The UN in Iraq celebrates United Nations Day

In the spirit of cooperation that underlies the work of the UN family in Iraq, United Nations Day celebrations took place at the UN offices in Erbil, Baghdad and Kirkuk in October 2012. These events brought together representatives of the Government of Iraq, the diplomatic community, civil society, youth, artists and United Nations staff in a recommitment to the ideals of the UN.

Celebrations kicked off on 19 October with a reception at the UN's Erbil Regional Office. The KRG Minister of Justice, Mr. Sherwan Haidery, the Governor of Erbil, Mr. Nawzad Hadi, and the former speaker of the Kurdistan Parliament, Dr. Kamal Kirkuki, joined the Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) for Iraq, Mr. Martin Kobler, in welcoming the guests, who included representatives of the Kurdistan Regional Government and Parliament, civil society, and the international community.

SRSG Kobler welcomed the guests and emphasized the UN's ongoing commitment to supporting the Government of Iraq with elections and other major political and development issues. He recapped some of the year's major achievements and stressed the importance of investing in a future for Iraq's young people.

"Iraq is a rich country," he said. "Iraq is also a young country. Fifty percent of..."
the population is under the age of 18. The young play a key role in building a prosperous and peaceful Iraq. The United Nations is here to help ensure that this wonderful resource – the young – are engaged and employed in this task.”

In his address, Mr. Zebari praised the work of the UN and thanked the Organization for its support, saying that the Iraqi people recognized the importance of the UN’s work, both in Iraq and worldwide. He noted that public perception of the UN continues to grow and improve in Iraq. “People know that the UN is doing a good job,” he said.

Some of the brightest young artists of the Baghdad Music and Ballet School performed for guests before the official proceedings concluded with the cutting of a UN cake.

The UN family in Kirkuk also marked the occasion with a gathering and cake-cutting ceremony. It was the first time that UN Day had been marked in Kirkuk since the establishment of the office in 2009.

What is UN Day?

Each year on 24 October, the United Nations celebrates its creation. It was on this day in 1945 that the UN Charter was adopted. Sixty-seven years on, United Nations Day is an anniversary that gains more meaning as the years pass. More than ever, it is an occasion for the Organization to reaffirm its commitment to the ideals of the UN Charter and to building a better world.

UN Day is a time to reflect on achievements, and to seek a path forward that will bring peace and prosperity for all. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, in his UN Day statement this year, spoke about challenges, but also about the importance of partnership.

“We are living through a period of profound turmoil, transition and transformation. Insecurity, inequality and intolerance are spreading. Global and national institutions are being put to the test. With so much at stake, the United Nations must keep pace across the spectrum of its activities – peace, development, human rights, the rule of law, the empowerment of the world’s women and youth...”

“... In carrying out this global mission we [the United Nations] rely on countless friends and supporters. Non-governmental organizations, scientists, scholars, philanthropists, religious leaders, business executives and concerned citizens are critical to our success. No single leader, country or institution can do everything. But each of us, in our own way, can do something.”

UNAMI now on Facebook and Twitter

UNAMI has recently started to be active on social media platforms, and we are pleased to announce the launch of UNAMI’s Facebook and Twitter accounts:

www.facebook.com/UnitedNationsIraq
www.twitter.com/uniraq

We invite you to follow us to get exclusive information, pictures and regular updates on our activities.

UNAMI will use social media to inform you about the work of the UN in Iraq on a variety of issues. We will be posting in English, Arabic and Kurdish.

Please follow us on Twitter and Facebook and spread the word to your networks.
SRSG Martin Kobler visits Kirkuk

By Waseem Wastin – UNAMI PIO

The Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) for Iraq, Mr. Martin Kobler, visited Kirkuk on 16 October to discuss the upcoming governorate council elections and the overall political and security situation in the governorate with a variety of local interlocutors. He met separately with the Province’s Governor, Dr. Najmaldin Karim, the Chairman of the Provincial Council of Kirkuk, Mr. Hassan Turan, and representatives of the Kurdish, Turkomen, Arab and Christian blocs.

UNAMI has found that there is political momentum in Kirkuk and that the different components agree that elections should be held – especially since there have been no governorate council elections in Kirkuk since 2005. What the components differ on is the modalities for conducting the elections. SRSG Kobler stressed that UNAMI is listening to all components’ views and is keen to help them bridge their differences on these modalities.

Mr. Kobler also visited the Kirkuk Chaldean Cathedral, where he met with Archbishop Louis Sako and discussed the situation of the Christian community in Kirkuk and the surrounding provinces.

SRSG Kobler welcomes the new IHEC Board of Commissioners

On 1 October, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) for Iraq, Mr. Martin Kobler, conducted his first visit to the offices of the Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC) since the appointment of the Commission’s new Board of Commissioners in September.

The United Nations supported the almost year-long process of selecting the Board, and Mr. Kobler expressed his happiness to meet the nine successful candidates who had competed with thousands of others for the Commissioners’ posts. He emphasized that cooperation with the IHEC is a top priority for the UN, and assured the Commissioners of the solidarity of the international community.

