



SUPPORT FOR ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT OF THE IRAQI MARSHLANDS

2004 - 2009

UNITED NATIONS ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME



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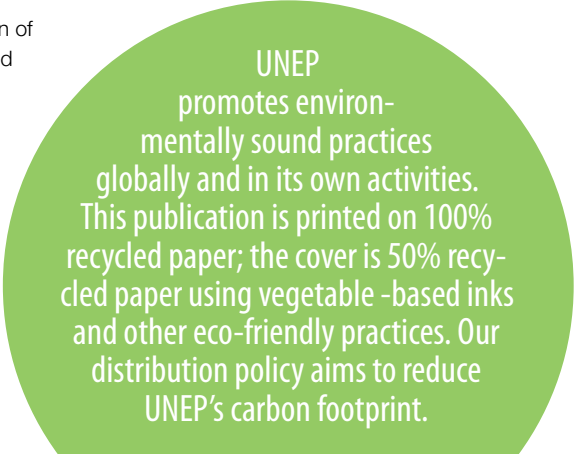
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THE IRAQI MARSHLANDS
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Foreword by Achim Steiner, UNEP Executive Director

UNEP's Iraqi Marshlands Project was one of the largest environmental projects conducted within the framework of the United Nations Development Group (UNDG) Iraq Trust Fund. This project has also been one of UNEP's most wide-ranging efforts to support the transfer of Environmentally Sound Technologies (ESTs).



This publication presents the major activities and results achieved by this project, which had the goal to support sustainable development of Iraq by rehabilitating and managing the damaged ecosystem through technology support and capacity building. Among the project achievements was improving access to drinking water and wastewater management using ESTs and it has generated visible and immediate on-the-ground benefits for the rural residents. The analysis presented in this report strengthens our conviction that ESTs can address post-conflict and longer-term priorities for basic services including drinking water and ecosystem management, and therefore should be an integral concept for re-development initiatives.

The project was implemented under very difficult security situations, calling for very close cooperation with Iraqi partners. UNEP would like to thank the cooperation extended from the Iraqi partners, particularly the Ministry of Environment, as well as the Ministry of Water Resources, Ministry of Municipalities and Public Works, local governorates, community groups, academic institutions and non-governmental organisations. UNEP is also grateful for the support provided to the project through the UN Iraq Trust Fund, the Government of Japan and the Government of Italy.

While we are coming to the completion of the original project, our work in this important area, and in Iraq as a whole, is far from complete. The area is now facing yet another crisis from a two-year drought and impacts of desertification, in part due to the effects of climate change and reduction in water resource availability. The environment still needs to be prioritized and mainstreamed in the national development agenda, and there remains a lot of work to do in the Marshlands and beyond. UNEP is committed to continue cooperation with the Government of Iraq to address these challenges. For example, UNEP is cooperating with UNESCO to develop and implement a longer-term sustainable management and preservation plan for the Marshlands based on the World Heritage inscription requirements.

UNEP's work in the Iraqi Marshlands has been unique for a whole variety of reasons, but the lessons we have learned go beyond the Marshlands. They have the potential to be transferred to other areas in Iraq that face environmental and socio-economic challenges. They can also provide a blueprint for the management and rehabilitation of many other ecosystems across the world. We hope that the insights and our collective wisdom featured in this document will be useful to inform future work in the rehabilitation and restoration of economically-important ecosystems.

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read 'Achim Steiner'. The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Achim Steiner
UN Under-Secretary General and Executive Director
United Nations Environment Programme

Foreword by Her Excellency Mrs. Narmin Othman, Minister of Environment of Iraq

The Iraqi Marshlands are considered to be one of the most important ecosystems in Iraq, as well as the Middle East. They cover a large area in the southern parts of Iraq, with very unique and rich natural and human resources. The indigenous people of the marshes have maintained their inherited cultures and customs that are thousands of years old. The area is thus considered as a place of considerable cultural importance for world heritage, in addition to its environmental and economic value.



Since its establishment in 2003 as part of the new face of Iraq, the Ministry of Environment has placed an emphasis on environmental management, most notably in the Marshlands region, in cooperation with other line ministries. The Ministry of Environment has also recognized the importance of international cooperation. The international community answered Iraq's call for urgent help to save the marsh environment and the residents. I wish to take this opportunity to thank the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) for undertaking the implementation of the Environmental Management of the Iraqi Marshlands project. I also extend my gratitude to the people and the Government of Japan as well as Italy for supporting this project.

Throughout the UNEP Marshlands project, various Iraqi Ministries took responsibility for direct field implementation of many activities. Such involvement played a very positive role in raising the capabilities of the ministry staff, in addition to helping to achieve the project benefits. The project implementation was conducted in a manner that reflected the commitment of all sides. We are also very pleased that the project team was selected for the UN 21 Award Prize in 2007. We take this recognition to our hearts and congratulate all who have contributed to this achievement and well-earned recognition.

Iraq is committed to helping protect the planet's environment by means of the participation in the international community. In this regard, Iraq has acceded to a number of Multilateral Environmental Agreements such as the Convention on Biodiversity, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Kyoto Protocol, the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, as well as the Vienna Convention and the Montreal Protocol on the Protection of Ozone Layer. Iraq is also facing emerging environmental concerns, including the impacts of the two-year drought and desertification in the marsh area and beyond. Addressing these challenges requires enhanced international cooperation. I look forward to continuing our partnership with UNEP for the sustainable development of Iraq.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Narmin Othman".

Narmin Othman Hassan
Minister of Environment
Republic of Iraq

Acknowledgement

This project was made possible by cooperation of many individuals and institutions. UNEP would like to thank them, particularly the following Iraqi institutions: Ministry of Environment, Ministry of Water Resources, Ministry of Municipalities and Public Works, Ministry of Planning and Development Cooperation, State Ministry of Marshlands, Centre for Restoration of the Iraqi Marshlands, Basrah Governorate Council, Missan Governorate Council, Thi-Qar Governorate Council, local governments in Basrah, Thi-Qar, and Missan, Al-Chibaysh Marsh Arab Forum, Marsh Arab Forum of Thi-Qar, Missan Marsh Arab Forum, Basrah University, Thi-Qar University and Women and Environment Organization.

Cooperation was also extended by the following institutions: American University of Beirut, Arab Center for the Studies of Arid Zones and Dry Lands, Cairo University, Center for Environment and Development for the Arab Region and Europe, Global Environment Centre Foundation, International Agricultural Centre, International Institute for Geo-Information Science and Earth Observation, International Lake Environment Committee, Japan International Cooperation Agency, Nature Iraq, Osaka Municipal Government, Secretariat of the Ramsar Convention, Shiga Prefecture Government, United Nations Education, Science and Cultural Organisation, United Nations Economic and Social Commission for West Asia, United Nations Information Centre in Japan, United Nations Office for Project Services, Wetlands International, and World Health Organization. Furthermore, financial contributions from the Government of Italy, Government of Japan and the United Nations Development Group Iraq Trust Fund are acknowledged with great appreciation.

The core team members merit special recognition: Dr. Ali Abdul-Zhra Zebon Al-Lami, National Coordinator, Dr. Chizuru Aoki, Senior Programme Officer, Dr. Sivapragasam Kugaprasatham, Project Officer (former), and Ms. Aya Mimura, Team Assistant.

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