



# SOCIAL COHESION PROGRAMME: 2020 IN REVIEW

UNDP Iraq's Social Cohesion Programme is committed to improving the enabling environment for peace and enhancing social cohesion in Iraq through:



Strengthening policy & institutional frameworks

Increasing capacity for institutions through education & research



Strengthening local & community mechanisms & resources

Increasing positive relationships and understanding between groups



## 2020 ACHIEVEMENTS



Empowering local peace structures to respond to community needs during COVID-19 and implementing basic needs distribution campaigns, including sterilization of public spaces in Anbar, Ninewa and Salah al-Din that reached over 100,000 vulnerable people.



124 public spaces sterilized as an initiative by Local Peace Committees in West Anbar, East Anbar, Ninewa, and Salah al-Din.



Four youth groups and three women groups were formed, implementing 27 community initiatives and reaching over 11,000 people with innovative campaigns.



Launch of project to improve the capacity of 100 religious leaders from Erbil, Baghdad, Anbar, and Ninewa in social cohesion.



Online Joint Peace Conference to prevent violence and decrease tensions in Ninewa.



Covenant of Peace supported in Muhalibiya to enhance community readiness and encourage 1,100 perceived ISIL-affiliated families to return, supported by the West Mosul Local Peace Committee.



Over 5,000 people benefitted from skills development training sessions and grants provided to 12 Community-Based Organizations.



Launch of Citizen Journalism Workshops for 120 media students and bloggers to build their capacity in social cohesion, peace-building and combating hate speech.



Implementing a national art contest to advocate for social cohesion and peace on social media.



255 social workers were trained on GBV psychosocial support and 18,300 women and girls reached across 15 governorates with on-line support.



19 audio-visual products were created on Social Cohesion Activities, 16 web stories were published, and 5 web series were produced.



Launch of 9 social cohesion knowledge products, surveys and assessments.



Capacity Building of UNDP staff and partners in mediation and dialogue.

## CAPACITY BUILDING FOR IRAQI RELIGIOUS LEADERS

Phase 1: 25 trained religious leaders conducted peer education sessions targeting 2,000 religious leaders in several districts in Ninewa, held family awareness sessions, and led a lifesaving distribution campaign targeting 680 vulnerable families in response to impacts of COVID-19.

Phase 2: In December 2020, UNDP Iraq launched a project to improve the capacity of 100 religious leaders from Erbil, Baghdad, Anbar, and Ninewa with peacebuilding workshops that focus on enhancing dialogue, creative expression, peacebuilding, and coexistence, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. The training sessions aim at building the capacity of religious leaders to disseminate key public health messages and tackle rumors and false information about COVID-19. A Coexistence Network will be established among the trained religious leaders to foster dialogue, coexistence, and tolerance among communities in close coordination with the 24 Local Peace Committees supported by UNDP Iraq.

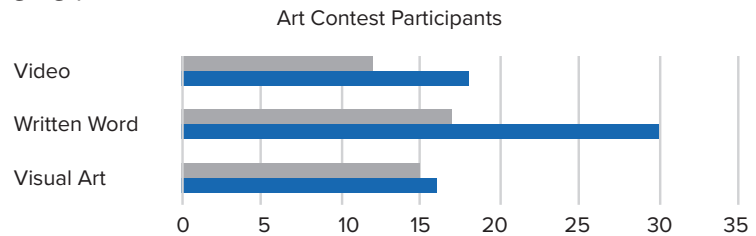
## WOMEN AND YOUTH FOR PEACE GROUPS

In early 2020, UNDP Iraq established four “Youth for Peace” groups in Anbar, Ninewa, Salah al-Din and Diyala governorates with a total of 90 members. Additionally, three “Women for Peace” groups in Anbar, Diyala and Ninewa governorates were formed with a total of 72 members. The members were introduced to social innovation and entrepreneurship models and engaged in a participant-led process using conflict analysis and innovation principles to design solutions within their communities. Initiatives in 2020 included a release of two high profile web series on communal peace and social cohesion, launch of a Women’s Book Club, various campaigns to distribute Personal Protective Equipment to communities in need, and more.