SRSG Martin Kobler meeting with the Governor of Kirkuk, Dr. Najmaldin Karim, on 16 October. Photo: Waseem Wastin / UNAMI PIO

SRSG Martin Kobler and UNAMI Chief Electoral Advisor Jose Maria Aranaz meeting with the new IHEC Board of Commissioners in Baghdad on 1 October. Photo: Sarmad Al-Safy/UNAMI PIO
"There is no development in any country without democracy, no democracy without elections, and no elections without a professional electoral commission," he said.

Mr. Kobler encouraged the appointment of women in senior posts at IHEC, to compensate for the under-representation of women in the Board of Commissioners. One of the nine new commissioners is a woman.

In addition, he encouraged the IHEC to reach out to the country’s young people and to interest them in the elections.

The SRSG once again met with the new Commissioners on 7 October, during a reception he held at the UN House in Baghdad, which was also attended by the IHEC’s outgoing chairman, Mr. Faraj al-Haidari.

Mr. Kobler underlined the importance of free, fair and transparent elections to secure Iraq’s democratic future, and expressed the UN’s continuing commitment to support the IHEC through the capacity building, assistance and technical advice provided by the UNAMI-led UN Integrated Electoral Assistance Team, which brings together staff from the mission, UNDP and UNOPS.

TEDx Baghdad: Proud to be spreading ideas

By Ali Al-Mshakheel / UNAMI PIO

More than 1,000 people gathered at the Rasheed Hotel in Baghdad on 22 October to discover and discuss ‘ideas worth spreading’ at the 2012 TEDx Baghdad event.

TEDx is a programme designed to give communities, organizations and individuals the opportunity to stimulate dialogue at the local level and to spark deep conversation and connections. TEDx events promote the spread of ideas, innovation and creativity, mirroring the spirit of the conferences organized by the non-profit organization TED in the US to bring together thinkers and doers from around the world. Speakers are challenged to give the talk of their lives in 18 minutes or less.

The event in the Iraqi capital, which also marked the beginning of UNAMI’s partnership with TEDx Baghdad, attracted a young crowd from all of Iraq’s provinces and featured speeches by presenters from Iraq and abroad. Speakers discussed ideas that have changed lives, showing that these often originated with motivated people with limited resources, and giving young Iraqis with big ideas hope that, one day, their own ideas might make a difference in the lives of others and for the future of Iraq.

“What are your dreams for your country?” the Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) for Iraq, Mr. Martin Kobler, asked them during his keynote presentation, in which he stressed the critical role of young people in shaping Iraq’s future.

SRSG Kobler spoke about the need for tolerance in building a prosperous country, and provided his own, very personal proof that “tolerance is when it hurts”: “This is my son,” he said, pointing at a photo of a green-haired teenager behind him. “You can’t imagine the embarrassment of walking in the street with a green-haired son, but I tolerated this.”

Among the other presenters was Cabinet Secretary General Ali Al-Allaq, who, speaking on behalf of the Iraqi government, called on all Iraqi intellectuals abroad “to return home to help rebuild the country.” He said that the large turnout at the event sent “a clear message that Iraq has a
strong relationship with science, culture and creativity."

"TEDx Baghdad focuses on creativity and on changing Baghdad’s image among the international community by saying that there are a lot of creative people in this country," TEDx Baghdad manager Mr. Yahya al-Abdaly explained, promising that more TEDx events would be organized in the future. These will include TEDx Youth and TEDx Women conferences, as well as events in cities like Najaf, Karbala and Erbil in 2013.

Second Erbil International Marathon for Peace and Development

Under the motto of ‘Let us run for peace and development’, this year’s marathon in Erbil was organized and funded jointly by UNAMI and the office of the Governor of Erbil, with logistical support from the NGOs IKNN and al-Masalla, as well as a number of other national and international NGOs. Approximately 5,000 runners were registered for the event on 19 October, including 2,000 runners under 18 and 800 women. Although the bulk of the Iraqi runners were from Erbil, many others came from the cities and towns of Dohuk, Sulaymaniya, Kirkuk, Anbar, Mosul, Salahuddin, Baghdad, Basra, Diyala, Diwaniya, Falluja and Khanaqeen.

The Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq, Mr. Martin Kobler, and staff from UNAMI and the UN agencies, funds and programmes also were among the runners, as were officials and ministers of the Kurdistan Regional Government and members of the diplomatic community in Iraq, including the Australian and Swedish ambassadors.

Photos by Anne Czichas / UNAMI PIO
WOMEN

Highlighting the importance of women in peace-building

In 2000, the United Nations Security Council adopted a watershed resolution for women’s rights around the world. UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 calls for the active participation of women in decision-making in conflict prevention, conflict resolution, peace processes, peace-building and governance. It calls for the promotion of women’s rights and gender equality.

