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“ Today, the United Nations is asking the international community to go beyond just promoting education and training but to also enable equal access to science and technology to provide women better access to decent work ”

Mr. Ad Melkert
Special Representative of the Secretary-General

Ad Melkert: Education is a basic human right, a sustainable solution to social problems, and the cornerstone of women's empowerment



Children at Peeramerd Primary school in Badawa, Erbil. Photo: Bikem Ekberzade UNAMI/PIO

This year's celebration of the International Women's Day coincided with the first year of existence of the UN Women, the United Nations entity for gender equality and the empowerment of women that was created in July 2010 by the UN General Assembly.

"The establishment of the UN Women was a historic step in our joint efforts to accelerate global action for women's empowerment", said the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Iraq, Mr. Ad Melkert in an event marking on 8 March, in Baghdad, the 100th anniversary of the International Women's Day. This year's global theme for the Women's Day focused on "access and participation of women and girls in education, training, science and technology, including for the promotion of women's equal access to full employment and decent work".

Inspired by the theme of the year, Mr.

Melkert highlighted in his speech four areas of great importance to women in Iraq. He stressed that education is a basic human right, a sustainable solution to many societal problems, and the cornerstone of women's empowerment. He also emphasized that equal access to science and technology is needed in Iraq to ensure equal access to employment and that schools fit for girls are schools fit for all children.

"Recent events in the region demonstrate the need to address fundamental human rights, including the rights of women, which are of central importance to the stability of societies", said Mr. Melkert in reference to the protests that have been taking place in Iraq since late February.

While acknowledging the many achievements made towards the advancement of women in Iraq, Mr. Melkert noted that access to education in Iraq remains un-

even throughout the country, especially among women and children who have been internally displaced or have lived as refugees as well as children growing up in the 10 percent of households headed by a woman.

“Since the 1990s, primary school enrollment dropped to 85 percent, with only 70 percent of young girls living in urban areas attending primary school. The situation in secondary and higher education is even more worrisome. The net secondary school enrolment ration for girls is only 32 percent and among the few young people in higher education, only 42 percent are young women. The illiteracy rate amongst women at 24 percent is more than double the illiteracy rate amongst men (11 percent)”, noted Mr. Melkert, while stressing that Iraq has still an enormous potential to tap, and great opportunities to seize.

Turning to the role of the international community towards women in Iraq, Mr. Melkert said: “Today, the United Nations is asking the international community to go beyond just promoting education and training but to also enable equal access to science and technology to provide women better access to decent work.”

Referring to the Briefing Book that was

prepared by the Iraq Partners Forum in 2010 and submitted to Prime Minister Nouri Al-Maliki on February of this year, Mr. Melkert indicated that the document contains specific recommendations by the donor community to the Government of Iraq on how to tackle some of the most pressing development challenges in the country. It also makes it clear that placing gender equality and women’s empowerment at the heart of the national development agenda is a key means of enhancing the achievement of the development objectives of the government and people of Iraq, he noted.

“In Iraq, the United Nations has been active in supporting the Government and the Iraqi people in their efforts to reach the Millennium Development Goals, especially Goals 2 and 3 pertaining to universal primary education and gender equality; as well as other global commitments, such as those under the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Commission on the Status of Women”, said Mr. Melkert, stressing that all UN programmes are designed to take into account their possible impact on men and women, to ensure that these actions contribute to gender equality and not inadvertently disadvantage anyone.

“Since 2003, the United Nations has invested \$75 million in education programmes in partnership with the Government of Iraq and our civil society partners. The UN agencies such as UNESCO, UNICEF, UN WOMEN, UNFPA, UNDP, WFP, UN HABITAT and WHO are working in partnership with the Ministry of Education, the civil society and the international community to access to education, both formal and non-formal, for girls and women throughout Iraq”, said Mr. Melkert adding that UNAMI, through its Human Rights Office, monitors regularly the human rights situation of women in Iraq and continues to provide support and advice to the Iraqi authorities on gender-related issues.

“We look forward to continuing our partnership with the Government of Iraq and its people to ensure that women and men alike are treated with respect, given equal education opportunities and the life chances which will enable them to contribute to their own countries’ future”, Mr. Melkert concluded.

The event was jointly organized by the Government of Iraq, the European Union Integrated Rule of Law Mission in Iraq (EUJUST-LEX IRAQ), and the United Nations in Iraq.

Feature



Kurdistan in her store in Kalakeen, Erbil Governorate. Photo: Bikem Ekberzade UNAMI/PIO.