## MEDIA AND YOUNG JOURNALISTS

In spring of 2020, the Social Cohesion Programme’s first art contest received over 100 submissions. The contest encouraged Iraqis of all ages and backgrounds to demonstrate what social cohesion means to them through visual art, written word and video. Prominent social media influencers promoted the contest and participated on the judging panel.



In 2020, a call was made to request applications for Social Cohesion Champions across Iraq and over 300 applicants expressed interest. After an extensive review, 20 champions were chosen based on their experience, individual expertise and passions. Their skills and interests are diverse, from healthcare to journalism, to Iraqi culture and sports. These champions will conduct initiatives in their regions in order to promote social cohesion based on their skills, and the needs of their communities.

In December, a series of workshops was launched for 120 young Iraqi media students and bloggers from Baghdad, Anbar, Ninewa, Salah al-Din, Diyala, Najaf, Basra, and the Kurdistan region. The project includes the establishment of a young media network, an online platform dedicated to peacebuilding and social cohesion with featured articles, and development of training guidelines on digital media tools and positive and conflict-sensitive reporting. The training workshops include discussion on freedom of expression, rights and freedoms, and combatting hate speech.

## PERCEIVED ISIL-AFFILIATED FAMILIES

In 2020, UNDP Iraq launched a project on community readiness and reintegration of perceived ISIL-affiliated families with a target to reach 4,000 families in four locations of Ninewa, Salah al-Din and Anbar governorates in the first year, to be followed by more households in 2021 and 2022. Local Peace Committees play a vital role in the project to enhance community readiness and reintegration through designing and implementing activities that facilitate dialogue, mediation, reintegration and trust-building between different community groups.

A Covenant of Honour to encourage more than 1,100 families perceived to be affiliated with ISIL to return to their places of origin in the Muhalabiya sub-district was signed on 14 October 2020.



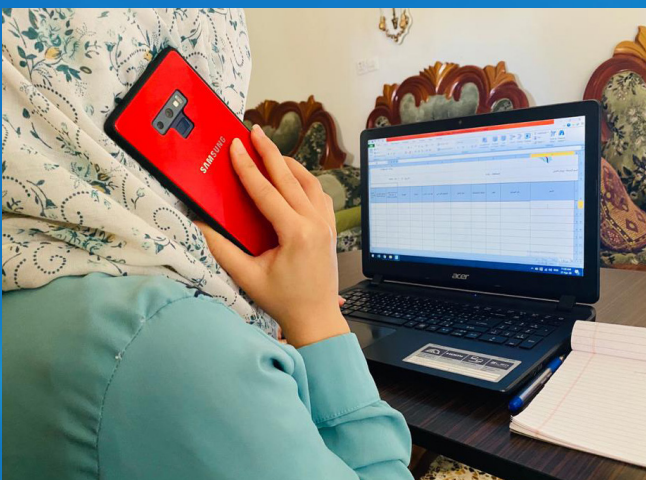
## LOCAL PEACE COMMITTEES

In 2018 UNDP Iraq, in coordination with the Iraqi Government, established 24 Local Peace Committees (LPCs) in Anbar, Salah al-Din and Ninewa governorates. Over the course of 2020, the LPCs have been active in assisting with food and hygiene package distribution and public space sterilizations, facilitating local peace agreements, and coordinating capacity building with local NGOs and CBOs. Soon, additional LPCs will be established in Diyala and Kirkuk bringing the total to 30 LPCs. The LPCs are designing and implementing actions that facilitate outreach, dialogue, mediation, problem-solving and trust-building between different groups in the community to promote peace and social cohesion.

## CAPACITY BUILDING FOR COMMUNITY-BASED ORGANIZATIONS

To support the capacity building of Iraqi Community-Based Organizations in 2020, 43 CBOs in Anbar and 27 in Salah al-Din participated in trainings on community peace initiative design and grant management. A total of 9 CBOs in Anbar and 10 in Salah al-Din were selected to receive grants to implement community peace initiatives. Through the CBO empowerment project and initiatives 5,324 beneficiaries were reached.