UNAMI and the UN Country Team joined forces with Iraqi civil society organizations to mark the 12th anniversary of the resolution this year, and organized two ‘Open Day’ events in October to provide a space for women to interact with the UN leadership and other key figures with a view to hearing their concerns, insights and experiences on how to better involve them in peace-building efforts.

First was an Open Day discussion forum in Nassiriyah (Thi-Qar governorate in southern Iraq) on 9 October – the first such event the UN family had ever organized in the governorate – which provided a platform for women and civil society organizations to discuss women’s issues with representatives of the local government and of the United Nations.

“Holding such an event in Thi-Qar province, one of the least developed provinces in South Iraq, reflects the commitment of the UN in Iraq to take the dialogue on women, peace and security to local levels, where the voices of women are seldom heard,” UNAMI representative in Basra Ms. Geetha Pious said on the occasion.

In Baghdad on 23 October, at the third UNAMI-organized Global Open Day on UNSCR 1325 to be held in the Iraqi capital, a second discussion forum provided an opportunity for the Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) for Iraq, Mr. Martin Kobler, and former Prime Minister Dr. Ibrahim Al-Jaafari, who leads Iraq’s National Alliance, to exchange views with civil society organizations on the role of Iraqi women NGOs in peace-building.

Mr. Kobler acknowledged the role of women civil society organizations in supporting, enhancing and complementing the work of government partners in addressing peace-building priorities, and reiterated the UN’s commitment to regularly engage with civil society as part of efforts to increase women’s meaningful and substantive participation in the political process in Iraq. He stressed that the voices of Iraqi women, who constitute more than 50 percent of the country’s population, should be fully heard in a true democracy.

Women’s Economic Empowerment Conference held in Baghdad

By Juliette Touma / UNDP Iraq

Under the patronage of Deputy Prime Minister Dr. Rowsch Shaways and in cooperation with UNDP Iraq, the first-ever Women’s Economic Empowerment Conference was held in Baghdad on 7-8 October under the slogan ‘Equality Means Business’.

The conference was organized with support from UN Women, ILO and IOM, and was attended by Dr. Ibtihal Al-Zaidi, Minister of Women’s Affairs, Dr. Ali Al-Alaq, the Secretary General of the Council of Ministers, as well as representatives from the Iraqi Council of Representatives, the Head of the High Council of Women’s Affairs in the Kurdistan Region, civil society and the private and public sectors.

“The Government of Iraq has undertaken a number of initiatives to address gender equality issues, recognizing the potential that Iraqi women have and the role they can play to improve the country’s economy,” said Deputy Prime Minister Shaways. “However, much more can be done to accelerate these efforts to have a tangible impact, and we hope that women will have more and better jobs through these policies and practices. This conference will be a major kick-start to such a process,” he added.
The past three decades in Iraq have been characterized by wars, conflicts, violence, sanctions and civil strife. In this context, Iraqi women have had to bear a heavy burden. One in ten Iraqi households is female-led and 90 percent of these women are widows. The unemployment rate among Iraqi women remains one of the highest in the Arab region. Only one in every 10 women is employed or actively seeking work.

“This conference aimed to address key issues hindering women’s participation in the Iraqi economy and to identify potential sustainable and inclusive solutions through public policies and innovative business models,” said Ms. Jacqueline Badcock, Deputy Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Iraq in Development and Humanitarian Affairs. “Without including women, a country will never be able to have a strong economy, a key to its development.”

The private sector actively participated in the conference, expressing support to women’s empowerment as part of the commitment to the United Nations Global Compact (UNGC) principles of corporate responsibility. “We are ready to help implement successful practices of women’s integration in sustainable development in line with the Rio+20 outcomes,” said Mr. Hameed Hilli, Iraq UNGC Network Representative.

The Women’s Empowerment Principles, a set of international guidelines formulated by the UN Global Compact and UN Women, were also launched to offer guidance to the private sector on how to empower women in the workplace, marketplace and community.

In addition, UNDP Iraq launched a report on ‘Women’s Economic Empowerment in Iraq, Integrating Women in the Iraqi Economy’ during the conference. The report describes the challenges to women’s participation in the Iraqi economy and provides case studies of Iraqi women who have managed to break barriers and undertake business ventures in very difficult circumstances.

A key outcome of the conference was an announcement from the Banking Association (representing nine banks) that special facilities would be established to provide soft loans of up to USD 250,000 for women entrepreneurs. A committee to follow up on implementation of the conference’s outcome was established with representation from the Deputy Prime Minister’s Office, UNDP and civil society organizations.

To read the full report on women’s economic empowerment, please visit http://www.iq.undp.org/Items/Uploads/121/IQ%20Women%20EE%20-%20Final.pdf

For more information, please contact Ms. Juliette Touma, UNDP Iraq: juliette.touma@undp.org

Prompt action halts cholera outbreak in northern Iraq

By Ruba Hikmat / WHO Iraq

In October, northern Iraq witnessed the second outbreak of cholera in less than five years. The disease claimed the lives of four people over the age of 60 in Sulaymaniya and Erbil, and affected approximately 310 additional persons in Sulaymaniya and 160 in Kirkuk with laboratory-confirmed cases.

