



IN THIS ISSUE

SRSG Melkert to the UN Security Council: Iraqis have legitimate concerns that the Government needs to meet	1
SRSG Ad Melkert guest of Frost Over the World show	2
Syriac museum revives memories and hope	4
Protecting Iraq's cultural heritage for future generations: First ICC plenary held in Iraq	5
Iraqi Youth Conference: Making youth views and voices heard	6
One woman's battle with tuberculosis: Fighting off ignorance and stigma	8
First distributions for school feeding in Iraq	9
Assessing the Iraqi civil registration system	10
IOM continues to support families affected by flooding throughout Iraq	10
News Briefs	11
List of UN Acronyms	12
Photo Essay: Inauguration of Syriac Museum	13

“ At the core of the protests that have been taking place across Iraq since 25 February of this year are legitimate concerns around better employment opportunities, the delivery of basic services and accountability. Unless these demands are addressed, the political and democratic gains made thus far may seem hollow to many ordinary Iraqis ”

**Mr. Ad Melkert,
the Special Representative of the
UN Secretary-General for Iraq**

SRSG Melkert to the UN Security Council: Iraqis have legitimate concerns that the Government needs to meet



SRSG Ad Melkert briefs the Security Council on the work of UNAMI and on recent developments in Iraq.
UN Photo/Evan Schneider

Speaking to the UN Security Council on 8 April, Mr. Ad Melkert, the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General (SRSG) for Iraq and the head of UNAMI, updated the Council members on the latest developments in Iraq.

“While Iraq has made remarkable strides in its democratic transition in recent years, which included the adoption of a constitution, credible national elections, a broad national partnership government and an opening environment for media and civil society, the people of Iraq are now demanding the dividends that were promised by their leaders,” Mr. Melkert said.

Referring to the protests that have been taking place in Iraq since 25 February as part of a larger movement across the region, Mr. Melkert said the protesters have legitimate concerns about employment opportunities, the delivery of basic services and accountability.

“Unless these demands are addressed, the political and democratic gains made thus far may seem hollow to many ordinary Iraqis. And this will be no easy task for the Government of Iraq,” he warned.

Mr. Melkert also expressed the hope that the relevant authorities will look into violent incidents that took place in different parts of the country resulting in the deaths and injuries of many Iraqi citizens and take steps to ensure that these basic rights are protected.

Mr. Melkert acknowledged the efforts of Prime Minister Nouri Al-Maliki to act decisively to meet these demands, including the 100-day plan for job creation and service delivery and the announcement of cuts in defence expenditures and government salaries as well as tackling corruption.

Highlighting the UNAMI and UN response to support the government's efforts,

Mr. Melkert said: "Subject to the government's approval and co-financing support, we proposed to implement a list of projects that could rapidly be expanded and fast tracked to address in particular youth employment, health and nutrition, solid waste management, public distribution of food rations, and access to water."

Mr. Melkert also informed that bilateral donors, the World Bank and the UN, will be meeting in May with a cabinet delegation to review the policy recommendations relating to Iraq's economic and social development and institutional capacity building which were presented to the Government by the Iraq Partners' Forum in [The Iraq Briefing Book](#).

Turning to the delay in completing the formation of the Government, Mr. Melkert urged Iraqi leaders to "set aside their differences and bring the government formation process to a close."

The country's stability is still under pressure, with terror attacks and sectarian tensions continuing, he warned. "As US forces prepare to leave, Iraq should not be forgotten and the international community should stand ready to continue support," he stated, noting that the overall trend of security incidents in recent months suggests

a significant decrease.

Mr. Melkert also touched on the violent incidents that took place in Ashraf Camp last month resulting in death and injuries. He reiterated that efforts are needed to stop violence and aim at peacefully resolving all issues.

Referring to the deployment of the Peshmerga forces into Kirkuk province, which occurred outside the Combined Security Mechanism framework, he stressed that these events "underscore the need for discussion on the future of the triangular Combined Security Mechanism and the process to resolve the country's disputed internal boundaries."

Mr. Melkert reported that some encouraging preliminary progress has been made towards a negotiated political agreement. "With our assistance, on 27 March an agreement was reached by Government officials and representatives of the main political parties to work with UNAMI on key outstanding issues through a 'Standing Consultation Mechanism' that would provide a forum for preventive multilateral consultation in cases of potential conflict," he added.

Significant progress has also been made in the Iraq-Kuwait relationship in light of PM Al-Maliki's historic visit to Kuwait and

the encouraging reports on the positive atmosphere of the meeting as well as the constructive discussions that took place on highly sensitive issues for both sides.

"I have expressed the hope that both parties will now seize this unique opportunity to show leadership in settling a complex and painful conflict at a time the region is searching for new perspectives of cooperation and development as a substitute for conflict and stagnation," Mr. Melkert added.

SRSJ Melkert concluded his briefing to the Council with a personal note by saying he had observed "the start of removing endless lines of concrete T-walls over the past months. It is symbolic of considerable progress to overcome years of wars, conflicts and sanctions that have plagued the country, and to bring normality to Iraq's international standing and the daily life of its people."