Backbone of a family

By Bikem Ekberzade

Kalakeen is a small village lying northeast of Erbil, in the Kurdistan region of Iraq. Driving through a tiny, winding path a few kilometers off the main road, houses emerge. Most of them are modern cement structures, basic, with cement garden walls fencing off the outside world. Sewage runs in small creeks with plastic pipes placed underneath cement foot bridges. The streets are filled with voices of children running along, playing, chickens running around and away from the madness of small feet.

Among this confused traffic of life is a little grocery store run by a woman named Kurdistan, with the help of her older children. One cannot tell Kurdistan’s age by merely looking at her. She says she is in her late forties but she looks much older. Mar-

ried when she was barely a teenager, she has given birth to four children. She says her husband is a hard working labourer. However, Kurdistan is unmistakably the backbone of the house. If it were not for her entrepreneurship they wouldn't have a house to call their own or a small market which brings bread to their tables.

Kurdistan is illiterate, yet resourceful. Despite her shortcomings - no education, no steady income to fall back on, children to take care of from an early age - she managed to build up a business where she does what she knows best: sewing. She makes hats; beautiful, ornamented, hand-crafted Newroz hats. She also makes traditional Kurdish clothes.

Although not as much as she used to, she says, because now the store takes more of her time, and contributes at a greater amount to the bread on their table. She is also the trusted nurse of her village. She gives injections to the sick and treats minor wounds.

Originally from Choman district, Kurdistan's family migrated to Erbil in the late eighties. This is where they would stay for years to come and this is where she would marry. Education was not a priority in Kurdistan's life while she was growing up. Survival was more important. Although her illiteracy hasn't kept her from taking active part in life and succeeding, part

of her still yearns for a proper education. She is working, she says, "so my daughters can go to school." Her dream is for her older daughter to become a doctor.

However unique Kurdistan's story of success may be, adult illiteracy is a common problem in modern day Iraq. According to UN's lead organization in Education, UNESCO, an estimated five million people, or 30% of the population is unable to read and write. This includes 14% of school age children who are currently out of school, either because they have no access to suitable schooling or are obliged to contribute to household income. Significant gender disparities are particularly a matter of concern with illiteracy rates higher than 40% among women. To quote a [2010 report by UNICEF](#): "In Iraq, the overall number of children receiving primary education has declined



Kurdistan with one of the Newroz hats which she designed. Photo: Bikem Ekberzade UNAMI/PIO

between 2004-05 and 2007-08 by 88,164, with no improvement in the percentage of girls enrolled." The report goes on to note, "Some 75% of girls who start school have dropped out during, or at the end of, primary school; and so do not go onto intermediate education."

Achieving universal primary education, gender equality and women empowerment being two of the millennium development goals mapped out by the United Nations, several programs run by United Nations Country Team are underway to eradicate illiteracy in Iraq. To give an example, since 2004, UNESCO has established a National Literacy Resource Centre in Baghdad and five Community Learning Centres in Baghdad, Basra, Diala and Muthanna, targeting vulnerable youth, girls and women. More are also in the works in governorates of Salahaddin, Thi-Qar and Sulaymaniah. Through these centres, women such as Kurdistan who have not been able to receive primary education will be able to do so. And if these women are half as imaginative as Kurdistan herself has been, they will certainly be able to claim successes in their lives and rightfully earned places within the Iraqi workforce.



Kurdistan and her daughter in their house in Kalakeen. Photo: Bikem Ekberzade UNAMI/PIO

Warvin, a magazine dedicated to women issues

By Sabah Abdulrahman, UNAMI PIO

Ms. Lanja Abdulla Muhammed is the head of Warvin, an organization dealing with women issues, and the Editor-in-Chief of Warvin weekly, the only Kurdish magazine dedicated to women issues. Ms. Lanja Muhammed contributed to the coverage of Iraq's first national campaign to end violence against women. On 25 November 2010 the United Nations in Iraq in cooperation with the Kurdistan Regional Government launched the 16 days of activism to stop gender violence against women. The campaign generated an extensive media coverage throughout the country. In December 2010, the United Nations and partners honored 28 media outlets for their coverage of the campaign and women issues in general. Ms. Lanja Abdulla was one of the honored media outlets.

UNAMI Newsletter: Can you tell us about your experience with covering women issues?

Ms. Lanja Abdulla: I have been a journalist since 2006 and working especially on women issues. I started by working with Medya weekly as responsible for the social affairs, then I continued with Rudaw weekly where I was in charge of women and social issues. This was my personal desire and I was interested in it. Before that, I have worked with many women organizations and NGOs interested in women issues. I have been working in this field, without interruption, since 2000.

UNAMI Newsletter: What importance does the media attach to women issues?

