

Iraq

Part 1: Situation update in the country

In 2018, Iraq took tentative steps towards stabilization. Notably, a reduction in armed violence and a decrease in mass population movements were signs of growing peace and security. However, Iraq continues to face challenges, exacerbated by a recent round of conflicts.

Since the end of the conflict against the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant in late 2017, reported violence has fallen to its lowest level since 2003, averaging around 236 deaths per month from April to September 2018. The drop in civilian casualties, down six-fold in one year, is a hopeful sign. However, according to the Economist Intelligence Unit, the lull in violence between 2009 and 2013 serves as a warning against complacency. Regions of Iraq continued to see violence and insecurity in 2018, including Anbar, Kirkuk, and Ninewa. The Iraq 2018 Humanitarian Response Plan determined that around a quarter of the population, including four million children, remained in need of at least one form of humanitarian assistance. Nearly 0 per cent of Iraq's population is under 20 years old. After 15 years of cycles of conflict, no child in Iraq has memories of a time of peace. According to International Organization for Migration, since 2014 nearly six million Iraqis have been displaced, around 15 per cent of the country's population, including three million children under 18 years old.

Patterns of population movement were complex. People remained in displacement, chose to return, were newly-displaced due to pockets of continued insecurity, or chose to re-displace ('secondary' displacement) to internally-displaced persons camps or previous displacement locations. As of December 2018, over 1.8 million Iraqis, over 900,000 children, remained internally displaced. Around 70 per cent of displaced families lived in out-of-camp settings.

Displacement and conflict disproportionately affected people from western and central Iraq. The majority of internally displaced people live in just five northern and central governorates (Ninewa, Dahuk, Erbil, Salah al Din, and Sulaymaniyah) and were displaced from three western and central governorates (Anbar, Kirkuk, and Salah al Din). Issues that hinder return, reported by displaced families, include problems with housing, earning a living, accessing basic services, social cohesion, security, and mental health. According to the International Organisation of Migration, two-thirds (64 per cent) of the remaining 1.8 million displaced report no intention to return in the coming 12 months) and smaller-scale 'secondary' displacements and new arrivals to internally-displaced persons camps continued throughout the year.

Movements continued between Iraq and Syria. Iraq remained host to over 250,000 Syrian refugees, around half of them children, according to UNHCR. For those choosing to return, many return to sites of recent armed violence. Ninewa governorate and its capital city Mosul were covered by international media, and the scale of damage remains vast especially in the western part of the city where large areas remain extremely dangerous due to the presence of explosive remnants of war. Across northern and central Iraq, homes and schools, hospitals and roads, electricity services and water and sanitation networks are damaged, non-functional or in disrepair due to violence, neglect and lack of

investment.

Humanitarian protection concerns were high, especially for children, women, people with disabilities and the elderly affected by conflict or displacement. These include loss of critical documents, such as identity or birth registration documents, increased use of negative coping mechanisms such as child marriage or child labour to support families without access to livelihoods, and increased vulnerability to sexual- or gender-based violence, especially for female-headed households, due to lack of shelter or continued insecurity.

High levels of gender-based violence, in particular sexual violence, were well documented during and after the recent conflict, with many abducted on a mass scale, held captive for months, sold into sexual slavery and subjected to rape, torture and abuse (according to UNAMI/OHCHR, 2014 and OHCHR, March 2015). For both refugees and internally displaced persons, risks of gender-based violence against women and girls persist, not only sexual violence, but intimate-partner violence, sexual exploitation, harassment, and early and forced marriage. According to the 2018 Iraq Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS-6) nearly 28 per cent of females between 20 to 24 in Iraq are married before the age of 18.

Birth registration rates have dropped since 2014 in areas formerly held by armed groups. Prior to 2014, the national rate was at 99 per cent (MICS-4); recent protection assessments showed that up to 25 per cent of children under five in these areas have no documentation, with long-term effect on their access to basic education, health and social welfare services.

Mass population movements also increased pressure on basic services in 'hosting' areas of Iraq, especially in the north and centre of the country. According to the MICS-6, 1.3 per cent of children aged 0 to 17 years were living with neither biological parent, while 4.3 per cent reported one or both parents to be dead. The proportion of children reporting either one or both parents dead is 7.1 per cent in Anbar, 7.5 per cent in Ninewa and 6.5 per cent in Salah al Din, all well above the national average of 4.3 per cent. These three governorates are the most affected by the conflict, with significant casualties and detentions, particularly of men.

For UNICEF and partners, continuation of humanitarian assistance for the most vulnerable children remained a central concern in 2018. In parallel, national systems need to be strengthened to re-build physical and social infrastructures, with sensitivity to the many tensions that remain.

In February 2018, an international conference in Kuwait focused on the physical and human dimensions of reconstruction sought support for the Government's reconstruction efforts, with the cost of damages to infrastructure since 2014 at US\$88 billion. At the conference, the United Nations launched its Recovery and Resilience Programme that focuses on social elements of reconstruction. UNICEF Iraq committed to support delivery of basic services in education, health, and water and sanitation sectors, as well as protection, to those affected by violence, exploitation and abuse. UNICEF Iraq will build local-level capacity to plan for and deliver basic services for children and young people.