In his most recent [report](#) on the activities of UNAMI, the UN Secretary General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon commended Iraq's political leaders for their commitment to dialogue and consensus-building and called on them to complete the formation of their new government and to establish the National Council for Strategic Policies.

Interview

SRSJ Ad Melkert guest of Frost Over the World show



SRSJ Ad Melkert appears live on Al-Jazeera's Frost Over the World show as a guest of Sir David Frost.
Photo courtesy of Al-Jazeera International TV

The Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Iraq (SRSJ), Mr. Ad Melkert, was the guest of Sir David Frost in his Al-Jazeera International show, Frost Over the World on 15 April. The following is the full text of the interview on the overall situation in Iraq:

Sir David Frost: Whilst the eyes of the world are on countries like Libya, Syria and Yemen, Iraq has also been having its own protests since late February. Unlike elsewhere though, Iraqis are not seeking regime change, but want more jobs, less corruption, better standards of living and, I suppose, more security too. Meanwhile, America is due to withdraw all its troops by December, but some say the country is not ready for that yet. So is it? I am joined right now by the Special Representative in Iraq, Ad Melkert, who has just produced the latest of his three-times-a-year report on the situation. How is the situation

right now? I mean, what is life like now for the Iraqis? Good? Better? Not good enough?

SRS Ad Melkert: Not good enough and better at the same time. Better when one compares it with some years ago when there was really bloodshed all over the place. Although, still the average number of incidents per day is certainly abnormal. But it is getting better.

Sir David Frost: How many incidents?

SRS Ad Melkert: There are 25 incidents per day in the whole country. And that is certainly not a situation that one would like to see in the future but the Iraqi security forces are imposing themselves more. The Government, after a long time of government formation and after successful elections, is in place and now tries to put an emergency programme together in order to respond, also to the demonstrations that you mentioned. Still, remains to be seen how effective that can be. It is probably the toughest challenge ahead. And then with the American troops withdrawing on the basis of the schedule that is out there, it's definitely, Iraq is definitely entering a new stage, but also a stage as a leader in the Arab world, chairing the Arab League at this moment and somehow they offer a better potential than one sees in other countries. So it is a mixed bag really.

Sir David Frost: A mixed bag really! And in terms of people living safe lives, or lives not worried by the number of explosions or whatever in the course of the day and so on. In your case, you were nearly killed by a bomb! Weren't you?

SRS Ad Melkert: Well, we were pretty close in Najaf in October last year, but I would thought, even at that time, of the many Iraqis who did not survive in many places, and it shows that rebuilding a country can really come at a price to many people. And yet there are many people that want to take that risk because there is a strong motivation with the overwhelming majority of the Iraqis to get back to normal.

Sir David Frost: In retrospect, looking back, the big mistake was the allies

were understaffed after the war was technically won.

SRS Ad Melkert: I think that there is consensus that there was no plan for after the invasion, and that it took the international community a long time to get the kind of support in place, including reconstructing the fabric, so to speak, of Iraqi governance. Now, that is certainly in better shape, although there are capacity shortages in many areas, but increasingly Iraqis show determination to govern, to be more effective, investors are certainly more interested, particularly in the northern part of the country. The oil industry is picking up although still a long way to go.

Sir David Frost: And you mentioned the Americans are due to leave in December and so on and so forth. Secretary Gates made comments recently that maybe the Americans or some of the Americans should stay on. Could that happen? Should that happen?

SRS Ad Melkert: Well, you know from the UN side we cannot and should not take a position there because this is really a bilateral matter between the Iraqi Government and the US Government. Clearly, it is a controversial issue in Iraq itself, and importantly from an international point of view, it is very necessary to look at the implications for the stability of the country, particularly in the north where there are disputed boundaries in areas claimed by the Arab side or the Kurdish side. That is something of concern to us also as the UN to see how with the Iraqi army, but also with the Kurdish Peshmarga forces, something can be maintained that was progress over the past few years with a so-called combined security mechanism overseen by the Americans. This obviously is gonna change and we are looking at how we can make our contributions so to have a kind of international engagement in place in order to avoid that things would run out of hand there in future.

Sir David Frost: And in terms the pressures on the area, do you think that the insurgents are almost defeated or could rise again? Pray to God not!

SRS Ad Melkert: It is difficult to say. There are still multiple sources of potential violence around and, as I said, we also see it on everyday basis. It may be on the decline. There certainly may be also an impact from what is happening elsewhere in the region. Because, I think, many countries are now very focused also on their own business, which may leave Iraq also, a bit more, to its own business. Because there was a lot of interference from many sides and perhaps that offers the space and the opportunity for Iraq to show that is already one stage ahead after the constitution, after elections, now trying to put proper seeds in place and that is important for the people.

Sir David Frost: So, in a sense you are saying it is indeed what you produced is a progress report rather than lack of progress report. Things are getting better. Are they?

SRS Ad Melkert: I am always very cautious about that because setbacks are looming everywhere, but when one really takes a longer term look, I can, one can be cautiously optimistic about what is going on.

Sir David Frost: Good news, Ad. Thank you. Thank you very much indeed.

SRS Ad Melkert: Thank you for having me."

