

The right to adequate housing

10 December was Human Rights Day, the day that the UN General Assembly adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948). Adequate housing is universally viewed as one of the most basic human needs. Yet, according to the figures from the Iraq Humanitarian Needs Overview, almost 2.6 million people in Iraq do not have adequate living conditions and at least 3.3 million live in informal settlements. The most cited shelter needs include: insulation from extreme weather; protection from rain leakages; improved safety and privacy; protection from hazards – including floods; and improved sanitation facilities which has become essential during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The right to housing has never been more critical. UN-Habitat has been carrying out extensive housing rehabilitation works in conflict-affected governorates and working together with the Government of Iraq to pass a law to regularize and upgrade informal settlements (houses that had been previously constructed on non-residential public land). This would provide the opportunity for people to have access to tenure security and for municipalities to engage in development activities in these locations.



Water rehabilitation project in Erbil

UN-Habitat Iraq has completed a water rehabilitation project in the underserved Mamzawa and Qatawi neighbourhoods in Erbil. With funding from the EU and in response to the recovery needs identified by the Governorate of Erbil, 265 houses were connected to the main water network, providing regular water supply to around 1,590 IDPs, host community members and refugees. Under the project, a new water well of 400m depth was constructed to serve both neighbourhoods.

International Day of Persons with Disabilities

Public open spaces that are designed to be accessible to all are still rare in Iraq. In its on-going public space rehabilitation projects in conflict-affected areas, UN-Habitat is including step-free access to sidewalks and wheelchair ramps to public facilities, as well as playgrounds and outdoor workout equipment designed specifically for people with disabilities. Aside from creating opportunities for physical open-air activities in a safe setting, such spaces contribute to increasing children's, youth's and seniors' self-reliance and confidence.





COVID-19 mitigation in Heet, Anbar

Access to safe water and sanitation services is critical to stop the spread and reduce the impact of COVID-19. Many poor and vulnerable households do not even have the facilities at home to wash their hands with soap and running water. Recently UN-Habitat, working together with the Heet Water Directorate, connected 94 houses to water in the Al-Baker neighbourhood, Heet District Anbar. This will help to mitigate the risk of COVID-19 transmission amongst families in their homes.



Zakarya, a 20-year-old returnee in West Mosul, participated in an UN-Habitat vocational training conducted in May 2020. After completion of the training on electrical installations, he opened a shop that sells electrical installation supplies. Zakarya says "my dream is to become an electrical engineer. The training provided me with the ability to find work in a field that I love very much, and to help my family."

Mosul soon to have trained female gardeners

As part of UN-Habitat's area-based urban recovery programme in Mosul, 30 unemployed female residents have undergone a 10-day long horticultural training course delivered by local experts in this field. The training blended theoretical and practice-oriented sessions and followed by hands-on preparatory, planting and maintenance work for the greening of Yarmouk Park. The trainees are to also receive entrepreneurship training to equip them with the necessary skillset for securing jobs as individual experts or set-up gardening cooperatives.



320 houses rehabilitated in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq

UN-Habitat Iraq has completed the rehabilitation of 320 houses resided by IDPs, refugees and host community members, including 90 houses that were completed over the month of November in the cities Erbil, Dohuk and Sumel. The rehabilitation is part of a larger initiative aiming at ensuring access to safe and dignified shelters for vulnerable populations.



UN-Habitat, the United Nations Human Settlements Programme, is the focal point for all urbanization and human settlement matters within the UN system and is mandated by the UN General Assembly (beginning in 1975) to promote socially and environmentally sustainable towns and cities. Its mandate is further derived from other internationally agreed upon development goals, including SDG11 of the Sustainable Development Goal, a goal dedicated for urban development, and the New Urban Agenda, an action-oriented document signed by member states which sets global standards of achieving SDG11. UN-Habitat has been active in Iraq since 1996.



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