Since 2017, there have been a number of earthquakes up to 6.3 on the Richter scale in Iraq. Though damages were limited, the country does not have sufficient emergency preparedness or response capacity for earthquakes or other disasters.

Progress against key development indicators in recent years has been inconsistent, with discrepancies between the wealthy and poor areas of the country, and between girls and boys.

Although under-five mortality rates decreased from 37 children to 26 children per 1,000 live births (MICS-4, 2011 and MICS-6, 2018), overall there has been limited progress in the health sector. Vaccination coverage stagnated, with only half of children between 12 to 23 months vaccinated against the main vaccine-preventable diseases (47 per cent in 2011 to 50 per cent in 2018). With the addition of new vaccines, changes to the national immunization schedule makes it difficult to assess full vaccination coverage over time. BCG vaccine coverage increased from 90 per cent in 2011 to 95 per cent in 2018, and measles vaccination coverage fell (75 per cent in 2011 and 71 per cent in 2018).

Certain challenges persist, including poor completion and transition rates of children in education, especially girls. In 2018, only 8 per cent of children were out-of-school at primary level but the figure rose to 40 per cent by upper secondary level (MICS-6). There was geographic disparity in completion rates between the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (89 per cent completion) and central and southern Iraq (73 per cent), as well as between richest and poorest wealth quintiles (93 per cent against 54 per cent respectively).

Environmental concerns came to the forefront in 2018. There were demonstrations in southern Iraq over quantity and quality of water in the Tigris and Euphrates, where the rivers meet and become the Shatt al Arab. Many parts of Iraq have suffered from drought over several years, negatively impacting agricultural potential. Limited rainfall in most of the country depleted groundwater sources, upstream damming reduced flow in major rivers, and damaged and neglected sanitation systems increase water contamination and risk of waterborne disease.

The sanitation situation is worse, with limited functioning waste-water treatment nationally. The vast majority of sewage is discharged directly into rivers, canals and fields without treatment. Per the Ministry of Environment, only 20 per cent of household waste-water is treated at international standards. Bacteriological contamination (18 per cent, as reported by the Iraq Ministry of Health and the Environment) exceeds the national standards and World Health Organisation (WHO) guidelines for drinking water (less than five per cent).

In August 2018, an outbreak of gastroenteritis, suspected as a result of widespread water supply problems, affected nearly 105,000 people in Basrah, southern Iraq, around half were children (WHO). With a swift response from the World Health Organisation, UNICEF, the Ministry of Health and partners, the outbreak was contained and case levels returned to almost normal by mid-October. However, water conservation and management issues are a major concern with implications for children's health and safety and for stability in the country.

Iraq's harsh environment presents a range of challenges. Summer temperatures reach beyond 50 degrees centigrade and winter temperatures can plummet to below zero in mountainous or desert areas. When rains do come, usually between November and February, after many months of summer heat, dry ground and poor drainage frequently combine to cause flooding. In 2018, heavy rains affected 18 internally displaced person camps and 10,000 people, causing death and injury, and destruction and loss of shelter and possessions. Overall, the role of environmental concerns, including climate change, should not be underestimated in the children's future and as potential drivers of insecurity,

Economically, Iraq is dependent on its hydrocarbon resources of gas and oil. The lack of economic diversity makes Iraq vulnerable to global price fluctuations which, in turn, makes national planning and budget allocation challenging. Fluctuations in oil prices limited the fiscal space to address children and young people's needs. Budget allocations to key services, including education and health, fell.

Civil servants' salaries, including teachers, social workers and healthcare staff, were withheld or reduced, further restricting access to basic services for children and families.

External and internal tensions across political, economic and social spheres create a volatile dynamic that expose children to the risk of violence, abuse and neglect, and threatens child and human rights. Politically, Iraq is vulnerable to external pressure, dealing with complex relationships with bordering states. Internally, tensions continued between a range of political actors and parties, and between citizens and the state. The effects of a Kurdistan Region of Iraq referendum on independence in September 2017 lasted into 2018, with its borders closed to international traffic until March 2018. In October 2018, new custom checkpoints were announced, requiring additional permission and fees for goods including humanitarian supplies moving between the Kurdistan Regional Government and federal Iraq.

After national elections in May 2018, government formation continued into December 2018, at which time eight out of 22 ministries had not yet been filled, including positions such as interior and defence ministers. Without key interlocutors at ministry level, including the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Justice, and Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, planned policy and legislative interventions to support of children slowed, including the implementation and monitoring of the National Child Protection Policy and progress towards a new child rights law.

The security situation remained uncertain as asymmetric attacks persisted and armed groups retained local support. According to Amnesty International, small-scale violence continued, as did reports of collective punishment and targeted killings of individuals or families perceived to be affiliated with armed groups. In this context, children in Iraq are at risk of direct harm from violence, including physical injury and psychological trauma, as are their caregivers and communities.

The number of children in detention since 2015 rose significantly. These children are particularly vulnerable, their situation made perilous by a legal system that is retributive rather than restorative. The age of criminal responsibility is just nine years old in Iraq and 11 years old in the Kurdistan Region. Iraq must improve coordination in the juvenile justice system, including child-friendly procedures, services that address the root causes of delinquency, better use of alternatives to detention, rehabilitative and other services for children in detention, and after-care services for released children.

