



Iraq commits \$30 million for children

Children in the Marshlands to receive improved access to clean water and education

BAGHDAD, 04 May 2009. Iraq's Ministry of State for Marshlands has committed \$30 million for projects to assist children in rural areas of the Marshlands region in 2009. The allocation marks the first government investment focused exclusively on improving the lives of Iraqi children.

"This is a major achievement by the government as it's the first-of-its-kind investment targeting children not only in Iraq but also globally," stated Sikander Khan, UNICEF Iraq Representative. "This sets the standard and will be the beginning of a series of child-friendly investments that will help realize the long-deprived rights of all Iraqi children, specifically improving their prospects for survival and to fully develop their capacities."

The Marshlands has some of the worst development indicators in Iraq. Some 34 per cent of women in the Marshlands are illiterate, compared with 24 per cent at the national level, and school enrollment in rural areas of the region is at least 30 per cent lower than in urban areas. Around 81 per cent of households are not connected to the general water network, compared with 26 per cent at the national level with, in some villages, up to 99 per cent of people relying on drinking water to be delivered by truck.

"The current situation of children in the Marshlands is unacceptable," said Minister of State for Marshlands Affairs Hassan Al-Sari. "With this investment we will start improving the welfare of children in the area so that many more are able to go to school and thousands of people will have access to clean water".

Part of the Marshland's Children's Initiative, this new government investment will support projects in the most impoverished rural areas of the Marshlands where children are most vulnerable. In rural areas of the Marshlands districts in the Basra, Misan and Thiqr governorates, 70 water stations will be rehabilitated to provide clean drinking water to around 250,000 people, including around 125,000 children who are particularly vulnerable to water-borne diseases.

In addition, 48 schools will be built to provide access to education for around 12,000 children.

UNICEF will support the Government of Iraq in developing and implementing the projects to ensure they are of the highest standard and will have the greatest impact for children. The projects are expected to start in the coming months.

About UNICEF in Iraq

UNICEF has been on the ground in Iraq since 1983 working to ensure Iraqi children survive and realize their full potential. UNICEF is supporting the Government of Iraq to develop child-friendly policies, build the capacity of institutions, and mobilize resources to realize the full rights of Iraqi children. Via a network of staff and partners, UNICEF's programmes continue to improve basic health services, safeguard quality education, rebuild water and sanitation systems, protect

children from abuse, violence and exploitation, and meet the needs of the most vulnerable in crisis situations.

About UNICEF

UNICEF is present in over 150 countries and territories to help children survive and thrive, from early childhood through adolescence. The world's largest provider of vaccines for developing countries, UNICEF supports child health and nutrition, good water and sanitation, quality basic education for all boys and girls, and the protection of children from violence, exploitation, and AIDS. UNICEF is funded entirely by the voluntary contributions of individuals, businesses, foundations and governments.

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