In a **Newsmaker interview with the UN News Centre on 8 April**, Mr. Melkert said that **despite insecurity, there is no doubt that things have changed in Iraq over the past few years, noting the ongoing reconstruction efforts, increased investments and the willingness of Iraqi political leaders to meet the people's demands. "But it's an uphill battle to respond to all the demands that are out there, such as better services, electricity, water, sanitation, jobs and also many people are very concerned about corruption." (The UN News Centre, 8 April 2011)**

Syriac museum revives memories and hope

By Sabah Abdulrahman, UNAMI PIO



Habeb Luka, from Ankawa town, attending the inauguration of the Syriac Museum.
Photo by Bikem Ekberzade / UNAMI PIO

The 68 year-old Habeb Luka is a retired teacher from Assyrian origins. His black eyes sparkle with wit and vivacity in a wrinkled face, creased with years of hardship. Looking through his thick lenses into a series of photos displayed in the cultural hall at the Syriac Cultural Museum that was inaugurated on 10 April in Ankawa town, northwest Erbil, Habeb seemed pleasantly overwhelmed with his ancestors' heritage that had finally made it to a museum.

Habeb looked immersed in childhood memories as he stared at an old photo of his own father standing up next to other students in front of one of Ankawa's mud school. He was slowly touring the museum in awe and religiously examining old manuscripts of the Bible, ecclesiasts manuscripts, text prayers, as well as birth, marriage and school graduation certificates.

"I feel like living those days again," said Habeb as his eyes, glazed with emotion, were admiring several Syriac newspapers, audio records of Syriac folklore and hundreds of portraits of notables, historians, musicians, singers, playwrights and actors known to be the

pioneers of theatrical art in Iraq.

Like most of women, men and children who attended the inauguration of the first Syriac Museum in Iraq's Kurdistan region, including a number of top government officials, Habeb traces his origins back to the Syriac people, frequently known as Assyrians, Syriacs, Syriac Christians, or Chaldeans. With the spread of Christianity in Mesopotamia around the first century A.D., the descendants of this ethnic group, whose origins lie in the Fertile Crescent, converted to Christianity.

Since the Middle Ages, most of the Syriac people live as minorities under other ethnic groups' rule mainly across Iraq, Syria, Iran, and Turkey, while the rest has migrated to different parts of the world. Currently, the largest concentration of Syriac people is to be found in Ninewa plain, between Erbil and Ninewa, as well as in Ankawa, a small town of Christian majority of about 30,000 population northwest Erbil. The Syriac Museum and ecstatic visitors celebrated a glorious past and an asserted identity.

The Museum, a small space for a great

heritage, was full of jubilant visitors from all walks of life who came to immerse themselves in ancestral memories. Some greeted each other with a kiss on each cheek. Others preferred the handshake. Dressed in splendid colorful traditional costumes and accessories, the museum personnel also gave a glimpse of Syriac history.

Benjamine Haddad, an 80-year-old writer, originally from Alqush, is now a Dahuk resident. He was one of the many visitors who couldn't hide their joy, pride and surprise, while enjoying the museum's most treasured pieces.

"Interest in the cultural heritage of a people is a science on its own today and we have seen in this exhibition the professions of our ancestors, their folklore and cultural products which can document all that could be read, heard or seen," said Haddad with passion.

The only one of its kind, the museum is built on 1430 square meters in Ankawa's Darga neighborhood. The two-story exhibition hall of 300 square meters area is a bit small for all its exhibits, said the museum director, Mr. Farouq Hanna.

Mr. Hanna, a proud Syriac himself, envisages finding a larger space and a better location. He wants to make it one of the best museums in the country that would attract visitors from around the world. Hanna's concern, however, is that none of his 50 staff are properly trained to work in museums.

An agro-engineer by profession, Hanna's appointment as the Director of the Syriac Museum was a mere coincidence. One sunny day in June 2009, he approached the Directorate-General for Syriac Culture and Heritage, soliciting their support for opening a cultural exhibition for a Syriac collection he'd worked passionately to put together over years. Hanna didn't know how lucky he was. The Directorate-General had already obtained an approval for opening a cultural and heritage museum and was looking for the right person to run it. Without hesitation, the

Directorate offered Hanna the job that he gladly accepted.

A small building was rented to kick off the project before work on the main building for the museum would start later in 2009. As far as the story of this museum goes, the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) is to be credited for having made this dream come true. The KRG municipality of Ankawa offered a plot of land which would host the museum building while the KRG Ministry of Culture funded the museum furniture and covered the administrative costs.

Within two years, and thanks also to donations of cultural and heritage pieces from 376 individuals and groups, over 3,000 pieces were collected from villages around Ankawa, Ninewa plain, Dahuk, Kirkuk and many other places, including Hakkari in southeast Turkey.

The collected materials tell the story of Syriac heritage, from traditional costumes to dishes, agricultural and handicraft tools and manuscripts, photographs and voice records of folklore and traditional music and songs. Before putting the materials to display, they were cleaned, catalogued and tagged



Benjamin Haddad, taking a closer look at the handwritten manuscripts, featured in the Syriac Museum.
Photo by Bikem Ekberzade/UNAMI PIO

in four languages—Syriac, Kurdish, Arabic and English.