Ms. Lanja Abdulla: We cannot say all the media outlets attach importance to women issues. We cannot say that the media outlets that were present here today have been working on women issues 100%. Yet there have been some good work. The recent establishment of the Council on Women Affairs reflects the role of the media because the women issue has now become a very sensitive one in Kurdistan.

UNAMI Newsletter: What are the main challenges to women in Kurdistan Region?

Ms. Lanja Abdulla: One of the important challenges is the absence of a clear gov-

ernment mechanism for working on women issues as this is not related to women only. It is rather a social and humanitarian issue that affects all the other aspects of the society; therefore any violence against a woman is also violence against her family. We have to work very wisely on this society. Yet nobody has done this by thoroughly studying the circumstances. We need to act in accordance to the mentality of the Kurdish society and approach these problems very wisely.

UNAMI Newsletter: What about the role of media?

Ms. Lanja Abdulla: The role of the media is to communicate information to people, in addition to guiding them. Quite often, women face more violence because of unwise media coverage of their cases. Self-immolation has become a phenomenon. Therefore, this should be properly studied. As the Minister of Culture and Youth, Dr. Kawa said, because working on women issues should not be arbitrary. When publishing certain stories, the safety of the family involved should be protected. A child's photo on a magazine cover, in relation to such cases, may adversely affect his personality.

UNAMI Newsletter: What was special about your coverage that earned you today's award?

Ms. Lanja Abdulla: We in the magazine have requested that the department in charge of following up on violence against women should be headed by a woman, and the government appointed Ms Kurda Omer as the Director-General of such a department. We also requested the government that the establishment of a council on women affairs was a necessity in this cabinet. These are examples of our approach to the concerned authorities. We have also reported on cases of homicide and immolation. We have taken some initiatives on many issues. For example, in the election of the platform against female genital mutilation (FGM) we played an active role in having the Ministry of Health issue a statement on this issue. We are now waiting for an official law to ban FGM.

UNAMI Newsletter: Have you written on FGM in Warvin magazine?



Lanja Abdulla Muhammed, Editor in Chief for Warvin Magazine. Photo: Rafiq Shukri

Ms. Lanja Abdulla: Of course. FGM is one of the issues we have constantly covered. We have reported on its side effects and its social and psychological consequences. We have also reported on sexual harassment as well as honor killing. There have been many cases of brutal murders of women. The scope of our work is not limited to Erbil. We also report on cases in Iran and Syria as well.

UNAMI Newsletter: What role can the media play in reducing violence against women?

Ms. Lanja Abdulla: Media outlets should make covering women issues their priority. This is true even for a political magazine or newspaper. Also, covering women issues should not be for the sake of filling the space on their pages or programs. The media need to set programs on how to do this and they need to have qualified staff for it. We need to have media personnel specialized in these issues because. We also need to know how to address such issues. We need to think of establishing a court specialized in family cases. We need to coordinate, to set plans, to lobby with the government on certain issues. Warvin, Aso, Rudaw magazine and newspapers cannot do this alone. In Turkey, people take to streets when a father threatens his daughter. Here women are killed on a daily basis, yet we keep silent just to protect our newspapers or for the sake of our political parties and their policies. Therefore, women organizations should be empowered and the genuine press should work on this honestly.

A woman's health is her right

By Ruba Hikmat, WHO Iraq



Ministry of Health, National women day, 2011

"A woman's health is her right... It's an investment for future generations" was the theme of Iraq's first national Women's Day that took place on 8 March 2011 under the lead of the Minister of Health in Iraq in collaboration with the Ministry of Women's Affairs, the World Health Organization and UNICEF.

Iraq joined the rest of the world in marking the 100th anniversary of International Women's Day by launching its first national Women's Day to secure women's rights to health and improve their lives and that of communities in all spheres of life. The Iraq national Women's Day aimed to address critical gaps, build on lessons learned and

move forward toward achieving the Millennium Development by 2015.

A series of activities took place in all the governorates across Iraq including seminars, distribution of health awareness materials, media outreach, round-table meetings with decision-makers, field visits and counseling sessions for women visiting the health care centers in selected governorates.

Despite all the challenges faced by Iraq in recent years, many advances have been made with regard to improvement of the health of women and girls in Iraq. The maternal mortality rate dropped from 291 per 100,000 live births (ICMMS 1999) to 84 per 100,000 live births (MISC3 2006^[1]). These include meeting the needs of women in the areas of reproductive and sexual health, a focus on prevention of violence against women while reducing the burden of infectious and chronic diseases, as well as mental health problems that may affect women, and efforts to increase access to preventive services and treatment of high quality.