At the end of 2018, Iraq sits on a cusp. Despite the trend of returns and a decrease in violence, humanitarian assistance to support basic services for vulnerable, displaced and returnee children and families remains. The imperative to enable early recovery and national resilience puts pressure on development actors to strengthen the country's fragile systems and services and expand and improve children's access to their rights to education, health, safety and opportunity.

Part 2: Major results including in humanitarian action and gender, against the results in the Country Programme Documents

The UNICEF Iraq situation analysis identified ways to inform a life-course approach to programming. Health and nutrition interventions were delivered with attention to children under five years old; water, sanitation and hygiene support contributed to children's health and growth. Education and child protection programming, with focus on girls' safety and learning, and on children in contact with the law, ensured children's access to their rights. UNICEF Iraq supported the Government's commitment to social protection; to a child-focused priority in the national poverty reduction strategy; and to

humanitarian cash assistance in support of children's education and health. Humanitarian action has been the basis of UNICEF support in Iraq since 2014. As violence subsides, however, focus is shifting to development, including building capacity of government partners.

Goal area 1: Every child survives and thrives

With the World Health Organisation, UNICEF supported the Ministry of Health to strengthen Iraq's maternal and perinatal deaths surveillance and response system, establishing a perinatal audit in five governorates. The system builds on the existing maternal deaths surveillance and response system with the goal of one, integrated countrywide system. Feedback from the Ministry of Health was positive. UNICEF will evaluate the project in 2019 and use findings to scale up the process into additional governorates.

In 2018, a milestone achievement in relation to maternal and neonatal health was the inclusion of key coverage indicators into the national Health Management Information System. The indicators will be used to track progress, inform health policy makers and ensure feedback on how interventions are reaching those in need. According to the Multiple Indicator Survey Cluster (MISC), the proportion of births attended by a skilled attendant rose to 95.6 per cent in 2018 from 90.9 per cent per in 2011, significant progress in meeting international standards.

Building on 2017 supply chain strengthening, UNICEF provided technical support to train government staff in the central warehouse in Basrah, and in Najaf, on web-based vaccine stock and supply management, which was modified to meet Iraqi regulations. UNICEF supported the Government to introduce this in five additional governorates. To ensure implementation of the first comprehensive vaccine management assessment, UNICEF supported the Government in two phases. Phase one was directorate-level self-improvement plans; and phase two (starting in November 2018), the training of 26 assessors. Key partners included WHO and the Eastern Mediterranean Public Health Network, with support from UNICEF Regional Office and Headquarters.

In December 2018, new assessment tools were tested in Iraq, the first country to do so. Adjustments to the tools were required and the effective vaccine management assessment will continue in 2019. UNICEF supported the Ministry of Health to procure the 2018 requirement of three million doses of BCG vaccine. A high-level delegation from the ministry visited the UNICEF Supply Division to expand the scope of the memorandum of understanding to include other vaccines and supplies. The new minister is reviewing the revised MoU as of December 2018.

With UNICEF support for large-scale social mobilization efforts, polio campaigns reached more than 1.2 million children under-five years old in conflict-affected areas where low coverage had been noted. No further cases of polio were diagnosed in Iraq. A mid-2018 outbreak of measles was contained, with new cases declining after the first phase of a national campaign in September.

Access to maternal health services improved with delivery by skilled birth attendants rising from 90 per cent to 96 per cent (from 2011 to 2018) and institutional delivery from 87 per cent to 97 per cent during the same period. A revised National Nutrition Strategy (2018-2022) was endorsed by the Ministry of Health. As a vital step in monitoring and controlling the violations of breast milk substitute code, UNICEF, the Nutrition Research Institute and the national committee that approves drugs specifications in Iraq, KIMADIA, agreed to change the specifications of therapeutic milk to be limited to medical conditions when infants are not able to take breastmilk; all other milk formulas were excluded. UNICEF and partner advocacy resulted in removal of infant formula advertisements from public places, and changes to the standard infant formula label, which is now aligned with the breast

milk substitute code.

UNICEF continued health and nutrition support in humanitarian situations, including in the Syrian refugee and internally-displaced person camps, returnee areas and host communities. As part of the wider health cluster led by WHO, UNICEF Iraq is the lead agency for the nutrition working group in Iraq, and ensures technical staff support the coordination and information management functions of the group. In retaken areas, UNICEF Iraq supported revitalization of routine immunization services including the physical rehabilitation of vaccine stores damaged by conflict or neglect. UNICEF Iraq also ensured that capacity-building of national staff on child-focused health and nutrition needs and services were integrated into humanitarian activities. UNICEF Iraq delivered high energy biscuits in rapid response mechanism kits, reaching more than 150,000 children (7,650 girls) under five years old. Joint efforts between UNICEF and its WASH and health partners helped ensure no cholera outbreaks in 2018.

Goal area 2: Every child learns

In 2018, UNICEF Iraq focused on institutional strengthening of the Ministry of Education and continuation of education in emergencies response. UNICEF Iraq with UNES and the Government developed a national roll-out plan of the Education Management Information System to 10 governorates. The system will allow for real-time, quality data for decision-making, planning and budgetary allocation; support monitoring of the quality of education services; and improve national figures on enrolment and attendance. UNICEF also supported steps to establish a national learning assessment system to provide insight on children's learning. A 2018 scoping mission produced an analysis of the Iraq context and the steps required to establish the system nationally. This work will continue into 2019.

