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Social Cohesion Programme Update

United Nations Development Programme Iraq March 2022

PEACEBUILDING IN ACTION: UNDP AND SWISSPEACE TRAIN IRAQI PEACE PRACTITIONERS

Engagement with local actors is fundamental to building sustainable communal peace in Iraq. From 24 to 26 October 2021, UNDP Iraq in partnership with swisspeace, held a capacity building workshop on dialogue and mediation for representatives from local non-governmental organizations, academics, and peace practitioners. This is the second in a series of workshops, targeting seven organizations from the governorates of Anbar, Babel, Diyala, Erbil, Kirkuk, and Maysan, in addition to representation from Baghdad University. [More here.](#)



MAKING MENTAL HEALTH A PRIORITY: PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT IN AYADIYAH AVAILABLE TO COMMUNITY AND RETURNEES

From 25 – 27 October 2021, UNDP Iraq organized a workshop on Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) for twenty social workers from the Ayadiyah subdistrict in Ninewa. Following the training, the social workers will extend MHPSS services to 200 community members in Ayadiyah, including returned IDPs and families perceived to be affiliated with ISIL, who have often suffered due to the actions of relatives they are no longer in contact with. MHPSS services are one component of the Support for Ayadiyah Reconciliation and Reintegration Project implemented by UNDP Iraq in partnership with the Iraqi Institute for Development. In addition, the project includes vocational and business training, as well as small grants to local businesses. [More here.](#)



Learn more about the Social Cohesion Programme online [here](#)



EMPOWERING IRAQI COMMUNITY LEADERS FOR GENDER MAINSTREAMING IN SOCIAL COHESION AND PEACEBUILDING ACTIVITIES

Gender equality is required as a foundation for peaceful and unified communities. From 7-9 and 11-13 November 2021, UNDP Iraq in partnership with Folke Bernadotte Academy (FBA) held two three-day workshops on gender mainstreaming in the design of social cohesion activities for community leaders in Anbar, Ninewa, and Salah al-Din governorates and Community Peace and Dialogue Committees from Diyala and Kirkuk. [More here.](#)

LEADING WITH COURAGE: EMPOWERING YOUTH, WOMEN, AND LOCAL CHANGE-MAKERS IN IRAQ

With support from the governments of Denmark and Germany, and in partnership with Kurdistan Organization for Human Rights Watch, a series of capacity building workshops were held for participants from Anbar, Baghdad, Diyala, Kirkuk, Ninewa and Salah al-Din. The workshops took place from 25 to 27 November 2021 and covered topics related to initiative design including gender, conflict analysis, and Preventing Violent Extremism. A second round of sessions will occur from 02 to 04 December covering initiative implementation including grant management, teamwork, and leadership. Following training, the youth and women for peace groups and local champions will implement initiatives in their areas that focus on peacebuilding, covering topics from awareness raising on women's rights to helping vulnerable communities meet their basic needs. [Read More.](#)

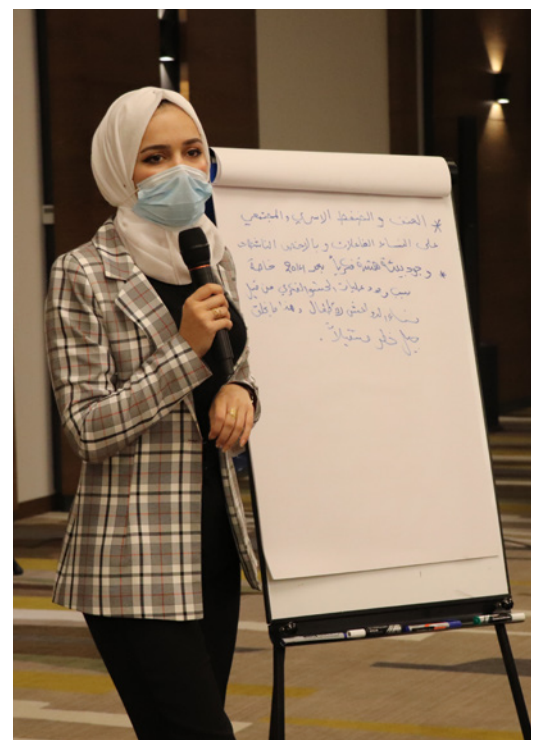


WOMEN BRING POWER TO PEACEBUILDING: UNDP HOLDS A FORUM FOR IRAQI WOMEN COMMUNITY LEADERS

The active participation of women in peace processes is essential for sustainable development and leaving no one behind in Iraq. On 10 December 2021, over 50 representatives from the Women for Peace Groups supported by UNDP Iraq participated in a networking and coordination meeting together with the focal points of the Iraqi Women Empowerment Department in their respective governorates. The women discussed how to strengthen communication among the groups and with the Women Empowerment Department and reviewed their past initiatives. [More here.](#)

“ I want to work with children to focus on ensuring the next generation of Iraqis is prepared to lead. I want to focus on empowerment and educating them on their rights ”

Alaa, Salah al-Din Women for Peace Group Member.



PUTTING THE PIECES BACK TOGETHER: FUNDING UNITY IN TUZ KHURMATU

Tuz Khurmatu is a small city in the north-east of Salah al-Din Governorate, north of Baghdad, in Iraq. It is a home to a multi-ethnic population of over 100,000 people. With the ongoing implementation of the Community-based Reconciliation and Reintegration Project supported by the Government of Japan, the community of Tuz Khurmatu and the returning Internally Displaced Persons, including families perceived to be affiliated with ISIL, will benefit from a full socio-economic reintegration package. A project to enhance livelihood and economic opportunities has been launched, as well as a project to provide psychosocial support to those in need, in addition to the ongoing rehabilitation of 200 houses in the area. [More here.](#)

“ *It is up to people to choose whether they wish to return or not. But my advice is that the best way to live is to merge with the community again* ”

Aala* is a divorced woman who lives alone. She returned to Tuz Khurmatu in late November 2021, following over seven years of displacement. Aala has two sons who were affiliated with ISIL and killed during liberation operations.