Few hours after the inauguration, inspired by what they saw in the museum, six additional people donated new pieces to the collection, said Mr. Farouq with a glowing face: “This shows that

we are on the right path for reviving our culture and heritage!”

Habib couldn’t agree more as he completed touring the museum. An almost forgotten glorious past has been revived in the museum with a great deal of hope lying ahead, he thought.

Cultural Heritage

Protecting Iraq’s cultural heritage for future generations: First ICC plenary held in Iraq

By George Papagiannis, UNESCO - Iraq



Opening of the Fifth plenary session of ICC Iraq, organized for the first time in Iraq.
Photo by UNESCO

Iraqi officials took significant steps, with the support of UNESCO and international experts, to address threats against the nation’s cultural heritage at the 5th Plenary of the International Coordination Committee for the Safeguarding of the Cultural Heritage of Iraq, also known as the ICC. The meeting, held for the first time in Iraq, took place on April 3rd and 4th and resulted in a list of targeted recommendations intended to ensure the preservation Iraq’s cultural heritage for future generations. The Ministry of Culture of Iraq representative, Deputy Minister Mr. Fawzy Al Atroushi, chaired the meeting of behalf of the Government of Iraq.

As testimony to the importance of the ICC, the First Lady of Iraq, Hero Khan, opened the session with words of encouragement to the plenary. She did also voice her concern over potential lost heritage in the Marshlands of

southern Iraq, where an entire culture was nearly wiped out due to the policies of the last regime.

Also present at the meeting was Mr. Francesco Bandarin, Assistant Director General of UNESCO for the Culture sector, who emphasized that "The reconstruction and future development of Iraq must occur within a framework, and culture provides that framework. Our heritage tells us where we've been, lighting the way for our future endeavors."

The recommendations covered specific policy and management areas and actions to be undertaken to prevent any further loss of Iraqi heritage, a fact emotionally highlighted by the Advisor of the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities, Mr. Bahaa Mayah.

"This meeting had two primary objectives in support of one goal," said Mohamed Djelid, Director of the UNESCO Iraq Office. "One objective was to firmly establish a working mechanism

that allows the brightest international minds to join with their Iraqi counterparts. The other was to identify actions to be taken to safeguard and promote Iraqi cultural heritage. And all of this to ensure that future generations can learn from the valuable lessons that first emerged from the peoples of these lands."

Key programmatic recommendations included:

- Cooperating with international experts on the preparation of the Management Master Plan for the Marshlands for the potential of creating a mixed cultural and natural heritage site, in light of the ongoing process for its nomination to the World Heritage List;
- Expanding the Erbil Citadel maintenance Master Plan into a comprehensive management plan within the Citadel's larger urban context;
- Developing a master plan for the

Babylon Museum, to be located in the former presidential palace, which would be based on the holistic approach taken in the design of the Basra and Sulaymaniyah museum projects that include supportive, yet strong roles for the international community.

The 5th Plenary marked the first time the ICC has met on Iraqi soil. The symbolism was not lost on the ICC members who saw this as an important transition to true and full Iraqi ownership of this deliberative body. The next technical ICC meeting is to be organized in Baghdad, and the next political meeting in Najaf, in view of the celebration of Najaf as Islamic Culture Capital in 2012.

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Development

Iraqi Youth Conference: Making youth views and voices heard

By UNDP Iraq staff



Participants in the Iraq Youth Conference gather for a group photo.
Photo by Magic Carpet/Spaceton TV

The situation in Iraq in the last years has been characterised by dynamic changes, with positive efforts towards reconciliation and economic recovery. However, significant challenges remain within development and social integration that cause deep uncertainty about the future of the country. As in many post-conflict contexts, one of the largest obstacles for recovery in Iraq is the lack of perspective regarding opportunities that the country can offer to its people. This is particularly true for the youth of Iraq who have been severely affected. Many have lost hope in the future and are frustrated by their limited potential to contribute to social and economic progress.

At this turning point in the history of Iraq, when the forces of integration and inclusion are still being shaped, many youth feel disoriented. Yet youth represent the largest segment of the Iraqi population. Iraq is one of the most youthful countries in the world with nearly half of its population under 19 years of age; hence youth is the country's largest human capital resource. National statistics show that Iraq

1- U.S. Census International Database 2010.

is progressing towards what is called the “Demographic Gift”: The favourable state when the ratio of children and the aged to the working population diminishes.

To maximize benefits and to address key issues faced by youth, Iraqi policy makers are focusing on the preparation of effective strategies to integrate youth issues into the national development agenda. UN Agencies in Iraq, such as the UN Development Programme (UNDP) and the UN Population Fund, are providing support to these efforts which acknowledge the role of youth and their contribution to a more sustainable development. These efforts are in line with international community initiatives and timely as the United Nations on 12 August 2010 launched the International Year of Youth, with activities and events throughout the world until 12 August 2011.

In this context and under the strategic objectives defined by the Iraq National Development Plan for 2010-2014, Iraqi counterparts from the government and civil society in partnership with UNDP organised on 30 April a National Youth Conference, held in Baghdad at the Safia Al Souhail Cultural and Literary Salon. The event attracted some 500 young women and men who were selected through universities, NGOs, and youth cultural or professional associations across the country.