With the technical support of the World Health Organization (WHO), the Government of Iraq was able to determine the origin of the cholera contamination immediately after the first case was detected in Sulaymaniya. A team of experts identified the Dokan river as one of the main sources of the contamination, which was also spread through direct contact on farms, in markets and in households with agriculture products that had been irrigated with contaminated water. The
disease also found its way to the victims through ice produced using water from contaminated shallow wells.

Along with UNICEF and UNAMI, WHO supported the Ministry of Health of Iraq and the Ministry of Health of the Kurdistan Regional Government in strengthening the epidemiological surveillance system for communicable diseases in all governorates – with a special focus on Baghdad, Sulaymaniya, Kirkuk, Dohuk and areas with a high concentration of people in a limited space, such as the Domiz refugee camp – to detect any unusual rise in acute watery diarrhoea cases.

The UN supported the Ministries in implementing preventive strategies in most of northern Iraq. This included intensifying existing preventive services through different partners; implementing a hygiene promotion campaign with a special focus on hand washing; and disseminating information on cholera through different communication tools and means, such as short mobile messages, Friday prayers and informal activities at schools. Water chlorination was increased at the domestic and water-point levels; latrines and water tanks in schools were disinfected; and soap, water purification tablets and oral rehydration salts were distributed.

With WHO’s support, the Ministries of Health also implemented strategies for better curative outcomes, such as training health professionals on case management skills and referral systems for patients, supporting cholera treatment centres and oral rehydration points, and supplying the main hospital and clinics in Sulaymaniya with stocks of life-saving medicines to enable them to respond immediately and prevent any shortages.

These efforts proved successful and the outbreak receded within a very short time. Despite fears that the outbreak could spread to other areas, only two of 18 governorates were affected and the number of hospitalizations decreased during the month.

In Sulaymaniya, the outbreak reached its peak on 4 October, with 340 cases of acute watery diarrhoea. The number of cases had decreased to 129 by 14 October and to 57 by 23 October. All patients recovered and most of them had left hospital by the end of the month, having received intravenous fluids or having been treated with antibiotics.

The severity of the cases also drastically decreased as most patients only had mild to moderate dehydration.

The WHO team formulated a number of recommendations to the government to prevent or minimize the impact of future outbreaks. These include strengthening the functions of the Preventative Health Directorate for timely detection and efficient response; further strengthening water quality surveillance; strengthening disease surveillance and reporting; monitoring and surveillance of food; monitoring the sources of water for domestic consumption, such as shallow wells and water tanks, and sources of water used for irrigation. One of the recommendations also involved the establishment of a sewage treatment plant to treat wastewater from Sulaymaniya prior to its discharge into the Tanjaru stream.

At a global level, cholera is re-emerging as a public health threat. The number of reported cases worldwide is close to the peak levels observed two decades ago, a new strain has appeared and antimicrobial resistance has increased. Weak surveillance and water and sanitation systems have compounded the problem, and the possibility of travel restrictions on those found to have contracted the disease contributes to widespread underreporting of cholera cases.

For more information, please contact Dr. Buthaina Ghanem, Epidemiologist, WHO Iraq: ghanemb@irq.emro.who.int

**Results of health status screening in 24 disadvantaged primary schools**

By Ruba Hikmat / WHO

An effective school health programme can be one of the most cost-effective investments a nation can make to simultaneously improve education and health. WHO promotes school health programmes as a strategic means to prevent important health risks among school children and to engage the education sector in efforts to change the educational, social, economic and political conditions that affect risks.

The organization does so in a variety of ways. This includes managing one of the six main output areas of a major

http://unami.unmissions.org
programme designed to support the Government of Iraq in developing the capacity of the Iraqi education sector by enhancing the learning environment in vulnerable areas in Iraq to meet the Education-for-All goals. The project is implemented by the Ministry of Health and Ministry of Education at the federal level and in Kurdistan Region, jointly with UN agencies (UNICEF as the lead agency, WHO, UN-HABITAT and UN Women) and in partnership with local communities and with the financial support of the United Nations Development Group, Iraq Trust Fund.

WHO’s responsibilities as part of the programme involve the development of health promotion in schools and the strengthening of health service provision in 24 disadvantaged primary schools in the governorates of Sulaymaniya, Salahuddin and Thi-Qar. Students at these schools were examined for visual and hearing problems, muscular-skeletal abnormalities and their nutritional status. The findings of this screening were then presented at a ceremony organized in Baghdad on 16 October by the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Education, in collaboration with the WHO Iraq country office.

The assessment revealed that only 1.9 percent of students examined had visual acuity and that 39.7 percent had astigmatism (a type of refractive error of the eye that causes blurred vision). 15.4 percent suffered from stunting and 2.8 percent suffered from severe stunting; the highest recorded levels were in Salahuddin province.