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Human Rights

Strengthening the monitoring and reporting skills of Iraqi human rights actors

To strengthen the monitoring and reporting skills of human rights actors in Iraq, the Ministry of Human Rights (MoHR) in partnership with UNAMI Human Rights Office (HRO) conducted on 27-30 March a three-day training session on monitoring and documenting human rights violations. A total of 27 Iraqi civil society organizations active in the human rights field and 13 staff members from MoHR benefited from the training that took place at the UNAMI Headquarters in Baghdad.

The training was jointly conducted by

MoHR and UNAMI HRO. While UNAMI experts briefed participants on international humanitarian and human rights law, the Ministry staff helped improve their understanding of international treaties and mechanisms monitoring human rights violations.

The training covered several areas including the international and national human rights principles, standards and instruments. A special focus was



Monitoring and documenting human rights violations training taking place in Baghdad

[1] MICS3: Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey Round 3.

Human Rights

put on enhancing the participants' ability to plan and conduct impartial and accurate research and investigations into human rights violations.

The training was conducted by trainers from the National Human Rights Institute, part of the MoHR, along with UNAMI human rights experts and a representative of the Bar Association who highlighted the Iraqi laws covering human rights violations.

A representative of the Ministry of Interior /Human Rights Directorate briefed participants on the mechanisms available at the Directorate in dealing with human rights violations, while a judge from the High Judicial Council/ Central

Investigation Court shed light on the judicial procedures.

While assisting the Ministry's efforts to meet its human rights' obligations, UNAMI HRO supports the establishment of an informed and active Iraqi civil society that effectively and responsibly promotes a culture of human rights in the country.



Participants for the training in a group shot

Monitoring human rights' violations during protests



Participants conduct exercises at the workshop on monitoring demonstrations held at the UK Embassy in Baghdad

In light of the protests that have been taking place in Iraq since late February, the Ministry of Human Rights felt the need to train a number of its staff on how to monitor human rights violations during demonstrations.

In response to an urgent request from MoHR, UNAMI organised a training course for four Iraqi NGOs and 25 staff from different MoHR's departments and offices in different gover-

norates. Focusing on monitoring and documenting human rights violations during demonstrations, the one-day training course was held on 17 March at the UK Embassy with the participation of the Baghdad Operations Command.

The training covered primarily the national and international legal framework of monitoring the demonstrations, the code of conduct of law enforcement officials and document-

ing violations of human rights during demonstrations.

The understanding of human rights' obligations and responsibilities including those of monitors, was reinforced by linking the legal framework to the role-plays several and exercises developed specifically for this workshop that has been adapted to the Iraqi context. The best practices session covered experiences from Nepal, Denmark from the perspective of UN Monitors and Security Forces controlling the demonstrators.



The workshop provides ground for active participation

Schools across Iraq celebrate World Water Day with UNICEF and The European Community



A performance at Al-Mansour primary school about water on World Water Day. (C) UNICEF-Iraq/Arar/2011

UNICEF and the European Union marked World Water Day in Iraq this year with celebrations in 23 schools across the country. 11,000 primary school children joined UNICEF in calling for more investments in water infrastructure, the conservation of water resources and keeping these resources free from pollution.

Al-Mansour Primary school was among the six participating schools in Baghdad, along with one in each of the other 17 governorates that celebrated World Water Day. At each school events were held where students had a chance to explore on the importance of water conservation and the effect of pollution on water.

This year, International World Water Day called attention to the impact of urbanization and the uncertainties caused by climate change, conflicts and natural disasters on urban water systems.

In Iraq, three decades of war, armed conflict, sanctions and neglect of infrastructure – combined with limited environmental awareness – have undermined Iraq's water resource management system, and means of effective water conservation. Improvements in the management of the country's water resources, including at the household level, will have a profound effect on Iraq's efforts to reduce poverty and hunger, child mortality and ensure environmental sustainability, helping the country meet three of the eight Millennium Development Goals as set out by the United Nations.

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School children at Al-Mansour primary school in Baghdad gather at the school yard before performing at the school's World Water Day festivities. (C) UNICEF-Iraq/Arar/2011



Primary school children in 23 schools around Iraq were given t-shirts and information materials provided by UNICEF and the EC on how best to conserve water and keep water free from pollution. (C) UNICEF-Iraq/Arar/2011



Two girls at Al-Mansour primary school in Baghdad look at the exhibit in their school. (C) UNICEF-Iraq/Arar/2011



As part of the activities on World Water Day children in 23 schools around Iraq organized drawing exhibitions on water and the environment. (C) UNICEF-Iraq/Arar/2011



Pre-school student from Baghdad wearing a costume representing safe drinking water on his way to perform at a play on World Water Day at Al-Mansour primary school in Baghdad. (C) UNICEF-Iraq/Arar/2011

Assistance to Iraqi date sector in reaching international standards

By Wigdan AL Qassy, UNIDO Iraq



Workers at the date packaging plant. Photo: UNIDO

Once ubiquitous, date palms used to form a green ring around Baghdad. Their decline due to decades of war, sanctions and mismanagement led to devastating ramifications for the Iraqi people and economy. To reverse this decline and create jobs in the most populated governorate of Iraq, UN Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) has partnered with Iraqi Dates Processing and Marking Company (IDPMC).

