

**Reintegration through Integrated Support and Empowerment (RISE)  
MPTF OFFICE GENERIC PROGRAMME<sup>1</sup> NARRATIVE PROGRESS REPORT  
REPORTING PERIOD: 1 JANUARY – 31 DECEMBER 2024**

<p><b>Programme Title &amp; Project Number</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Programme Title: Reintegration through Integrated Support and Empowerment (RISE)</li> <li>● Programme Number: JIQ00</li> <li>● MPTF Office Project Ref. Number<sup>3</sup>: 00140372</li> </ul> <p><b>Participating Organization(s)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● United Nations Development Programme</li> <li>● United Nations Children's Fund</li> </ul>	<p><b>Country, Locality(s), Priority Area(s)<sup>2</sup></b></p> <p>Country/Region: Iraq (Anbar, Kirkuk, Ninewa, Salah al Din governorates)</p> <p>Priority area/ strategic results</p> <p><b>Implementing Partners</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● National counterparts: Ministry of Migration and Displacement, Office of the National Security Advisory.</li> <li>● UNDP Responsible Parties: Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue (HD), Welthungerhilfe (WHH).</li> <li>● UNICEF Responsible Parties: Sabe' Sanabul Organization for Relief and Development (SSORD).</li> </ul>																
<p><b>Programme/Project Cost (US\$)</b></p> <p>Total approved budget MPTF /JP Contribution<sup>4</sup>:</p> <table> <tr> <td>-European Union</td> <td>USD 5,441,244</td> </tr> </table> <p>Agency Contribution</p> <table> <tr> <td>-UNDP</td> <td>USD 100,000</td> </tr> <tr> <td>-UNICEF</td> <td>USD 100,000</td> </tr> </table>	-European Union	USD 5,441,244	-UNDP	USD 100,000	-UNICEF	USD 100,000	<p><b>Programme Duration</b></p> <table> <tr> <td>Original Duration</td> <td>18 Months</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Current Duration</td> <td>23 Months</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Start Date</td> <td>1 June 2023</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Original End Date</td> <td>30 November 2024</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Current End Date</td> <td>30 April 2025</td> </tr> </table>	Original Duration	18 Months	Current Duration	23 Months	Start Date	1 June 2023	Original End Date	30 November 2024	Current End Date	30 April 2025
-European Union	USD 5,441,244																
-UNDP	USD 100,000																
-UNICEF	USD 100,000																
Original Duration	18 Months																
Current Duration	23 Months																
Start Date	1 June 2023																
Original End Date	30 November 2024																
Current End Date	30 April 2025																
<p><b>Progr. Assessment/Review/Mid-Term Eval.</b></p> <p>Assessment/Review - if applicable please attach</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No Date: dd.mm.yyyy</p>	<p><b>Report Submitted By</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Name: Judy Wakahiu</li> <li>○ Title: Social Cohesion Team Leader</li> <li>○ Participating Organization (Lead): UNDP</li> <li>○ Email address: judy.wakahiu@undp.org</li> </ul>																

<sup>1</sup> The term "programme" is used for programmes, joint programmes and projects.

<sup>2</sup> Strategic Results, as formulated in the Strategic UN Planning Framework (e.g. UNDAF) or project document;

<sup>3</sup> The MPTF Office Project Reference Number is the same number as the one on the Notification message. It is also referred to as "Project ID" on the project's factsheet page the [MPTF Office GATEWAY](#)

<sup>4</sup> The MPTF or JP Contribution, refers to the amount transferred to the Participating UN Organizations, which is available on the [MPTF Office GATEWAY](#)

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<u>Abbreviation</u>	<u>Definition</u>
HD	Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue
CPIMS	Child Protection Information Management System
CBR	Community-Based Reintegration
COMSEC	Council of Ministers Secretariat
DoA	Description of Action
ECD	Early Childhood Development
GoI	Government of Iraq
IOM	International Organization for Migration
LPC	Local Peace Committee
MHPSS	Mental Health and Psychosocial Support
MoMD	Ministry of Migration and Displacement
MoLSA	Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs
NCE	No-Cost Extension
NES	Northeast Syria
ONSA	Office of the National Security Advisory
PHCC	Primary Health Care Center
PMF	Popular Mobilization Forces
PMO	Prime Minister's Office
RISE	Reintegration through Integration Support and Empowerment
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
TPM	Third Party Monitoring
UNSDCF	United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
VT	Vocational Training
WHH	Deutsche Welthungerhilfe e.V.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Reintegration through Integration Support and Empowerment (RISE) Joint Programme, launched in June 2023 and implemented by UNDP and UNICEF, aims to support the Government of Iraq in reintegrating Al-Hol returnees and fostering community acceptance in Anbar, Kirkuk, Ninewa, and Salah al-Din. The programme employs a three-tier reintegration approach at the individual, community, and institutional levels, demonstrating substantial progress and impact across all three. The RISE Joint Programme has made significant strides in reintegration and community acceptance efforts by delivering critical livelihood, mental health, and child protection services while also building the capacity of government institutions and local actors. Through targeted interventions at the individual, community, and institutional levels, the programme is contributing to long-term social cohesion and sustainable reintegration outcomes.

- High-level engagement: The programme facilitated strategic discussions with government officials on reintegration challenges, particularly in livelihood support, psychosocial assistance, and the reintegration of women and girl returnees.
- Socio-economic reintegration: A total of 587 beneficiaries (278 women), including 293 Al-Hol returnees and 294 community members, participated in vocational and business skill development training, equipping them with essential tools for economic self-sufficiency. The programme also established and operationalized an MHPSS center in Mosul, in addition to providing the 587 beneficiaries also received structured MHPSS services
- Capacity building in community-based reintegration: A Training of Trainers (ToT) was conducted for 16 participants (7 women) from key government ministries, civil society, and community leadership to enhance their technical knowledge of community-based reintegration. Following the ToT, five of the trainees led training sessions for 122 key stakeholders, further strengthening reintegration capacity at the institutional level.
- Child protection and case management: UNICEF expanded child protection services at Al Amal Centre and supported returnee families across Ninewa, Anbar, and Salah al-Din, including HasanSham and Debaga camps. Through static spaces and mobile teams, UNICEF and its partners provided case management, psychosocial support, and parenting programs. During the reporting period, 369 children, including 176 girls, received case management services, while 732 caregivers, including 585 women, participated in structured parenting programs, enhancing their well-being and community involvement in areas of return.
- Expansion of psychosocial support for children: A total of 403 children, including 213 girls, benefited from non-structured psychosocial support, while 4,719 children participated in structured activities aimed at reducing psychological distress and building resilience.
- Strengthening child protection systems: 38 social workers and supervisors, including 22 women and 16 men, on case management to support two national and ten sub-national Childhood Care Units. Government officials from MoLSA and

COMSEC were introduced to the Child Protection Information Management System to support its adoption. Additionally, a Case Management Task Force was established, comprising four MoLSA staff, including three women, UNICEF implementing partners, and child protection units in Ninewa and Anbar, to improve coordination, referrals, and service mapping.