The National Youth Conference aimed to provide a platform for youth to share their voices and open discussion with relevant counterparts on priority issues addressed in the National Youth Strategy such as employment, access to services and participation in governance. It also aimed at initiating a consultation process on the Iraq National Human Development Report, which proposes to focus on “youth” issues as the key theme.



Young people from across Iraq making use of the conference opportunity to have their voice heard. Photo by Magic Carpet / Spacetoon TV



The conference brought government and civil society together to hear and in turn address the challenges the Iraqi youth faces today. Photo by Magic Carpet / Spacetoon TV

The Youth Conference served as an open consultative forum. Participants listened to young people’s personal accounts and collective experiences as well as their concerns, aspirations and proposals to address the many challenges lying ahead. The conference provided also a unique opportunity to discuss with relevant actors how to respond to these needs utilizing available instruments such as the Government National Development Plan, situational analysis and reports by UN agencies.

The young participants were articulate and constructive in their discussions which inspired consideration among the audience. They stressed their strong and common desire to play an active role in supporting the democratic progress. This did not prevent critical issues from being raised, such as direct questions regarding the lack of progress in the resumption of adequate basic services and other pressing problems in Iraq. Potential tensions on this issue were resolved in a composed manner within the positive spirit that pervaded the event as a whole.

The forum offered a rare and direct glimpse into the world of the young people in Iraq and their potential. It was successful in raising greater awareness on youth-related development issues. The extensive discussions resulted in the identification of 31 recommendations that aim to promote the formula-

tion and implementation of a national comprehensive strategy for ensuring a safe, socially, economically and politically productive future for youth, through the combined efforts of the state, private sector and civil society.

Several ministers, parliamentarians and senior government officials participated in the Conference, including Mr. Abdul Latif Rasheed, representative of the President of Iraq; Mr. Muhammed Tamim Al-Joubouri, Minister of Education; Mr. Nas-sar Al-Rubaiee, Minister of Labour and Social Affairs; and Ms. Bushra Zouwaini, Minister of Women’s Affairs.

The participation of MP. Saeed Khoshnow, Head of Youth and Sports Committee; MP. Saleem Al-Joubouri, the chairman of the Human Rights Committee was another testimony to the importance of the Youth Conference. Also present at the event were Mr. Muhammed Bandar, Chairman of the Investment Board; Mr. Zuhair Al-Ghraibawi, Head of Iraqi Intelligence; and Falih Al-Fayadh, National Security Advisor and a large number of representatives of diplomatic missions and international organizations.

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One woman's battle with tuberculosis: Fighting off ignorance and stigma

By Ruba Hikmat, WHO Iraq



Dmoe Ali and her four year-old daughter Abeer in one of Baghdad health centres.
Photo by Thamer Al-Halifi

Dmoe Ali is a 23 year-old Iraqi woman from Baghdad and a mother of two children. Recently, the young woman's smooth life changed dramatically when she was diagnosed with tuberculosis (TB), a disease she thought had vanished. It was the shock of her life that made her literally lose her breath. What made matters worse for Dmoe is learning that her four-year old daughter, Abeer, was also infected.

"It was extremely painful for me to see my daughter suffer from the infection. Many times I blamed myself for having caused the suffering of my own child just because I didn't know enough about Tuberculosis," said Dmoe in a trembling voice.

Dmoe's sufferings didn't stop there. Blame, abandonment and stigma were looming large. When Dmoe's husband knew about TB infection, he left both his wife and daughter in fear of being contaminated. Dmoe's own family did the same, leaving the young woman and Abeer in utter isolation and despair.

"I did what any mother would do if

facing the same situation. I did my best to look after my daughter while trying to cope with my own infection. There were times when the psychological and physical pain was simply unbearable," said Dmoe, painfully describing the daily torment of uncertainty she had to go through until she saw some light at the end of the tunnel.

Dmoe's hope for full recovery came during a workshop she attended in a primary health center in Al-Khadmia district. The workshop was a community mobilization event organized by the World Health Organization - Iraq office, in partnership with the Iraqi Anti Tuberculosis Association (IATA) with the aim to raise awareness of Iraqis about every aspect of TB prevention and treatment, including how to deal with social stigma.

The young woman learned that TB is a chronic infection mainly caused by the mycobacterium tuberculosis bacteria that is transmitted from person to person by airborne droplets. She also learned that usually this infection is passed on as a result of very close contact, therefore if the infect-

ed person continues to live with the family in the same household and has not undergone proper treatment, family members are endangered and need to take the precaution of seeing a doctor and getting a skin test.

During the WHO-IATA workshop, Dmoe was informed that for patients who undergo full treatment including the Bacille Calmette-Guerin vaccine, the chances of full recovery are good. With so much hope for a good health and better future for her daughter and herself, Dmoe started taking TB drugs that are offered free of charge to all TB patients attending the primary health care centres in Iraq. She also took her destiny into her own hands.

As medications were putting Dmoe and Abeer on the path to healing and recovery, the young woman started working for an NGO as an advocate for women's health and rights. This job helped her care for the family that the father had abandoned.

Dmoe and Abeer recovered from the disease mainly because the mother was lucky enough to have been tested on time and benefited from the community mobilization programme.

