

# Policy Brief: Community Security Integration Pilot (CSIP) in Iraq



The Community Security Integration Pilot (CSIP) was developed by UNDP's Security Sector Reform/Rule of Law Programme to address the needs of former volunteer fighters and their home communities following the demobilization of fighting forces in Iraq.

CSIP aimed to support former combatants to increase their skills and emotional resilience, and thereby economic stability, through a combination of training, psychosocial support (PSS) and grant support interventions. Following a scoping mission held in August 2019, UNDP decided to focus the pilot in Al-Qurna district in Basra governorate. CSIP partnered with Qurna Industrial Preparatory School (QIPS) to provide vocational training.

CSIP commenced in January 2020 with 107 former volunteer fighters, who were selected primarily based on their length of service (more than 15 months), had 3 or more dependents, and were locally based in Al-Qurna district.

The pilot consisted of 12-weeks of vocational training (welding, AC, refrigeration/AC),

psychosocial support sessions, business training, financial support, a small business grant and community investment schemes. There were a few dropouts from the pilot, leaving 87 former volunteer fighters who successfully completed the three-month vocational training course.

From March 2020, CSIP implementation was affected by the COVID-19 health pandemic. To manage the spread of the pandemic in Iraq, the Government of Iraq (GOI) imposed a lockdown and nationwide curfews that restricted movement within and between governorates. All field operations were temporarily suspended by UNDP to adhere to government containment measures. However, the implementation of CSIP continued despite disruptions resulting from resumption of popular demonstrations and the COVID-19 health pandemic using remote and field-based modalities.

In December 2020 CSIP held a graduation ceremony for the 87 former volunteer fighters who completed the 12-week vocational training course.

<sup>1</sup> CSIP was developed under the Forging Iraq's Path to Sustainable Peace and Development Project (FIPSPD) funded by the Government of Japan.

<sup>2</sup> The majority of former fighters were from Al-Qurna in Basra governorate. Most of the former fighters were above the age of 32 years and their educational backgrounds skewed heavily towards having no, or limited, levels of education.

<sup>3</sup> Individual and group psychosocial support sessions were delivered by CSIP partner, Sara Trauma Centre.

<sup>4</sup> Financial support consisted of a stipend of USD370/month for the first three months of training – later extended to 5 months due to COVID-19 delays.

<sup>5</sup> The schemes involved the rehabilitation of learning spaces at Qurna Industrial Preparatory School (QIPS) and increasing access to ICT resources. The schemes were intended to improve local capacity for vocational training to benefit 200 vocational training students annually after the end of CSIP.

## Case Study: CSIP Beneficiary 1

“ . . . I was nothing and now I am something . . . ”

Beneficiary 1 was a member of a fighting unit but after he left them and lost his benefits, he struggled to make ends meet. He managed to get some work at a shop but after hearing about the CSIP programme, he knew that he could capitalize on the free training to improve himself for the job market and in so doing help his family and community. This was a much-needed development for him because he used to escape his home so as not to see his ailing family as he did not have enough money to take care of their health needs among other issues.

Before participating in this programme, Beneficiary 1 mentions another program that he was interested in that was administered by the Government of Iraq. He went for 2-years and 6 months and left without acquiring any new skills. As such, he was very sceptical initially but after applying to the program, his mind was put to ease when he started to learn three skills that covered cooling systems, gas, and electricity.

Beneficiary 1 describes the experience of the training as very interactive. He mentions learning about the theoretical aspects of cooling and then going home to watch some YouTube videos to put what he learned in perspective.

After participating in the programme and completing the training, Beneficiary 1 mentioned that it helped him attain financial freedom, improve his mental health, as well as improve his relationship with his family. In addition, his newfound financial freedom means that his heart problem, his son's kidney issues, and his daughter's heart problems can now be properly taken care of at reputable hospitals.

Finally, Beneficiary 1 highlights that as he did not expect any hope in his life, the programme changed everything and as such he has become a better person as a result. For example, he brings a lot of integrity to his job as he mentions that sometimes he lowers his fees to help families that are not doing well financially so that they can afford his services.