UNICEF and the World Bank, with technical assistance from Cambridge Education, rolled out plans to support decentralized education sector plans in 11 governorates, including capacity-building of government staff to conduct comprehensive sector assessments, and use outcomes to prioritize and cost actions in the next three to five years. For better integration and to initiate the life-course approach to multi-sectoral programming, UNICEF provided technical support to develop a multi-sector early childhood development strategy for Iraq. Work will continue into 2019.

To improve education quality, UNICEF supported the Ministry of Education to scale-up schools participating in the school-based management approach (child-friendly standards approach in Iraq), reaching 374 schools in the year with over 290,200 children enrolled. Parent-teacher associations, school management committees, principals, teachers and supervisors were oriented on how to make learning environments child-friendly. As an indicator of success, an additional 240 schools across Iraq requested to participate, demonstrating commitment by mobilization of their own resources to activate school improvement plans. As evidence of the Government commitment, the Ministry of Education issued a country-wide directive that school-based management be integrated into all governorate-level plans.

For years, education actors have faced challenges in determining the number of school-age children who lost or were denied access to formal school. The Kurdistan Region's pilot education management information system had 362 schools registered as of 2018 (out of 662 in the region). As of December, plans for roll-out to remaining schools were ready. The system will work complimentary with UNICEF and the Government to create a national learning assessments system.

UNICEF Iraq also proposed to support a community-based system for tracking out-of-school children,

using EduTrac. In 2018, UNICEF Iraq continued technical and logistical support to the national EduTrac committee led by the Directorate-General of Planning. Discussions were held with private mobile service providers on the potential of SMS-tracking non-enrolled or non-attending children. Integrated interventions are required to address girls' poor transition rates from primary to secondary level, most prevalent in southern Iraq where UNICEF focused its interventions. In 2018, 2,713 girls in UNICEF-targeted communities transitioned from the primary to the secondary level.

For children who missed years of education, UNICEF supported a concept note on non-formal education and in 2018 helped the Kurdistan Region initiate development of a non-formal education policy. The policy will provide guidelines for linking children in non-formal pathways to the formal system. In 2018, UNICEF supported more than 269,400 out-of-school children in marginalized communities to access education through non-formal interventions.

UNICEF Iraq delivered training for teachers to identify children in need of psychosocial support in the classroom, including how to recognize signs of stress for teachers and techniques that support the psychosocial well-being of children. UNICEF Iraq continued to implement life-skills education activities that reached over 325,300 children, encouraging social cohesion and stronger relationships among schools and communities. As a sign of success, the Kurdistan Regional Government developed a specific life-skills curriculum targeting children between six and 15 years old.

UNICEF Iraq continued humanitarian support to ensure that children affected by conflict accessed learning, rehabilitating damaged schools; and providing new learning spaces, teaching and learning supplies, and teacher incentives alongside training on how to deliver education in an emergency. In 2018, nearly 1.3 million children (583,774 girls) accessed education with direct UNICEF support, including 30,947 Syrian refugees (15,398 girls). To reduce financial barriers to learning faced by children affected by conflict, displacement, or poverty, UNICEF Iraq and partners delivered cash assistance of US\$30 per child per month. Of the 7,732 children (including 3,789 girls) reached, on average 97 per cent continued their education.

As lead United Nations agency for the education cluster in Iraq, UNICEF Iraq continued its coordination role in 2018, successfully working with cluster partners to advocate against the early closure of schools that host internally-displaced children; to register undocumented children in the formal school system while their documentation is processed; and to standardize incentives for teachers in schools for internally-displaced persons and refugees.

Goal area 3: Every child is protected from violence and exploitation

In 2018, Iraq strengthened its child protection framework. Under the Ministry of Planning and with UNICEF technical support, all 12 ministry members of the Child Welfare Commission initiated implementation of sector workplans for the National Child Protection Policy using government budget, which augurs well for the intervention's sustainability. In the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, UNICEF provided technical and financial support for the child protection policy. By the end of 2018, the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs legal board re-submitted to the Council of Ministers for endorsement. UNICEF Iraq worked with a non-government organization, providing technical and financial support to an ongoing review of domestic child-focused laws, and leveraged its relationship with the Government to obtain agreement to the review and the harmonization of laws with the Convention on the Rights of the Child and other international norms. The review will lay a foundation for a new comprehensive child-rights act.

To strengthen alternative care for children outside the family environment, UNICEF Iraq provided

technical and financial support to develop a foster care guide for Kurdistan, submitted to the Council of Ministers alongside the child protection policy. The guideline builds on the 2017 establishment of foster care units in two governorates, a foster care approval board, and training 170 government staff. Noting the increase of children in state care, an assessment of the children's situation was initiated in 2018. Findings will support long-term strategies to de-institutionalize children without caregivers.

To prevent children's experience of violence and abuse, in 2018 UNICEF Iraq built capacity of 646 community-based structures; 4,709 adults (2,693 women) were trained on child protection topics. UNICEF Iraq and partners delivered psychosocial support for 180,331 internally-displaced and refugee children (85,822 girls). Child protection services were accessed by 10,967 internally-displaced and refugee children (4,766 girls) including legal assistance, family tracing and reunification of children unaccompanied by or separated from caregivers.