Indicators show that 62 percent of students drink soft drinks more than three times a week. More than 82 percent drink tea more than three times per day, and 3.2 percent of students in the 5–14 age group in the three governorates are obese.

In addition to the general examination conducted by specialists in 2011, psychological support training was provided to the teaching staff and students in coordination with health care centres.

The Ministry of Health took necessary and appropriate action based on the results of the examinations, such as strengthening the process of referring patients to hospitals, the provision of eyeglasses for the visually impaired, or a recommendation for the provision of hearing aids to those with impaired hearing.

The findings of the screening will also provide baseline data that will assist the government in shaping new policies and strategies to enhance quality health education in a safe and healthy environment. Before the programme, the selected schools suffered from a decline in the health services provided, from poor quality of drinking-water and sanitation services, and from insufficient health education programmes.

For more information, please contact Ms. Ruba Hikmat, Health Promotion and Education Technical Officer: hikmatr@irq.emro.who.int

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UNICEF helps students from schools damaged by explosions to cope with anxiety

By UNICEF Iraq

UNICEF and the Ministry of Education are providing training to teachers from two schools that were damaged by recent bombings in Anbar governorate, western Iraq.

"Violent explosions like these have heavy consequences on children," said Dr. Marzio Babille, UNICEF’s Representative to Iraq. “They create fear and severe stress within children, which disturbs their healthy psychological, emotional and social development. The students who have been directly affected by this latest violence will be better able to cope with and recover from their anxiety as a result of this teacher training.”

Children at Al-Kifah after the rehabilitation of the school. Photo: UNICEF
CHILDREN

Teachers from the Al-Kifah and Amar Bin Yasir primary schools will learn a range of skills, including: identifying coping styles and strengths within children; recognizing constructive attitudes, behaviours and communication modes to adopt in the classroom; utilizing effective communication skills; and developing and practicing psychosocial activities. One hundred teachers and education staff are being trained and their work will benefit over 1,000 students in the schools.

In addition, damage to the schools caused by the explosions is being repaired.

“This rehabilitation will ensure that the schools return to normal as quickly as possible,” said Dr. Babille. “It will help children return to and stay in school, which is particularly important given the school year has just started.”

Kurdistan Parliament of Iraq asks for inputs to civil society policy

The Kurdistan Parliament of Iraq in October invited NGOs and the public to draft a regional policy on authority – civil society cooperation. A first draft was jointly prepared by MPs, Government representatives and NGOs, and consultations open to all NGOs – run by a consortium of NGOs led by the organization Al Mesalla – began in the governorates following the Eid-al-Adha in late October.

“Civil society has an important role to play in service provision and awareness-raising for citizens of the region and parliament looks forward to hearing the perspectives of NGOs on the draft to ensure that the text is representative of the views of all stakeholders,” said Dr. Rozan Abdulkader Ahmad, a member of the Kurdish Parliament of Iraq. “We need to work together.”

The draft policy is also referred to as a ‘compact’ between authorities and civil society. Among other things, it proposes mutual respect and equal partnership as values and principles to govern relations between the sectors; increased citizen action and participation in public life; as well as political independence of civic initiatives. Its goals include the transparency and accountability of authorities and NGOs; active NGO participation in policy making; and sustainable funding for civic initiatives.

The drafting process is supported by a project implemented by the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) and funded by the Government of Denmark.

“In a way, the meetings with civil society are the most important stage in the drafting process,” said Mr. Abdulla Khalid, Director of Al Mesalla NGO. “We will organize 25 workshops and a regional conference to introduce the compact and gather opinions on the draft in addition to online consultations. We hope for a very active participation and high turnout of NGOs. In the end, the compact is about their work and will be the base for their future cooperation with authorities. It will strengthen the democratic process in the region.”

The first draft of the compact in Arabic is available at www.almesalla.net and NGOs and the public can directly submit inputs to the draft by emailing krgngo@mail.com, signing up for the compact email group through krg-ngo@googlegroup.com, or visiting the consultation Facebook page called شراكة المجتمع المدني +الدولة+ الإعلام.

“This type of initiative cannot succeed without active engagement of all parties, and as the stronger party, it is crucial that the authorities remain open to cooperation and that civil society
CIVIL SOCIETY

proactively advocate for their rights,” said Mr. Adam Styp-Rekowski, Programme Manager for Civil Society at the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS). “So far, the authorities have shown exceptional commitment and understanding of the purpose of this policy and we hope that this will result in the agreement of a strong, meaningful policy for the region next year.”

For more information, please contact Ms. Caroline Hammarberg, Public Information Officer and Programme Manager a.i. - Reconciliation and Civil Society Portfolio, UNOPS: carolineh@unops.org, tel: +962 775466008

or visit www.unops.org/iqoc

For the compact Facebook page, please visit this link.

DISASTER REDUCTION

First Iraqi disaster risk reduction law drafted

By Girma Bekele / UNDP Iraq

With support from UNDP, the Government of Iraq drafted the first version of the National Disaster Risk Reduction Law in mid-October 2012.