## Case Study: CSIP Beneficiary 2

“...I was lost and had no financial security...and now I am alive...”

Beneficiary 2 highlights financial insecurity as the number one issue that many face in the community. The issue he said is further compounded as even those people who have jobs did not have the money to properly take care of their families. According to him, the minimum wage was not even enough.

When the UNDP suggested the CSIP programme for him, he was sceptical as he felt it was an experiment. Other such programs that the government had initiated that he had heard about did not work out and did not result in any changes.

Even when more information was available, he still did not believe but still participated because it was an opportunity to do something. What won him over was that, rather than fight among themselves when this came up, the conversation turned positive. For him, the opportunity to participate in some form of training helped to reduce all his anxiety and anger. If the prospect of participating could do this, then actually participating could be a life changer.

Beneficiary 2 is happy that he was proven wrong because since he and others participated, they feel better and are also in a position to help their families. The experience that they gained occupied their free time as well so unproductive meetings with peers were limited and this resulted in less antagonistic behaviours towards one another.

The specific point he highlights was that there was no specific age for one to participate in the programme and this created a very good social relationship as they worked towards one goal.

His one advice is that any person who does not participate in future programmes will lose out on a change of life, not just for themselves, but also for their family and community.

# Key Findings

As part of CSIP's monitoring and evaluation framework, four surveys were conducted with former volunteer fighters, QIPS training instructors, community leaders, and family members of former volunteer fighters who participated in CSIP. This section sets out the key findings from these surveys.

## Vocational Training

### Former volunteer fighters

- 79% of former volunteer fighters reported that the vocational training and psychosocial support was excellent.
- All former volunteer fighters (100%) agreed that the training was well organized and instructors presented ideas and concepts clearly.
- A strong majority of former volunteer fighters agreed that the workshops were well-equipped (82%), the equipment was useful (90%) and that the time allocated for the course was sufficient (96%).
- The majority (70%) of former volunteer fighters are not currently working, and of those who are, over half are working in part time or seasonal work.
- 100% of former volunteer fighters responded that their knowledge had increased as a result of the course and 76% thought that the vocational training course would be helpful in getting or keeping a job.

### Instructors

- Two-thirds of instructors (67%) reported that the former volunteer fighters were not equally engaged in the training.
- 100% of instructors responded that the time allotted for the vocational training course was sufficient for the former volunteer fighters and that the practical rooms and equipment were properly used.
- Two-thirds of instructors (67%) reported that some elements of the curriculum were too challenging for an average learner to understand.

## Psychosocial Support

### Former volunteer fighters

- 94% found the psychosocial support sessions helpful, reporting that it improved communication with their spouse (89%), family members (96%) and community members (94%).

### Family Members

- 87% of female family members of the volunteer fighters who participated in CSIP strongly agreed that communication with their spouse has improved.
- 85% of female family members of the volunteer fighters who participated in CSIP strongly agreed that communication between their spouse and children has improved.

### Tribal Leaders

- All (100%) tribal leaders reported that the former volunteer fighters had been more helpful and peaceful members of their communities since the beginning of CSIP.

## Business Skills Training

### Former volunteer fighters

- 96% of former volunteer fighters reported that the training gave them practical tools in marketing, bookkeeping, and business planning and that it met their expectations.
- 95% of former volunteer fighters reported that the trainer provided valuable assistance and successfully delivered the training contents.

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## Employment in local businesses

### Local Businesses

- The highest percentage of businesses (45%) preferred new employees who had completed a Vocational Training Course.
- 67% of businesses preferred experienced employees, followed by those who have newly completed vocational training course (18%).
- 54% of businesses preferred new employees aged 25 or under.