The programme faced some challenges related to complexities around beneficiary selection, ensuring continuity of critical support services, and delays in return processes thus impacting timely implementation. As a result, the programme submitted a No-Cost Extension (NCE) request in November 2024. The NCE stipulated the justification for the request and specified the changes made to the DoA, as listed below:

- 1) Composition of the Steering Committee
- 2) Changes to targets in the Integrated Results Framework
- 3) Timeline of implementation and subsequent impact assessment.

The NCE request has been approved by the EU through Amendment no 1 to the Contribution Agreement.

## I. Purpose

This Joint-Programme directly responds to Strategic Priority (5): Achieving Dignified, Safe and Voluntary Durable Solutions to Displacement in Iraq of the 2020-2024 United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) of Iraq and the following outcome and outcome indicator:

Outcome 5.1: Strengthened stabilization, development and peace building initiatives support area-based interventions in locations of displacement, return or relocation to enhance the achievement of voluntary, safe and dignified durable solutions for displacement affected populations.

Outcome Indicator 5.1a: Number of activities/services implemented to support the achievement of durable solutions for displacement affected populations

In addition, the Joint-Programme contributes to the following Sustainable Development Goals:

SDG (5): Gender Equality: achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.

SDG (8): Decent Work and Economic Growth: promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all.

SDG (10): Reducing Inequalities: promote universal social, economic and political inclusion.

SDG (16): Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions: Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.

By aligning its objectives with Iraq's UNSDCF and the SDGs, the RISE programme ensures that its interventions are part of a larger, cohesive strategy to restore stability and promote reintegration. The focus on socioeconomic reintegration and community cohesion directly supports the sustainability of return efforts, while addressing root causes such as poverty, lack of access to services, and social exclusion, which can impede long-term reintegration.

The programme's multi-tiered approach—working on individual, community, and institutional levels—ensures that interventions not only target immediate needs but also contribute to systemic changes that will enhance the resilience of communities and promote peace in the long term. The integration of child protection services further ensures that the most vulnerable populations, particularly children, are not left behind in the process of reintegration and recovery, aligning with the overarching purpose of creating a stable, peaceful, and inclusive environment for displaced populations.

## II. Results

### Outcomes

Overall Objective: Address the reintegration needs of vulnerable children, young persons, adults, and other stigmatized groups such as families with perceived ISIL-affiliation returning to Iraq from NES, as well as of conflict-affected host community members.			
Indicators	Baseline	Target	Implementation Progress
The intervention responded to a new/emerging crisis (not at all, limited degree, medium, significant, fully) - (EU Indicator, New and/or emerging crisis)	0	Medium	The programme continued to respond to emerging crises related to the reintegration and acceptance of Al Hol returnees. Further impact will be captured through an impact assessment exercise following the completion of activities.
The intervention minimized negative risks and maximized positive outcomes on peace	0	Yes	The programme continued to maximize positive outcomes on peace and security. Further

and security (Y/N) - (EU Indicator, Conflict-sensitivity)			impact will be captured through an impact assessment exercise.
Level of confidence in the return process expressed by communities in locations of interventions - (EU Indicator, Refugees, IDPs, & Stateless Persons)	0	Positive	Confidence levels will be assessed through an impact assessment exercise. However, based on initial interactions with project beneficiaries, positive responses have been provided for reintegration support.
Project Specific Objective (1): Support national and local authorities and communities to enhance community acceptance of the returnees, including ISIL-perceived families.			
indicators	Baseline	Target	Implementation Progress
The activities were appropriate response to the new/emerging crisis which led to the expected results (not at all, limited degree, medium, significant, fully) - (EU Indicator, New and/or emerging crisis)	0	Medium	Fully. Activities were designed to directly respond to the growing need to support returnees from Al Hol, adults and children, and to promote community acceptance at the community and national level.
Project Specific Objective (2): Promote socio-economic reintegration of the most vulnerable and at-risk people			
Indicators	Baseline	Target	Implementation Progress
% of families with livelihoods support who have materially improved living conditions (M/W) - (EU Indicator, Economic Recovery/Livelihood)	0	40%	An impact assessment exercise will be conducted to determine improved living conditions at the end of the project.

Number of targeted individuals who report improved well-being (reduced level of distress) (M/W) - (EU Indicator, Preventing/Countering VE)	0	350	An impact assessment exercise will be conducted to determine improved well-being at the end of the project.
Project Specific Objective (3): Enhance availability and accessibility to protection and legal services for children			
Indicators	Baseline	Target	Implementation Progress
The intervention was implemented using a conflict sensitive and do no harm approach (not at all, limited degree, medium, significant, fully) - (EU Indicator, Conflict Sensitivity)	0	Medium	Fully. The programme ensured that selection of beneficiaries was done through a conflict-sensitive approach and that Do No Harm principles were consistently streamlined in all forms of implementation.

The RISE programme has made significant progress in addressing new and emerging challenges in the return and reintegration process of Al-Hol returnees in Iraq. The programme has demonstrated a high level of responsiveness to these challenges, continuously adapting its strategic approaches to align with the rapidly evolving situation on the ground.

The programme's design and implementation have been informed by a deep understanding of local dynamics, ensuring that return and reintegration interventions are both timely and aligned with government priorities and the UN's One Plan for Supporting Iraqi Nationals Returning from Northeast Syria. Throughout implementation, a strong focus on conflict sensitivity has been maintained by adhering to a "Do No Harm" approach, particularly through community engagement in the beneficiary identification and selection process. This approach has been instrumental in advancing sustainable reintegration and fostering social cohesion within affected communities.

A final impact assessment will be conducted upon the programme's completion in April 2025 to evaluate its overall effectiveness and specific objectives. This assessment will provide insights into the programme's relevance and impact in promoting and supporting the reintegration of returnees from Al-Hol Camp.

## Outputs

Output 1: Facilitation of the return of displaced persons to Iraq, including ISIL-perceived families, is fostered through dialogues and social cohesion interventions.

Through active engagement with and mediation between local leaders, civil society representatives, and government officials, the programme has effectively fostered critical discussions on reintegration challenges, such as sexual exploitation and abuse, documentation barriers, compensation, economic struggles, and the societal stigma returnee's encounter. By establishing dialogue initiatives, the programme has created a platform for open communication and collaboration, leading to key government commitments to address the needs of vulnerable returnees and strengthen social cohesion.