The law, which is currently under consideration by the Council of Ministers, provides a comprehensive and coordinated approach to address the impacts and consequences of natural disasters through early warning, preparedness and real-time action plans. The institutional mechanisms that support this approach include a multi-sectoral National Disaster Committee, chaired by the Ministry of Science and Technology and the National Centre for Disaster Risk Reduction, with a network of institutions across the country.

The UNDP initiative helped Iraqi officials identify the full range of natural disasters facing Iraq – including floods, droughts, desertification, disease outbreaks and earthquakes – and UNDP Iraq and the UNDP Regional Centre worked closely with the Government to draft the Disaster Risk Reduction law during a series of meetings with senior government officials in Erbil.

For more information, please contact Mr. Girma Bekele, UNDP: girma.bekele@undp.org
**Potable water for a neighbourhood in Khanaqeen, Diyala**

By Entesar Al-Musawi – UNHCR

As part of a national empowerment scheme in central Iraq, Al-Dour Al-Maknoon, an NGO funded by the Danish Refugee Council, UNHCR’s implementing partner, installed a network for potable water in the Bakhtiari neighbourhood in Khanaqeen, Diyala. The neighbourhood is home to many internally displaced persons. According to residents like Gaib Wali Ali, an IDP who had to flee his hometown of Al-Sadiya in Diyala due to the escalation of sectarian violence, there had been a well with potable water in the neighbourhood, but it had not been properly connected to the houses. The delivery of water was inconsistent and inefficient. In addition, the water was contaminated, frequently causing illness among the residents, especially the children. Families had no choice but to purchase water for domestic use.

Thanks to the project, all houses in the district now have potable water.

For more information, please contact Ms. Entesar Al-Musawi, UNHCR: irqpi@unhcr.org

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**Green house project for refugees in Sulaymaniya**

By Entesar Al-Musawi – UNHCR

As part of a livelihood project implemented by REACH, a UNHCR implementing partner, 11 plastic green houses have been provided to 22 female-headed families in the Barika refugee settlement in Sulaymaniya in the Kurdistan Region in northern Iraq. Each green house is shared by two families.

In spring 2012, the families initially grew seasonal vegetables in the green houses, which they then sold at the main vegetable market in Sulaymaniya through REACH’s facilitation. By June, cucumber had been cultivated in all the green houses. Due to the fertility of the land in Barika, the project was highly successful, securing a good income for each family.

In the meantime, the beneficiaries have started marketing the produce themselves and are now also selling it from their houses. Customers are coming to the settlement, which has meant savings in transportation costs for the refugees.

One of the beneficiaries, 60-year-old Jamina Abdulqadir, who heads a family of eight, reported that she previously had to work for minimal daily wages in the nearby agricultural fields and found it difficult to manage her life. “Now, thanks to UNHCR, I am doing very well and I really feel that I totally depend on myself and no longer wait for assistance from anyone,” she noted.

For more information, please contact Ms. Entesar Al-Musawi, UNHCR: irqpi@unhcr.org
UNICEF supports 2,000 Syrian refugee children in Iraq in returning to school

By UNICEF Iraq

With the opening of new schools in the Domiz and Al-Qaim Syrian refugee camps in October, UNICEF is supporting around 2,000 Syrian refugee children in returning to school.

In Al-Qaim, on Iraq’s western border, over 700 refugee children started attending school in two shifts under the tutelage of 24 teachers, including 15 Syrian refugee teachers.

“Children in the Al-Qaim camp have been through difficult times and need some structure and normalcy to return to their lives,” said Mr. Zaid Ismail, a volunteer Head Teacher from the Anbar Department of Education. “The department will do everything it can to support these children so they receive a quality education.”

Classes are currently being held in 11 tents provided by UNICEF at the first Al-Qaim refugee camp while work is underway to create an additional school in the second camp, where over 200 children are expected to enrol once the school opens.

“These tents serve as temporary shelter for the schools,” said Ms. Iman Abdullah, an Education officer with UNICEF. “With winter quickly approaching, what is now urgently needed are the funds to upgrade the tents to prefabricated classrooms.”

In the northern city of Dohuk, with the support of UNICEF and UNHCR, the first primary school opened in the Domiz refugee camp with 24 prefabricated classrooms for 500 students. Two more 24-classroom schools will be opened in the camp in the coming weeks to provide schooling to an additional 1,200 children who have registered.

UNICEF is supporting awareness-raising campaigns in both camps to encourage parents to register their children for school. UNICEF has also provided textbooks, teaching and learning materials, school bags, and recreation and sanitation kits to the schools and is training teachers on best teaching practices to help children overcome the anxiety and stress they are experiencing from having witnessed extreme violence in Syria as well as displacement from their homes.

Almost half of the over 47,000 Syrian refugees in Iraq are children and adolescents under the age of 18.