As a result of this effort, IDPMC proudly received in February 28 the ISO-22000 certificate, marking a first in Iraq. The certificate endorses adherence to international standards on food safety throughout the food production chain, and allows the company to export processed dates directly to Europe and United States. This is a result that UNIDO has been striving to achieve through its work supporting the Iraqi date sector since April 2007 with the aim of allowing the Iraqi companies active in this sector reach international standards.

Although Iraq was second-to-none in the world in raw and processed date exports in 1950s, decades of sanctions and war that followed had detrimental effects on the Iraqi date processing facilities, machinery and human resources, forcing Iraq to ship

raw dates to other countries in the region for processing. This was a catastrophe for the Iraqi economy. Let alone employment opportunities lost due to this shift, since a ton of raw dates cost merely one-sixteenth of a ton of processed dates, it caused a significant loss of revenue. Moreover, since Iraq has a comparative advantage when it comes to dates, transferring the value-added benefits to neighboring countries prevented Iraq from developing a successful and productive sector.

IDPMC now owns and operates eight date processing plants in various governorates of Iraq. Focusing on the largest processing facility, which is located in Baghdad, UNIDO assisted the company through three key activities: capacity-building, rehabilitation and technology transfer. These activities were held in cost-sharing basis with the company.

Training sessions on ISO-22000 and relevant quality assurance principles were held by UNIDO experts

with the participation of forty-five IDPMC employees, who, following the training, undertook the role of trainers, responsible for training other employees of the company, even those operating in the factories in the other provinces. UNIDO has also been working with the company to draft plans to rehabilitate and equip the other plants owned by the company, including the Shlchia Factory, which is proposed to produce nutrition bars and biscuit sandwiches from processed dates.

Given the nutritional value of dates, IDPMC can play a significant role when it comes to Iraqi public distribution and school feeding programme. Since most items on the food baskets distributed through these two initiatives are imported, adding locally produced dates to the list has the promise of reducing the burden on the budget, and generating employment and income for the Iraqi people. In fact, the company has been holding talks with the government to expand its production capacity by rehabilitating four other factories and include locally produced dates in the food basket of the public distribution programme.

The methodology followed by UNIDO in assisting IDPMC can be followed for edible oil as well, leading to employment and income generation through rehabilitation of processing facilities. Edible oil is already a part of the food basket, but is being imported due to shortage in local supply.

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Sterile conditions are enforced during the packaging process. Photo: UNIDO

An advocate for the rights of people living with HIV/AIDS in Iraq

By Ruba Hikmat, WHO Iraq



Dr Thamer Al-Halifi, the Vice President of CCM in Iraq during a meeting with HIV-health workers, representatives from the community and patients to discuss HIV/AIDS programme's gaps and activities.

Salma is in her forties, and for many years she has been living with HIV positive. She has experienced firsthand the challenges of living with HIV in Iraq where the level of stigma and discrimination can be very high. She has lived through feelings of abandonment by friends, family and society at large and a health care service that often turn a blind eye on the needs of People Living with HIV (PLHIV).

"I was exhausted from the sensation of being labeled, set apart, discarded and in essence abandoned in my society", Salma says, "frequently a blind eye has been turned to our needs, requests and demands and therefore my colleagues and I felt to some extent that we are undervalued due to our social prejudice".

Nevertheless, there have been efforts to gradually address the needs of PLHIV and fight stigma and discrimination in Iraq. Since 2008, with the selection of Salma as a member of the Country Coordinating Mechanism (CCM) of the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, TB and Malaria, the voices of PLHIV has been represented at a national level.

"Being a part of the CCM presented a major opportunity to act on the prevailing stigma and discrimination against PLHIV, and the lack of services to PLHIV," Salma explains. Increasing the community awareness as well as reducing the stigma and discrimination against PLHIV is a crucial step in improving the lives of those affected by HIV/AIDS.

Iraq is a low HIV prevalence country with a cumulative number of 585 HIV positive patients registered between 1986 and 2010; 288 of which are Iraqi. Last year alone 21 new cases were reported. About 77% of reported cases were patients infected through contaminated blood products. However, recent reports show that cases where the disease was sexually transmitted is on the rise. Reports also indicate low level of knowledge on HIV transmission and prevention, and high level of stigma and discrimination against PLHIV.

