

Social Cohesion Programme during COVID-19 Update

United Nations Development Programme Iraq April 2021

OVER 100,000 BENEFICIARIES REACHED WITH COVID-19 SUPPORT THROUGH LOCAL PEACE COMMITTEES

When coronavirus pandemic restrictions started in Spring 2020, 19 Local Peace Committees (LPCs) supported and empowered by UNDP Iraq to respond to community needs and mitigate conflict sprung into motion to help families and individuals cope with the impacts of the pandemic. UNDP Iraq supported the LPC members, community-based organizations, and volunteers to identify vulnerable families and provide support to those in need. In total, by the end of January 2021, a total of 111, 654 beneficiaries were reached.

“Local Peace Committees work in several areas, including supporting community reconciliation. There are more than a thousand missing and martyrs (those killed in conflict) in the Fallujah district, with most families in villages unable to sustain their livelihoods.”

Sheikh Muhammad Hamid, member of the Central Peace Committee, the Fallujah Peace Committee, and the Al-Awaraf Peace Committee in Anbar Governorate.





The Anbar Youth Group for Peace, supported by UNDP, produced a series of videos called “A Day in My Life” that document a day in the life of various people who have been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic in Iraq. The campaign aims to shed light on members of Iraqi society who have not stopped their work and continue to provide services during the pandemic. The series includes interviews with a doctor, media representative, a volunteer, a person who recovered after being affected with the coronavirus, a sign language specialist, a schoolteacher, a cleaner, and a restaurant employee.

“ The coronavirus has affected the world, and especially me in my daily life as a doctor. I had to deal with dangerous and emerging conditions that I had not previously dealt with. Through my personal account on Facebook I announced my availability for online consultations and to receive questions and cases. I received no less than 600 medical consultations during the lockdown. ”

Iraqi doctor featured in the web series.

ONLINE INTERFAITH TRAINING PROMOTES CO-EXISTENCE

Supported by UNDP Iraq, 87 religious leaders from Erbil, Baghdad, Anbar, and Ninewa attended an eight-day online training session beginning in December 2020. Over six different religious sects were represented, including Sunni and Shia Muslim, Christian, Yazidism, Sabian Mandaeanism, Zoroastrianism, Yarsanism, and Bahai. The training included peacebuilding workshops focusing on enhancing dialogue, creative expression, coexistence during the COVID-19 pandemic, and the role of Iraqi women in building peace. A coexistence network has been established among the trained religious leaders to foster dialogue, coexistence, and tolerance among communities in close coordination with the local peace structures supported by UNDP across Iraq. UNDP has supported the religious leaders to hold various events in their areas, including workshops on tolerance and community blood drives for local hospitals in need. To celebrate World Interfaith Harmony Week in February, UNDP Iraq partnered with the Ministry of Endowments and Religious Affairs in Kurdistan-Iraq to hold a half-day event for over 50 diverse religious leaders in Erbil, including representatives from Muslim, Christian, Jewish, Zardashti, Bahai, Sabian Mandaean, Yazidi and Kakai communities.



CITIZEN JOURNALISM PLATFORM LAUNCHED

In December 2020, UNDP Iraq launched a citizen journalism project to encourage and build the capacity of 120 young Iraqi journalists, bloggers, and social media activists. Focusing on topics such as conflict-sensitive reporting and hate speech, the facilitated sessions were tailored to participants. The “Diversity” (or “Tanawo3” in Arabic) web platform was recently launched to share their stories, photographs and videos related to peacebuilding and community cohesion in Iraq.

“ Over the past few months, I participated in the training workshop on citizen journalism and social cohesion supported by UNDP. During the workshop, I networked with young women and men from different governorates across Iraq who are specialized in media, including bloggers and social media activists. The training I received helped to develop my skills in photography, and encouraged me to produce media materials, including nine video stories within just one month. ”

Saif, 29, Najaf Governorate.