For more information, please contact Mr. Jaya Murthy, UNICEF Iraq: jmurthy@unicef.org

SMALL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

Equipping un- and underemployed Iraqis with the basics of small business management

By IOM Iraq

In the auditorium of a community centre in the neighbourhood of Bartella, 13 Iraqi women and men are instructed to close their eyes and take a moment to reflect. “Envision your community. What it looks like. What it feels like,” their instructor tells them. After a moment of silence, the instructor continues. “Now think about what is missing. What is not available in your community? What gaps can we fill? What needs can we address?”

At first glance, the session does not seem like a standard business management skills training. Upon
closer inspection, however, one realizes that, as the participants share their ideas, participate in games and draw pictures reflecting their communities’ needs, they are actually receiving intensive training on marketing, production, logistics, organization, and business management.

Known as Competency-based Economies through Formation of Enterprise (CEFE) training, the three-day training is provided to beneficiaries of IOM Iraq’s livelihood assistance programmes. Business management principles are given alongside in-kind grants and follow-up assistance, providing beneficiaries with both the tools and knowledge necessary to create and successfully maintain their own small enterprises.

Rather than focusing on lectures and recitations, the training utilizes brainstorming, games, and exercises. As a significant proportion of IOM Iraq beneficiaries lack formal education or are illiterate, such an interactive learning environment ensures that concepts being taught are truly understood.

“I think this training is very useful for our beneficiaries,” Mr. Yassir Jabbar, an IOM Iraq BDS Trainer from Missan, stated. “It’s something new in Iraq, something they’ve never seen before. I find the market game to be particularly helpful. We role-play, and depending on your skills and interests you are either a buyer or a seller. I think it helps the beneficiaries really understand the dynamics of owning a business.”

Upon completion of the training, beneficiaries sit one-on-one with IOM staff and together develop an individualized business plan. The business plan is then submitted to IOM for assessment, and if approved, the beneficiary receives a corresponding in-kind grant.

“My husband had a car accident last year and broke his leg,” stated Sasha (not her real name), a beneficiary from the neighbouring Al Hayat Complex for internally displaced persons. “We took him to several doctors, but things just kept getting worse. Now it’s seriously infected, and he can’t work. And that’s why I’m here. We have three kids and I need to provide for them... I know I am good at hairdressing and sewing, and I would like to explore both of those options... hopefully I can develop a plan for one.”

CEFE training is led by IOM Iraq’s own business development services (BDS) staff, all of whom now hold international CEFE trainer’s licenses. In order to receive their licenses, IOM Iraq staff underwent over 400 hours of intensive instruction. During this ‘training of
trainers; which was led by InterDev Consulting/CEFE International, staff were coached on how to help beneficiaries assess their entrepreneurial competencies, generate business ideas, screen and select the most potentially viable projects, and formulate business plans. The training also included one-on-one mentoring and live coaching, in order to ensure that IOM Iraq staff received feedback on their performance outside of the classroom.

“I am very impressed with the competencies and experience of IOM Iraq staff, and I think after receiving this training, the probability that their beneficiaries’ businesses will succeed is only greater," stated Ma. Normita Palo, a lead CEFE trainer who is providing instruction to IOM staff.

IOM Iraq began providing business training to livelihood assistance beneficiaries in 2010. In the coming year, 2,670 more individuals throughout Iraq will receive the training.

For more information, please contact IOM Iraq: iraqpublicinfo@iom.int

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POPULATION

UNFPA support to evidence-based planning related to population

By Dr. Luay Shabaneh / UNFPA

As part of its Population and Development Strategies Programme, UNFPA is continuing its support to the Central Statistical Organization (CSO) in conducting population surveys to support evidence-based planning in Iraq. October saw the completion of the UNFPA-supported pilot Iraq Poverty Mapping and Maternal Mortality Survey (i-PMM), which was conducted in three governorates with a sample size of 300,000 households, representing all segments of the population. The results of the pilot survey will be discussed with teams from the central and governorate levels in a workshop in Amman, Jordan, before the start of field work in November.

In addition, after receiving the detailed findings and governorate reports from the recently completed Iraqi Women Integrated Social and Health (I-WISH) survey, a series of sessions was conducted in the five governorates of Karbala, Salah al-Din, Diyala, Babil and Wasit in October, with a session in Najaf governorate having already been held earlier on. In each governorate, an official ceremony was organized to present the main I-WISH indicators and discuss them with the governorates’ administrative councils, academia, NGOs, public figures, religious leaders and the media.

For more information, please contact Dr. Luay Shabaneh, UNFPA: shabaneh@unfpa.org

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Photo: UNFPA
FAO and the Ministry of Agriculture celebrate World Food Day

FAO and the Ministry of Agriculture celebrated World Food Day at the Abu Ghraib Vegetable Station in Baghdad on 16 October under the slogan ‘Joining Forces through Agricultural Cooperatives to Feed the World’. The Abu Ghraib Vegetable Station is among a number of stations that were rehabilitated by FAO, and the World Food Day celebration also marked the opening of a fully functioning vegetable seed processing plant at the site.

