

Annual Results Report

2023

Iraq

Acknowledgements

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- 4.1 - Lessons Learned and Future Outlook

Section 1: Context and Overview

1.1 Changes to the Operational Context

Iraq's security has improved in the past six years but remains unpredictable. The current situation is no longer linked to the presence of Da'esh but relates to incidents by Iran-aligned groups which surged since the October 2023 Gaza conflict, raising concerns of Iraq being drawn into a regional conflict. Some areas also continue witnessing sporadic attacks by extremist groups, which however do not impact UNHCR's operational footprint.

The socioeconomic situation remains fragile, despite the substantive expansion of the Federal government's fiscal space due to oil revenue increases. In June 2023, Iraq passed its largest-ever multi-year budget, heavily reliant on oil revenues. Oil export halts to Turkey exacerbated oil and gas management disputes between the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) and Federal authorities, that impacted the KRG public sector salaries. Financial strains increased with the February 2023 devaluation of the Iraqi Dinar against the USD.

Complex relations between the Government of Iraq and the KRG also center on disputed territories, representation in Federal institutions, and the stalled Sinjar Agreement meant to address the security and administrative vacuum in Sinjar District, the Ezidis' homeland.

Iraq hosts around 300,000 refugees and asylum-seekers, of which 270,000 are Kurdish Syrians in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KR-I), as well as over 1 million internally displaced persons (IDPs), of whom some 160,000 live in 23 camps in the KR-I. The 2023 Global Refugee Forum marked Iraq's first commitments regarding a new refugee law, refugees' access to public services, and statelessness. The UN Country Team and civil society pledged support for refugee inclusion in social safety nets and the economy. UNHCR and partners, including donors, further transitioned from a humanitarian to a development approach to strengthen national capacity to provide protection and quality public services for Iraqis and refugees on an equal basis donors' priority.

1.2. Progress Against the Desired Impact

1. Impact Area: Attaining Favorable Protection Environments

By 2024, forcibly displaced and stateless persons in Iraq will be able to enjoy a safe protection environment (rights to asylum, documentation, and identity, and access to inclusive protection services)

Indicators	Population Type	Strategy Baseline	Actual (2023)
1.1 Proportion of people seeking international protection who are able to access asylum procedures	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	98.00%	51.08%

In 2023, UNHCR continued supporting both Federal and Kurdish authorities in strengthening their asylum policies. In the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KR-I), most refugees receive humanitarian residency permits (HRPs) from the authorities. In Federal Iraq, with UNHCR's support, the Federal Ministry of Interior (Mol) issued 1,698 refugee ID cards, – covering only a fraction of the refugees present. UNHCR's advocacy and technical support on developing a sound asylum framework that is aligned with international standards and practice led to new Administrative Instructions in the KR-I and Federal Iraq and a refugee bill. These instruments that are yet to enter into force as of the end of 2023, incorporate key principles such as non-refoulement and comprehensive refugee definitions.

Some asylum-seekers were barred from entering Iraqi territory or registering with the authorities or UNHCR, including asylum-seekers who entered the country through regular means and Afghans moving onwards from Iran in the KR-I, and Syrians arriving after 2019 in Federal Iraq. Restricted criteria for accessing residency documents both in the KR-I and Federal Iraq limited access to asylum in conjunction with strict border controls, limiting the ability of Syrians—the largest asylum-seeking population—to seek asylum.

UNHCR registered new asylum -seekers in Iraq (31,807), facilitating their access to essential public services and intervening, mostly successfully, on behalf of people at risk of refoulement. Most newly registered individuals were Syrians (27,838) followed by Afghans (1,060), Iranians (858), Turkish (409) and Palestinians (297). While UNHCR furthered refugee inclusion into existing public protection services, its partners continued providing complementary case management and psychosocial support to the most vulnerable.

UNHCR also supported IDPs, IDP returnees, and vulnerable Iraqis with complex legal situations (perceived affiliations with Da'esh) in accessing civil documentation in collaboration with the Federal Mol and civil courts and through outreach and legal counselling. In total, support by UNHCR and partners resulted in securing 45,567 civil documents, processing of over 46,000 applications for documents and the deployment of 50 mobile missions.

Furthermore, UNHCR conducted a qualitative study to gather information on nationality status, demographics, and current needs of individuals of Iraqi origin who are stateless or at risk of statelessness. The individuals identified were referred for civil documentation support. In the most recent phase of the study of this population group, through which some 1,000 interviews were conducted, 233 stateless persons were identified. Through continuous efforts to grant/confirm the nationality of individuals with Iraqi origin, the Iraqi government, with the support of other actors, has made significant progress in reducing statelessness. Regarding stateless refugees in Iraq, the figure was previously estimated at 6,585 following a 2022 study by the Norwegian Refugee Council; however, a critical examination of the study in 2023 indicates problems with the methodology, which focused more on possession of documents rather than fulfilling the criteria for statelessness. Accordingly, the true number of stateless refugees is likely significantly less than the findings of the Norwegian Refugee Council study suggest.

2. Impact Area: Realizing Rights in Safe Environments

By 2024, the people we serve are able to access quality services in Iraq that meet their basic needs and reduce their vulnerability.

Indicators	Population Type	Strategy Baseline	Actual (2023)
2.2 Proportion of people residing in physically safe and secure settlements with access to basic facilities	IDPs	100.00%	68.01%
2.2 Proportion of people residing in physically safe and secure settlements with access to basic facilities	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	100.00%	69.44%
2.3 Proportion of people with access to health services	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	100.00%	100.00%

UNHCR advanced the inclusion of refugees both in terms of public services and national policies. In particular, progress was made in furthering the inclusion of refugees in the public education system in the KR-I, with the inclusion of refugee students up to grade 5 and a firm commitment by the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) at the Global Refugee Forum (GRF) to expand this inclusion further to cover secondary education. UNHCR strengthened public primary health systems (including mental health and psychosocial services). This translated into the construction or rehabilitation of health and education facilities and the provision of equipment coupled with training for public service providers. In addition, UNHCR strengthened public services, such as water, sanitation or electricity, in the nine refugee camps in the KR-I. All these interventions were beneficial to both refugee and local communities.

Economic inclusion of refugees has been one of the highest new priorities for UNHCR in Iraq; through a catalytic role, 400 refugees were included in poverty alleviation programmes, and the enabling environment for economic engagement was strengthened through the commitment by the Central Bank of Iraq to include refugees in the National Financial Inclusion Strategy. Furthermore, the Federal and Kurdish authorities committed to include refugees and stateless persons in the upcoming population census, ensuring their systematic inclusion in development plans.

UNHCR advocated with the authorities on finding dignified solutions for IDPs in camps, which resulted in decisions to allow IDPs to return to their villages in the Al-Hamdaniyah disputed area and led to the consolidation of camps in Sulaymaniyah with IDPs returning home or locally integrating.

In addition to having ensured that all IDPs in camps (save in the East Mosul Camps) received their Iraqi IDs, through consistent advocacy by UNHCR the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (MoLSA) assessed all IDPs in camps to review their eligibility for inclusion in the Social Safety Net (MoLSA's poverty reduction programme). Individuals who were deemed eligible for assistance receive IQD 125,000 per month per person to address their poverty levels.

3. Impact Area: Empowering Communities and Achieving Gender Equality

By 2024, the people we serve are actively engaged in decision-making processes that affect and shape their lives.