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Scaling up the Health Sector Response for Disability and Rehabilitation Needs in Iraq

By Ruba Hikmat, WHO Iraq

The Iraqi Ministry of Health, in collaboration with the World Health Organization (WHO), conducted a three-day high level consultative workshop on Scaling up the Health Sector Response to Disability and Rehabilitation Needs in Iraq, on 6 March in Amman..

The workshop offered an opportunity to share information and experience on recent developments in the field of disability and rehabilitation at national, regional and global level; review the structure and role of the Ministry of Health, Iraq with regard to disability and rehabilitation; review and suggest changes to the MoH's current and proposed disability registration forms in light of the International Classification and Functioning, Disability and Health and the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities; and agree on next steps to scale up the health sector response to disability and rehabilitation, including capacity development plans.

The event brought together 40 senior officials and specialists involved in the field of disability, representing the Ministry of Health and all the governorates of Iraq, national, international and Civil Society Organizations, including Iraq Alliance for Disability Organizations, The International Committee of the Red Cross, International Medical Corps, the Jordan Higher Council for the Affairs of Persons with Disabilities, the UN Development Programme, the European Union and WHO.

The workshop was part of the implementation of the disability management and rehabilitation services component of the ongoing European Union funded programme (€13 million) to support Specialized Medical Services in Iraq.

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Berlin Declaration on the development of policy and land management in Iraq

By Dyfed Aubrey, UN-HABITAT Land and Housing Expert

The UN-HABITAT Iraq Programme facilitated a study visit to Berlin and Potsdam from 28 February to 5 March 2011 to learn from the German experience in land management and transition towards decentralization. The study was attended by an Iraqi delegation headed by Dr. Thamir Al-Ghadban, Chairman of the Task Force for Economic Reform at the Prime Minister's Advisory Commission in addition to representatives from Food and Agriculture Organization and the World Bank.

The study visit concluded in a statement indicating the Government of Iraq's commitment to initiate a land policy process which will serve as a framework to address land management and land administration issues in Iraq. The statement will be shortly submitted to the Iraq Council of Ministers for endorsement.

UN-HABITAT will support the Government of Iraq in preparing a detailed work program for the policy, and will support the establishment of institu-



Polluted irrigation channel in Al Hammar Marsh. Photo: Casey Walther/UNESCO

tional arrangements and legislation as needed. The Land Policy will contribute to economic development, poverty reduction and good governance in line

with the National Development Plan (2010-2014), Poverty Reduction Strategy, and National Housing Policy while supporting investment in Iraq.



Al Hammar Marsh near Chibayish. Photo: Casey Walther/UNESCO

Marshlands' White Paper

By Hiba Sha'ath, UNESCO - Iraq Office

The UNESCO Science Officer and a representative from UNAMI conducted a 12-day assessment mission of Iraq's Marshlands in Basra and Thi-Qar, starting on the 8th of February. The objective of this mission was to collect information, data and feedback from local and provincial stakeholders and other partners, for the drafting of a White Paper that aims to provide a synopsis and analysis of the current and future challenges facing development in the area.

The Iraqi Marshlands, once covering more than 20,000 square kilometers, represent an ecosystem of fundamental importance to the natural and human life in the region. However, since the 1970s, over 90 percent of the original ter-

ritory of the Marshlands was decimated as a result of a combination of upstream damming and systematic draining of the Marshlands by the former Iraqi regime.

Under the umbrella of the Integrated Water Task Force, the UN Country Team has set out to develop the Marshlands Paper, which aims to provide a comprehensive overview and analysis of the current situation in the Marshlands region, focusing on both ecosystem and human development analysis.

Also, through the presentation of the specific scenarios for the future of the Marshlands, the paper intends to direct the attention of the policy makers to the

Marshes, to advocate for policy development for the area, and not only addressing the environmental sustainability of the region, but also focusing on the human development challenges. In this manner, the paper, once completed will present a comprehensive range of options and choices that the Government of Iraq has in front of it, as it embarks on implementing an ambitious and challenging development agenda.

The paper will also provide a framework (Plan of Action) for the United Nations Country Team in Iraq, and highlight the specific areas where the UN's integrated approach to the Marshlands would de-

rive the most benefit in terms of the environmental and socio-economic needs. It is envisaged that the analysis provided by the paper will serve as a basis for development of a comprehensive, integrated programme for the Marshlands, in full partnership with the Government of Iraq and in support of their particular priorities and vision in the region.