Indicator	Baseline	Target	Implementation Progress	Status
# of reconciliation initiatives/dialogues set up - (EU Indicator, Mediation, Conflict Prevention and Resolution and Reconciliation)	0	6-10	Eight reconciliation initiatives/dialogues have taken place among key stakeholders at the national and sub-national level to address issues that may impede reconciliation efforts.	Achieved
# of individuals engaged in inter-faith dialogues/communication channels (M/W/B/G)) - (EU Indicator, Preventing/Countering VE)	0	20	Three-hundred and fifty-three people were engaged.  The programme has overachieved this target as it was found that addressing such complex issues required greater engagement with community members and key stakeholders at the sub-national and national level.	Achieved
# of bi-lateral meetings (Project Indicator)	0	100	One-hundred and thirty-five bi-lateral meetings were held.  The programme has overachieved this target as it was found that addressing such complex	Achieved

			issues required greater engagement with community members and key stakeholders at the sub-national and national level thus resulting in a greater number of bi-lateral meetings.	
# of events organized or supported (EU Indicator)	0	12	<p>Thirty-five events were held in project locations.</p> <p>The programme has overachieved this target as additional field visits (events) were required to take place due to the challenging issues that needed to be addressed with key stakeholders.</p>	Achieved

### 1.1 Number of reconciliation initiatives/dialogues set up.

Eight reconciliation dialogues were held to address reintegration challenges, engaging key stakeholders, including local leaders, government officials, and tribal representatives. Discussions highlighted harassment, extortion, sexual exploitation, bureaucratic barriers, and a lack of documentation, psychosocial support, social interaction and livelihood opportunities for returnees as key issues impacting sustainable and peaceful reintegration. Concerns were also raised over the continued use of the banned kitab al tabri'a (disavowal statement). Issues were documented by the Office of the National Security Advisory (ONSA) and reported to the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) through individual and then joint dialogue and mediation actions implemented by the project.

A focused dialogue between three female activists and a senior PMO advisor addressed the social stigma and abuse faced by female returnees. The advisor acknowledged concerns, including smuggling from Al-Hol, and pledged follow-up actions. A reconciliation meeting was also held with Al-Jaghaifa clan leaders in Haditha, who expressed concerns over lingering ISIL ideologies, justice for victims, and the need for youth services. After being provided a space to dialogue and be heard, leaders agreed to facilitate safe returns and engage with senior officials in Baghdad.

In Al-Qaim, the project facilitated dialogue between the Albu Mahal tribe and ONSA to address resistance to returns. This led to a high-level ONSA delegation visiting Saada village, where key issues—compensation, services, security, and tribal concerns—were

discussed. A major outcome was the signing of the Peace Document of the Albu Mahal Clan, reaffirming commitments to social cohesion, the rule of law, and safe returns.

This dialogue session, attended by senior government representatives, security officials, and tribal leaders, served as a platform to address long-standing grievances related to displacement, security, and inadequate services. Key issues included unresolved compensation claims, the return of displaced families, and the need for improved infrastructure, healthcare, and education. Tribal leaders emphasized their community's sacrifices in resisting ISIL and the state's failure to compensate them adequately. The ONSA delegation, led by senior official Mr. Saeed Al-Jayashi, pledged ongoing support and collaboration with local authorities to address these concerns.

The Peace Document outlined commitments by tribal leaders and community members to uphold social cohesion, reject retaliation, and support legal accountability for those involved in terrorist crimes. It emphasized cooperation with security forces, assistance in identifying and reporting suspected militants, and ensuring that returnee families with no direct links to ISIL are reintegrated through community consultations. The document also advocated for economic recovery, particularly in agriculture, and called for fair compensation for victims of past conflicts.

Concrete steps resulting from the conference included resolving long-standing disputes over land and property, with unlawfully seized homes and a school returned to their rightful owners. Control over key security checkpoints was transferred to the Federal Police, and vulnerable individuals were included in social welfare programs. Additionally, commitments were made to rehabilitate Al-Qaim Hospital and improve public services, including road repairs and street lighting. These measures aim to foster stability and create conditions for sustainable reintegration in Saada village and surrounding areas.

The impact of the eight rounds of dialogue is twofold: 1) many host community grievances were addressed leading to them becoming more receptive to returns; and 2) returnee concerns were addressed allowing for the removal of certain barriers to their return. Reluctant tribal and other local leaders and officials became more flexible after attention was given to them, or after they were afforded opportunities to express their concerns and grievances to government or NGO officials. The government also reduced barriers and facilitated compensation and helped solve other problems obstructing returns, such as the presence of militias.

## 1.2 Number of individuals engaged in inter-faith dialogues/communication channels.

Cumulatively, 353 individuals (52 women and 77 youth) participated in dialogues and discussions focused on resolving key bottlenecks to safe and sustainable returns. The programme regularly engaged with high-level officials, Iraqi political party members, Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF) leaders, tribal leaders, civil society activists and

international non-governmental organizations to deepen its understanding of the challenges returnees face and the role of local authorities in addressing these issues.

For instance, in Haditha, Anbar governorate, the community suffered significant losses during the ISIL siege, with over 800 men killed, compounding casualties from previous conflicts with al-Qaeda and ISIL. This led to the formation of four tribal militias, which continue to operate with significant influence, limiting the authority of civilian leadership. In Garma, tribal diversity enables returnees, including families of former ISIL fighters, to reintegrate, often through smuggling. However, many returnees—especially women whose husbands were ISIL fighters—face harassment, exploitation, and severe economic hardship, struggling to secure housing, education, and essential services. Corruption, political favoritism, and concerns about sleeper ISIL cells further complicate reintegration efforts. Reports of exploitation, including recruitment into the sex trade, underscore the vulnerabilities faced by returnees. These discussions have helped the programme identify key obstacles that would not have been known without the integration of this mediation into the broader social cohesion reintegration programme and will inform further efforts to support reintegration.

Several field visits to multiple districts in Salah al-Din were conducted, gaining deeper insights into the challenges faced by returnee families from the Al-Hol camp. Persistent community rejection remains a major barrier, with some families leaving their areas of return due to stigmatization and exclusion, opting to move elsewhere or even return to northeast Syria. Coordination gaps between government authorities and security entities further complicate the return process, while a lack of government support for compensation claims from the victims of ISIL has fueled tensions between communities in areas of return and returnees. Legal documentation remains a significant challenge, hindering access to education, employment, and basic services. UNDP's partner, Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue (HD), documented these challenges and brought them to the attention of the Minister of Migration, the National Security Advisory, and the Prime Minister's Office. Separate meetings were held in which the serious nature of the problems was conveyed.