CELEBRATING INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

Through supporting the formation of Youth and Women for Peace groups in Iraq, UNDP has observed the power of the Iraqi woman in motivating groups of youth to create change and build the foundation for a better future. Asia, leader of the Diyala Youth for Peace Group, and Mariam, group member, were the subject of our feature story for International Women's Day on March 8, 2021. In the words of Mariam (pictured, right)

“ There are two things for women to work on if they want to be future leaders. First, she must build confidence in herself, and second, she must encourage her family to trust her. I believe that we must convince our family that we are doing the right things and have confidence that our work will not put us in harm's way. Women should support each other, and my advice is to find another woman who will advocate for you when you face challenges. ”



YOUTH & WOMEN FOR PEACE GROUPS DISCUSS 2021 INITIATIVES

During January and February 2021, Youth and Women for Peace groups supported by UNDP Iraq from Anbar, Ninewa, Salah al-Din and Diyala participated in meetings to discuss initiatives that will make a positive difference in their communities this year. During these lively sessions, the youth and women discussed their hopes and goals for 2021. In 2020, the groups implemented 27 initiatives, reaching over 11, 000 beneficiaries.

These initiatives included beautifying their community with art, support to marginalized women headed households, distribution of Personal Protection Equipment related to COVID-19, and more. In 2021, the groups will implement more than 50 initiatives, doubling their impact in 2020.

RELEASED AND UPCOMING PUBLICATIONS

Pathways to Reintegration: Iraq, Families Formerly Associated with ISIL

Released on 4 March 2021 as a comprehensive background related to the project launched in 2020 by UNDP Iraq on community readiness and reintegration of perceived ISIL-affiliated families, Pathways to Reintegration: Iraq provides sufficient background on the issues these Iraqis may face, including within the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. UNDP Iraq's project on community readiness and reintegration is expected to reach 4,000 families in four locations of Ninewa, Salah al-Din and Anbar governorates, to be followed by more households. The project is built on the UN Iraq joint approach for community-based reconciliation and reintegration of persons perceived to be affiliated with ISIL/Da'esh in Iraq.

Women and Girls During COVID-19

On 10 December 2020, UNDP Iraq, in partnership with the Women Leadership Institute, released a study on the effects of COVID-19 on women and girls in Iraq. The Women and Girls in Iraq During the COVID-19 Pandemic Study notes the results of a telephone survey of 2,500 women in the five governorates of Baghdad, Ninewa, Anbar, Kirkuk, and Salah al-Din. The study is a follow-up to the April 2020 training of 75 social workers on psychosocial support by UNDP Iraq, which included further training of 25 female social workers to conduct the surveys relevant to the report.



Upcoming Publications:

Review of National Sexual and Gender-Based Violence Policies in Iraq by UNDP and UN Women

LOCAL PEACE AGREEMENTS SIGNED IN ANBAR & NINEWA

This year started on a high note, with two peace agreements signed to facilitate the return of perceived ISIL-affiliated families back to their communities. On 26 January, at a Local Peace Conference in Habbaniyah, Anbar Governorate under sponsorship of the Governor of Anbar (head of the Central Peace Committee in Anbar) and the Mayor of Habbaniyah (head of the Habbaniyah Local Peace Committee) with support from UNDP Iraq, a peace agreement was signed allowing the return of 524 displaced families perceived as affiliated with ISIL to their places of origin. Similarly, on 10 February, a peace agreement was signed supporting the reintegration of families perceived to be affiliated with ISIL in the Al-Ayadhiya sub-district of Tal Afar in Ninewa Governorate. The conference was sponsored by the Governor of Ninewa, the Mayor of Tal Afar, the head of Al-Ayadhiya sub-district, and other members of the Tal Afar Local Peace Committee, with support from UNDP Iraq. These peace agreements are related to the Community-based Reconciliation and Reintegration Project, which provides for fulsome reintegration support in areas of return.



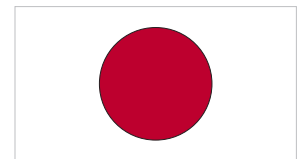
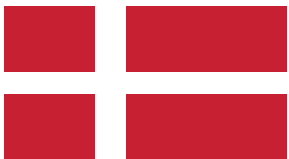
DONOR UPDATE: NEW CONTRIBUTION FROM JAPAN

UNDP Iraq has welcomed a US\$8.2 million contribution from the Government of Japan to support community-based reconciliation and reintegration in Iraq with a focus on families perceived as affiliated with ISIL in Anbar, Ninewa and Salah al-Din governorates. The contribution will be instrumental in supporting the Community-based Reconciliation and Reintegration Project which supports the community readiness, return, and reintegration of families perceived to be affiliated with ISIL, who are often the most marginalized and vulnerable. The project's phased approach includes area-based conflict sensitive assessments, facilitation of dialogue, mediation and reconciliation processes relating to the development of local peace covenants, and a full-scale socio-economic reintegration support package in communities of return, including shelter rehabilitation and psychosocial and livelihood programming.

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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