



# Advancing Decent Work in Iraq International Labour Organization

Decent Work Country Programme Update  
November 2020

## ► Background

In March 2020, the ILO opened its [first Iraq country coordination office in Baghdad](#) to provide better support to the government, workers and employers of Iraq in promoting decent work and increasing employment opportunities, as part of the country's post-conflict reconstruction.

As well as coordinating on existing work with a project office in Erbil, the Baghdad office oversees the implementation of a large portfolio of projects.

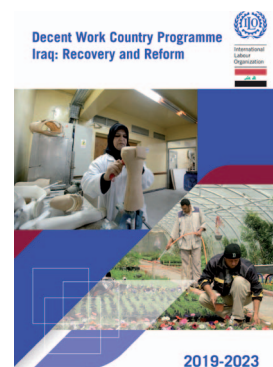


In 2019, Iraq and the ILO launched the country's first Decent Work Country Programme (DWCP). DWCPs are the ILO's main vehicle to implement its decent work agenda and to deliver policy, institutional and development cooperation support to member states.

The DWCP in Iraq, which covers the period 2019-2023, was developed in close consultation with Iraq's government and its worker and employer representatives, to ensure alignment with the national development frameworks of Iraq.

**In line with the first Decent Work Country Programme (2019– 2023), the ILO is:**

- Supporting private sector development and job creation
- Strengthening social protection and addressing child labour
- Strengthening labour governance and social dialogue



► Iraq has been a member of the ILO since **1932** and has ratified **68** ILO Conventions, including all eight fundamental Conventions.

## ► Progress – in brief

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### Supporting private sector development and job creation, through:

- Introducing ILO's [Employment Investment Approach](#) in the country to support immediate job creation in areas affected by the succession of crises, by providing short-term employment linked to skills development and employment services. These efforts also include preserving and enhancing cultural heritage interventions.
- Improving access of refugees to public employment services in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, including job and skills matching, career guidance and counselling, as well as on-the-job training opportunities.
- Improving entrepreneurship for women, youth, IDPs and refugees through introducing ILO's Start and Improve Your Business, in addition to introducing financial education and a financial inclusion model.
- Conducting a nation-wide labour force to support evidence-based national employment policies, in addition to a rapid assessment on the impact of COVID-19 on the labour market and an informality diagnostic study.

### Strengthening social protection and addressing child labour

- Supporting the revision of a draft retirement and social security law, including an updated actuarial valuation and a legal assessment in-line with ILO's international standards, as part of efforts towards a comprehensive social protection reform.
- Implementing a programme to tackle [the worst forms of child labour](#) amongst IDPs, refugees, and vulnerable host communities in Iraq. Efforts will help establish a child Labour monitoring system; develop a national action plan against child labour; and ensure vulnerable children have access to formal and non-formal education.

### Strengthening labour governance and social dialogue

- Supporting the developing of a national policy on labour inspection and on Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) and building the capacities of partners on modern labour inspection procedures and OSH in a gender-responsive manner.
- Supporting trade union organizations to enhance cooperation among each other to better influence the social and economic policies, to promote the need to finalize the trade union law and establish bipartite and tripartite dialogue.

## ► Projects

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The ILO in Iraq is currently implementing five projects with a total budget of US\$ 17.5 million and is discussing another four projects with a total budget of US\$ 13 million.

### Partnership for improving prospects for forcibly displaced persons and host communities (PROSPECTS)

PROSPECTS is an eight-country programme, funded by the [Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands](#), which seeks to improve protection, employment and education prospects for refugees, internally displaced persons and the local host communities. The global programme is implemented jointly by the ILO, UNHCR, UNICEF, World Bank and IFC in Egypt, Iraq, Jordan and Lebanon as well as Ethiopia, Kenya, Sudan and Uganda.

The ILO's contribution to the partnership in Iraq includes an employment intensive investment programme (EIIP), enterprise and skills development and efforts to enhance refugees' access to the labour market and social protection.



## Improved Business Development Support Services and Entrepreneurship Education targeting MSMEs and Youth for the creation of Decent Work Opportunities in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq

The project, implemented by the ILO and funded by the [German Agency for International Cooperation \(GIZ\)](#) aims to promote decent work opportunities in micro, small and medium-sized enterprises in the Kurdistan region of Iraq. The project introduces and institutionalizes the ILO Start and Improve Your Business (SIYB) program and its Financial Literacy training in selected national Business Development Services (BDS) providers. In turn, these providers will offer quality-training services to potential and existing Iraqi Kurdish entrepreneurs. The project will also foster entrepreneurship education by introducing the ILO Know About Business (KAB) entrepreneurship education training in technical and vocational training centers under the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (MOLSA).



