

Strengthening resilience in dealing with crises and conflicts in Nineveh (SRN), Iraq

Enhancing the resilience of returnees, internally displaced persons (IDPs) and host communities in Nineveh Governorate, Northern Iraq

The challenge

Nineveh Governorate in northwestern Iraq is still facing the devastating aftermath of occupation by the terrorist organisation Islamic State (IS) and the ensuing struggles for liberation. Public infrastructure remains partly or completely destroyed. Reconstruction efforts so far have been limited and confined to certain regions, while other regions have been neglected. Neither at local nor national level have strategic plans been drawn up for physical and economic reconstruction. Local administrations are largely inoperational and cannot meet their statutory obligations to provide for the welfare of the population, which renders access to public social services very restricted. The former economy that provided the basis for livelihoods and income opportunities has been ruined under the massive brunt of the hostilities. The situation is further complicated by the deep-rooted tensions and lines of conflict between the various ethno-religious groups. After more than two years since liberation, mistrust between these groups is still high which results in impediments for return to former areas of origin. The lack of trust in the state to provide security for the individual population groups further impedes return processes. Resulting from this overall adverse situation, the main priorities lie on the return of IDPs and reconstruction.

Our approach

In cooperation with the Ministry of Planning (MoP), the objective of the project is to strengthen the resilience of the population in Nineveh for coping with crises and conflicts, by strengthening livelihoods, rehabilitating public infrastructure and fostering social cohesion. All activities are intricately interlinked to create synergies and achieve the best possible impact for the communities. Participatory consultation and negotiation processes with all relevant stakeholders, including of formal and informal leaders, such as mayors, head of directorates, tribal leaders, civil activists and academics build the basis for the joint selection of all project measures. Activities for boosting the local economy and rebuild

public infrastructure are thus complemented by innovative initiatives for improving social cohesion. The inclusion of behavioural science approaches in implementing selected activities raises effectiveness and contributes to gaining new evidence for successful approaches.

The project builds on the results achieved by the projects Stabilising Livelihoods in Nineveh (SLN) and Recovery and Rehabilitation Mosul (RRM).

Project name	Strengthening resilience in Nineveh
Commissioned by	German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)
Project region	Nineveh Governorate
National partner	Ministry of Planning, Iraq
Duration	04/2020 – 06/2024

Aiming at facilitating transparent and participatory planning processes to support peaceful coexistence and social cohesion at the local level, the project works with local peace structures and provides them with capacity development to create awareness towards their communities' needs, especially those of marginalised or underrepresented groups and to reflect on local priorities when designing action plans and implementing initiatives.

Further, measures to rehabilitate social public infrastructure are identified by the communities themselves in transparent consultation processes and implemented by the project. The project further supports activities to strengthen social cohesion on community level with the monitoring of local peace agreements and the negotiation of new agreements to facilitate safe and dignified return of IDPs in Nineveh.

At the same time, the implementation of a social media campaign to showcase diversity in Nineveh and the training of mediators contribute to peaceful coexistence on a broader and more localized level.

In addition, the project supports coordination of peacebuilding activities on governorate level through the Peace and Reconciliation Working Group (PRWG), where representatives of the Iraqi government, international organisations, international



Photo left: Meeting of a Community Dialogue Committee.

Photo right: Participants catching up on missed school education at the Accelerated Learning Center in Wana.

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Photo left: Recipient of a livelihood activation grant, who could open her own food shop.

Photo right: Meeting of the Peace and Reconciliation Working Group.

and national non-governmental organisations along with the civil society exchange, coordinate and evaluate peacebuilding activities.

In the field of livelihoods, the project improves the living conditions of the local population by strengthening the employment prospects and the income situation of individuals and households. The project focuses on three main interventions: Improving the employability of job seekers through technical and vocational education and training (TVET) and job placements, supporting small and medium enterprises (SMEs) through grants, asset recovery and business training as well as cash-for-work for vulnerable households. A special focus lies on those households particularly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, which are additionally supported to secure a minimum income for their families through multi-purpose cash assistance.

For improving perspectives for the youth, the project also supports the rehabilitation of schools offering accelerated learning curricula (ALC), where children (10-18 years) can make up for their missed school education during the IS occupation by taking weekend classes.

Impact

The project maximizes impact by tailoring the interventions to needs on both the individual and societal level. Through regular needs assessments, the activities are customized to local needs.

Further, a conflict and context monitoring system enable the project to regularly adjust its interventions to changing circumstances on the local level. Conflict-sensitive programming allows the project to effectively address community tensions and very importantly, to not create any harm or support harmful actors.

Overall, so far 1200 households have benefitted from grants to (re-) open a business and secure a stable income for their families and 287 entrepreneurs particularly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic received additional financial support, accompanied by further trainings on how to overcome socio-economic shocks. 900 vulnerable people benefit from temporary income through Cash-for-work measures.

With its social cohesion measures, the project reaches approximately 3,3 million people in Nineveh. The communities of Ayadiyah, Zummar and Qayarrah particularly benefit from the monitoring and implementation of a local peace agreement, which facilitates the dignified and peaceful return and reintegration of IDPs. Community Security Forums, where community members have the opportunity to discuss security and peace needs with security actors (e.g. the police) for women have been particularly successful and popular, including the formation of a Women's Peacekeeping Team, a self-organised group that actively seeks out the protection needs of returnees in their communities, particularly female-headed households, and reports them to local decision-makers.

Apart from the above-mentioned, additional measures will expand the project's reach and impact in the future.

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