In collaboration with the National Tuberculosis Programme, the Ministry of Health, WHO and other partners, IATA regularly holds such community events to reach out to those who are in need and educate Iraqi women, women and children about how TB can be prevented and treated and how to face stigma and discrimination that is prevailing in modern societies.

Tuberculosis is a major public health problem in Iraq, ranking 44 out of 212 countries and territories by estimated number of cases on the global level. Iraq is considered among the nine high TB burden countries in

the Eastern Mediterranean Region, contributing to 3% of the total cases. There are an estimated 16,000 TB cases in Iraq, out of which 7,200 are infectious cases. The estimated deaths due to TB are more than 3000 every year.

Funding through the round 6 grant of the Global Fund to fight Aids, Tuberculosis and Malaria helped improve the delivery of services for quality Directly Observed Treatment TB care for poor and vulnerable populations, the expansion of these services to

include three governorates in Kurdistan Region of Iraq, and increase the management capacity of the National Tuberculosis Programme. As a result, notifications of smear positive cases increased from 2950 in 2007 to 3150 in 2008 (from 37% CDR in 2007 to 43% in 2008).

However, despite the increase in the case detection rate, the overall still less than 50% and the speed of its increase (2007 to 2008) is not fast enough to ensure timely achievement of global targets. Laboratory

and treatment network is not extensive. Vulnerable populations such as prisoners, internally displaced population, marshlands population and families and individuals in contact with TB patients haven't fully covered.

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Education

First distributions for school feeding in Iraq

By Caroline Legros, WFP Iraq



Distributing micronutrient biscuits to Iraqi children.
Photo by WFP

The World Food Programme (WFP) is supporting the Ministry of Education's National School Feeding programme which is designed to encourage children's access to education and to reduce drop-outs during primary educa-

tion in Iraq. Studies show that improving nutrition can help increase student's attention span and alertness, and enhance their opportunities for personal development, which can then help reduce poverty for their families, communities

and country.

Recognizing the importance of school feeding, the Iraqi Council of Ministers decided to implement a National School Feeding programme and requested WFP to assist in making the transition to a sustainable programme that is nationally owned, nationally led and sourced.

The first distributions for School Feeding in Iraq are now underway. Locally produced, micronutrient fortified biscuits arrived to the school children on 23 April 2011 in Kifri, Sulaymani. Kifri is one the most vulnerable areas in Iraq as identified by the 2008 GoI/WFP Comprehensive Food Security and Vulnerability Assessment. It has a large number of female headed households and has been affected by recent droughts and is one of the 24 vulnerable districts targeted under this programme.

School feeding is an integral part of a cohesive social safety net system for Iraq. WFP is pleased that the Government of Iraq has taken

ownership of this school feeding activity, including a generous contribution of US \$17 million to WFP for initial implementation.

WFP is supporting the Ministry of Education with a transition strategy that will provide the base for a future national strategy for school feeding. This will strengthen the government's capacity to design and implement similar programmes in line with international school feeding quality standards.

WFP's school meal programmes work towards achieving several Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The programmes directly contribute to the goals of reducing hunger by half and achieving universal primary education by 2015, and of achieving gender parity in education by 2015.

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Development

Assessing the Iraqi civil registration system

By Dr. Luay Shabaneh, UNFPA Iraq

As part of the implementation of Iraq Public Sector Modernization Programme, a United Nations multiagency initiative, the UN Population Fund (UNFPA) organized on 6-16 April a functional review mission for the Iraqi civil registration system in both Baghdad and Erbil.

This mission was facilitated by the Amman-based Arab Institute for Training and Research in Statistics and carried out by a regional expert in this field who visited the civil registration related bodies at the Central and Kurdistan Region governments in Baghdad and Erbil to evaluate the civil registration system's efficiency especially in recoding births, deaths, marriages and divorces.

The Iraqi bodies visited during this mission included the directorates of civil registration at the ministries of Interior and Health and the related judicial authorities in Baghdad and Erbil as well as the Central Statistical Organization and Kurdistan Regional Statistical Office.

During this ten-day mission, the expert was able to have access to relevant records and databases; which enabled him to submit a first draft report that includes an assessment of the situation of the current civil registration system, including the gaps and priority areas of improvement to enhance its overall performance.

The report is being reviewed by UNFPA Iraq advisors and will later be discussed with the concerned national counterparts for their endorsement.

Through this robust Public Sector Modernization Programme coordinated by UNDP, several UN agencies 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.

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Relief

IOM continues to support families affected by flooding throughout Iraq

By Courtney Webster – IOM Iraq



IOM aid reaches regions affected by flooding.
Photo by IOM

The severe storms that occurred in Northern and Central Iraq in mid-April caused massive flooding and damaged the homes of hundreds of families. The Rawanduz District and Warte sub-district of Erbil were particularly affected on Friday, April 22, with severe rainstorms flooding a large portion of the Erbil governorate.

IOM responded to the crisis in these districts rapidly, as field staff had already been monitoring the situation created by the floods, and thus were well-prepared to conduct a rapid assessment of the damages and needs of the flood victims. IOM, along with the Governorate Emergency Cell and the mayor of Rawanduz district and Warte sub-district, found that 21 families living in Rawanduz and Warte were in need of urgent humanitarian assistance to help them recover from the damage wrought by the storm.