Indicators	Population Type	Strategy Baseline	Actual (2023)
3.1 Proportion of people who have the right to decent work	IDPs	100.00%	100.00%
3.2a Proportion of children and young people enrolled in primary education	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	82.00%	76.89%
3.2b Proportion of children and young people enrolled in secondary education	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	Unknown	31.14%
3.3 Proportion of people feeling safe walking alone in their neighbourhood after dark	IDPs	Unknown	99.74%

3.3 Proportion of people feeling safe walking alone in their neighbourhood after dark	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	Unknown	98.33%
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At the start of 2023 school year, 70% of Syrian refugee children (51% girls) were enrolled in 1,500 public schools in the KR-I. In addition, 393 qualified refugee teachers were recruited in 2022 and maintained their positions as lecturers on KRG's payroll. Inclusion of refugee children and teachers in the education system paves the way for enhanced economic inclusion and social cohesion.

UNHCR promoted community-based protection (CBP) to empower and mobilize displaced communities and to ensure their meaningful engagement in all aspects of programmes that affect their lives – through 45 Community Support Centres (CSCs) and diverse community representation structures with over 900 members. In addition to standard channels for feedback, complaint, and response mechanisms, large-scale consultations with displaced communities were carried out throughout the year, reaching over 36,000 individuals, with 50% of participants being women, to inform programme design and advocacy. UNHCR established quotas for women in the selection of refugee representatives and piloted gender support groups, as well as targeted some 1,350 women and girls with life skills training.

A key initiative involved identifying 400 refugee households for inclusion in the Danish Refugee Council's livelihood programme. Thanks to advocacy by GIZ and UNHCR, the Central Bank of Iraq committed to including refugees in the National Financial Inclusion Strategy which will accelerate the financial inclusion of refugees through policy and regulatory reform regarding Know Your Customer rights (KYC). This allows refugees to enjoy full-fledged financial and non-financial services. Moreover, sustained engagements with the International Trade Center (ITC) resulted in a joint commitment to establish an aggregation hub in Dohuk. The initiative, backed by training in essential skills and connecting markets in agricultural value chains, aims to overcome challenges and enable refugees to engage in economic activities.

4. Impact Area: Securing Solutions

By 2024, forcibly displaced and stateless persons are able to secure sustainable and adequate solutions that guarantee their rights and allow them to realize their potential.

Indicators	Population Type	Strategy Baseline	Actual (2023)
4.1 Number of refugees who voluntarily return in safety and dignity to their country of origin	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	4,000	2,338
4.2a Number of people who departed on resettlement	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	1,000	1,243
4.2b Number of people who departed through complementary pathways	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	10	165
4.3a Number of stateless people for whom nationality is granted or confirmed	Stateless Persons	500	88

In 2023, most refugees in the KR-I were granted legal residency status through issuance of an HRP while in Federal Iraq most did not receive their ID cards from the authorities. Through its advocacy, UNHCR addressed arbitrary arrest and detention issues, protected refugees from risks and supported their access to public services. However, procedural burdens and policy limitations were placed for obtaining residency documents based on the mode of entry, year of entry (after 2019 for Syrians in Federal Iraq), nationality (non-Kurdish populations in KR-I), and other criteria (patients with communicable diseases or persons with diverse sexual orientations, gender identities, expressions and sex characteristics (SOGIESC)). Some refugees found durable solutions through resettlement (1,243) and complementary pathways (165), mainly through family reunification. Another group voluntarily returned to Syria where all individuals were counselled by UNHCR on the situation back in Syria, UNHCR non-return advisory and potential risks they might be exposed to upon return. However, a total of 2,338 individuals still decided to return without the support of UNHCR. Furthermore, 88 stateless people identified through a UNHCR-supported study obtained nationality documents granting Iraqi citizenship. The actual number of stateless people granted nationality was lower than the strategy baseline because the study revealed that there were fewer stateless

individuals of Iraqi origin than originally anticipated.

In line with its global policy against encampment of forcibly displaced populations, UNHCR worked with the Kurdish and Federal authorities and durable solutions partners to identify and implement dignified solutions for IDPs still residing in camps. UNHCR supported the delivery of civil documents to these IDPs to apply for clearances to either return or locally integrate, and to access public services and compensation and social safety net schemes. UNHCR's relentless advocacy resulted in a breakthrough in July 2023, with the KRG authorizing a group of IDPs residing in the East Mosul Camps to return to their villages surrounding the camps in Hassansham disputed territory (under KRG's de facto control) which had been blocked for years. In addition, UNHCR successfully advocated for IDPs in the camps in Sulaymaniyah governorate to be allowed to integrate locally during the camp consolidation process at the end of 2023.

1.3 Challenges to Achieving Impacts

Despite UNHCR's advocacy, some asylum-seekers are still barred from entering the Iraqi territory or registering with the authorities or UNHCR. Restricted criteria for accessing residency document both in KRI and Federal Iraq limit the access to asylum in conjunction with strict border control limiting the ability of Syrians seeking asylum. However, through its engagement with both Kurdish and Federal authorities on legal reforms, progress was achieved in reaching a common understanding about the refugee definition and the non-refoulement principles – which has yet to be translated into proper implementation. The divergent approaches between the Federal and Kurdish authorities underscore the complexity of harmonizing protection standards across different administrative jurisdictions. Because of restrictive policies and limited number of residency cards issued in Federal Iraq, many Syrian and other refugees there remain without proper documentation which deprives them of access to public services and puts them at risk of arrest and detention, if not refoulement.

Notwithstanding a few breakthrough developments in 2023 to further solutions for IDPs in camps, at the end of 2023 approximately 160,000 IDPs remained in a camp setting. Barriers to attaining a durable solution for the remaining IDPs in camps include: their profile and perceived affiliation with extremist groups; socio-economic barriers preventing them from locally integrating; insecurity, lack of livelihood opportunities, damaged housing and lack of basic services in their areas of origin, especially for Ezidis in Sinjar as well as the absence of reconciliation and justice. While UNHCR and other durable solutions stakeholders advocate to address such barriers, tensions between Federal and Kurdish authorities affect the prospects.

1.4 Collaboration and Partnerships

UNHCR enhanced cooperation with key Ministries such as the Federal Ministries of Labour and Social Affairs and Interior, and KRG's Ministries of Education, Interior, and Planning, as exemplified by the joint pledges regarding the inclusion of refugees in public services and policies at the GRF. In 2023, Iraq's transitional chapter of the Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan (3RP) reflects the shift to advance refugee inclusion in development processes such as the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF), as acknowledged by the UN Country Team (UNCT) commitments at the GRF. Accordingly, refugees, asylum-seekers, and stateless people were more consistently included in the Common Country Analyses. Lastly, UNHCR shared its strategy for identifying solutions for IDPs in camps with UN partners as part of its inter-agency commitment.

Following the deactivation of the Protection Cluster at the end of 2022, the Iraq Protection Platform was launched in January 2023 with two central aims: to ensure the centrality of protection in the implementation of the UNSDCF in Iraq; and to serve as a forum for unified, high-level protection-oriented advocacy interventions at the national level. The Platform members include UN agencies, international and national non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and UNHCR co-chairs the Platform with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). In 2023, the Platform focused its advocacy on addressing legal obstacles related to the issuance of civil documentation. A mapping of available legal aid services for members of ethnic and religious minority communities in the KR-I was also completed. Throughout the year, UNHCR funded 21 partners, of whom nine were national NGOs, seven were

international NGOs, and five were government entities, demonstrating a higher engagement with national organizations in line with its localization strategy. In addition, UNHCR liaised with the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Iraq (SRSG) and head of United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) on some sensitive files with notable progress on the assessment of their civilian character related to asylum. Similarly, UNHCR engaged donors and high-level diplomats on various protection issues, from solutions for IDPs in camps to legal reforms related to asylum.