## Community reintegration and support

### Tribal Leaders

- 80% of tribal leaders strongly agreed that it is easy for volunteer fighters to return to civilian life and that it is the right time for them to return.
- All tribal leaders either disagreed (87%) or strongly disagreed (13%) with the statement that there are sufficient government resources available to former fighters.
- The responses in relation to tribal resources are mixed, with 47% agreeing somewhat that there are sufficient tribal resources available to support former fighters, and 53% disagreeing.

## Psychosocial Support

### Tribal Leaders

- 73% of tribal leaders always feel safe in their communities.
- Unemployment and access to services were the top community concerns highlighted by tribal leaders.
- Family members followed by the Local Police and ISF/Army were the most trusted enablers of safer communities according to tribal leaders.





### Family Members





- 92% of female family members of the volunteer fighters who participated in CSIP always feel safe in their homes.
- 83% of female family members of the volunteer fighters who participated in CSIP always feel safe in their communities.
- Unemployment, public health, and access to services were the top community concerns highlighted by female family members.
- Family members and tribal leaders followed by the Local Police were the most trusted enablers of safer communities according to female family members.
- Armed assault and theft, followed by intimidation or harassment were the most common types of violence and crime reported by female family members.



## Lessons Learned

As a pilot project, CSIP generated a number of learnings, which have been summarised below. The lessons learned from the CSIP project will be used for future likeminded programmes in Iraq.

Operations and Management	
	<p><b>Expand initial data collection process to inform beneficiary selection process</b></p> <p>The grantee identification, vetting and selection process required several follow-up data collection and verification efforts to complete placement. Lessons learned on documents and data needed for former volunteer fighters has been integrated into a candidate vetting tool for use in future programming.</p>
	<p><b>Anticipate challenges of remote implementation and unstable security/public health environments by fostering use of locally adopted social media platforms</b></p> <p>COVID-19 interruptions impacted all facets of programming in the target area. CSIP was able to move forward with coordination and data collection by utilizing social media systems established during the initial phase of programming. It is therefore recommended to establish group(s) using locally popular social media platforms, such as WhatsApp, as early as possible for new programmes in Iraq.</p>
	<p><b>Data Sharing Agreements and other templates to increase efficiency</b></p> <p>Privacy and data security considerations are increasingly important. In order to avoid duplication with other parties operating in Al-Qurna, CSIP endeavoured to facilitate a data sharing agreement between large institutions with distinct internal systems. Although ultimately not needed, the process identified the need to endorse and implement data policies early in the implementation process; as data management issues will continue to expand across the UN portfolio, local initiatives such as CSIP will benefit from having ready access to UNDP, or UN-wide, templates for quickly establishing agreements.</p>
Programming Considerations	
	<p><b>Needs of female former volunteer fighters and female family members of former volunteer fighters should be distinctly considered in any new programme area</b></p> <p>CSIP confirmed that female family members of former volunteer fighters in Al-Qurna have had limited access to educational and economic opportunities either due to, or compounded by, societal restrictions that limit support from family for participation in activities outside of the home. These same restrictions also require thoughtful accommodations and time to build trust in order to connect with female community members for any level of programming. CSIP developed linkages with female family members of former volunteer fighters and confirmed that there are both gender and role-specific elements that should be considered for future programming; one single package will not address deeper needs of male and female former volunteer fighters as well as the needs of male and female family members of former volunteer fighters. It is therefore recommended that future programmes consider the needs of female family members of former volunteer fighters and female former volunteer fighters as distinct target groups for support</p>