In Sharqat and Beiji, returnees faced strong community rejection due to security concerns and suspicions of ISIL affiliations. Local sheikhs and dignitaries noted that inadequate health, education, and other essential services exacerbate tensions and hinder social cohesion. In Eitha, a village in Sharqat with a high number of returnees, service provision remains severely lacking. Returnees struggle to access basic healthcare and education, with no birth center or emergency care unit available at the local clinic. Additionally, prolonged electricity outages, sometimes lasting days, further hinder reintegration efforts. These findings highlight the urgent need for enhanced coordination and targeted interventions to improve reintegration conditions for returnees.

### 1.3 Number of bilateral meetings

Cumulatively, 135 bilateral meetings were held across the targeted provinces as well as in Baghdad to address return and reintegration challenges. These meetings engaged key tribal leaders, local officials, security personnel, and advisors to the Prime Minister, ensuring ongoing dialogue on security risks, legal documentation, and community tensions. Notably, the project met with Sheikh Ghaleb al Nufus in Beiji, mukhtars in Eitha, and tribal leaders in Kirkuk, including PMF commander Sheikh Issa Sabeel, to discuss return processes and reintegration efforts. The project team also met with the National Security Directorate in Ramadi regarding challenges faced by returnees from Al-Hol and engaged with Jaafar Hussein, the reconciliation and social peace advisor to the Prime Minister, to discuss reintegration barriers in former ISIL -held areas.

Given the sensitivity of these discussions, the bilateral meetings proved essential, as many interlocutors were hesitant to speak candidly in larger forums. The programme also conducted multiple follow-up meetings to ensure sustained engagement and progress. For example, after the dialogue event between female activists and the PMO, the project held bilateral meetings with senior advisors Zeinab Al-Allawi and Fadi Shemmari, as well as Jaafar Hussein. These engagements led to further requests for meetings, including with the chief of police in Anbar, who committed to addressing the abuse and sexual exploitation of female returnees.

Additionally, the project team met with the head of the National Security apparatus in Anbar, who emphasized the need for livelihood projects to prevent exploitation and proposed collaboration with the Social Welfare Department on vocational training and job placement. Psychological rehabilitation and the inclusion of female officials in local administrations to manage returnee affairs were also highlighted as priorities. Security agencies committed to supporting reintegration efforts and agreed to develop a unified database to track returnees, including those smuggled into communities. The head of civil status and passports clarified that returnees must obtain identification in their original districts. One result of these meetings was 30 women were seconded from other State administrations to join the community police in Anbar province.

These bilateral meetings have strengthened coordination, deepened trust between stakeholders, and facilitated concrete commitments to improve reintegration processes particularly regarding sensitive topics that would not normally be raised in public forums.

#### 1.4 Number of events organized or supported.

During this year, 35 field visits were conducted across Anbar, Kirkuk, Diyala, and Salah al-Din to facilitate roundtable discussions and bi-lateral meetings with key stakeholders. These discussions addressed critical reintegration challenges, including access to documentation, social stigma, and limited livelihood opportunities. Participants included local authorities, government officials, community members, and tribal leaders, ensuring broad representation. Communication and coordination among relevant parties were identified as key challenges, leading to a commitment to strengthen these efforts.

In Salah al-Din, multiple visits were carried out in Beiji and Sharqat, where returnee families shared their challenges with the project team. Meetings with local dignitaries focused on integration concerns and service gaps affecting returnees. In Anbar, visits assessed the needs and challenges faced by female survivors of ISIL captivity, including a meeting with the National Security Directorate in Ramadi to discuss legal and security-related concerns. In Kirkuk, the project visited Hawija, engaging with local officials, tribal leaders, and community members to address challenges related to community acceptance, documentation, and employment opportunities for returnees. These problems were noted during field visits and conveyed to relevant government officials, and in addition local representatives were taken to meet government officials so that their communities' problems could be resolved. This has resulted in the initiation of a process to address these problems. This process will result in a round of dialogue to be held with the community and representatives from the PMO to discuss grievances and provide an opportunity for the PMO to respond to these specific issues.

Output 2: Families perceived to be affiliated with ISIL/ returning from NES, as well as community members in areas of return received reintegration support.

The programme has significantly advanced socioeconomic reintegration support for returnees and host community members, ensuring both groups benefit from a comprehensive assistance package. By combining community-level initiatives with the training and engagement of government officials and local authorities on community-based reintegration, these efforts have strengthened reintegration processes at multiple levels and fostered greater community acceptance.

Indicator	Baseline	Target	Implementation Progress	Status
# persons directly benefiting from the intervention (M/W) - (EU Indicator, Obligatory)	0	600 (240w, 360m)	587 beneficiaries (278 women and 309 men) are engaged in socioeconomic reintegration activities that include vocational trainings and business skill development trainings. 13 participants were unable to continue with the activities due to various personal reasons.	Achieved
# of microenterprises supported, disaggregated by owner-gender, location, economic sector - (Project Indicator)	0	550	By providing business grants and vocational training toolkits to establish enterprises, 531 businesses (177 women-run) have been established.	On-track

			Disbursement of the second tranche is pending.	
# of people trained by the EU-funded intervention who increased their knowledge and/or skills (disaggregated by sex and age.	0	120	122 people were engaged and received training on community-based reintegration.	Achieved

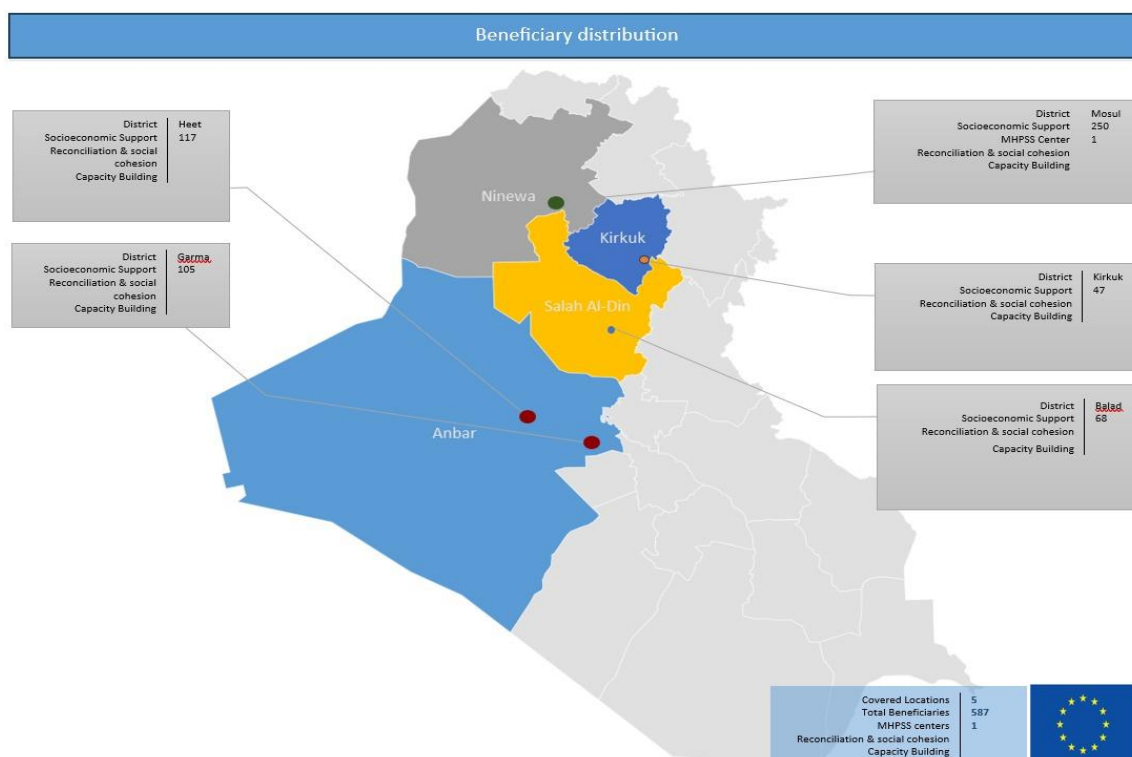
## 2.1 Number of persons directly benefiting from the intervention