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News Briefs

SRSO Ad Melkert's first visit to Iran

On March 4-7, SRSO Ad Melkert, conducted his first visit to Iran since taking up his post as head of UNAMI. Mr. Melkert met with the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Ali Akbar Salehi, the Speaker of Parliament, Mr. Ali Larijani, the Deputy Secretary of the Supreme National Security Council, Mr. Ali Bagheri and the Deputy Minister of Interior, Mr. Ali Abdullahi.

Accompanied by officials from the UN Department of Political Affairs and of the newly established UNAMI Liaison Office in Tehran, Mr. Melkert discussed the role and mandate of UNAMI. He added that the United Nations stands ready to assist ongoing Iranian-Iraqi bilateral engagement through the provision of technical assistance on issues such as environment, demining, drug control and water management. Mr. Melkert reiterated the important role that both Iran and Iraq can play in fostering a stable regional environment in which both sides can pursue key objectives of economic development and social progress.

Mr. Melkert said that his discussions in Tehran have been open and constructive, and that "they form a good basis for UNAMI's mandated support to bilateral Iraq-Iran relations in the context of enhanced regional cooperation".

WFP supports Iraqi Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs in social safety nets

The Iraqi Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (MoLSA) and the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) in Iraq signed on 30 March, in Baghdad, a Memorandum of Understanding cementing a partnership to strengthen Iraq's Social Safety Nets. This partnership comes at a time when the Government of Iraq is reforming its Public Distribution System which currently provides a monthly food ration to all citizens of Iraq.

The Iraqi High Committee for the reform of the Public Distribution System has requested WFP's support to develop the capacity of the Government of Iraq to increase efficiency of the Social Safety Net system and improve linkages between the Public Distribution System and the Social Safety Net.

This partnership will enable WFP to strengthen the capacity of the Ministry staff to adapt the Social Safety Nets to current pressing needs, improve field operations and ensure efficient and effective results-based management. WFP will also work with the Ministry to conduct a food security and poverty survey and support the Government to reach out and help the most vulnerable people.

Despite recent improvements in the food security situation in Iraq, the latest WFP/Government of Iraq analysis shows that

930,000 people remain food insecure, and an additional 6.4 million will become food insecure in the absence of the PDS. Thus, this partnership between WFP and MoLSA is a crucial step toward social protection.

Rule of Law International Policy Committee

As the international community moves forward with several rule of law initiatives in Iraq, the Rule of Law International Policy Committee (RIPC) held a meeting on 29 March at UNAMI Headquarters in Baghdad with the participation of representatives of 14 countries, the United Nations, the World Bank and EUJUST LEX Iraq, the European Union Integrated Rule of Law Mission for Iraq.

Ambassadors, top officials and international rule of law experts continued their monthly dialogue on human rights, good governance and the rule of law in Iraq. They shared information in view of coordinating their work in the field of human rights and Rule of Law in Iraq with the aim of promoting the protection of human rights and judicial and legal reform in the country.

The meeting provided for a review of the work of its three working groups dealing with trafficking in persons and juvenile justice, international judicial cooperation and rule of law and judiciary reform/legislation and parliamentary oversight.

The Committee meeting also included

three presentations on the Iraq Rule of Law Strategy of RPC partners and the activities of the US-supported National Center for State Courts and USAID-funded Iraq Access to Justice Program.

The RPC serves as a monthly rule of law forum chaired by various missions. The Committee is made up of Australia, Denmark, European Union, Egypt, Italy, Japan, France, Germany, Korea, Turkey, Sweden, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom, United States, United Nations and EUJUST LEX Iraq.

Three UN Organizations sign Programme Action Plans with the Government of Iraq

UNICEF, the UN Development Programme and the United Nations Population Fund have signed their Country Programme Action Plans for their respective 2011-2014 Programmes of Cooperation with the Government of Iraq. The signing endorses the key results the agencies will deliver over the next four years in support of the Government of Iraq's development agenda.

Via a robust Public Sector Modernization program, the three United Nations organizations will contribute to creating a public sector that delivers high quality and equitable services, especially in the areas of education, water and sanitation, and health services. Additionally, assistance will be given to the rehabilitation of existing run-down power stations as well as the building of new ones, clearance of mines and other remnants of war and establishment of environmental programmes together with the government and local communities.

The three organizations' Country Programme Action Plans are costed at over \$600 million over a four year period, which represents more than one-third of the total resources required for the United Nations programme in Iraq as agreed with the Government for 2011-2014.

Disaster Risk Reduction Seminar in Erbil

Government officials and representatives from the Government Disaster Risk Reduction Committee and representatives from

the United Nations met in Erbil on 7-8 March to discuss how Iraq can better react to disasters and reduce the threats of both man-made and natural disasters. The committee comprised of 10 ministries, led by the Ministry for Science and Technology.