IOM immediately mobilized supplies and distributed relief packages to the 21 families on Tuesday, April 26, in coordination with UNHCR and UNICEF. From the IOM emergency warehouse, families received bed frames, pillows, plastic sheets, plastic furniture, an ice chest, and a gas stove. UNICEF contributed hygiene kits to the distribution as well, as part of an ongoing partnership with IOM in this regard. These supplies will ease the most acute burdens created by the flooding, and will drastically improve quality of life for affected families

while they work to rebuild their damaged homes and communities.

The distribution was attended by representatives from the local media, as well as the mayor of Rawanduz. In addition, many local community members volunteered to help IOM with the distribution, adding to the overall success and efficiency of the endeavor.

By utilizing the funding for IOM's emergency distributions provided by USAID's Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA), IOM remains prepared to re-

spond to the needs of vulnerable populations, should flooding occur in other areas of Iraq.

As a member of the UN Country Team (UNCT) for Iraq, IOM Iraq works closely with the United Nations system and the Iraqi authorities in support of the Iraqi National Development Plan 2010 - 2014, and is integrated into all sector outcome teams of the UNCT Coordination Structure.

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News Briefs

Standing Consultation Mechanism met under UNAMI auspices

On 25 April 2011, a meeting held in Baghdad in line with the framework of the Standing Consultation Mechanism under UNAMI auspices to advance a resolution to the Disputed Internal Boundary issues. This meeting was dedicated to Kirkuk, with special focus on conditions necessary to hold the provincial council elections.

In the discussions, the parties emphasized the importance of local participation and agreed to hold an expanded meeting in the coming weeks with the participation of Kirkuk stakeholders to begin to addressing the outstanding concerns.

The meeting was facilitated by SRS Ad Melkert and attended by Dr. Rowsch Shawis, Deputy Prime Minister, Council of Representative members: Mr. Hassan Al-Sunaid and Dr. Salman Al-Jumaili.

Iraq launches the second vaccination week

On 24 - 30 April, Iraqi women, men and children across the country were engaged in advocacy, education and communication activities during the country's second immunization week, which also included vaccination services.

During this week, the Ministry of Health with the support of WHO and UNICEF expanded its vaccination services. More than 1,600 vaccinators provided routine

immunization services through Primary Health Centers, targeting unreached and unvaccinated children in low coverage areas in addition to outreach programmes and mobile activities across the country.

Additionally, 2,000 volunteers visited houses in all Iraqi governorates to educate families and mothers about the new and improved vaccines and the importance of immunization. Series of events took place in schools, academic institutions, and civil societies.

According to the Ministry of Health estimates, 93% of infants received the first DPT1 dose, whereas, 84% received the DPT3 dose. However 9.8% of infants were not brought in to take the third dose.

Iraq has made great strides towards expanding immunization for preventable diseases. The country has strengthened its surveillance system as hundreds of Iraqi health workers received training on detection, reporting, investigation and conducting necessary vaccinations. The Iraqi media also conducted awareness campaigns to support these efforts with the government's full participation. In the last few years, Iraq has shown a significant change towards measles outbreak, which resulted in the decline measles' cases from 30,328 in 2009 to 462 in 2010.

UNAMI concerned over events at Camp Ashraf

On 16 April, UNAMI issued a press statement indicating that the mission has

been in close contact with the Iraqi authorities with regard to the events of 7-8 April in Camp Ashraf. Following a monitoring visit to the camp on Wednesday 13 April, UNAMI met with the Iraqi authorities and shared with them the initial findings, confirming the death of 34 people with dozens injured.

UNAMI expressed deep concern over the events and repeatedly urged the Government of Iraq to refrain from the use of force and informed that it will continue to assist the Government in search of a permanent solution to the issues of Camp Ashraf in line with international humanitarian and human rights law and seeks the support of the international community in these efforts.

Earlier in the month, UNAMI called for restraint and respect for humanitarian and human rights and urged the Iraqi authorities to provide humanitarian assistance in this regard and access to medical services.

Four districts in Iraq nominated to implement the basic package of health services

The implementation of Basic Health Service Package through improving the performance of District Health System based on family practice approach, is a new WHO Eastern Mediterranean Region initiative recently adopted by the Ministry of Health in Iraq. To ensure a universal, equitable and efficient access to essential health services for ev-

ery Iraqi especially the most vulnerable people, the initiative will be introduced as a pilot in four Iraqi districts, including Baghdad, Kirkuk, Missan and Erbil governorates.

On 16- 21 April, the Ministry of Health of Iraq, in cooperation with WHO, Iraq Programme, held a workshop in Beirut (Lebanon), on the implementation of Basic Health Service Package. High level government officials along with representatives from USAID and United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees participated in the workshop.

Facilitated by WHO experts from the regional office and country offices of Iraq, Jordan and Lebanon, the workshop aimed to reach an agreement on a roadmap for the implementation of the Health Package in Iraq and on the necessary financial and human resources and to identify the four districts following standard criteria and mechanisms for implementation.