To support reintegration efforts and promote community acceptance, 587 individuals (293 Al Hol returnees and 294 community members, 278 women) have received socioeconomic reintegration support. 13 beneficiaries (7 community members, 6 Al Hol returnees) dropped out after starting the implementation of project activities due to different reasons, but mainly; finding another employment opportunity or due to family commitments.

The beneficiaries were selected to receive socioeconomic reintegration support from across Anbar, Ninewa, Kirkuk, and Salah al Din governorates. These beneficiaries were selected using a conflict-sensitive approach and a vulnerability criterion. UNDP conducted a gender-sensitive market assessment to identify in-demand sectors and inform the types of vocational trainings and business support that would be provided. Below is a list of the top five sectors identified from the assessment:

- Handicrafts
- Trade and commerce
- Manufacturing, processing, and mining
- Livestock
- Agriculture

The following map shows the distribution of the 587 beneficiaries who received socioeconomic reintegration support:



## 2.2 Number of microenterprises supported, disaggregated by owner-gender, location, and economic sector.

The programme adopted a two-track approach to support sustainable livelihoods for beneficiaries. The first track focused on business development training and grants, supporting 396 individuals to establish microenterprises. The second track provided targeted vocational training along with toolkits 191 participants, equipping them with the necessary resources to start their own businesses. Of the 396 individuals that participated in the business track, 340 businesses were established, 44 of which were joint ventures, with beneficiaries combining their grants to create larger and potentially more sustainable enterprises. A breakdown of these businesses is provided below:

	Business Track Enterprises	Vocational Training Toolkit Enterprises	Total Enterprises
Anbar	125	75	203
Ninawa	141	79	220
SAD	42	22	64
Kirkuk	32	15	47
Total	340	191	531

Established businesses ranged from:

- Construction
- Home furniture
- Plumbing and electrical maintenance
- Shoe stores
- Library (stationary, photocopies, printing)
- Car maintenance.

An impact assessment will be conducted once interventions have been completed to provide further details on the impact of the business grants and vocational toolkits.

### 2.3 Number of people trained by the EU-funded intervention who increased their knowledge and/or skills.

To strengthen technical capacity in Community-Based Reintegration (CBR) training delivery, UNDP organized a Training of Trainers (ToT) for 16 trainees from the Ministry of Migration and Displacement (MoMD), ONSA, and other key ministries. The training focused on developing their ability to design and conduct effective training sessions on CBR. Following the ToT, the top five trainees were selected to deliver a three-day CBR training to 122 participants, including 35 women, from various governmental organizations such as the Ministry of Migration and Displacement, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Youth, women's organizations, local peace actors, and mayors. The training aimed to enhance participants' knowledge and skills in CBR, equip them with tools to plan and implement training activities, and improve their ability to monitor and evaluate training programs.

A total of 102 participants who completed the CBR training reported improved knowledge of CBR, as measured by pre- and post-assessments. The remaining 20 participants were not included in the assessments due to either absence during the distribution of the pre- and/or post-assessments, however, were present during the entire CBR training.

Additionally, the programme has developed a CBR Handbook and Training Manual in both Arabic and English to serve as a resource for future training initiatives. The manual is currently under review and finalization.

Output 3: The protection of child rights, including legal rights, among repatriated Iraqis improved

Significant advancements have been made in enhancing the protection of child rights among repatriated Iraqi children. Through structured psychosocial support, legal assistance, and capacity building for government staff and social workers, the programme has successfully provided critical services to thousands of vulnerable children and their families. Efforts to secure civil documentation, including birth registration for children, have enabled better access to essential services such as education and health care. These

achievements reflect the programme's commitment to safeguarding the rights of children and ensuring their successful reintegration into society.

Indicator	Baseline	Target	Implementation Progress	Status
# of children (boys and girls) reached with structured psychosocial support services (equivalent to the EU indicator "Number of Persons directly benefiting from the intervention)	0	8,880 (4,440g, 4,440b)	5,122 children (2,485 girls and 2,637 boys) have been reached through structured psychosocial support services.	Ongoing
# of social service workforce/ civil society trained on child rights and child protection (equivalent to the EU indicator "Number of Persons directly benefiting from the intervention)	0	290 (145w, 145m)	230 government staff, teachers, and social workers (144 women) have been trained on child rights and child protection.	Ongoing
# of children (boys and girls) reached with legal support/ birth registration (equivalent to the EU indicator "Number of Persons directly benefiting from the intervention)	0	300 (150g, 150b)	759 children (199 girls, 360 boys, 143 women, 57 men)	Ongoing

### 3.1 Number of children (boys and girls) reached with structured psychosocial support services.

By December 2024, 5,122 children (2,485 girls) had participated in structured and non-structured psychosocial support programmes with support from this grant.

An initial psychological pre-test assessment of children returning from Al-Hol camp in Northeast Syria, after years of confinement, exposure to violence, exploitation, and neglect, revealed a range of complex mental health and psychosocial issues. Symptoms included PTSD (flashbacks, nightmares, hypervigilance, emotional numbness), anxiety disorders (separation anxiety, social anxiety, generalized anxiety), depression (persistent sadness, withdrawal, loss of interest in activities), aggressive or oppositional behavior (acting out due to past trauma or survival mechanisms developed in the camp), and hyperactivity or attention difficulties (indicative of underlying trauma or stress-related

disorders). These children were then engaged in a range of programme activities, including "Tree of Life" and "Community Mapping, which organized them into groups based on gender and age. Upon completion of this component, a post-test was administered to evaluate the effectiveness and progress achieved through these activities, as well as their impact on children.

