

A Quality Education in Iraq

Overview:



Huda, age 10, reads aloud at her Basra primary school

Education is fast becoming a casualty of Iraq's ongoing conflict, despite extraordinary determination on the part of government and families to keep schools functioning. Prior to 1990, education was a thriving sector in Iraq. But after two decades of war and deprivation, the quality and availability of learning deteriorated dramatically. By 2000, budget constraints were seriously limiting the provision of textbooks and other teaching and learning materials. Fewer resources were available to rehabilitate dilapidated school infrastructure, denying children the opportunity to study in a child-friendly environment. The advent of war again in 2003 has contributed to a general "stalling" of progress in education. Girls continue to suffer most severely in many parts of the country.

Today, despite some positive achievements in northern and southern Iraq, ongoing violence is posing new challenges in the country's central zone. In an insecure atmosphere where schools have been targeted, many parents are having to choose between education and safety for their children, with girls once again the most affected. But even in these challenging conditions, millions of children are still attending school whenever they have the chance.

Priority Issues:

- **Children out of school in and around Baghdad:** The current school year has seen a sharp decline in attendance at school in Iraq's south central zone, particularly girls. Closures & absenteeism are now a daily fact of life. Many schools in Anbar and Diyala failed to open at the start of the school year. In Baghdad attendance has been hampered by curfews and fear of violence.
- **Girl's education in southern Iraq:** In most rural areas of southern governorates, where poverty and traditional attitudes still hold sway, fewer than half of girls are in school.
- **Rehabilitation of school buildings:** A massive national programme of rehabilitation is ongoing. In 2004, it was estimated that close to 85% of the existing 14,000 schools need rehabilitation. The security downturn has affected the rehabilitation process, lengthening the average duration of a rehabilitation project from three months to up to nine.
- **Teacher training:** some 220,000 teachers are still in need of training in school management, child-friendly teaching methods and psychological care for traumatized children.

UNICEF in Action

UNICEF works across Iraq to provide children with the essentials of a quality education, from school books and pens to child-friendly classrooms and well-trained teachers. UNICEF has rehabilitated hundreds of schools in Iraq, including installation of safe drinking water and separate toilets for girls who might otherwise be unable to attend. UNICEF trains teachers and Ministry of Education officials to promote education and stimulation in pre-school children, as well as child-friendly teaching methods and psychological care to make schools safe havens for children who have experienced trauma. UNICEF also supports Iraq's government to develop and maintain a non-formal education system which is reaching children prevented from attending school because of insecurity or poverty.

Some of benefits reaching Iraq's children include:

- **Millions receiving school materials:** Millions of primary school students across the country are receiving critical classroom supplies – school books, school bags, pens, pencils and other basic learning tools.
- **Catching up on missed school days:** last year, 14,000 children who had dropped out of school were able to pass their final exams thanks to the UNICEF-supported Accelerated Learning Programme. This initiative operates across 10 governorates to bring long-term absentee children back into the education system through special classes. Another 22,000 students were attending ALP classes at the start of the school year in 2006, with children from three additional governorates
- **Schools rebuilt and restored:** 153 schools rehabilitated in 2006 and water and sanitation facilities fully rehabilitated in 717 schools
- **Teachers trained:** 50,000 teachers have been trained in child-friendly teaching methods and school management.
- **Linking schools to community reconstruction:** 110 schools in 6 governorates are the focus of a new multi-sectoral project to make schools the centre of a renewal of community services. As a result of this project, school facilities have been made child-friendly, water and sanitation services improved and health services brought to the school and made accessible to the whole community.



UNICEF provides basic school supplies for millions of primary school children

About UNICEF in Iraq

UNICEF has been on the ground in Iraq since 1983, working to bring all Iraqi women and children the essentials of a better life. Today UNICEF's programmes are reaching millions of children across the breadth of Iraq with a package of critical care. UNICEF invests approximately \$100 million each year to improve basic health services, ensure a quality education, rebuild water and sanitation systems and protect children from abuse, violence and exploitation. Every day, UNICEF's national network of staff and partners is providing vital humanitarian assistance to families in crisis and supporting reconstruction and recovery efforts. Even in the most challenging conditions, Iraq's children can still count on UNICEF to deliver for them.