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in cooperation with the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs are supporting the Committee to develop a concrete Disaster Risk Plan. Iraq is currently exposed to risks from natural disasters, especially through drought, desertification and flooding and it is anticipated that climate change may further aggravate these problems. Facilitated by a Disaster Management Expert from UNDP, the workshop exposed the participants to the relevant institutional and legal frameworks in countries such as Japan and Pakistan.

The workshop provided an opportunity for the Iraqi government to explore how to improve the Disaster Risk Management System in Iraq through an analysis of policies and institutional set-ups in other countries. The government intends to review its existing disaster management systems and identify better ways to mitigate risks to protect the Iraqi people.

Scottish Government makes first financial contribution to the UN Trust Fund for Iraq

The Scottish Government contributed 300,000£ (480,000 US\$) to the newly established United Nations Trust Fund for Iraq, the first to be made towards this Fund. The contribution of the Scottish Government will be allocated to water development in Iraq under the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF).

The contribution will support the UNDAF Priority on "Environmental Management and Compliance with Ratified International Environmental Treaties and Obligations", a priority that contributes to meeting a number of targets set to be achieved under the Millennium Development Goals by 2015.

The UNDAF was jointly signed in May 2010 by the United Nations and the Government of Iraq. It requires 1.9 billion US \$ for the implementation of an agreed pro-

gramme of work. To be implemented from 2011-2014, the fund has five priorities: improved governance and protection of human rights, economic growth, environment management, access to quality essential services, and investment in human capital with a focus on women, youth and children. It is aligned with the priorities of the Government's Five Year National Development Plan which considers human capital the main pillar for building Iraq.

Escalating the fight against Tuberculosis in Iraq

On this year's World Tuberculosis (TB) Day, the Government of Iraq and the World Health Organization (WHO) highlighted the urgent need not only to sustain the existing gains Iraq has made in TB control such as the increase in the detection rate from 43% in 2007 to 49% in 2010, but also to focus more on addressing the remaining 50% of TB cases that go undiagnosed and untreated.

The Iraqi Ministry of Health, in collaboration with WHO launched on the 24th of March, a series of advocacy, social mobilization and communication events that focus on recognizing individuals - doctors, nurses, managers, patients, activities and advocates, and researchers in Iraq who have found new ways to fight and stop TB in different settings and can serve as an inspiration to others in the quest towards TB elimination.

In line with the campaign, the National TB control programme with the support of WHO announced the start of a new Capture TB Assessment, using record linkage and capture recapture techniques. The planned research will help increase case detection rates for all TB forms, and smear positive TB cases in Iraq. The study will also evaluate the case management of TB by non-National Tuberculosis Program (NTP) providers in the country. It will be carried out in all non-NTP facilities delivering care to TB patients in randomly selected governorates .

More collective wisdom is needed to come forward and join the fight against tuberculosis and save lives. TB kills 4,200 people and affects 16,000 other people every year in Iraq.

This year marks the second year of a two-year campaign that aims to inspire innovation in TB research and care. It is inspired by the ambitious new objectives and targets of the Global Plan to Stop TB 2011-2015.

IOM International Women's Day celebrations

By Bertram Douglas Langley Chambers, IOM Iraq

Over 150 women between the ages of 15 and 50 attended IOM Iraq's International Women's Day on March. The celebrations were held in three separate locations in Erbil and Baghdad. Various topics were discussed including women's rights, as well as their roles and responsibilities.

The event aimed to empower Iraqi wom-

en and equip them with the necessary skills and knowledge to overcome the many difficulties they face. Women were able to speak freely about the problems they encounter on a daily basis and experts were on hand to give valuable advice on a number of issues, ranging from domestic abuse to how they can make a greater contribution to their community. The women were also asked to submit photographs that would illustrate their lives; the results of which will be seen in the coming weeks.

The events were organised in coordination with the Iraqi NGO, Women for Peace, that stressed the importance of women's rights to education and specifically, their access to sciences and technology. Education is essential for these women gaining sustainable employment.

IOM Iraq's Programme for Human Security

and Stabilization (PHSS) was introduced to the audience. PHSS offers a wide range of livelihood opportunities. Women from earlier phases of the programme spoke about their experiences and the positive impact it had on their lives.

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List of UN Acronyms

There are 16 UN organisations, programmes, agencies and funds working in Iraq. They are the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), International Labour Organization (ILO), International Organization for Migration (IOM), UN Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), UN Development Programme (UNDP), UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), UN Population Fund (UNFPA), UN Human Settlements Programme (UN-HABITAT), Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), UN Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), UN Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN OCHA), UN Office for Project Services (UNOPS), World Food Programme (WFP) and World Health Organization (WHO).