Section 2: Results

2.1. Outcomes and Achievements

1. Outcome Area: Access to Territory, Reg. and Documentation

Forcibly displaced and stateless persons enjoy non-discriminatory access to effective protection in Iraq, including through identification, quality registration, and timely issuance of documentation.

Indicators	Population Type	Strategy Baseline	Target (2023)	Actual (2023)
1.1 Proportion of refugees and asylum seekers registered on an individual basis	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	98.44%	100.00%	90.82%
1.2 Proportion of children under 5 years of age whose births have been registered with a civil authority	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	85.21%	90.00%	83.22%
1.3 Proportion of people with legally recognized identity documents or credentials	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	98.77%	100.00%	99.73%

Progress Against the Desired Outcome

In 2023, UNHCR registered 31,807 new refugees in Iraq, providing them with UNHCR certificates that allow them to prove their identity and protect them against arbitrary arrest, detention, and forcible returns. The majority were Syrians (27,838, i.e., 87.5%), followed by Afghans (1,060), Iranians (858), Turkish (409), Palestinians (297), and a smaller number from other countries (1,345). The majority accumulated backlogs of renewal of UNHCR documentation; 255,763 individuals were verified and issued with new certificates (64% of which are valid for two years and 36% are valid for one year). In Federal Iraq, the Ministry of Interior's Permanent Committee for Refugees (PC-MOI) issuance of documentation did not include certain nationalities. UNHCR's continuous advocacy and support resulted in PC-MOI issuing ID documents for 1,661 individuals in Federal Iraq. Among those registered with PC-MOI, 963 are Palestinians (58%), 677 Syrians (41%), and 21 individuals from other nationalities.

UNHCR continued to support IDPs, especially those residing in camps, IDP returnees, and certain vulnerable, non-displaced Iraqi populations (including returnees from Al-Hol and other areas of north-east Syria) with access to civil documentation. In 2023, some 16,960 individuals attended legal awareness sessions on the importance of civil documentation and the application processes. UNHCR and partners provided individual legal counselling services to 51,341 people for the purposes of accessing civil documentation, including some 5,661 individuals with 'complex cases', such as those with perceived affiliations with Da'esh or missing key supporting documents. UNHCR supported the Ministry of Interior and Civil Courts through 50 mobile civil documentation missions. As a result, some 45,567 civil documents were secured in 2023. This achievement comes from processing over 46,000 civil documentation applications in 2023, as the issuance of the physical documents for some of these cases is still pending. UNHCR advocated with the Federal and Kurdish authorities to prevent refoulement by directly intervening on behalf of individuals at such a risk and registering individuals in detention on immigration-related charges. Through UNHCR's advocacy, the refoulement of 430 individuals was prevented. As a result, the number of refoulements decreased by 57% compared to the previous year (from 131 in 2022 to 56 in 2023).

3. Outcome Area: Protection Policy and Law

Government is supported to promote and develop inclusive policies, legislation, and mechanisms that are in line with international standards, ensuring protection and social protection for forcibly displaced and stateless persons.

Indicators	Population Type	Strategy Baseline	Target (2023)	Actual (2023)
3.1 Extent national legal framework is in line with the 1951 Convention and/or its 1967 Protocol	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	Not yet aligned ≤69 points	Broadly aligned: ≥ 90 points	Not yet aligned: ≤69 points
3.2 Extent national legal framework is in line with the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness	Stateless Persons	Not yet aligned ≤69 points	Broadly aligned: ≥ 90 points	Not yet aligned: ≤69 points

Progress Against the Desired Outcome

With UNHCR's support, a committee formed by the Federal Ministry of Interior (MoI) drafted a refugee bill aligned with international standards, particularly regarding the refugee definition and a comprehensive non-refoulement principle rooted in international human rights law. In parallel, a Federal Administrative Instruction (AI) reached its final stage and protects UNHCR from having to share data on refugees in the KR-I. Similarly, an AI by the KRG to harmonize the procedure regarding H RPs across governorates and irrespective of the mode of entry into the KR-I, as well as reflecting comprehensive definitions of the term refugee and the principle of non-refoulement, was completed. Both AIs have yet to enter into force.

Through its partner REACH, a study on statelessness determined that there were 233 known stateless individuals of Iraqi origin amongst the population surveyed, significantly less than what was previously estimated. UNHCR advocated with MoI for an exception to the Foreign Residency Law to enable them to obtain residency and subsequently apply for nationality. A final decision is pending. Legal assistance was also initiated for 1,553 individuals identified as at risk of statelessness to help them obtain core civil documents. As legal assistance was initiated in the last quarter of 2023, issuance of documentation was still pending for most of these individuals at the end of the year.

UNHCR engaged in targeted local and national-level advocacy with Government counterparts to address administrative and legal barriers to civil documentation for Iraqis, especially for individuals with complex profiles, including Iraqi nationals returning from Al-Hol camp in north-east Syria to Jeddah 1 Centre in Iraq. As a result, certain civil documentation challenges have been addressed at the local level – for example, for Jeddah 1, UNHCR successfully advocated to allow persons arriving from Al-Hol to retain copies of their existing identity documents while the originals are taken for security processing which ensures that the legal needs assessment and subsequent legal assistance would not be delayed. Implementing countrywide policy changes remains challenging given the decentralized nature of the judiciary and the degree of independence allotted to each individual judge.

4. Outcome Area: Gender-based Violence

Gender-sensitive and inclusive protection including gender-based violence prevention, mitigation, and response services, are progressively expanded and improved to address needs of the people we serve.

Indicators	Population Type	Strategy Baseline	Target (2023)	Actual (2023)
4.1 Proportion of people who know where to access available GBV services	IDPs	Unknown	85.00%	63.50%
4.1 Proportion of people who know where to access available GBV services	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	24.02%	88.00%	70.66%
4.2 Proportion of people who do not accept violence against women	IDPs	Unknown	85.00%	89.05%

4.2 Proportion of people who do not accept violence against women	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	Unknown	92.00%	93.23%
4.3 Proportion of survivors who are satisfied with GBV case management services	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	Unknown	88.00%	99.21%

Progress Against the Desired Outcome

In addressing gender-based violence (GBV) challenges within refugee communities, UNHCR, with its partners, engaged 12,573 individuals - 999 boys, 2,571 girls, 2,008 men, and 6,995 women refugees - in awareness-raising activities covering critical issues, such as domestic violence, child and early marriage, women's rights, and access to gender-based violence specialized services. These initiatives fostered a better understanding and awareness of gender-based violence within communities. They enhanced timely reporting, leading to a response, evidenced by community members' increased awareness of available gender-based violence services and access procedures. This empowerment has contributed significantly to behavioural change and a more proactive attitude toward seeking assistance and supporting others, strengthening the overall community response to gender-based violence.

The successful completion of the engagement in accountable practices (EMAP) programme by refugee men and boys in Erbil marked a positive step towards changing perceptions of gender equality, power dynamics, and women's rights. The pre and post tests conducted during the EMAP programme reflect a shift in mindset where the men and boys participating in EMAP committed to becoming proactive allies in advocating for gender equality and protecting women's rights. This was further supported by the training of 1,687 individuals - 783 women and 904 men –including Government actors, specialized service providers and non-specialized partners, on various aspects of gender-based violence prevention, mitigation, and response. The individuals trained are now expected to be better equipped to implement effective interventions ensuring a survivor-centred approach. In addition, training partners on the use of UNHCR's gender-based violence safety audit tool kit, knowledge sharing with Government actors in both the KR-I and Federal Iraq of the concerns faced by refugees related to gender-based violence, prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse, safe disclosure and referral for partners (not working on gender-based violence) and UNHCR staff, and case management by partners has overall contributed to the enhanced capacity of local systems to address gender-based violence more effectively.