UNICEF Iraq initiated a partnership with religious leaders who work to prevent violence against children, including child marriage, training 40 imams and female religious instructors. UNICEF Iraq reached 20,854 people (13,290 women, 7,564 girls) with multi-sector gender-based violence support services. In addition, 13,324 women, girls and boys participated in social and recreational activities that support resilience, and 73,265 community members participated in awareness-raising sessions and trainings to reduce stigma related to gender-based violence.

To improve quality, UNICEF Iraq and partners trained 987 service providers to strengthen services and multi-sector referrals for gender-based violence cases. In 2018, the adolescent girls' toolkit, a life-skills programme covering gender, health, child marriage and gender-based violence, continued to target adolescent girls' needs.

UNICEF Iraq's technical and financial support to the Government and to non-government organizations helped achieve a six per cent reduction in children who were in pre- or post-trial detention (based on governorates where UNICEF was working and for which data was available). This was a 20.5 per cent reduction from the baseline figure, meeting the UNICEF Iraq 2019 target of a 20 per cent reduction in detained children, a year earlier than anticipated.

The Baghdad governorate has the highest number children in detention and, with the overall reduction countrywide, is the only governorate where the number and percentage of children in detention increased in 2018. There are data gaps in governorates such as Ninewa, where it is generally **known** many children are in detention, but figures are unreliable or not available. For this reason, in 2019 UNICEF will pay particular attention to these governorates.

To a varying degree, six out of 18 Iraqi governorates have a functioning juvenile justice taskforce, pre-trial diversion programmes, trained social workers and a case management system for children in contact with the law. As of the end of 2018, 61 per cent of children tracked by UNICEF Iraq were diverted from or had alternatives to detention (against a target of at least 20 per cent). Despite progress, there is still no systematic diversion, no diversion standards, or clear provisions in law. As a result, although the 20 per cent target was surpassed, there is much work needed to establish fully functional diversion programmes aligned with international standards. Some progress was made towards delinquency prevention in 2018. At least three governorates, Erbil, Najaf and ThiQar have a justice for children task force and delinquency prevention plans, but only Najaf has begun implementation. This work will continue into 2019.

In 2018, the Iraq monitoring and reporting mechanism for grave violations of child rights increased its reach and verification rate, so that timely and accurate reporting informs programming and advocacy.

The baseline for the 2016-2019 Country Programme was a 59 per cent verification rate, with a target of a 75 per cent rate. As of end-November 2018, verification stood at 82 per cent. Improvements were supported by a strengthened monitoring and reporting technical working group, but access and security threats, as well as sensitivities around violations, remain a challenge to obtain and verify reports.

In June 2018, UNICEF Iraq initiated the community-based reintegration and security programme to help prevent recruitment of children into armed groups. There are local plans in pilot neighbourhoods in two governorates, and community management committees and local economic development forums were established. Work to protect children and families from un-exploded remnants of war continued, with 198,284 beneficiaries participating in awareness-raising, including 150,221 children (70,082 girls) and 48,063 adults (17,553 female). An estimated 595,000 people, at least half of them children, were reached with key messages.

Children in humanitarian need had increased access to child protection services; 80 per cent of targeted internally-displaced and refugee children received psychosocial support to improve their safety, well-being and resilience. UNICEF Iraq continued co-leadership of the child protection sub-cluster with 50 partners countrywide. In 2018, the sub-cluster supported the implementation of case management standard operating procedures, updated guidelines on alternative care and on unaccompanied children. Coordination with agencies such as the International Committee of the Red Cross/Red Crescent improved cross-border reunification efforts for conflict-affected children of foreign nationality. Further support was given to the initiation of the Child Protection Information Management System for Iraq; as of December, this was underway, with pilot implementation started in Dahuk Governorate.

Goal area 4: Every child lives in a safe and clean environment

In 2018, UNICEF Iraq worked to improve water, sanitation and hygiene interventions. Two key strategies were a high-level engagement with line ministries and their technical staff, combined with social mobilization and information sessions at community level. Advocacy with government counterparts facilitated cost-sharing mechanisms: UNICEF procured and delivered quality supplies and/or equipment and government resources (technical experts, labour and machinery) undertook construction. This increased national ownership of interventions, especially the early stages to identify needs and plan, and supported efficient interventions with opportunity for UNICEF to reach more communities with limited resources.

Community-based approaches helped guide water-service providers and users to assess and manage the risks of water contamination. Adolescents participated through youth groups, civil society organizations and engaging university students, especially in the Baghdad governorate. The groups and societies participated in public-awareness events about water consumption, conservation, and hygiene-promotion and encouraged young people to be agents of change in their communities.

UNICEF Iraq encouraged participation from national counterparts including the Ministry of Construction, Housing and Public Municipalities and the Ministry of Health and Environment in planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. UNICEF integrated capacity-building to enable government counterparts to engage for children, promote partnership and participation, encourage feedback and ensure close monitoring of WASH interventions. In 2018, 58 government technical staff completed training on a new water quality module, and water safety planning was initiated in Baghdad, with plans to scale up into Kirkuk in 2019.

As part of intersectoral linkages and focus on gender- and age-specific needs, WASH and Education programmes focused on adolescent girls' needs, conducting training sessions on menstrual hygiene management for 76 teachers from schools in Dahuk and Ninewa, led by certified female trainers from the Directorate of Education.

