achieving its development priorities. The careful management of financial resources, paired with targeted programmatic interventions, delivered substantial impact for those most in need – laying a robust foundation for continued progress on sustainable development and resilience.





Chapter 3

UNCT KEY FOCUS FOR 2025

In 2025, the UN in Iraq will embark on the implementation of the new UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework 2025–2029. Taking stock of the lessons learned from the 2020–2024 Cooperation Framework, the UN will redouble its efforts to advance a peaceful, prosperous, climate-resilient future for the people of Iraq, with a particular focus on the humanitarian-development-peace (HDP) nexus to support ongoing development efforts in the country.

Under the guidance of the Resident Coordinator, the UN in Iraq will redefine its strategic direction to support Iraq's progress on the Sustainable Development Goals. Focusing on innovative pathways – equality, investment, urbanization, energy consumption, food systems and digital technology – the UN will seek to catalyse societal and environmental shifts in line with the SDGs, drawing on a wealth of expertise both within and beyond the UN system.

Efforts to amplify youth voices include plans for a dedicated social media platform, focus group discussions and inclusive events. These efforts will also be aligned with HDP transition priorities, ensuring that peacebuilding and resilience are mainstreamed across development interventions.

In 2024, the Summit of the Future called for revitalized global collaboration to overcome critical challenges. In 2025, the UN in Iraq will heed this call by advancing the HDP transition to bridge immediate humanitarian needs with long-term peace and development objectives, as well as by strengthening strategic partnerships with government entities, civil society, the private sector, academic and international donors. These efforts will drive forward sustainable development, inclusive growth and climate action forward.

WFP-supported Constructed Wetland Project in Sulaymaniyah Photo © WFP

UNITED NATIONS
IRAQ

Iraq.un.org

unami_iraq

UnitedNationsIraq

@UNIraq