WHO and Iraq Ministry of Health joined international call for combating drug resistance

Antimicrobial resistance is not a new problem, but one that is becoming more dangerous. On the occasion of 2011 World Health Day, marked every year on 7 April, WHO introduced a six-point policy package to combat the rising threat of drug resistance and called for urgent and concerted action by governments, health professionals, industry and civil society and patients to slow down its global spread, limit its impact today and preserve medical advances for future generations.

In Iraq, the Day was marked by the Ministry of Health and WHO Iraq, under the slogan: "Save lives and protect health by keeping precious antimicrobial medicines effective to combat diseases". The Ministry of Health, with the support of

the WHO Iraq, launched an awareness raising campaign in all Iraq governorates where educational materials were distributed in addition to organizing lectures, exhibitions and awareness raising events for teachers, academia, doctors and pharmacists in primary health care centers.

WHO's new policy package sets out the measures governments and their national partners need to combat drug resistance. The policy steps recommended by WHO include: (1) developing and implementing a comprehensive, financed national plan; (2) strengthen surveillance and laboratory capacity; (3) ensure uninterrupted access to essential medicines of assured quality; (4) regulate and promoting rational use of medicines; (5) enhance infection prevention and control; and (6) foster innovation and research and development for new tools.

Moving ahead to improve lives of Iraqis affected by landmines

To commemorate Global Mine Action Day, the Iraqi Ministry of Environment and the United Nations in Iraq held a press conference on mine action in Iraq on 5 April at the UN Headquarters in Baghdad. Representatives of national, regional and international media outlets in Iraq interacted with Deputy Minister of Environment, Dr. Kamal Latif, the Head of Humanitarian and Development Office at UNAMI, Mr. Daniel Augstburger, and Major General Hadi Athab, Director of Military Engineering at the Ministry of Defence.

The panel briefed the media on Iraq's continued commitment to building awareness on the dangers of landmines and clearing the country from explosive remnants of war, while supporting mine victims.

The event also included an exhibition of photographs by acclaimed landmine photographer Giovanni Diffidenti and well-known Iraqi photographer Jamal Penjweny. The exhibit illustrated the

impact of landmines and explosive remnants of war on the people of Iraq. It also showed how, with support from the international community, the Government and the people of Iraq are working to overcome the tremendous difficulties caused by unexploded devices.

NGO-Authority relations breakthrough in Iraq's Kurdistan Region

On 7 April, the Kurdistan Parliament passed a draft law aimed at improving transparency of relations between regional authorities and civil society and clarifying the legislative framework for NGOs in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq.

UNOPS and the International Centre for Not-for-Profit Law 9 (ICNL), welcomed this as a significant step towards the empowerment of civil society in the region. The text of the draft law, which remains to be endorsed by the President of the Kurdistan Region, is in line with international best practices and is the result of a civil society who drove the process.

UNOPS and ICNL have supported the process of developing an NGO law for the Kurdistan Region of Iraq over several years. Support rendered included expert advisory, raising awareness of international best practices of NGO regulations, and coordination amongst regional stakeholders from civil society, Government, Parliament, and the Presidency Council.

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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).

Photo Essay: Inauguration of Syriac Museum

The April 10th inauguration of the Museum for Syriac Heritage in Ankawa town, Erbil, is the first of its kind in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. The opening ceremony attracted not only the residents of this Christian neighborhood, but also some high level guests such as the Kurdistan Regional Government's Minister of Culture, Dr. Kawa Mahmoud, and the Archbishop of Ankawa, Mr. Bashar Mati Warda. *Photos by Bikem Ekberzade/UNAMI PIO*



Preparing to receive the guests: The opening for the Syriac Heritage Museum in Ankawa, Erbil, is a momentous occasion for the local Christian community. Museum personnel in traditional dresses welcome the guests.



The small hall where the opening speeches are delivered by the director of the Museum as well as honorary guests is crowded with visitors.



The Archbishop of Ankawa Basha Warda (L) and the Minister of Culture for KRG Dr. Kawa Mahmoud (middle) take a moment to discuss the regional dresses used by Syriac communities in towns and villages in the region.



Not the smallest component of daily life in Ankawa goes unnoticed in the Museum, where even the simplest contributions are backed up by old photographs showing the artifacts customarily used in daily life.



From old to new, historical to the mundane, not a detail goes unnoticed by visitors.



The manuscripts as well as old Syriac documents, originals in glass cabinets are on display...



... as well as the historical breakdown of the Syriac alphabet to decipher them.



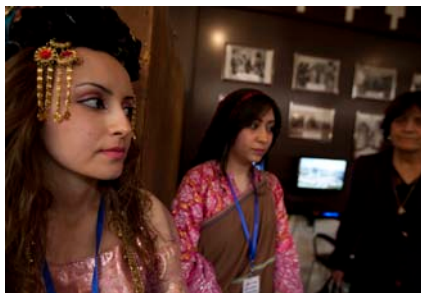
From weapons, to cameras, to toys for small children, every single item is a contribution by residents of Ankawa.



A moment of fun...



... and a moment of exhaustion.



Each dress is different from the other with regional ornaments distinguishing them from each other.



... and every document at the Syriac Heritage Museum tells part of the story of one of the most colorful cultures in the diverse cultural landscape of Iraq.