	<p>that accommodate the unique needs and goals of the beneficiary group under DDR or other programme umbrellas.</p>
	<p><b>Social services needed by former volunteer fighters and their families are widely mandated, but have very limited funding through government channels</b></p> <p>CSIP discovered a highly supportive environment of at least 20 government or pseudo-government institutions that could provide a range of social services to former volunteer fighters and their families based solely on their economic or other needs. However, very few CSIP beneficiaries reported receiving any government support. This issue will benefit from further study through the Security Development Nexus or other lane of senior engagement.</p>
	<p><b>Consider opportunities for harmonizing M&amp;E structures with higher programme levels in future efforts</b></p> <p>CSIP developed extensive M&amp;E tools relating to activity and output monitoring within longer outcome targets. Due to the short-term funding windows and the many different programme cycles involved, the CSIP Theory of Change could not be integrated with higher-level, and longer term, targets. These include the targets still emerging from Security Development Nexus work under the Japanese Supplementary Budget (JSB) 2018. This did not undermine the integrity of implementation, but it does create barriers to easily compiling, analyzing, and reporting project information outside of the JSB 2018 framework.</p>
	<p><b>Leverage available human capital through internships and “champions”</b></p> <p>CSIP partners in Al-Qurna identified an untapped pool of unemployed university graduates that had created semi-formal “unions” to demonstrate commitment towards contributing to their local communities. CSIP engaged ten of these graduates as interns (7 male, 3 female) to support the CSIP beneficiaries in completing their business skills training and related documents. The exercise was limited, however instructors deemed the interns as essential to allowing the beneficiaries, who as a group had low literacy rates, to complete their training. The programme provided the interns with a stipend during a very difficult financial period, professional experience with a UNDP pilot, and access to the business skills training. CSIP experience suggests that efforts such as interns or the use of “champions” can improve internal community relationships, leverage human capital, and provide local support networks for former volunteer fighters.</p>
	<p><b>DDR programming can be designed around the knowledge, skills, and abilities of a disadvantaged beneficiary pool</b></p> <p>CSIP explored opportunities for addressing the needs of a beneficiary pool selected based on time of service without filtering out those with limited education or work experience. Former volunteer fighters self-reported literacy rates of around 60%, with a majority reporting at least elementary education. However, functional literacy was deemed to be less than 40% by business skills trainers. CSIP worked with vocational training partners to focus on hands-on practical training and verbal instruction and provided two additional support interns for every 15 former volunteer fighters during business skills training to accommodate the characteristics of the beneficiary pool. Early decisions to commit to a comparatively long vocational training programme of 12 weeks were also critical for allowing former volunteer fighters time to receive new information and skills in an accessible format.</p>



### **Developing and managing partnerships**

CSIP was implemented in the portion of Basra governorate that has been in recurring conflict since the 1980s due to its proximity to international points of conflict, the sectarian dimensions of its population in relation to the ruling authorities, and its major oil reserves. In order to maintain access to oil reserves and limit external risks, national policy has supported a primary role for traditional governance structures in day-to-day decision making in areas such as Al-Qurna. UNDP worked through local formal government offices, particularly the Mayor's office of Qurna, and informal channels to identify senior traditional leaders to work with in developing CSIP. It took more than a year, however, for CSIP to complete data collection on local leadership in the communities from which former volunteer fighters were drawn. In areas with less stability and formal governance presence than Al-Qurna, partnerships with local traditional leadership will need to be built robustly enough to facilitate community engagement and decision-making processes without the support of government structures.

## **Economic Considerations**



### **Selection of vocational or other training be connected to market analysis**

World Bank analysis of vocational training in the Middle East has noted that curricula have not evolved in coordination with market needs. CSIP was fortunate to have a strong partnership with dedicated and experienced educators in Al-Qurna, however it is not clear that the courses selected are in areas that the private or government sectors need more broadly. It is therefore recommended that future scoping missions include market analysis or opportunity mapping that can inform course design and contribute to modernization efforts of partner training institutions.



### **Grant (Cash and/or Tools and Equipment)**

CSIP surveys revealed that 60% of former volunteer fighters did not have jobs and their average monthly income was less than USD250. The small monthly stipends helped former volunteer fighters to cover transportation, education and other expenses while remaining committed to CSIP support – after initial intake processes. It is therefore recommended that future programmes of a similar nature provide small monthly stipends to support former volunteer fighters in daily expenses so that they can attend vocational training, psychosocial support, and other activities over an extended period. Other grant support should be tailored using “in-kind” or cash packages to meet the backgrounds and needs of the specific beneficiary group.