UNICEF further coordinated a range of initiatives such as educational sessions, athletic quests and imaginative workshops aimed at fostering the development and welfare of the children. These experiences enabled children to acquire new skills, establish connections with peers and freely express themselves within a nurturing setting. The activities offered a diverse range of options, including morning sports, relaxation techniques, the One-Thousand-and-One-Night programme, recreational activities, competitive events, handicrafts and non-formal education opportunities.

The assessments found that there was high improvement in a supportive community due to the available support systems; an increase in self-esteem and self-confidence; an increase in positive thinking and optimism; followed by an increase in emotional stability due to a higher prevalence of hobbies and activities made available for children.

Of the 5,122 children who received PSS services, 403 children (213 girls) across Ninewa, Anbar and Salah al-Din benefitted from multiple sessions of non-structured psychosocial support focused on entertainment and recreational activities. These sessions contributed to their well-being by helping them learn, develop life skills, build interpersonal relationships and strengthen problem-solving abilities. The activities supported children in coping with the challenges of displacement and conflict, including the social stigma they face in their communities, where they are often viewed as affiliated with armed groups or ISIL. These interventions are critical investments in children as human capital, laying the foundation for their long-term development, reintegration and the stability of their communities.

3.2 Number of social service workforce/civil society trained on child rights and protection. In 2024, 38 government social service workforce and civil society staff (18 women) were capacitated on child protection approaches, fundamental principles of child rights and case management, bringing the total to 230 social service workers (144 women). The social service workers were trained in return areas, including teachers, social workers from two national and 10 piloted sub-national childhood care units in Ninewa, Anbar, Baghdad, Basra and Muthana, as well as judicial assistants in Juvenile Reformatory Centers. Participants developed a strong understanding of child protection methodologies, fostering a more informed and proactive approach in their roles. The project will continue strengthening the capacity of social workers, legal staff, court staff and educators to support children and young people in Al-Amal Centre and return areas, including Ninewa, Anbar and Salah al-Din.

The project further supported 369 children (176 girls) with case management, including cases of unaccompanied and separated children, cases of violent, abuse and neglect, cases of children in need of legal support and civil documentation, through trained caseworkers in meeting their individual needs. Total 862 children aged 0-5 years (513 girls) enrolled in the Early Childhood Development Centre at Al Amal, while UNICEF continues to support a women's club established within the centre<sup>5</sup> as a platform for conducting focus group discussions, raising awareness and facilitating activities related to parent training.

Additionally, 732 parents and caregivers (including 585 women) have participated in structured parenting programmes, where child rights are explained alongside child development issues and the support required by caregivers in these developmental stages.

3.3 Number of children (boys and girls) reached with legal support/birth registration. By December 2024, 759 people (199 girls, 360 boys, 143 women, 57 men) received legal support and successfully secured civil documents, including birth certificates.

To date, over 13,000 returnees have arrived, with another 15,000 expected this year. Over 60 per cent of those returning from Al-Hol camp are children, many of whom, along with their caregivers, lack civil documentation. Resolving complex cases requires a court process, further increasing the demand for legal assistance. The high number of cases requiring documentation exceeded initial projections, prompting UNICEF to intensify efforts to reach as many beneficiaries as possible, resulting in surpassing the initial target. In fact, UNICEF will continue to provide legal aid through trained lawyers and civil documentation, including birth registration for returnee children.

## Challenges

Challenge	Mitigation Measures
Sensitivity around beneficiary selection, including Al Hol returnees, required longer than planned.	The programme put in place additional measures to maximize inclusivity and a participatory approach to ensure the selection of the most eligible individuals of Al Hol returnees and community members. A two-phase process is used: Selection and verification. The first phase is led by Local Peace Committees, chaired by the mayor, with a list of identified community members and Al Hol returnees using a preliminary vulnerability screening. This list is then shared with the Responsible Party

<sup>5</sup> Women's clubs are community-based groups that provide peer support and opportunities for women to participate in addressing issues affecting their children. They are part of broader community protection mechanisms.

Challenge	Mitigation Measures
	for a verification process using a comprehensive vulnerability assessment and ensuring AI Hol documentation is collected. This maximizes inclusivity and participation.
Frequent Movement of Returnees: Returnees frequently relocate due to economic, security, and stigmatization issues. They also fear tribal retaliation.	UNDP's field facilitators maintain the list of AI Hol returnees when they arrive to the areas of return to keep informed of the areas that have the highest number of returnees for future programming. UNDP provided targeted technical assistance to the Ministry of Migration and Development (MoMD) to strengthen its institutional capacity and enhance service delivery for returnees and reintegration efforts. This support involved the secondment of two specialized technical staff to the Jeddah 1 Rehabilitation Center: A Coordination Officer and an MHPSS Specialist. A Coordination Officer will streamline communication and coordination efforts directly with MoMD and as MHPSS plays a critical role in the rehabilitation process, the presence of an MHPSS professional to strengthen MoMD will benefit the programme.
Registration of children born from unregistered marriages whose fathers are missing or incarcerated because of the war remains challenging for lawyers. This is aggravated by the negative social attitudes of some officials who are reluctant to offer support.	Mitigation measures include classifying the most complex cases, continuing coordination with other actors under the protection platform and advocating with judicial authorities to find legal solutions.
Enrolment of children/back to learning is challenged by the unavailability of civic documents, especially where schools are already overcrowded and function for three shifts per day. Access is also an issue due to long distances to schools and the lack of public transportation.	Local committees established for child protection advocacy at community levels have successfully enabled children with exceptional cases to continue their academic year. This serves as a reintegration mechanism for children formerly associated with conflict armed groups and ISIL.
Delays in the return process: The return process for displaced persons,	The dynamic nature of the situation on the ground requires flexibility in our approach

Challenge	Mitigation Measures
particularly returns to host communities, has been slower than anticipated. This has resulted in extended stays in Jeddah 1 and other locations beyond the expected duration.	to ensure the sustainability of reintegration efforts. This flexibility includes the expansion of beneficiary selection with the selection of informal returnees.