A key result in 2018 was the Smart City Initiative piloted in Baghdad and Kirkuk, which improved efficiency of the water supply system in urban areas for 9,500 inhabitants. As well as technical support, UNICEF contributed smart water-meters to improve efficiency of water supply in urban areas. Meters monitor water loss, usage, reverse flow and support authorities in accurately billing customers, helping to increase sustainability of public services. The pilot project had positive feedback from government and private sector partners on scaling-up the technology to other governorates.

In 2018, UNICEF Iraq provided technical, financial and supply support to improved, equitable and affordable access to safe drinking water for 3.5 million people, at least 1.6 million children (816,000 girls), from under-served communities in Iraq (non-humanitarian response) and for more than one million internally-displaced persons and 79,000 Syrian refugees in camps, areas of return, or host community locations (humanitarian response).

Nearly 483,000 people, at least 227,000 of them children under 18 years old (115,770 girls), had access to improved sanitation services in the year. Of these, more than 438,000 people (205,800 children, 104,958 girls) were living in humanitarian settings such as internally-displaced person camps. More than 369,000 people (173,400 children, 88,434 girls) had improved knowledge in relation to treating and storing safe water and hygiene practices including in most vulnerable communities.

Through integrated WASH programming in 2018, 106 health care facilities and 247 schools had new or improved water and sanitation services. More than 128,400 children and adolescents in humanitarian situations had access to appropriate WASH facilities and hygiene education in schools, temporary learning spaces, and child-friendly spaces by December 2018.

In 2018, worsening water quantity and quality in central and southern governorates, caused by drought and upstream damming, was a challenge. Twelve governorates in Iraq experienced drought. Most do not have adequate mitigation measures or adaptive strategies. With support of the WASH cluster, government partners and World Health Organisation, UNICEF Iraq assured a coordinated response to the acute water crisis in Basrah, which had led to an outbreak of over 100,000 cases of gastrointestinal disease. UNICEF supported improvements in water quantity and quality for 500,000 people, including 50,000 children across 50 schools in most-affected areas.

As lead United Nations agency for the WASH cluster, UNICEF Iraq continued its commitment to humanitarian coordination in 2018, including the preparedness for potential cholera outbreaks working with World Health Organisation, the health cluster and government authorities to finalize a Cholera Preparedness and Response Plan, and institute a national cholera task force.

Goal area 5: Every child has an equitable chance

Social protection and child poverty

With UNICEF technical support, the Iraq Poverty Reduction Strategy II was launched in 2018, incorporating key findings from the UNICEF Child Poverty Report 2017. UNICEF Iraq, with technical support from the UNICEF regional office, proposed amendments for child-sensitivity, poverty targeting and shock-responsiveness of the Government's social protection law. As of December 2018, the draft

law was being reviewed by Parliament.

To strengthen social protection for the most vulnerable children and families, driven by the Iraq Social Protection Law of 2014, the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs with technical support from UNICEF Iraq and the World Bank, launched an 'incentivised cash transfer pilot project in Sadr City, a deprived neighbourhood in Baghdad, to strengthen school attendance and primary health care. As of December 2018, 83 per cent of the planned families were enrolled. Handover of the system to the Ministry was postponed until 2019, due to the delays in formation of a new government. UNICEF Iraq and partners will conduct an evaluation of the pilot in 2019, after which the intervention could be scaled up.

To promote cross-sectoral synergies, UNICEF integrated social protection and child protection programming to train 43 social protection-focused social workers on child-specific issues and case management, building skills on case identification and referral systems. A total 1,140 beneficiaries were registered for possible case management and referrals and 36 per cent of cases were closed; work is in progress for the remaining 64 per cent.

In 2018, UNICEF Iraq and UNESCWA supported the Ministry of Planning to develop a national and child-specific multi-dimensional poverty index, involving analysis of multi-dimensional poverty based on MICS-6 (2018) data and intending to generate evidence for targeted investments. On a pilot scale, and in collaboration with the World Food Programme and telecommunication company Zain, innovation in child poverty measurement is ongoing using mobile data, satellite images, and crop-productivity mapping to produce child poverty maps.

Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey

In collaboration with the Government, in November 2018 UNICEF Iraq launched the sixth Multiple Cluster Indicator Survey (MICS). The MICS offers updated evidence on children and women in the country, covering around 200 indicators. It is the first such survey since 2011; Iraq was not able to complete the previous round due to armed conflict. As the Government begins to develop national frameworks, plans and policies to monitor progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals, MICS data will provide reliable estimates to establish baselines and monitor national and global commitments. Evidence is informing the UNICEF Iraq Situation Analysis, providing baselines for the UNICEF Country Programme 2020-2024, and the United Nations Development Assistance Framework covering the same period. Secondary analysis on specific topics will take place in 2019 to deepen understanding on barriers and bottlenecks for effective programming, including advocacy and policy dialogue.

