



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization

Organisation
des Nations Unies
pour l'éducation,
la science et la culture

Organización
de las Naciones Unidas
para la Educación,
la Ciencia y la Cultura

Организация
Объединенных Наций по
вопросам образования,
науки и культуры

منظمة الأمم المتحدة
للتربية والعلم والثقافة

联合国教育、
科学及文化组织

UNESCO in Iraq

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Operating at a distance out of Amman, working within a volatile security situation, constantly adapting to changes in the political context, UNESCO's Iraq Office currently implements 16 programmes in education, science, culture and communication which aim to contribute to peace-building, poverty reduction and sustainable development.

UNESCO's approach within all of its Iraq programme activities is to support national capacity to manage urgent sectoral needs; to strengthen and support Iraqi civil society and human rights; and to assist vulnerable groups and targeted professions such as journalists and academics.

The office has implemented projects worth \$75 million since 2003. The major source of funding has been through the UNDG Trust Fund for Iraq which has financed some \$1.2 billion in UN projects in the country. Major funders for UNESCO under the Trust Fund have been the European Commission and Japan, while Qatar is the major bilateral funder along with the Government of Iraq itself.

Although it may seem to the outsider that the UN has had huge funds in Iraq, programme delivery has posed major challenges. The scale of needs to be met has been vast, the level of expectations within Iraq extremely high, whereas there have been inevitable limitations both to UNESCO's capacity to deliver and to the absorptive capacity of Iraqi counterparts.

The Context

The highly volatile security situation remains a permanent feature, continuously challenging humanitarian, reconstruction and reconciliation efforts led by Iraqi authorities with the support of the international community.

However, since early 2008 there has been little to no large-scale fighting on the scale previously experienced and while the situation of refugees and internally displaced persons remains a serious concern, Iraq does not have to cope at present with significant humanitarian crises. This means the focus can be turned much more to reconstruction activities.

Operating from a distance constitutes a major constraint for UNESCO. There is a high cost associated with ensuring the safety and security of staff sent to some areas of Iraq and safety concerns sometimes play a role in delaying implementation of activities, which

can have to be cancelled or deferred at the last moment due to sudden security incidents.

UNESCO's Iraqi partners have always been extremely cooperative in understanding these limitations and accept to attend meetings and conferences outside Iraq when this is feasible.

While operational management is conducted from Amman, an international Programme Coordinator in Baghdad acts as a focal point for the office with senior Government officials, line Ministries, donor representatives, diplomatic missions, UNAMI and other UN counterparts. UNESCO also maintains national staff in Baghdad and Erbil as well as associated monitors in Babil, Samarra, Suleimaniyah and the Iraqi Marshlands, who play a key role in implementation and in monitoring our projects. International staff undertake



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frequent missions to Iraq, regularly visiting partners and undertaking follow-up visits to project sites all over the country. The Iraq office has gone from four staff members in 2004 to 43: 12 international and 22 national staff in Amman, one international and eight national staff in Iraq.

Partners

UNESCO is an active member of the United Nations Country Team in Iraq, which is coordinated by the United Nations Assistance Mission in Iraq (UNAMI). UNESCO's key Iraqi partners both at the federal and at the Kurdistan Regional Government level include the Ministries of Education and Higher Education, Water Resources, Labour and Social Affairs, Culture, Tourism and Antiquities. Other national partners include the Governorates, the Independent Higher Electoral Commission and the Communications and Media Commission.

On the ground, UNESCO works with international and national NGOs, as well as with the national and local authorities and in

Checklist for a UNESCO Mission in Iraq

Certification: Security Awareness Induction Training for Iraq (4 day course)
Security Clearance: apply two weeks in advance to UNDSS NY
Red zone movement: one month advance notice of intention to enter zone
Provide grid references, plus all timings to the hour, for red zone movement
Mission Plan accounting for all movements approved by UNAMI
Book room in UN Residence
Flashlight, plus kit ready for any overnight at the airport
Prepare appropriate clothes plus glasses ready for helicopter
Flak Jacket, Helmet and emergency run bag ready

cooperation with other UN agencies in Iraq for the implementation of its projects.

Programme Overview and Key Achievements

There are 16 ongoing programmes of the office, 5 of which are implemented jointly with other UN Agencies. The Director-General conducted an official visit in May 2009, during which he signed four major MOUs with the Government to expand UNESCO's work in education and culture.

Education: UNESCO Iraq projects take a sector-wide approach, intervening in the fields of basic, secondary, tertiary, technical and vocational and non-formal education to support the rehabilitation of the sector through increasing access to education, promoting life-skills, reversing the growing trends of illiteracy among the population and declining female participation. UNESCO implements projects oriented around three main objectives: 1) Assist authorities to strengthen Education Planning, Policy, Management, Monitoring and Evaluation; 2) Support access to quality education at all levels according to identified needs; and 3) contribute to literacy and life skills development with a focus on vulnerable groups.

Key achievements include the printing of 18 million new textbooks; assisting the government to establish an Education Management Information System; supporting the establishment of an Educational TV channel and the creation of a website containing electronic versions of textbooks targeting IDP/refugee populations.

Natural Sciences: UNESCO has implemented a set of Natural Sciences programmes to assist the Iraqi scientific community placing priority on: 1) Training and capacity development for Iraqi experts on Integrated Water Resources Management; 2) Strengthening Science, Technology and Innovation Policy formulation; and 3) Supporting Iraqi

participation in regional and international science research programmes.

A key achievement has been the reintegration of Iraq in intergovernmental processes concerning water issues.

Culture: UNESCO attempts to protect this key element of Iraqi national identity by: 1) Rehabilitation of the Al-Askari Shrine in Samara, the flashpoint of widespread sectarian violence in 2006; 2) Combating illicit traffic of cultural heritage; 3) Supporting capacity building of relevant national cultural institutions; and 4) Preservation of major cultural and historical heritage sites (Samara, Erbil Citadel and Babylon).

One notable achievements is the rehabilitation of the Al-Askari Shrine in Samara launched in 2007.

Communication and Information:

UNESCO supports the Iraqi government and the media sector in building an enabling environment to create conditions where sustainable local initiatives for freedom of expression and press freedom can flourish. UNESCO implements projects which aim to: 1) Train media in safe codes of conduct as well as strengthening the regulatory aspects of media protection; 2) Support press freedom and public access to information; and 3) Promote free and fair elections through information dissemination about parties, policies and the election process.

Key achievements include supporting the elections process and strengthening independent media in Iraq.

Contact information:

UNESCO Iraq Office in Amman
Tel: +962 (0)6 551 6559
Fax: +962 (0)6 553 0842

iraqoffice@unesco.org
<http://www.unesco.org/en/iraq-office>