## Labour Force Survey in Iraq and design of National Employment Policy

In collaboration with the Central Statistical Organization (CSO) and the Kurdistan Regional Statistical Organization (KRSO), the ILO is conducting a nation-wide labour force survey. The findings of the survey will support the establishment of a national employment policy. Supported by ILO's regular resources, the first report is expected to be delivered in early 2021.

## Social Protection Programme - Leveraging Effective Response and Accelerating Reform

An agreement is being finalised between the [European Union \(EU\)](#), the ILO, UNICEF and WFP to implement a joint programme to support the Government of Iraq to catalyse more effective social protection responses in the short-term and to support Iraq to accelerate reform in the medium- and longer-term. The joint programme will contribute to social protection reform in Iraq by adapting, expanding and innovating social protection responses to address the immediate needs of households in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic as well as effectively reduce the negative implications of the crisis, in the short-term and long-term, on human development.



## Tackling the worst forms of child labour amongst IDPs, refugees, and vulnerable host communities in Iraq

The ILO, with the support of the [European Regional Development and Protection Programme for Lebanon, Jordan and Iraq \(RDPP II\)](#) - a joint European initiative running until 2021, is implementing a project which seeks to address the worst form of child labour in Iraq.

In close collaboration with a range of international and local partners and organisations, activities to identify, withdraw and rehabilitate children from some of the worst forms of child labour will be implemented. In addition, measures to prevent at-risk children from entering the worst forms of child labour are being developed. This includes the development of a Child Labour Monitoring System to identify and refer vulnerable children to relevant actors and services, as well as the development of a National Action Plan Against Child Labour to ensure better protection for vulnerable children and families.



## Enhancing Labour Governance, Inspection and Working Conditions in Response to COVID-19

A new partnership between the [European Union \(EU\)](#) and the ILO in Iraq will seek to enhance labour governance, inspection and working conditions, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Focusing on the agricultural sector, the project will strengthen the labour inspection system in line with International Labour Standards, through policy development and capacity building. It will also focus on improving Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) through the development of a national OSH policy and programme in consultation with social partners, as well as other technical support to government officials, particularly labour inspectors and staff of the National Center for Occupational Health and Safety.



### ► Studies:

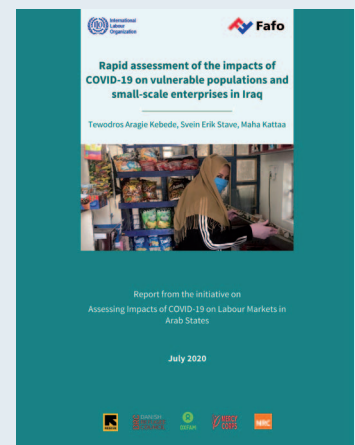
In mid-2020, a rapid assessment on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic fallout on vulnerable households and small-scale enterprises in Iraq was conducted by the ILO and Fafo Institute for Labour and Social Research (Fafo), in collaboration with the Cash Consortium for Iraq (CCI). It highlights the adverse impact of the pandemic on employment and income, particularly among younger workers, women and those in informal employment.

The assessment is part of a regional initiative examining the impact of the pandemic in fragile Arab States (Iraq, Lebanon and Jordan). A second assessment round is being prepared to examine the longer-term impact of the crisis in the three countries.

IOM and ILO published the findings from ILO/Fafo/CCI assessment in Iraq, along with findings from a second assessment on Small and Medium Enterprises, conducted by IOM, FAO and ITC, highlighting the impact of COVID-19 related movement restrictions on earnings and revenue.

In addition, the ILO, UNDP and UNWomen are developing an informality diagnostic to better understand the dynamics of informality in Iraq and opportunities and pathways towards greater formalisation. Improved national capacity for collective responses to the economic and employment impact of COVID-19 and for developing strategies to tackle informality will be pursued through this joint UN collaboration.

The ILO is supporting a UNFPA-led study on youth employment in Iraq, aimed at identifying challenges facing youth's access to the labour market.



### *ILO's interventions in Iraq are implemented in partnership with:*

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), The United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UNWomen), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the World Bank, the International Finance Corporation (IFC), and the Cash Consortium for Iraq (CCI), comprised of the Danish Refugee Council (DRC), the International Rescue Committee (IRC), Mercy Corps, the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) and Oxfam.

### ► For more information:

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