Adolescent development and participation

Young Iraqis have a role in promoting tolerance and peace and ensuring inter-generational transfer of protective family and social norms. Prolonged instability has kept adolescents and youth 10-24 years old (around 31 per cent of the population) from reaching their potential. The No Lost Generation initiative, the United Nations Recovery and Resilience Programme and Vision 2030 in partnership with the Ministries of Youth and Sports, and Labour and Social Affairs and civil society organisations, reached 37,280 adolescents 10-19 years old (48 per cent girls) from 16 governorates with multi-sector services and opportunities. They were also enabled to promote social cohesion and change by participating in social and civic engagement initiatives. Social cohesion interventions targeted the most vulnerable young people, including those with disabilities and young people of mixed religious and ethnic backgrounds.

UNICEF Iraq raised awareness for young people's involvement, combined with capacity-building

activities for interpersonal and communication skills, by developing community-based initiatives in local areas. Alternative education was built into UNICEF Iraq interventions for adolescents, in the form of life skills and citizenship education, and vocational and entrepreneurship training. UNICEF Iraq partners enhanced their capacity on approaches to adolescent development and participation.

Overall, adolescents and youth identified and addressed issues and promoted awareness on areas such as child protection, including child labour and child marriage, Young people highlighted the importance of environmental protection, including waste collection and recycling. Ultimately, services and spaces supported by UNICEF in 2018 contributed to young people's purposeful transition to adulthood.

Cross-sector service-delivery platforms were promoted through partnerships with non-government organisations, covering child protection and adolescent development, and considering the 'whole child' to strengthen a life-course approach. The platform will be broadened in 2019, integrating other services and brought to scale. Data and evidence generation were challenging; steps to strengthen this component were pursued, including a national adolescent survey with UNFPA and participatory action research.

Humanitarian response and emergency capacity-building

In 2018, the WASH and education clusters, the child protection sub-cluster and the nutrition working group tracked the evolving humanitarian situation and system-wide emergency preparedness and response capacity in Iraq. The focus was to strengthen national counterpart coordination, with the aim to transition in 2019 to sectoral coordination. Clusters strengthened inter-cluster linkages, for example by integrating psychosocial support in learning spaces or establishing a joint task force for cholera prevention.

Internally, emergency preparedness and response capacity were strengthened with risk-informed country-wide plans for four scenarios: armed conflict, natural disaster, election-related violence and epidemics. A specific contingency plan for Sinjar was developed. Accountability to affected populations is a central principle of UNICEF humanitarian action, and feedback is enabled through the Iraq hotline for internally-displaced persons, run by United Nations' partners. Information is shared via the cluster system, implementing partners and field monitoring missions, as well as through UNICEF-supported structures such as the WASH service centres.

UNICEF Iraq in partnership with United Nations Population Fund, World Food Programme and non-government organisation partners, deployed the rapid response mechanism to deliver life-saving humanitarian support in a timely, coordinated and predictable manner to vulnerable people on the move due to crisis or camp relocation. Around 78,839 people (45,119 children) received immediate life-saving assistance through the mechanism, which was also deployed to support 6,000 flood-affected families between November and December.

Multi-sector emergency packages were delivered in the first quarter of the year, including water purification tablets, jerry cans, hygiene kits, high energy biscuits and health and protection messages, to assist 18,824 people (9,000 children) choosing to remain in retaken areas. No further emergency packages deliveries were required in following quarters, as there were no people caught in conflict areas.

As of February 2018, UNICEF reached almost 426,000 internally-displaced and refugee children in nine governorates with warm clothes as part of the 2017-2018 winter response. Additionally, 60,000 children (31,200 girls) received warm school uniforms for winter. For the 2018-2019 winter response,

as of 31 December, UNICEF and partners had reached 90,322 children (42,400 girls), plus 1,497 pregnant women in 15 camps across northern Iraq.

Gender

To advance UNICEF accountability to Gender Action Plan results, a gender programmatic review was undertaken in 2018 to identify opportunities to further mainstream gender into programming per the framework. As of December 2018, draft report recommendations are being reviewed.

Disability

UNICEF Iraq promoted the inclusion of children with special needs, to ensure equitable access to services. UNICEF advocacy and communication worked to reduce prejudice, stigma, discrimination and negative stereotypes at the individual, sector, and society level. UNICEF Iraq used disability-friendly classrooms in schools and sensitized teachers on inclusive education, needs identification and referral. The WASH programme recognized non-discrimination in its work on disability, mindful of gender and other forms of discrimination. Inclusive WASH services for people with disabilities are part of all UNICEF interventions at camp level with accessible models for latrines and showers provided. Wherever possible, WASH facilities in schools include separate latrines for children with disabilities.

Child protection interventions focused on inclusive access to psychosocial and other support services by making sites disability-friendly. Case management services aimed to reduce barriers to access, including disability. UNICEF Iraq worked with local authorities in Basrah to conduct psychosocial support activities for children with disabilities, including mental health problems, and children who are deaf, mute or blind. In adolescent development and participation, UNICEF Iraq and partners promoted interventions that responded to needs of adolescents with disabilities. More than 1,500 disabled adolescents (46 per cent girls, and mainly with physical disabilities) benefitted from multi-sector services and opportunities, focusing on empowerment, leadership and creativity skills, as well as access to psychosocial support and other protection support.

Part 3: Lessons learned and constraints

As levels of violence in Iraq declined, the humanitarian situation in Iraq has stabilized since the end of 2017. UNICEF Iraq shifted focus from a fast-moving service delivery at scale, to review its systems and processes and streamline operational strategies and approaches, consolidate gains made in previous years, and review the existing structure in light of the 2019 context.