In 2019, UNDP trained 59 CBOs in Ninewa and Salah al-Din and supported 12 CBOs with grants to implement community peace initiatives. In total, 5,038 beneficiaries were reached.



## TRAINING SOCIAL WORKERS TO MITIGATE GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

UNDP Iraq has trained 255 social workers from the Iraqi government and NGOs on psychosocial support related to Sexual and Gender-based Violence (SGBV) in times of conflict and during COVID-related restrictions. The social workers contacted and supported 18,300 women and girls over the phone. A follow up survey conducted by 25 researchers based on telephone surveys with 2,500 women in five Iraqi governorates has documented how the COVID-19 pandemic affected women and girls in Iraq with a focus on SGBV.



## CAPACITY BUILDING & PEACE EDUCATION: STUDENTS, YOUTH & IDPS/REFUGEES

- Over 80 university students and 150 community members, the majority being youth, benefited from training and capacity building in peace and conflict studies through the Peace Education Project.
- 250 community members in Arbat / Sulaymaniyah including Internally Displaced Persons, Syrian Refugees, and 50 youth in Ninewa benefited from social cohesion skills development programmes.

## COVID-19 RELATED CAMPAIGNS

In response to the impact of the ongoing COVID-19 crisis on vulnerable communities, food and hygiene packages, awareness raising efforts, and sterilization of public spaces have benefitted over 64,000 people in Anbar, Salah al-Din and Ninewa. Putting the community at the forefront, Local Peace Committees and partner NGOs led the distribution. An additional distribution was launched in December 2020, expected to reach over 47,000 vulnerable Iraqis, leading to an expected total of 100,000 beneficiaries.



## KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTS

In 2020, the Social Cohesion Programme produced nine knowledge products:

- The Impact of COVID-19 on Social Cohesion in Iraq in partnership with IOM
- Women and Girls in Iraq During the COVID-19 Pandemic in partnership with the Women Leadership Institute
- Elicitive Peace and Conflict Monitoring: A Pilot Study in Iraq in partnership with Iraq's Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, the Iraqi Al-Amal Association, and the University of Innsbruck
- Conflict Analysis, Social Cohesion, and Livelihoods & Economic Reintegration assessments, respectively, of Four Areas in Salah al-Din, Anbar and Ninewa
- Perception Survey on the Reintegration of ISIL Families
- Reintegration Practices: The Role of Local Peace Committees
- Assessment on National Sexual and Gender-based Violence Policies in Iraq with UN Women

## SHARING EXPERIENCES DURING COVID-19

During 2020, the Anbar Youth Group for Peace produced a series of ten short videos on a day in the life of various Iraqis who have been affected by COVID-19, including how the pandemic has affected their jobs. While sharing their stories, interview subjects divulge how they have gone above and beyond to help those around them in need despite extraordinary circumstances. The following is an excerpt from the video focused on the life of a doctor in Iraq.

“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.”