Broadcast by TV channels across Iraq, the celebration was attended by the Senior Deputy Minister of Agriculture, Dr. Subhu Al Jumaily, and Member of Parliament Mr. Ebrahim Al Moutlak, who represented Deputy Prime Minister Dr. Salah Al Mutlak, among others.

Dr. Nazar Al Kobaisy, the assistant to the FAO Representative for Iraq, and Mr. Sabah Saleim Al-Kawaz, the Director General of the State Company for Horticulture and Forestry (SCHF), gave speeches about the important role of agricultural cooperatives in reducing hunger and increasing food security around the world.

IAU and UNDP: Training the Parliament’s Research Directorate on the Statistical Package for Social Sciences

As part of its support to UNDP, the Inter-Agency Information and Analysis Unit (IAU) conducted a two-week training on statistical analysis using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) for the Research Directorate of the Council of Representatives.

Held at the Council of Representatives in Baghdad from 23 September to 4 October, the training brought together 22 researchers and sought to build their capacity to conduct common statistical analysis using SPSS and to link statistical analysis to the research process – from gathering the data to the formulation of policy recommendations. It aimed to increase the Research Directorate’s capacity to inform parliament members’ decision-making processes through reports and situation papers.

WHO: Assessing the prevalence of congenital birth defects in Iraq

Participants of the WHO training workshop on advanced analytical methods held in Erbil on 21-23 October. Photo: WHO
UNIDO: Meeting of SME Development Programme steering committee

UNIDO held the last steering committee meeting for its Small and Medium-Sized Enterprise (SME) Development Programme in Rome on 22-23 October 2012. The meeting was hosted by UNINETTUNO, an Italian university specializing in distance learning solutions, which has partnered with UNIDO in developing the capacity of Iraqi SMEs.

Stakeholders in the UNIDO Iraq SME Development Programme discussed strategies for project implementation, progress achieved and challenges faced by the programme, and formulated recommendations for October to train health professionals from the two ministries on how to evaluate the collected data.

WHO is now providing technical support to the Ministry of Health of Iraq in conducting a preliminary analysis of the data. It is expected that the results will be released at the beginning of 2013.

UNDP: Iraqi youth in Jordan participate in focus group

Eighteen young Iraqis living in Jordan participated in a focus group sponsored by UNDP Iraq on 21 October 2012. The meeting was designed to support work on the National Human Development Report, which focuses on the challenges faced by Iraqi youth. It helped the report's researchers better understand why young Iraqis leave their homeland and the challenges they face in Jordan.

According to most of the participants, security was the primary reason for leaving. Most of them said their families were economically secure inside Iraq but were forced to leave as a result of threats, abuse, unlawful detention, violence and the deaths of their friends and relatives.

In order to gain more accurate information about the prevalence of congenital birth defects in Iraq, the Ministry of Health decided to embark on a pilot study covering a large geographical area and a sample size consisting of 10,800 households in 18 districts. This first-of-its-kind study was conducted in Baghdad Karkh, Baghdad Rasafa, Diyala, Anbar, Sulaymaniya, Babel, Basra, Mosul and Thi-Qar, starting in May/June 2012. Data collection was finalized at the beginning of October.

The Ministry of Health of Iraq and the Ministry of Health of the Kurdistan Region, in collaboration with the WHO Iraq Country Office and the WHO Regional Mediterranean Office, held a training workshop in Erbil on 21-23 October to train health professionals from the two ministries on how to evaluate the collected data.

WHO is now providing technical support to the Ministry of Health of Iraq in conducting a preliminary analysis of the data. It is expected that the results will be released at the beginning of 2013.

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UNIDO Iraq’s SME Development Programme has facilitated the creation and upgrading of SMEs through the (operationally now closed) Enterprise Development and Investment Promotion for Iraqi SMEs Project (EDIP) and the ongoing Enterprise Development through Information and Communication Technologies (EDICT) and Investment Promotion in Iraq (IPI) projects. Thanks to UNIDO’s support, more than 600 Iraqi SMEs had received direct technical assistance by October 2012, resulting in the creation of over 1,000 employment opportunities in Iraq and the generation of an estimated investment value of USD 14 million in the SME sector.

UNDP: New community policing stations in Basra

UNDP Iraq has handed over two new, state-of-the-art police stations to the Iraqi Police Service in Basra. The stations have been specifically designed to support community policing and will serve as models to others.

Community policing aims to promote civilian participation, emphasizes social prevention and the resolution of social problems, and promotes partnerships with civil society or state agencies. It also introduces consultation mechanisms that empower communities and create a police force that is culturally diverse and responsive to the needs of the community and to gender issues.

In addition to introducing community policing techniques and innovative equipment, the UNDP Iraq project, generously funded by the Government of Japan, supported the police stations through the establishment of an intranet system and a new curriculum on community policing, which will be used as the primary training material for future officers.