

## Facts and figures

### Iraq Population

- 37 million

### People in need of humanitarian aid

- 4.1 million

### Refugees

- 242,000 from Syria
- 40,800 from other countries

### Internally displaced persons (IDPs)

- 1.3 million

### Switzerland's annual bilateral and multilateral budget for Iraq

Total approx. CHF 11 million

- Humanitarian Aid (HA)  
CHF 10 million
- Global Programme Migration and Development (GPMD)  
CHF 0.3 million
- Global Programme Water (GPW)  
CHF 0.1 million
- Peace and Human Rights Division (PHRD)  
CHF 0.5 million
- State Secretariat for Migration (SEM)  
CHF 0.2 million

### Key Swiss partners:

- International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)
- International NGO Safety Organisation (INSO)
- UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR)
- World Food Programme (WFP)
- Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC)
- International Rescue Committee (IRC)
- Danish Refugee Council (DRC)
- Kvinna till Kvinna (KtK)
- United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)
- Ministry of Agriculture and Water Resources
- Ministry of Water Resources/ Baghdad

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Women attending an awareness raising session as part of the COVID-19 response @OXFAM

### Context

Iraq is marked by decades of war and destruction, violence, political instability and precarious rule of law. The country is strongly fragmented along confessional, ethnic and religious lines and is split between the political elite and a protest movement that started in October 2019. Conflicting interests of external actors who exert significant influence on the country have further widened the rift in society. In general, Iraq has maintained good relations with most of its neighbours giving it some leverage to ease tensions between the countries in the region.

Three years after Iraq's victory over Islamic State (ISIS), approximately 1.3 million people remain displaced and over four million persons require humanitarian assistance, 2.4 million of whom have acute needs. Those in the most difficult predicament are families with perceived affiliations to extremist groups as they face widespread discrimination and rejection by their communities.

In 2020, COVID-19 threw another spanner in the works of progress aggravating the country's deep-rooted economic, social and political challenges. The economy which has been struggling since oil prices collapsed in 2020 received a new blow with the arrival of the pandemic as it created another hurdle for the Government to initiate much-needed reforms.

The conflict-affected population is faced with a myriad of challenges such as lack of civil documentation; insufficient housing and services due to destruction; limited or no job opportunities; presence of explosive remnants of war in home areas; and threats to their safety and security, including for suspected affiliations to ISIS.

### Switzerland's support to the region

Switzerland aims at meeting the most urgent needs of IDPs and returnees as well as mitigating tensions between the different ethnic groups. Over the next few years, Switzerland's top priority will be to find a durable solution for those in need of humanitarian assistance and enable the people of Iraq to lead a safe and dignified life. However, the ability for humanitarian, development and peacebuilding actors to effectively operate is increasingly constricted as political unrest, government gridlock and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic make cooperation efforts more challenging.

In addition to its humanitarian efforts, Switzerland will also continue to focus on fostering dialogue to improve social cohesion and the peaceful coexistence of actors in the conflicts. It will further contribute to promote human rights and accountability; help develop regional cooperation and prevent the escalation of fragile situations in the Middle East. For this, Switzerland supports peacebuilding processes that help better understand the diverging interests of regional actors thereby enhancing Iraq's position in the region.

The Swiss Cooperation Programme Middle East 2019 to 2022 focuses on four domains: Protection & Migration; Education & Income; Water & Sanitation; and Conflict Prevention & Peace Promotion. Given the protracted nature of the crises in the region, Switzerland's response has a strong emphasis on linking humanitarian engagement with inclusive development-oriented and peace-building interventions.

## Protection & Migration

Conflict-affected and vulnerable persons often live in undignified conditions and have limited or no access to basic protection services. In cooperation with United Nations (UN) agencies, ICRC and non-governmental organisations (NGOs), Switzerland aims to provide the local authorities with technical support on



international protection standards and migration governance. It also offers protection services such as specific support for sexual and gender-based-violence (SGBV), child protection, legal aid and labour rights.

A strategic secondment has been deployed by the [Swiss Humanitarian Aid Unit](#) (SHA) to the office of the UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator (RC/HC/DSRSG) via UNHCR. This deployment aims to strengthen the UN's ability to effectively engage government counterparts on topics pertaining to durable solution for displaced persons.

Switzerland promotes respect for human rights and more accountability for human rights violations in general and in connection with the use of force against civilians during protests.

Protection needs are likely to increase due to the COVID-19 pandemic as borders and parts of the economy have been shut down. This has pushed people into unemployment and poverty and increased social tensions and SGBV.

**Implementing partners:** [ICRC](#), [UNHCR](#), [DRC](#), [NRC](#), [WFP](#), [KfK](#), [IRC](#)

**WOGA actors:** [SDC Humanitarian Aid](#), [SDC Global Programme for Migration and Development](#), [State Secretariat for Migration \(SEM\)](#), [Peace and Human Right Division \(PHRD\)](#)

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## Conflict Prevention and Peace Promotion

Switzerland aims to address root causes of violence and support the prevention of conflict. It works towards peace through the



restoration of relationships and social systems serving the needs of the population as well as the resolution of conflicts. Switzerland supports these efforts through targeted processes including

state and non-state actors at community or national level and through working on legal and political frameworks.

**WOGA actors:** [SDC Humanitarian Aid](#), [Peace and Human Right Division \(PHRD\)](#)

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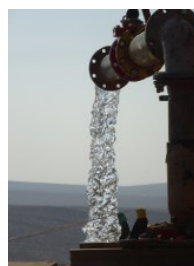
## Water & Sanitation

Historically, Iraq had some of the most abundant water supplies in the Middle East. However, the fact that the flow of the Tigris and Euphrates has dropped significantly since the 1970s has put an additional burden on the water management and supply in

the country. Decades of unfavorable wastewater discharge, irrigation return flows, saltwater intrusion caused by high upstream extraction, low water levels and climate change have left about three in every five citizens without a reliable source of clean drinking water.

Water shortages have fuelled conflict as communities faced with droughts and uncertainties about their future were easy targets for ISIS recruiters who lured farmers into joining them in exchange for money and food. Economic hardship for those relying on river water has caused rural to urban migration putting significant strain on overpopulated towns and cities. This development has exacerbated the dire situation on the house and job market, increased electricity shortages and widened the gap between the haves and have-nots.

Due to several challenges such as the lack of reliable and real energy data, poor water governance and negotiation skills as well as limited knowledge on international water laws and the benefits of good cooperation, Iraq has struggled to reach an equitable and sustainable agreement over the shared water resources with its neighbouring countries. Approximately 70 per cent of Iraq's water originates from Turkey and Iran.



Through the Blue Peace Middle East Programme (*see separate factsheet*), Switzerland supports efforts to transform water from a source of crisis to an instrument of cooperation and peace which is a core element of the regional engagement. The regional programme was established in 2011 and has been instrumental in establishing a common

understanding on the water structure and bridged information gaps between the countries involved, namely Jordan, Iraq, Lebanon, Iran, Turkey and, to a limited extent, Syria.

As far as reducing health risks related to water and sanitation and increasing access to clean water is concerned, Switzerland supports OXFAM and Terre des Hommes in its efforts to rehabilitate water networks in conflict-affected communities that host IDPs and vulnerable returnees.

**Implementing partners:** [Ministry of Water and Irrigation](#), [Yarmouk Water Company](#), [Terre des Hommes](#), [OXFAM](#)

**WOGA actors:** [SDC Humanitarian Aid](#), [SDC Global Programme Water](#)

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