## BOOK ON EXPERIENCES OF IRAQI WOMEN DURING COVID-19

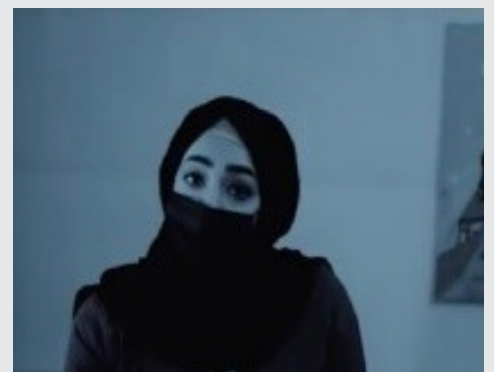
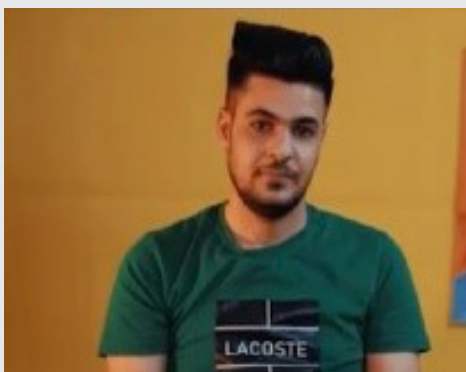
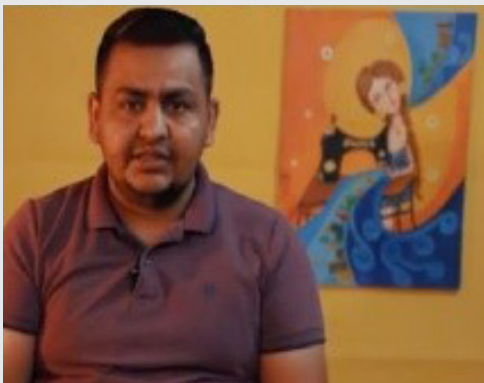
In November 2020, the Anbar Women for Peace Group released a book of original stories about women affected by COVID-19 in Iraq. The book, titled “Kohl” or “Eyeliner” includes a collection of stories written by young women from Anbar Governorate, expressing the strength of women and their ability to overcome difficulties to achieve their goals. Most articles are non-fiction and discuss the quarantine period in Iraq following the spread of COVID-19. The book signing ceremony took place in Ramadi City with a number of writers, intellectuals and academics in attendance.



## YOUTH LAUNCH CAMPAIGN TO DISCOURAGE DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

The Diyala Youth for Peace Group created and launched the **#tolerance\_instead\_of\_violence** campaign in May 2020, which has been shared by over sixty social media platforms in Iraq, including local news agencies, government officials, social media influencers, and non-governmental organizations. The campaign included a video produced by youth, stories of survivors of domestic violence to raise awareness about the issue, and a live discussion on Facebook with community police to provide advice to women.

“As a young Iraqi woman, I hope that social cohesion and peace will prevail among all Iraqis,” says 24-year-old Mariam, Diyala Youth Group Member. “This domestic violence campaign will encourage women to speak out and discuss their problems. This is a positive development in moving from submission to speaking with courage.”



## WHAT'S NEXT?

- Increased facilitation of return & reintegration of perceived ISIL-affiliated families to their areas of origin.
- Expanding Youth and Women Groups Programme.
- Establishment of additional Local Peace Committees.
- Launch of a nation-wide media campaign in 2021.
- Kick off Social Cohesion Champions initiatives.
- Launch Community-Based Organization Empowerment Project Phase 2.
- Extension of Social Cohesion within Durable Solutions to Sinjar & other areas and regions.
- Launch the Iraqi Women in Reconciliation and Preventing Violent Extremism Programme.
- Capacity building of staff, partners, and local structures as part of the broader infrastructure for peace.

## READ MORE ONLINE:

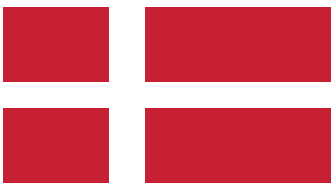


- [Youth empowered: Young people in Iraq discourage domestic violence during COVID-19](#)
- [Food is life: Iraqi families receive support packages during COVID-19 restrictions](#)
- [Seven Messages of Hope: Unity in Iraq During COVID-19](#)
- [Iraqi youth step up: Future leaders help those in need](#)
- [Sanitizing schools: Securing a safe environment for education in Iraq](#)
- [Economic Reintegration: A Pathway for Peacebuilding and Social Cohesion](#)
- [Peacebuilding through journalism: UNDP Iraq launches training for young media professionals](#)
- [Voices of Women Empowerment: UNDP and UN Women lead workshop on SGBV policies in Iraq](#)
- [United We Rise: How diverse religious leaders are promoting coexistence in Iraq](#)
- [Finding virtual solutions: UNDP Iraq provides psychosocial support to Iraqi women during COVID-19 pandemic](#)

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

For more information on UNDP Iraq's Social Cohesion Programme, please contact [Nadia.Alawamleh@undp.org](mailto:Nadia.Alawamleh@undp.org) or [Abdelmoneim.Mustafa@undp.org](mailto:Abdelmoneim.Mustafa@undp.org).

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