### **Lessons Learned:**

- **Strong Coordination and Collaboration:** Ongoing coordination among government agencies, UN partners, and civil society is essential to prevent duplication of efforts and ensure effective implementation. Platforms such as the Technical Working Group on the Implementation of the Global Framework in Iraq, the Reintegration Taskforces, and the Child Legal Protection Task Force play a crucial role in streamlining efforts.
- **Flexibility in Reintegration Efforts:** The voluntary return process has been slower than anticipated, leading to extended stays in transitional centers. A flexible approach is necessary to adapt to the evolving situation and sustain reintegration efforts.
- **Investments in Social Cohesion:** Community acceptance is key to sustainable reintegration. Engaging local peace actors, including community leaders and influencers, helps promote social harmony and facilitates the reintegration of returnees, particularly female-headed households and children.
- **Sustaining Child Protection Services:** Many host communities and areas of return lack adequate child protection services. Continued investment in human and financial resources is necessary to maintain effective child protection mechanisms, including the Childhood Care Units in Ninewa and Anbar.
- **Comprehensive Reintegration Approach:** A holistic strategy that combines legal, economic, and social support is essential in preventing marginalization. Civil registration efforts must be integrated with broader reintegration programs to address the diverse needs of returnees.
- **Advocacy for Legal Reforms:** Legal frameworks should be improved to simplify civil registration processes, particularly for children born from unregistered marriages, ensuring their rights are protected and facilitating access to essential services.
- **Community Engagement in Reintegration Planning:** Involving community stakeholders in the planning and implementation of reintegration efforts, such as beneficiary selection through Local Peace Committees (LPCs), enhances community ownership and promotes smoother reintegration.

### **III. Other Assessments or Evaluations**

A Third-Party Monitoring (TPM) mission was initiated in 2024 to assess the impact of the RISE programme. The programme has been in communication with TPM to identify key stakeholders from each output who can provide insightful and beneficial information to the TPM team. Findings of this assessment will be shared with partners during Q1/2025.

The programme is in progress to develop a Terms of Reference to conduct an impact assessment following the completion of interventions in Q2/2025.

#### IV. Programmatic Revisions

The programme submitted and received approval for a No-Cost Extension, extending the programme until April 2025. to allow the partners to implement the remaining activities efficiently and impactfully.

#### V. Resources

N/A

## ii) Indicator Based Performance Assessment

CF Outcome(s): 5.1: Strengthened stabilization, development and peace building initiatives support area-based interventions in locations of displacement, return or relocation to enhance the achievement of voluntary, safe and dignified durable solutions for displacement affected populations.				
Outcome indicator: 5.1a: Number of activities/services implemented to support the achievement of durable solutions for displacement affected populations	Baseline: TBD	Target: TBD	MOV: UN Agencies	
Overall Objective: address the reintegration needs of vulnerable children, young persons, adults, and other stigmatized groups such as families with perceived ISIL-affiliation returning to Iraq from NES, as well as of conflict-affected host community members.				
Indicators	Baseline	Target	MOV	Status
The intervention responded to a new/emerging crisis (not at all, limited degree, medium, significant, fully) - (EU Indicator, New and/or emerging crisis)	0	Medium	Impact assessment report	Ongoing
The intervention minimized negative risks and maximized positive outcomes on peace and security (Y/N) - (EU Indicator, Conflict-sensitivity)	0	Yes	Impact assessment report	Ongoing
Level of confidence in the return process expressed by communities in locations of interventions - (EU Indicator, Refugees, IDPs, & Stateless Persons)	0	Positive	Impact assessment report	Ongoing
Specific Objective (1): Support national and local authorities and communities to enhance community acceptance of the returnees, including ISIL-perceived families.				
Indicators	Baseline	Target	MOV	Status
The activities were appropriate response to the new/emerging crisis which led to the expected results	0	Medium	Progress reports, meetings with	Ongoing

(not at all, limited degree, medium, significant, fully) - (EU Indicator, New and/or emerging crisis)			stakeholders, impact assessment	
---	--	--	---------------------------------	--

Specific Objective (2): Promote socio-economic reintegration of the most vulnerable and at-risk people

Indicators	Baseline	Target	MOV	Status
% of families with livelihoods support who have materially improved living conditions (M/W) - (EU Indicator, Economic Recovery/Livelihood)	0	40%	Field visits, progress reports, impact assessment	Ongoing
Number of targeted individuals who report improved well-being (reduced level of distress) (M/W) - (EU Indicator, Preventing/Countering VE)	0	350	Pre-and-post assessments for MHPSS support	Ongoing

Specific Objective (3): Enhance availability and accessibility to protection and legal services for children.

Indicators	Baseline	Target	MOV	Status
The intervention was implemented using a conflict sensitive and do no harm approach ((not at all, limited degree, medium, significant, fully) - (EU Indicator, Conflict Sensitivity)	0	Medium	Progress reports, field visits, meetings with women stakeholders	Ongoing

Output 1: Facilitation of the return of displaced persons to Iraq, including ISIL-perceived families, is fostered through dialogues and social cohesion interventions.

Indicators	<u>Achieved</u> Indicator Targets	Reasons for Variance with Planned Target (if any)	Source of Verification
Indicator 1.1 # of reconciliation initiatives/dialogues set up - (EU Indicator, Mediation, Conflict Prevention and Resolution and Reconciliation)	Ongoing: 8 initiatives/dialogues held	N/A	Mission and field reports, progress reports

Baseline: 0 Planned Target: 6-10 initiatives			
Indicator 1.2 # of individuals engaged in inter-faith dialogues/communication channels (M/W/B/G)) - (EU Indicator, Preventing/Countering VE) Baseline: 0 Planned Target: 20 participants per round of dialogue	Overachieved: 353 participants have engaged in various roundtable discussions and meetings.	HD was able to secure greater participation in roundtable discussions and meetings, providing more in-depth insight on the challenges in return and reintegration and how to address them.	Mission and field reports, progress reports
Indicator 1.3 # of bi-lateral meetings (Project Indicator) Baseline: 0 Planned Target: 100 bilateral meetings	Overachieved: 135 bilateral meetings have been held with various stakeholders including ONSA, PMO, and governorate-level officials.	Through strong coordination with government stakeholders, HD was able to secure a greater number of bilateral meetings.	Mission and field reports, progress reports
Indicator 1.4 # of events organized or supported (EU Indicator) Baseline: 0 Planned Target: 12 field visits	Completed: 35 field visits have taken place to targeted locations to organize roundtable discussions and meetings with various stakeholders including government officials and community members to discuss and address key issues and obstacles related to reintegration.	N/A	Mission and field reports, progress reports
Output 2: Families perceived to be affiliated with ISIL/ returning from NES, as well as community members in areas of return received reintegration support.			