UNHCR facilitated specialized case management services and psychosocial support for 6,552 individuals - 516 boys, 656 girls, 507 men, and 4,873 women refugees and asylum-seekers who sought support, directly contributing to their well-being and recovery.

UNHCR concluded its partnership with the KRG Directorate of Combating Violence Against Women (DCVAW) on 31 December 2023. DCVAW is now committed to providing services to refugee survivors, particularly with respect to safe shelter referrals.

5. Outcome Area: Child Protection

The children we serve are protected from violence, abuse, exploitation, and discrimination, have access to child-friendly procedures and services, and their social-emotional well-being is promoted.

Indicators	Population Type	Strategy Baseline	Target (2023)	Actual (2023)
5.1 Proportion of children at heightened risk who are supported by a Best Interests Procedure	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	91.72%	65.00%	19.69%
5.2 Proportion of children who participate in community-based child protection programmes	IDPs	24.63%	2.00%	2.05%
5.2 Proportion of children who participate in community-based child protection programmes	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	21.54%	30.00%	9.62%
5.3 Proportion of unaccompanied and separated children who are in an alternative care arrangement	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	23.14%	65.00%	27.27%

Progress Against the Desired Outcome

UNHCR and its child protection partners delivered specialized case management and psychosocial support services to refugee children at risk of harm and to their families/ caregivers. The implementation of best interest procedures (BIP) for 4,181 refugee children included unaccompanied and separated minors, children with disabilities, and other refugee children at risk. This resulted in the children having timely access to legal aid, healthcare, and specialized assistance, such as tailored educational support, psychological support, and counselling, as well as social integration activities and life skills training to foster their resilience and social cohesion. Additionally, good practices in parenting programmes, such as developing skills in communication, children's needs and rights, and emotional support, strengthened the capacities of 1,256 refugee parents to foster supportive environments for safe child development.

Through 2023, UNHCR and its child protection partners organized training sessions in various locations, engaging 841 government staff, child protection actors, and community members. These trainings aimed to enhance understanding of child protection approaches and BIP principles, and as a result, increased community awareness and knowledge about specialized child protection services. These efforts are part of UNHCR's strategic direction to strengthen national systems to ensure responsible disengagement by UNHCR and its partners.

UNHCR sought support from UNICEF under the draft Strategic Collaboration Framework to ensure refugee children are included in the draft Child Rights Law which resulted in the inclusion of refugee children in the draft law that is yet to be endorsed. In addition, UNHCR's joint advocacy for retaining trained child protection social workers to capitalize on the capacity-building initiatives for Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (MoLSA) social workers in the KR-I, which UNHCR had previously contributed to. These efforts have successfully retained MoLSA's staff trained in child protection, ensuring the ongoing provision of specialized child protection services. In addition, UNHCR and its partners engaged with the MoLSA's High Commission for Child Protection (HCCP) to ensure refugee children and their needs are included in the services provided to children in the KR-I, furthering UNHCR's refugee inclusion focus. As a result, the Directorates of Labour and Social Affairs (DoLSA) in KR-I established its presence in refugee camps to deliver specialized child protection services.

7. Outcome Area: Community Engagement and Women's Empowerment

Community-based mechanisms promoting increased inclusive engagement and participation in leadership and decision-making are supported.

Indicators	Population Type	Strategy Baseline	Target (2023)	Actual (2023)
7.2 Proportion of people who have access to safe feedback and response mechanisms	IDPs	100.00%	95.00%	100.00%
7.2 Proportion of people who have access to safe feedback and response mechanisms	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	100.00%	95.00%	100.00%
7.3 Proportion of women participating in leadership/management structures	IDPs	Unknown	40.00%	50.00%
7.3 Proportion of women participating in leadership/management structures	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	Unknown	40.00%	49.75%
7.1 Extent participation of displaced and stateless people across programme phases is supported.	IDPs	Unknown	Extensive: ≥ 70 points	Extensive: ≥ 70 points
7.1 Extent participation of displaced and stateless people across programme phases is supported.	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	Unknown	Extensive: ≥ 70 points	Extensive: ≥ 70 points

Progress Against the Desired Outcome

In 2023, UNHCR further strengthened collaboration with diverse community-based outreach structures, including Community Outreach Volunteers (COVs), community representation entities, and committees to empower the community further. The COV programme comprised 459 individuals (over 50% women). Displaced and host communities played a pivotal role in fostering two-way communication, disseminating information on various themes, and identifying vulnerable persons. Collectively, these efforts engaged 68,503 refugees (over 50% women and girls) in awareness initiatives and 2,999 in community assessments – which resulted in fostering two-way communication, awareness of available protection services, identification, and referrals of over 350 highly vulnerable refugees. Additionally, 58,089 IDPs participated in awareness activities which resulted in identifying and directing referrals of over 800 IDPs to service providers.

UNHCR and its partners facilitated the establishment of elected/appointed community representation structures, emphasizing inclusivity through Women, Youth, and Refugee Welfare Committees. Elections in Sulaymaniyah and Erbil governorates promoted women's participation with dedicated quotas to address gender imbalances. As a result, 911 individuals engaged in community structures, with nearly 50% female participation. The emphasis extended to supporting their sustainability through capacity building and needs assessments, integrating them into the above-mentioned decision-making platforms to ensure a more equitable representation of concerns faced by 50% of the refugee community.

UNHCR maintained Feedback, Complaint and Response Mechanisms (CFMs). The digitalization of CFM channels in 2023 following the closure of the Iraq Information Centre in December 2022 enhanced responsiveness, with 100% feedback closure achieved in four field offices that implemented it through the Refugee Assistance and Information System (RAIS). In 2023, 12,867 refugees and 2,913 IDPs utilized the decentralized CFM tools to lodge complaints/feedback, mainly related to access to services such as cash assistance, gender-based violence support, child protection and mental health and psychosocial support.

Due to their anonymity, the suggestion boxes received sexual abuse and exploitation allegations channelled through the referral mechanism. The increase in the use of CFM in 2023 reflects the communities' trust in these mechanisms. Finalizing the digitalization for the remaining UNHCR offices across Iraq remains a priority to ensure greater accountability to affected people. Across the operation, 45 physical community spaces serve as a daily bridge between the community and UNHCR. They are used for community mobilization, information sharing, CFM, referrals, programming, and ad hoc activities. These centres are managed collaboratively with communities and local authorities and remain crucial reference points for community engagement as they help refugees to have a safe space to share important information, access services, and bond better as communities.

Of note, collaborations were formalized with the DoLSA in Dohuk and the Directorate of Youth in Dohuk and Sulaymaniyah which will allow refugees unhindered access to government services in shared spaces. Partnerships with community-based organizations such as Gashbun in Dohuk, the Women's Center in Fallujah, and Anbar, as well as establishing the refugee-led organization Domiz Sports Group, were key developments in 2023. These partnerships empowered refugees and host communities to self-identify and address their needs and fostered social cohesion. As a result, refugees in Dohuk and Fallujah now benefit from host community initiatives to support and address the needs of children with disabilities.

8. Outcome Area: Well-Being and Basic Needs

The people we serve, particularly the most vulnerable, have improved access to dignified, quality, integrated, shock-sensitive, and inclusive social protection systems and services meeting their basic needs.

