In Iraq, years of violence and conflict leave 4 million children in need

At the Kuwait International Conference for the Reconstruction of Iraq, UNICEF and UN-Habitat call for urgent investment to restore basic infrastructure and services for children and families
Photos and video are available for download here
Download the UNICEF-UN-Habitat assessment*, "Committing to Change - Securing the Future" and Fact Sheet* here

AMMAN/CAIRO/BAGHDAD, 11 February 2017– Violence may have subsided in Iraq, but it has upended the lives of millions across the country, leaving one in four children in poverty and pushing families to extreme measures to survive.

Without investment to restore basic infrastructure and services for children, the hard-won gains to end conflict in Iraq are in jeopardy, according to a UNICEF and UN-Habitat assessment, *Committing to Change – Securing the Future.*

The conflict turned Iraq's major cities into war zones with significant damage to civilian infrastructure, including homes, schools, hospitals and recreation spaces. Since 2014, the United Nations has verified 150 attacks on education facilities and 50 attacks on health centres and personnel. Half of all schools in Iraq now require repairs and more than 3 million children have had their education interrupted.

"Children are Iraq's future," said, Geert Cappelaere, UNICEF Regional Director for the Middle East and North Africa. "The Kuwait Conference for Iraq this week is an opportunity for world leaders to show that we are willing to invest in children - and through investing in children, that we are willing to invest in rebuilding a stable Iraq."

As displaced families return, many find that their homes require major repairs, exacerbating pre-conflict housing shortages in the country. In the city of Mosul, over 21,400 homes have been damaged or destroyed. The poorest families have no other choice but to live in the ruins of their homes, in potentially hazardous conditions for children. Some have taken their children out of school and put them to work. Many children were forced to fight an adults' war.

"Children are hardest hit in times of conflict, and Iraq urban crisis recovery and reconstruction should be prioritized, adequately supported and quickly implemented, with special attention to vulnerable people, including children" said, Zena Ali Ahmad the Director of Arab Region of UN-Habitat.

At the Kuwait Conference for Reconstruction in Iraq, from tomorrow to 14 February, UNICEF and UN-Habitat are appealing for firm commitments to restore basic infrastructure and services for children, including in education, psycho-social support, health and water, sanitation and hygiene, and housing.
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