Indicator 2.1 # persons directly benefiting from the intervention (M/W) - (EU Indicator, Obligatory) Baseline: 0 Planned Target: 600 direct beneficiaries receive support (240 women, 360 men)	Completed– 587 individuals (293 AI Hol returnees and 294 community members, 278 females) have participated in vocational trainings and business skill trainings. 13 beneficiaries were forced to drop out due to personal reasons.	N/A	Attendance records, progress reports, pre/post assessments
Indicator 2.2 # of microenterprises supported, disaggregated by owner-gender, location, economic sector - (Project Indicator) Baseline: 0 Planned Target: 550 microenterprises supported (220 women, 330 men)	Ongoing- Business track and vocational training participants have received their business grants and toolkits to establish enterprises. 533 businesses, both joint and single businesses, have been established.	N/A	Project reports, partner databases
Indicator 2.3 # of people trained by the EU-funded intervention who increased their knowledge and/or skills (disaggregated by sex and age) Baseline: 0 Planned Target: 120 persons	Completed– Training of Trainers for Community-Based Reintegration for 122 stakeholders from relevant governmental and non-governmental actors is currently ongoing. 102 stakeholders reported an increase in knowledge.	N/A	Attendance records, training report, pre/post assessment
Output 3: The protection of child rights, including legal rights, among repatriated Iraqis improved.			
Indicator 3.1 # of children (boys and girls) reached with structured psychosocial support services (equivalent to the EU indicator "Number of Persons directly benefiting from the intervention") Baseline: 0 Planned Target: 8,880 children (4,440 boys, 4,440 girls)	5,122 children (2,485 girls)	N/A	Partner progress reports

Indicator 3.2 # of social service workforce/ civil society trained on child rights and child protection (equivalent to the EU indicator "Number of Persons directly benefiting from the intervention) Baseline: 0 Planned Target: (290 individuals including 145 men, 145 women).	230 people (144 women)	N/A	Attendance sheets from trainings
Indicator 3.3 # of children (boys and girls) reached with legal support/ birth registration (equivalent to the EU indicator "Number of Persons directly benefiting from the intervention) Baseline: 0 Planned Target: 300 children (150 boys, 150 girls)	759 people (199 girls, 360 boys, 143 women, 57 men)	The target was exceeded due to a higher-than-anticipated number of people in need, compelling UNICEF to utilize resources strategically to reach maximum numbers of beneficiaries. Many cases remain unresolved and cannot be left unattended, so even higher numbers may be reported in the next progress report.	Records of civil documentation issued

### iii) Success Stories

#### Civil Documentation for Returnee Children

Years of conflict and displacement have left many individuals returning from Northeast Syria without essential civil documents such as birth certificates, identification cards, marriage certificates, and national ID cards. Without these documents, returnees and their families face significant obstacles in accessing basic services, including healthcare, education for their children, legal rights, and social welfare support, all of which are crucial for successful reintegration.

The lack of civil documentation is particularly challenging for returnees with perceived ISIL affiliations, as it prevents them from proving their identity and legal status. Without proper identification, access to education, healthcare, social services, and employment becomes nearly impossible. Many government agencies and institutions require official documentation for school enrollment, medical treatment, and hiring, leaving undocumented individuals marginalized and excluded from economic opportunities.

In addition to these challenges, the absence of legal documentation affects marriage recognition, custody arrangements, and inheritance rights. Couples without valid marriage certificates may struggle to formalize their relationships or secure legal custody of their children. Likewise, inheritance disputes often arise when returnees cannot provide the necessary documents to reclaim assets, leading to legal and social complications for families attempting to rebuild their lives.

The voluntary return process has been slower than expected, causing prolonged stays in transitional centers such as Al Amal. The sensitivity surrounding beneficiary selection, particularly for returnees from Al-Hol, further delayed implementation. To ensure inclusivity, the project introduced additional measures to maximize participation and facilitate the selection of the most eligible returnees and community members.

To address the issue of civil documentation for returnees from Northeast Syria, the Government of Iraq, in collaboration with UN agencies and non-governmental organizations, adopted a coordinated approach. Key interventions included:

- **Prioritizing Complex Cases:** Legal teams classified and prioritized the most challenging cases, particularly those involving missing or incarcerated fathers, to ensure targeted support for families facing the greatest barriers to registration.
- **Strengthening Coordination with Stakeholders:** Lawyers worked within a broader protection framework, engaging government agencies, NGOs, and community groups to provide legal assistance and navigate the complexities of reclaiming civil rights. By leveraging collective expertise and resources, these actors worked collaboratively to address challenges and provide comprehensive support to affected families.
- **Advocating with Judicial Authorities:** Lawyers engaged in advocacy efforts to raise awareness among judicial authorities about the unique challenges faced by children born from unregistered marriages, particularly in conflict-affected areas. By pushing for legal reforms and policy changes, these efforts aimed to streamline the registration process and safeguard children's rights, regardless of their parents' circumstances.

Given the dynamic nature of the situation, flexibility in approach remains essential to ensure sustainable reintegration efforts.

With support from this grant, 759 individuals (199 girls, 360 boys, 143 women, and 57 men) received legal assistance and successfully obtained civil documentation, including birth certificates. As a result, they are now able to access fundamental rights and services, assert their legal status, and reintegrate into society. Children can now enroll in school, families can receive healthcare, and returnees have better access to employment opportunities.

By securing these essential documents, beneficiaries have been able to reclaim their legal identity and avoid the marginalization and exclusion that undocumented individuals often face. Continued coordination and advocacy efforts will remain critical to ensuring that all returnees can access the documentation they need to rebuild their lives and fully participate in their communities.

### From Agriculture to Electricity

In July 2024, in the village of Ishaqi, Balad, Salah al-Din, three young men—Mohammed, his brother Watban, and their friend Saad—embarked on a journey that would change their lives. Having spent their entire lives in a community reliant on agriculture and animal husbandry, they had never imagined working in a different field. However, when they learned about a vocational training program on electricity, they saw an opportunity for a fresh start.

The 50-day training was an entirely new experience for Mohammed and his companions. “We knew nothing about electricity before. There were no electricians in our village—whenever we needed electrical repairs, we had to travel to the city,” Mohammed shared.

Despite their initial lack of knowledge, the three friends committed themselves fully to the training. As they learned the fundamentals of electrical work, they not only gained technical skills but also a newfound confidence in themselves. Watban described the impact of the training: “Besides learning about electricity, we felt a sense of well-being and increased confidence. It encouraged us to think differently about our future.”

Their return home in 2017, after three years of displacement in Al-Hol camp, had been fraught with difficulties. Their land and homes were in ruins, and they struggled to provide for their families. Initially, they returned to farming, planting crops and vegetables as they had before. However, they soon realized they needed a more sustainable livelihood to rebuild their lives.

The vocational training gave them a new perspective. With the electrical toolkits they received through the project, Mohammed, Watban, and Saad decided to open their own electrical shop—an untapped line of work in their village. “Looking back, we see that participating in the project was a major turning point in our lives. We learned new skills that changed the way we think and work, giving us the confidence to move into a new phase of our lives,” Saad reflected.

Beyond the technical skills, the training experience created strong social bonds. They made new friends, felt welcomed by the community, and built a support system that extended beyond the

classroom. This sense of connection and encouragement reinforced their belief that challenges could be turned into opportunities for growth.

Now, as they prepare to launch their business, they see a future full of possibilities. Their goal is not only to secure a stable income for their families but also to expand their work and provide job opportunities for others in the area. With their newly acquired skills, they are ready to build a better future—one wire, switch, and circuit at a time.