Indicators	Population Type	Strategy Baseline	Target (2023)	Actual (2023)
8.1 Proportion of people that receive cash transfers and/or non-food items	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	24.74%	50.00%	54.78%
8.2 Proportion of people with primary reliance on clean (cooking) fuels and technology	IDPs	Unknown	100.00%	99.61%

8.2 Proportion of people with primary reliance on clean (cooking) fuels and technology	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	Unknown	100.00%	98.96%
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Progress Against the Desired Outcome

In 2023, UNHCR maintained its multi-purpose cash assistance (MPCA) response to assist the most vulnerable refugees and asylum-seekers to meet their basic needs – including food and rent. A devaluation of the Iraqi dinar, coupled with price hikes, exacerbated the economic vulnerability of refugees and asylum-seekers as the majority rely on daily and informal labour to cover their basic expenses.

Cash assistance was provided as multi-purpose cash assistance to the most vulnerable refugees and asylum-seekers living in urban areas as WFP covers the camp population. A total of 11,424 refugee families (58,420 individuals) were thus assisted with providing IQD 300,000 (approximately USD 230) per month per family. Around 34% of the beneficiaries were female-headed households.

Based on the refugee registration data, the Proxy Means Testing (PMT) targeting approach was used to determine households' eligibility for the MPCA. PMT was run every two months to identify the most vulnerable families needing cash assistance, with new households included, replacing the ones discontinued after receiving 12 payments. The mobile money transfer solutions were used to provide MPCA.

Refugee households were informed about the assistance from the financial service provider (FSP) by SMS. The assistance distribution was conducted through IrisGuard biometric (EyePay) authentication systems. The iris technology ensures accuracy, efficiency, and speed, as it is the most secure biometric personal identifier available today. Refugees whose iris were not registered yet or who had iris problems received assistance through mobile wallets.

In addition to MPCA, some 53 refugee families (109 individuals 59 female and 50 male) were provided with emergency cash assistance (ECA) to address an emergency and mitigate against the shock. Similarly, 32 individuals received Medical Cash Assistance (MCA) to cover their medical expenses and mitigate the risk of losing their lives and complications.

Key findings from the post-distribution monitoring survey indicated that 79% of households reported being able to meet half of their basic needs. This helped reduce their feeling of stress and improved their living conditions. Almost 100% of the households reported being able to find desirable quality items and/or services in the markets; About 91% indicated being satisfied with the amount of cash assistance received and about 15% of recipients reported gaining access to livelihoods and productive assets thanks to the MPCA. The top spending priorities continued to be reported as rent, food, and health, followed by utilities and debt repayment.

In line with the complete UNHCR phase-out of distribution of core relief items (CRIs) in 2023, in-kind assistance was provided to address the basic needs of refugees and IDPs in the camps in response to accidents (fire/flooding). An emergency CRI stock for 5,000 families was also maintained in the event of population movements from north-east Syria.

9. Outcome Area: Sustainable Housing and Settlements

The people we serve in camps are supported in accessing safe, secure, and sustainable settlements with basic service provision.

Indicators	Population Type	Strategy Baseline	Target (2023)	Actual (2023)
9.1 Proportion of people living in habitable and affordable housing	IDPs	Unknown	40.00%	30.36%
9.1 Proportion of people living in habitable and affordable housing	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	Unknown	90.00%	41.12%
9.2 Proportion of people that have energy to ensure lighting	IDPs	Unknown	90.00%	98.64%
9.2 Proportion of people that have energy to ensure lighting	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	Unknown	100.00%	96.76%

Progress Against the Desired Outcome

Throughout 2023, UNHCR, in collaboration with the KRG, supported camp management for 25 IDP camps (reduced to 23 camps in the second half of the year following camp consolidation process in Sulaymaniyah governorate), nine refugee camps, and one transit centre, which hosted about 180,000 IDPs (reduced to 160,000 IDPs following camp consolidation) and 95,000 refugees. UNHCR completed a total of 63 infrastructure projects. The overall objective through these projects was to strengthen the capacity of the Government public services to allow further disengagement of UNHCR and humanitarian partners and to transition to engage development partners.

A total of 12 interventions under the Area-based Programming for Protection and Solutions (A2PS) approach were completed in 2023, amongst others around Basirma and Domiz refugee camps as well as in IDP return areas. The interventions varied from communal infrastructure, water supply and management, and solar energy which allowed for increased access to livelihoods, and more sustainable reintegration for IDPs through increased access to water and electricity. These interventions were implemented with development partners such as the Dutch Union of Municipalities (VNG), WFP, ILO and WHO, thus contributing to UNHCR's exit strategy to engage further public service providers and development actors. In total 173,540 persons benefitted from the completed interventions, including host communities.

In addition, 51 infrastructure projects were implemented to strengthen education, health, water supply and registration services, including 14 projects under the Refugee Education Integration Policy (REIP). As a result, refugees and approximately 50,000 Iraqi Kurdish students now study in less overcrowded classrooms. To limit the impact on the environment, UNHCR solarized a total of eight boreholes and rehabilitated some existing solar-powered boreholes in Erbil, Dohuk, and Sulaymaniyah, thus providing approximately 91,400 refugees with a constant supply of potable water to circumvent the constant electricity cuts from the national grid or diesel generators. Real-time monitoring systems were put in place to further manage the efficient use of water.

Two major sanitation projects were implemented in 2023 to improve the existing sewerage and drainage system in the refugee camps and host areas of Qushtapa in Erbil Governorate, Arbat in Sulaymaniyah Governorate. The projects will benefit approximately 75,000 individuals.

To accommodate the move from the Bardarash transit centre, where living conditions were dire and the population extremely vulnerable, UNHCR had to build 700 durable shelters in the Gawilan refugee camp, as instructed by the authorities. The shelters built are similar to the existing shelters in the other refugee camps. Consequently, Bardarash transit centre will return to its initial purpose for transit only. A total of 130 shelters in the Basirma refugee camp were upgraded from transitional shelters (prefabs) to durable shelters, thus ensuring better living conditions and paving the way to transforming the camp into a formal settlement when approved by the authorities. Furthermore, to support dignified living conditions and potential similar camp transformations in the future, UNHCR's continued advocacy resulted in the upgrade of 3,971 individual shelters for IDPs in Dohuk Governorate and the Zakho Administration, thus improving living conditions and reducing fire and other hazards that each year injure and kill IDPs, in particular children.

10. Outcome Area: Healthy Lives

Public Health services, including Mental and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS), at national and local levels, are supported to protect and promote psychosocial well-being, as well as, treat and prevent diseases/disorders, deliver accessible, equitable, and comprehensive universal health coverage to all, including the refugees and asylum seekers

Indicators	Population Type	Strategy Baseline	Target (2023)	Actual (2023)
10.1 Proportion of children aged 9 months to five years who have received measles vaccination	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	90.07%	98.00%	89.07%
10.2. Proportion of births attended by skilled health personnel	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	100.00%	100.00%	99.24%

Progress Against the Desired Outcome

In 2023, refugees continued enjoying free access to healthcare through primary healthcare centres (PHCs) supported by UNHCR and other United Nations agencies or public health facilities outside camps. A total of 214,244 medical consultations were provided for refugees living in camps, and the health utilization rate (visits/person/year) was 2.1, within the expected range of 1 – 4. Also, 5,269 refugees were referred from camp-based PHCs to public hospitals for further investigations or hospitalization, such as advanced investigations, deliveries, and surgeries.