UNDP AND IOM FACILITATE A WORKSHOP WITH IRAQI GOVERNMENT AGENCIES AND ANBAR COMMUNITY LEADERS TO ENCOURAGE RETURN AND REINTEGRATION

In January, UNDP Iraq and IOM, in partnership with the Office of the National Security Advisory, and with participation from the Ministry of Migration and Displaced (MOMD), Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (MOLSA), and other relevant government agencies, brought together over 35 community and tribal leaders from Anbar in a workshop aimed at fostering acceptance and understanding among local leaders to facilitate the return and reintegration of displaced Iraqis back into their communities. [More here.](#)



EMPOWERING THIRTY VILLAGES: SUPPORTING COMMUNITY RESILIENCE AND PREVENTING VIOLENT EXTREMISM IN BA'AJ AND TAL 'ABTA

Along the Syrian border, on the west and south-west edge of Ninewa Governorate, 30 small Iraqi villages that rely on livestock and agriculture for livelihood can be found. Now, in 2022, returning community members who were displaced for years are most vulnerable and often feel isolated. To empower these communities, UNDP has launched a 12-month project in 30 villages from the districts of Ba'aj, Hatra, and Tal 'Abta to help community and religious leaders promote a culture of tolerance, coexistence, and community resilience to Prevent Violent Extremism. [More here.](#)



MUSIC AS A MEDIUM FOR PEACE: UNDP SUPPORTS IRAQI PEACE ORCHESTRA

On 17 December 2021, a full house enjoyed a musical performance for the first time in 18 years at Baghdad's Al Rashid Theatre. The theatre was destroyed during conflict in 2003 and was since rehabilitated. UNDP Iraq was proud to support Mustafa Zair, renowned Iraqi musician, and his oud peace orchestra, in their debut performance. With over 500 attendees in person, the conference was also live streamed on Facebook.

The orchestra represents unity, peace, and cohesion, with members from governorates across Iraq including Baghdad, Salah al-Din, Sulaymaniyah, Nasiriyah, Wasit, Babil, Maysan, and Basra, including four young women. [More here.](#)

“ Music is the color that distinguishes one city from another. Iraqis associate music with desire and nostalgia. Just hearing a song or a piece of music that is part of a memory raises many emotions. ”

Mustafa Zair.

THE RESULTS ARE IN! SOCIAL COHESION PHOTO CONTEST

In November 2021, a photography contest was launched as an opportunity for Iraqis to showcase their photography skills while illustrating what brings their communities together. Now more than ever, following the global COVID-19 pandemic, it is important to find support and strength from family, friends, and neighbors. Five winners were selected based on criteria including creativity, originality, relatability to theme, and inspirational. [More here.](#)



CITIZEN JOURNALISM: PEACEBUILDING THROUGH MEDIA IN IRAQ

Phase two of the citizen journalism project is currently taking off with local partner Civil Development Organization and support from the Government of Germany, and it includes additional capacity building of the selected cohort, as well as training of 105 new members, and a short film competition. This phase focuses on combating Hate Speech and Preventing Violent Extremism on social media and using citizen journalism tools to promote social cohesion. In January, two three-day workshops were held for participants from Diyala, Dohuk, Erbil, Kirkuk, Mosul, Salah al-Din, and Sulaymaniyah, focusing on journalism ethics, and combating hate speech and violent extremism on social media. Additional trainings followed in February for the remaining governorates. [More here.](#)





BUILDING A BRIGHT FUTURE: IRAQ'S YOUNG LEADERS UNITE

Empowering youth and women to play an effective role in their communities is key to building harmony among different groups. The Social Cohesion Programme is focused on equipping community actors and leaders with tools to prevent and deal with communal tensions through capacity building related to enhancing social cohesion, conflict resolution, and mediation techniques. At the end of February, over 130 members of Youth and Women for Peace groups from Anbar, Diyala, Kirkuk, Ninewa and Salah al-Din supported by UNDP Iraq came together in a workshop focusing on social cohesion. The youth and women discussed contributions to peacebuilding in Iraq while receiving training on communication, volunteerism, and leadership. A total of ten Youth and Women for Peace Groups are supported in the five governorates with generous funding from the Government of Germany. [More here.](#)

PARTNERSHIP ON MISINFORMATION WITH TECH4PEACE

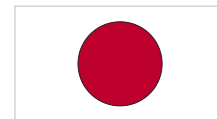
In Iraq, a country where more than half its population uses social media, a simple click of the mouse can easily spread misinformation and fake news. From false health reports to religious and cultural misconceptions, to violence against individuals or groups, misinformation across digital channels is rife – and continues to spread. In late 2021, UNDP Iraq partnered with Tech4Peace, a prominent Iraqi non-governmental organization that tracks and debunks fake news to provide examples of misinformation in Iraq, as well as tips to combat the spread of fake news. A social media campaign was launched, featuring three short videos on religion, COVID-19, and domestic violence. [Watch here.](#)



FOR MORE INFORMATION

For more information on UNDP Iraq's Social Cohesion Programme, please contact Nadia.Alawamleh@undp.org or Abdelmoneim.Mustafa@undp.org.

THANK YOU TO OUR PARTNERS. WITHOUT YOUR CONTINUOUS SUPPORT, THESE PROGRAMMES WOULD NOT BE POSSIBLE.



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