Since 2013, Iraq has been deeply affected by the conflict with the so-called Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). The displacement of over 6 million people and the influx of refugees from Syria has exerted extreme pressure on the Kurdistan Region, which has hosted the majority of the displaced persons and Syrian refugees. Many families lost their homes in acts of destruction by ISIL or during the military operations to liberate the occupied areas. UN-Habitat estimates that as many as 240,000 houses have been damaged or destroyed in the region.

Developed in 2018 in consultation with government partners and stakeholders, and implemented in partnership with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Headway Programme aims to strengthen the long-term resiliency of targeted subnational authorities and their host, displaced, and refugee populations affected by the Syrian and Iraqi crises. The Programme addresses the urban recovery needs of local populations in five target cities — Erbil, Duhok, Sumel, Mosul, and Sinjar — with components that focus on strengthening the capacity of local governments, improving service delivery, and facilitating local economic development.

UN-Habitat worked with community leaders to rehabilitate damaged houses to provide safe and secure living environments for IDPs and returnees. The activities directly supported Sustainable Development Goal 11 of ensuring access to adequate, safe and affordable housing, as well as UN-Habitat’s mandate of supporting the creation of inclusive and affordable housing for all. An investment of USD 2,745,060 million supported the direct costs of the house rehabilitation component.
GIS mapping specialists reviewed satellite imagery of identified neighbourhoods in each of the 5 municipalities. Concurrently, field engineers collaborated with subnational counterparts and neighbourhood Mukhtar teams to conduct preliminary structural assessments of up to 400 houses per municipality. Based on this technical assessment, 1,835 households were prioritized for further analysis using the Socio-Economic Vulnerability Assessment Tool (SEVAT).

SEVAT is a standardized vulnerability assessment tool developed by the Cash Working Group of Iraq and adopted by the Shelter/NFI Cluster to ensure a uniform and systematic approach to identifying highly vulnerable households across all communities in Iraq. The scoring tool automatically calculates per capita consumption, a reliable metric of household vulnerability. The SEVAT proved to be very effective and transparent in ensuring a standardized assessment of target beneficiaries. Close coordination with local authorities and community leaders during the vulnerability assessment phase helped avoid tension between host communities and the targeted IDPs and refugees. Of the assessed households, 82% fell under the poverty line and 200 were prioritized in each municipality.

**KEY OUTPUTS**

- 25,952 Working days created for skilled and unskilled workers in support of local economies
- 5,682 People directly benefited from improved shelter through this project, including IDPs, Syrian refugees, and host community members
- 976 Agreements signed with owners of rehabilitated houses detailing rights and responsibilities
- 200 Agreements signed between owners and renters stipulating no rent increase for a minimum of 12 months

**METHODOLOGY**

GIS REVIEW & STRUCTURAL ASSESSMENTS

SOCIO-ECONOMIC VULNERABILITY ASSESSMENTS

SELECTION OF HOUSES

HOUSES REHABILITATED TO PROVIDE DIGNIFIED SHELTER, INCLUDING:

- Plumbing works
  - Installing toilets, hand wash basins, water heaters, steel kitchen sinks, storage tanks, showers, and pipes
- Electrical works
  - LED lighting, wall sockets, wiring, wall switches with wiring, distribution boards, and cables
- Civil works
  - Pouring concrete, rebuilding walls, cement plastering, roof repairs, installation of doors & windows, railing repair, tiling, and painting

**TIMELINE**

- **2019**
  - JULY - AUG: SEVAT surveys conducted
  - FEB: Start of Phase I shelter rehabilitations in Erbil, Duhok, Sumel, Mosul, and Sinjar
  - APR - MAY: Inception meetings held with subnational authorities and technical counterparts
- **2020**
  - AUG - OCT: Agreements signed with subnational authorities
  - OCT: Start of Phase II shelter rehabilitations in Erbil, Duhok, Sumel, Mosul, and Sinjar
  - AUG: Start of water network rehabilitations around shelters
  - MAR: Capacity building for technical staff in each municipality
- **2021**
  - APR: Completion of 976 house rehabilitations and water network rehabilitations

**BEFORE**

- Damaged house in Sinjar. 2019. Photo © UN-HABITAT

**AFTER**

- Beneficiaries in rehabilitated house in Sinjar. 2020. Photo © UN-HABITAT