As part of UNHCR's exit strategy from providing support to camps, the Office continued to further the inclusion of camp-based health services in the national health system through joint plans with the Directorates of Health (DoH) for the remaining five PHCs in refugee camps (Darashakran, Domiz1, Domiz2, Gawilan, and Qushtapa) to be completed in 2024. Refugees in all camps will eventually all be serviced by public providers.

UNHCR handed over 22 sets of intensive care unit equipment to DoHs in Dohuk, Erbil, and Sulaymaniyah to enhance the capacity of the national health system. Each set contained a ventilator, a bed, a monitor, a nebulizer, a suction pump, a syringe pump, an infusion pump, an oxygen regulator, and an oxygen concentrator.

In addition, UNHCR provided training to 322 DoH staff in Erbil and Dohuk on surveillance, infection prevention, and control, and case management of communicable diseases to strengthen their capacity to respond to outbreaks. Similar orientation sessions for DoH-Erbil were provided with the support of WHO for 27 COVs to transmit accurate information to their communities, which was complemented by 27,000 leaflets and 300 posters distributed in October/November in refugee camps and urban areas with a high concentration of refugees.

UNHCR works with NGOs and the Directorates of Health to provide all refugees mental health and psychosocial services (MHPSS) within the general health system. Accordingly, 3,547 refugees were referred to specialized MHPSS consultations (12,632). Another 2,748 refugees received non-specialized MHPSS support, targeting people with mild and moderate common emotional disorders. In addition, 17,200 individuals engaged in group awareness-raising sessions related to their mental health and psychosocial well-being, enhancing and contributing to sustainable community MHPSS initiatives.

In Iraq, a significant shift in the prevalence of psychological disorders was observed; trauma-related disorders decreased since the refugee situation stabilized, whereas depression and anxiety became more prevalent due to uncertainties about the future and whether refugees would return home.

Moreover, MHPSS partners established a two-way communication channel between service providers and community volunteers. Aligned with UNHCR's Accountability to Affected Population (AAP) framework and Community Based MHPSS approach, it will significantly enhance MHPSS service adaptability and ensure staff can swiftly respond to refugees' mental health needs. UNHCR mainstreamed MHPSS in other sectors by building the capacity of 309 participants with 18 MHPSS trainings, focusing on addressing the most urgent psychological support (PSS) needs and ensuring efficient referrals. A total of 136 partners, Government staff, and gender-based violence prevention actors were trained in trauma-informed approaches to improve services for survivors of violence and trauma. For example, police officers in charge of residency permits were guided on communicating to improve their interactions with refugees, and teachers were capacitated on basic PSS to foster refugee students' well-being in class. Additionally, 45

MHPSS staff underwent advanced counseling training, enabling them to respond better to the mental health needs of refugees. Furthermore, 128 outreach volunteers were trained in basic MHPSS, focusing on detection and referral, ensuring a comprehensive approach to support all levels of interaction with refugees.

11. Outcome Area: Education

Refugees and asylum seekers have access to quality, integrated, and inclusive education services on a non-discriminatory basis at national and local levels.

Indicators	Population Type	Strategy Baseline	Target (2023)	Actual (2023)
11.1 Proportion of young people enrolled in tertiary and higher education	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	Unknown	5.00%	1.27%
11.2 Proportion of children and young people enrolled in the national education system	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	64.00%	60.00%	66.78%

Progress Against the Desired Outcome

As a result of UNHCR's advocacy, in July 2023, the KRG-Ministry of Education (MoE) approved the extension of the Refugee Education Integration Policy (REIP) to grade five, allowing refugee and asylum-seeker children to be enrolled in public schools and follow the KRG curriculum taught in Kurdish. As a result, according to the KRG-MoE's education management information system, in November 2023, a total of 49,851 (70%) Syrian refugee children were enrolled in 1,500 public schools, with an increase of 11% compared to November 2022. It is noteworthy that 43,473 (77%) children were enrolled in basic schools (grades one to nine), 3,806 (31%) in upper secondary level (grades 10 to 12), and 2,572 in preschool. Moreover, out of the 39,477 Syrian school-aged refugee children targeted by the REIP Phase II, 31,903 (80%) succeeded in enrolling in public schools (an increase of 13% of Syrian refugee children enrolled in grades 1-5 compared to November 2022). The KRG also retained the 393 qualified refugee lecturers recruited in 2022 in their positions under the KRG's payroll.

To improve the quality of education and further refugee inclusion, UNHCR constructed two new schools and 25 additional classrooms; renovated eight schools (including WaSH facilities); distributed 112 laptops, 14,000 student desks, 380 whiteboards, 14,000 textbooks; and 6,468 teaching and learning materials across the KR-I public schools. Capacity-building activities were delivered to 1,918 teaching and non-teaching staff on various topics, including prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse, gender-based violence, child protection, inclusive education, mental health and psychosocial support, and 72 Parent-Teacher Associations. Additionally, 7,156 individuals (398 teachers, 681 parents, and 6,077 children) benefited from Kurdish language courses to ease their shift from Arabic to Kurdish. UNHCR also supported 2,902 students with transportation costs (an activity UNHCR will phase out in 2024) and provided catch-up, remedial, numeracy, and literacy classes to 4,207 children, including 184 children with disabilities while 891 adolescent boys and girls participated in extracurricular activities to promote social cohesion and life-skills.

UNHCR led the REIP coordination group for advocacy, implementation, and monitoring of the REIP Phase II and supported the KRG-MoE delegation's participation at the GRF in December 2023, where KRG-MoE pledged to ensure the REIP will be incrementally implemented for grades 5 to 12 by 2030. This was also an opportunity for the KRG to describe its groundbreaking policy to hire qualified refugee teachers in public schools to teach refugee and local students, thus reinforcing social cohesion and providing livelihood opportunities.

UNHCR supported refugees' access to higher education with 147 DAFI scholars across Iraq (36 scholars graduated and 40 new students). DAFI Club's initiatives were supported to organize activities impacting their community, such as planting 60 trees to raise climate change awareness and health campaigns.

15. Outcome Area: Resettlement and Complementary Pathways

The most vulnerable refugees with needs that cannot be addressed in all of Iraq are able to access durable solutions through resettlement or complementary pathways to third countries.

Indicators	Population Type	Strategy Baseline	Target (2023)	Actual (2023)
15.1 Number of refugees submitted by UNHCR for resettlement	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	2,550	2,659	2,803
15.2 Average processing time from resettlement submission to departure under normal priority	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	400.00	1,149.00	958.00

Progress Against the Desired Outcome

Early in the year, the confirmed quota for resettlement was approximately 1,500 persons, from Australia (600), Canada (400), Norway (200), and USA (225), as well as few cases from France, against the expected quota of 3,500 persons. Continued advocacy in addition to the high quality of submissions as well as UNHCR's track record of meeting quotas on time, resulted in new quota from New Zealand (50) and Sweden (220), as well as additional quota from Australia (850, an approximate increase of 140%) and Norway (over 50). By the end of the year, the allocated quota for Iraq reached 2,575 persons.

Despite the increased quota at a later stage in the year, the Office managed to submit 2,803 persons for resettlement in 2023, including those facing imminent risks of refoulement/ deportation, facing gender-based violence, as well as persons of diverse SOGIESC. A total of 168 persons were submitted under medical needs' category for life-saving treatment, including the departure of one family to Norway requiring an air ambulance.

In 2023, 1,243 individuals departed to various resettlement countries: Australia, Canada, Finland, France, New Zealand, Norway, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America. The United States of America accounted for the largest number of departures, with 722 individuals resettled from Iraq in 2023. The majority of the departures were cases that had been submitted prior to 2023.