Political uncertainty in Iraq in 2018 remained however. Time frames for UNICEF Iraq policy interventions and support to legislative reform had to be lengthened to allow for formation of the new Government, which was not complete as of December, and for new ministers to be appointed. The continued autonomy of the Kurdistan Region was considered when introducing new measures. The push for independence influences the region's willingness to engage in joint processes in national policy or in laws with regional variations.

Partnership and engagement with the Government, stakeholders and communities promoted local and national ownership, supported results, and provided handover and exit strategies in programming. Strong engagement of line ministries enhanced sustainability and buy-in of interventions. For example, responding to immediate, emergency child-protection needs and supporting child protection system-building were previously two, separate work strands due to the exigencies of working in a large-scale humanitarian crisis. In 2018, they were considered complimentary with system-building actions (such as improving social workforce capacity) and

development of standards for case management approached as processes parallel to emergency assistance.

With more time to plan, improvements in security and fewer non-government organization partners in the country, UNICEF identified and encouraged integrated and multi-sector partnerships. Attempts were made to identify non-government organization partners with relevant geographic presence and technical capacity to support delivery of interventions that met the multi-sector needs of children and caregivers.

Challenges faced included identifying partners with sufficient technical capacity across UNICEF programme areas - for example, a partner with sufficient WASH capacity may not have adequate experience in child protection programming. Capacity-building, including UNICEF direct technical support and guidance, became a pre-requisite in the design of each programme document. With UNICEF Iraq's increased focus on transparent selection of partners through open calls for expressions of interest, the time needed to select, design the intervention, and move through internal quality assurance mechanisms such as the partnership review committee, was initially underestimated and had to be extended.

UNICEF Iraq increasingly supports programming that builds the capacity of national partners, in line with commitments made under the Grand Bargain. In 2018, UNICEF channelled more than \$40 million through national actors, of which around \$US2.5 million was for services contracted through national private sector actors, in particular for faster, more efficient humanitarian water trucking services for people living in recently conflict-affected areas. This was an increase of more than 10 per cent of programming supporting national actors compared to 2017.

UNICEF Iraq took the initiative under the United Nations operations management team to set common long-term agreements between United Nations agencies, improving the United Nations Country Team capacity to deliver as one. UNICEF itself executed 79 per cent of local procurement actions in 2018 through long-term agreements, to shorten delivery time and support the local economy.

On a smaller scale, the UNICEF Iraq country office improved integration for cost-efficiencies by building on existing programme agreements with non-government partners in specific cases, such as distribution of winter clothing kits. By negotiating with partners who had existing presence in internally-displaced person and refugee camps, distributions of clothes took place at no additional cost to UNICEF, maximizing resources available to procure needed items, rather than on in-country logistical costs.

UNICEF's largest contributors in Iraq continued to be government donors supporting humanitarian response, including ECHO, Italy, Japan, Norway, Sweden, Qatar and the United States. The UNICEF National Committees made significant contributions in Iraq in 2018, with flexible multi-year humanitarian funds facilitating swift and more predictable response to children's needs. Significant contributions from the Iraq Humanitarian Fund were also received.

UNICEF Iraq built strong donor relations through proactive engagement, including facilitation of field visits by donors to UNICEF projects, meetings with donors in-country and outside Iraq, and regular sharing of monthly situation reports for both Syrian refugee and Iraq internal displacement crises. At the close of 2017, it was anticipated that most of funding for 2018 would be channelled through the United Nations Recovery and Resilience Programme, in support of early recovery and resilience work. However, most resources received by UNICEF Iraq continued to be in support of the

humanitarian agenda, as has been the case since 2014. Nonetheless, UNICEF Iraq continued to engage donors in strategic dialogue on the humanitarian-development nexus to support sustained and positive change for children.

As UNICEF Iraq moves into the final year of its current Country Programme, preparations for the new Country Programme 2020-2024 are underway. The programme monitoring team's review and a strategic moment of reflection were conducted in late 2018 to take stock of progress, challenges, and lessons learned, and to contribute to the strategic thinking that will inform direction of the new Country Programme. The development of the UNICEF 2020-2024 Country Programme coincides with the development of the new UNDAF in Iraq, and this offers an opportunity for UNICEF to strategically influence the UNDAF to ensure inclusion of children's needs.

The journey taken by UNICEF Iraq since 2014 was challenging in many ways. The impact of crisis on children in Iraq cannot be underestimated, and there remains much work to be done. Moving forward, areas to consider include upstream advocacy, such as policy reform to encourage government resources for child-focused priorities; taking programmes to scale and reaching children in systematic and sustainable ways; and investment in national capacity. As Iraq decentralizes authority to governorate levels, UNICEF will need to maintain central-level influence to ensure resources are allocated to the most under-served children whether in cities, towns, or in the countryside; as well as maintaining presence and focus at decentralized levels to increase knowledge of children's needs and capacity to meet them. There is a push to work with adolescents and young people as partners to create programmes that give power and voice to one of the largest demographic groups in Iraq. And convergence through multi-sector interventions with partners will serve as platforms for the 'whole child', leveraging UNICEF expertise in service delivery, evidence generation, and advocacy to make change for children in Iraq.

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