In 2023, UNHCR exceeded the target of 250 individuals identified for and assisted with access to complementary pathways opportunities, with a total of 686 individuals assisted. Assistance for cases identified in 2023 was provided to individuals pursuing the following pathways: family reunification (488); sponsorship (104); humanitarian visas (44); labour mobility (7), education (4); other pathways (39). Family reunification comprised the majority due to active identification initiatives for individuals potentially eligible by utilising ProGres data to determine individuals with nuclear family links in third countries. Candidates departed under employment pathways and the Duolingo English Test's university admission pilot was renewed in 2023. UNHCR continues to collaborate with Talent Beyond Boundaries and TalentLift for employment pathways.

A significant achievement was the re-introduction of UNHCR-supported remote interviews for the Kingdom of the Netherlands family reunification cases. As a result, visas for the Kingdom of the Netherlands family reunification are now issued locally in the KR-I instead of at embassies in neighbouring countries, providing a solution to irregular travel for 32 individuals.

To increase access to information regarding complementary pathways, UNHCR developed a comprehensive Help page, providing refugees with information on eligibility and application procedures from credible sources, and reinforcing self-sufficiency and individual ownership in third country application processes.

16. Outcome Area: Integration and other Local Solutions

Forcibly displaced and stateless persons are able to benefit from a wide range of inclusive, rights-based local solutions.

Indicators	Population Type	Strategy Baseline	Target (2023)	Actual (2023)
16.1 Proportion of people with secure tenure rights to housing and/or land	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	35.97%	36.00%	19.51%

Progress Against the Desired Outcome

UNHCR has consistently fine-tuned its A2PS programme towards supporting the inclusion of refugees by establishing connections between refugee camps and public services or sustaining returns and reintegration of IDPs in their areas of origin by increasing the capacity of authorities to restore public service delivery. In 2023, 12 A2PS projects were completed in six key locations: Erbil, Dohuk, Kirkuk, Anbar, Ninewa, and Salah Al-Din governorates.

A2PS projects were implemented in consultation with communities and local authorities to ensure their relevance and sustainability as UNHCR empowered them to maintain them. They also brought development partners on board, such as VNG, German Development Cooperation (GIZ), ILO, WFP, and ITC. Interventions, seven of which span several years of implementation, are focused on services, i.e., water treatment plant rehabilitation, solarized street lighting, rehabilitation of irrigation canals, hydroponics greenhouses, and enhancement of public parks and markets. In 2023, 173,540 refugees, IDPs, and locals benefited from these interventions.

In a breakthrough development in February 2023, thanks to UNHCR's advocacy and technical support, the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (MoLSA) decided to assess all IDPs in camps in the KR-I for their eligibility to be enrolled in its poverty reduction programme - the Social Safety Net (SSN). IDPs who meet the MoLSA's vulnerability criteria (female-headed households, persons with disabilities) now benefit from monthly cash payments (IQD 125,000 per person per month) helping them to meet their basic needs.

UNHCR continued to advocate for dignified solutions for IDPs in camps. As a result, in July 2023, the KRG Ministry of Interior authorized the return of IDPs from the Al-Hamdaniyah area, many of whom are residing in the East Mosul Camps to their surrounding villages. UNHCR's advocacy also supported camp closure and consolidation efforts in Sulaymaniyah governorate at the end of 2023 with the closure of two camps (Qorattoo and Arbat) out of the four there.

In 2023, UNHCR built new partnerships to refer refugees to livelihood actors' economic inclusion programmes, which helped 400 refugee households to be included in the Danish Refugee Council's economic recovery programme. Sustained engagements with the World Bank led to a commitment to include refugees in the Mashreq Gender Facility which aims to enhance women's economic empowerment in agriculture. GIZ further committed to include refugees in the National Financial Inclusion Strategy by the Central Bank of Iraq which will accelerate their financial inclusion through policy and regulatory reform regarding Know Your Customer rights (KYC), allowing refugees to enjoy full-fledged financial and non-financial services. Collaborations between UNHCR, ILO, and a Microfinance Institution (Al-Thiqa) led to 130 refugee entrepreneurs accessing micro-credit and non-financial services to support their businesses.

2.2. Age, Gender and Diversity

Advancing gender equality and diversity remained a priority for the Office. The introduction of affirmative actions, such as fixed quotas for women in displaced leadership/management structures, further fostered 'women's participation (48% and 35% amongst the refugee and IDP populations, respectively). Gender support groups, women's associations, promotion of equal representation of girls in youth groups, and sports for girls' activities have continued to push for a more gender-inclusive environment, creating socialization and recreation avenues for girls.

The countrywide 2023 participatory assessment (PA) exercise represented an opportunity for UNHCR to review and advance its commitments and efforts in age, gender, and diversity inclusive programming, engaging over 3,460 respondents consisting of women, men, girls, boys, adolescents, older people, and people with disabilities. Women participation accounted for over 50% of the respondents. The PA outlined that barriers exist for people with disabilities in accessing community centres as well as a lack of activities targeting people with disabilities and older people. While persons with disabilities are integrated in all programming, activities specifically targeting these groups have not been the focus areas in community centres, and government services targeting these groups are also lacking. Respondents acknowledge the plight of vulnerable groups, including their struggles in education, livelihood opportunities, and access to information. UNHCR is advancing toward enhanced accessibility to its services and communication with affected people who face access barriers through an outreach approach. UNHCR's partnership with Gashbun, a community-based organization supporting children with disabilities in Dohuk, set a good practice for disability inclusion, and in 2023, the Fallujah Women Centre provided support for children with cognitive disabilities to better integrate them in kindergarten with psychological support. Restrictive legislative and political narratives continue to impact persons with diverse SOGIESC and those working with them, exacerbated by the anti-gender campaign in Federal Iraq, which has led to a restricted protection environment for vulnerable refugee groups.

Overall prioritization of people with specific needs for cash, livelihoods, gender-based or child violence support services, health, and resettlement have remained key features of UNHCR's response in Iraq.

Section 3: Resources

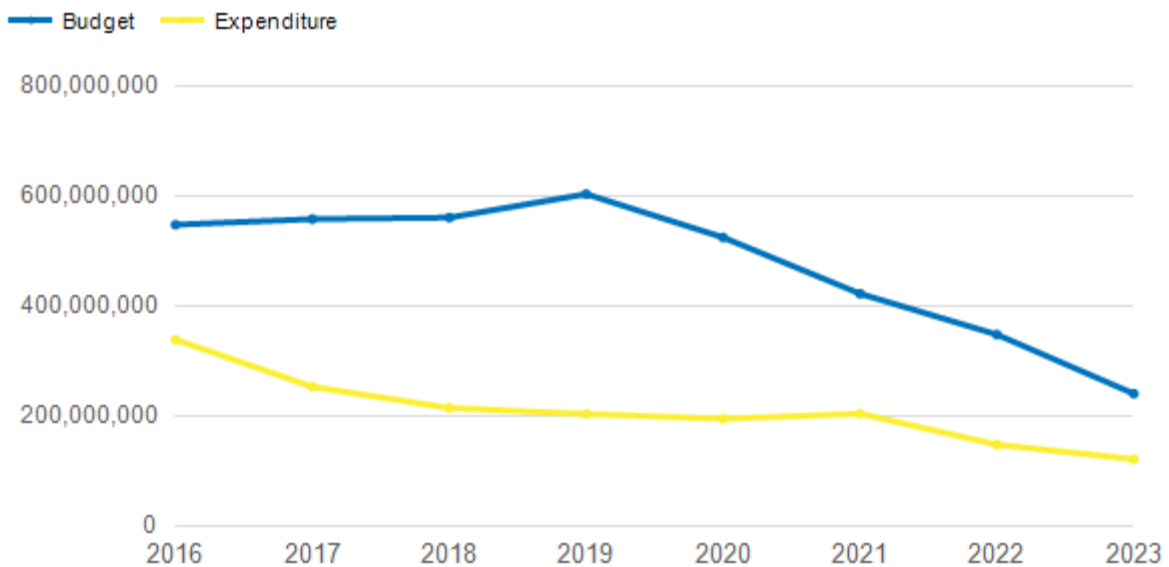
3.1 Financial Data

(Financial figures in USD)

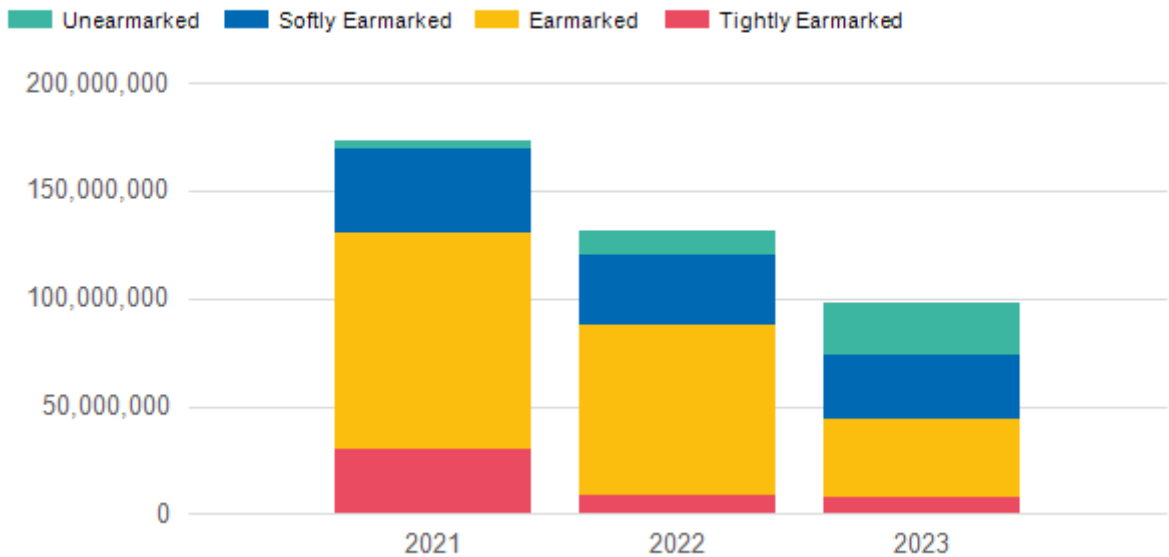
Impact Area	Final Budget	Funds Available	Funds Available as % of Budget	Expenditure	Expenditure as % of Funds Available
IA1: Protect	30,371,320	22,040,299	72.57%	22,040,299	100.00%
IA2: Assist	117,684,624	57,684,104	49.02%	57,684,104	100.00%
IA3: Empower	19,447,310	10,494,927	53.97%	10,494,927	100.00%
IA4: Solve	72,439,943	30,716,225	42.40%	30,716,225	100.00%
All Impact Areas		874,139			
Total	239,943,197	121,809,694	50.77%	120,935,555	99.28%

Outcome Area	Final Budget	Funds Available	Funds Available as % of Budget	Expenditure	Expenditure as % of Funds Available
OA1: Access/Doc	17,295,075	13,835,846	80.00%	12,965,339	93.71%
OA3: Policy/Law	811,691	1,131,669	139.42%	1,131,669	100.00%
OA4: GBV	5,381,786	4,164,074	77.37%	4,164,074	100.00%
OA5: Children	6,882,767	3,779,217	54.91%	3,779,217	100.00%
OA7: Community	19,447,310	10,494,927	53.97%	10,494,927	100.00%
OA8: Well-being	77,095,369	28,889,539	37.47%	28,889,539	100.00%
OA9: Housing	18,464,491	10,768,633	58.32%	10,768,633	100.00%
OA10: Health	9,161,141	6,010,463	65.61%	6,010,463	100.00%
OA11: Education	12,963,624	12,015,469	92.69%	12,015,469	100.00%
OA15: Resettle	3,663,604	3,083,795	84.17%	3,083,795	100.00%
OA16: Integrate	68,776,339	27,632,430	40.18%	27,632,430	100.00%
All Outcome Areas		3,632			
Total	239,943,197	121,809,694	50.77%	120,935,555	99.28%

Budget and Expenditure Trend



Contributions Trend by Type



3.2. Resources Overview

The operation’s budget for 2023 was only 51% funded, primarily due to significantly reduced humanitarian funding for Iraq as donors increasingly channel their funding towards development-oriented programmes and prioritize emerging humanitarian crises elsewhere in the world. This downward trend in humanitarian funding for Iraq is expected to continue and worsen over the coming years which will have significant implications on UNHCR’s presence and scope of programming.

Moreover, In the course of 2023, UNHCR aligned its priorities to a new vision for its operational and advocacy footprint that sought to transition from a humanitarian response to government-led development approaches. In this regard, UNHCR, for example, phased out most of its remaining interventions for IDPs given the Government’s improved ability to provide protection and basic services to its nationals, only maintaining legal assistance for access to civil documentation and support for durable solutions. UNHCR

focused instead on conducting advocacy and strengthening national capacity to further the inclusion of forcibly displaced and stateless people in public services and government social protection programmes. Moreover, UNHCR conducted a comprehensive staff review to ensure the operation's presence and footprint is aligned with the transition and shift in strategic priorities. As a result, the workforce between January 2023 and July 2024 will decrease by 27%. Various measures were taken to accompany staff, directly affected in particular – from on-the-job retraining to staff welfare initiatives. At the same time, UNHCR took several measures to strengthen cost efficiency and ensure optimal use of resources through, for example, increasing fuel cost saving, implementing carpooling arrangements, and promoting use of joint UN services.

Section 4: Lessons Learned and Future Outlook

4.1 Lessons Learned and Future Outlook

Collaboration with both Federal and Kurdish authorities remain fundamental but complex. UNHCR invested heavily both internally and externally – with the diplomatic / donor community in particular - to ensure buy-in on the new vision for UNHCR’s footprint and retain both financial and political support while it transitions from humanitarian to long-term interventions anchored in developmental approaches and furthering inclusion into government policies and services for displaced populations. The strategic moments of reflection in 2023, HQ missions and guidance from the Regional Bureau, provided opportunities for further insights to validate its strategic direction and share its many good practices globally.

UNHCR Iraq focused on three streams regarding IDP solutions: a) support access to civil documentation – almost completed; b) advocacy for the assessment of all IDPs residing in camps to review their eligibility to be included in the Social Safety Nets of the Iraq Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs – completed; and c) solutions to IDPs in camps for some 160,000 IDPs from safe and voluntary return home to local integration including through transformation of camps into formal settlements – ongoing. UNHCR played on its comparative advantage on protection and camp management to be a recognised leader.

UNHCR re-aligned its strategic priorities to focus on support to government (system strengthening) and advocacy towards full inclusion of refugees into social and protection services and policies and enhancing economic opportunities for refugees at par with nationals. Thanks to its data and public advocacy with authorities and development actors, coupled with infrastructure/A2PS projects, UNHCR proved its added value.

For statelessness, UNHCR used a qualitative study and its civil documentation support to IDPs to solve remaining cases.



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