

# Assisting Reconstruction and Improving Living Conditions in Anbar

Strengthening employment prospects, basic services and citizen-state relationships in Heet, Ramadi and Fallujah

## The challenge

Over the last two decades, Iraq has witnessed a complex multitude of crises. Three distinct violent conflicts, the US-led invasion in 2003, the 2007 insurrection and finally the intense warfare related to the emergence (2014) and liberation (2017) from the so-called Islamic State (IS) have destroyed not only physical infrastructure but undermined opportunities for livelihoods throughout the country and have harmed social cohesion. The governorate of Anbar is one of the areas most affected by destruction and displacement.

While Anbar's rural areas have a rich history of agricultural production, the urban centres have been known for their excellence in skilled crafts and trades. However, the recent crises have negatively affected the framework conditions for businesses and disrupted the market, resulting in a standstill for companies and industries, which undermines the opportunities for employment and entrepreneurship. The resulting unemployment affects women and youth, with 43 percent neither in work nor in vocational education or training.

Moreover, reconstruction of private and public infrastructure, such as housing, electricity networks, water supply, social centres and recreational sites remains stalled, which puts additional strains on the social cohesion in the communities and is not conducive to building trust in local administrations. The resulting poor living conditions remain a hindrance to finding sustainable and durable solutions for the return of displaced people as well as host communities.

## Our approach

The "Assisting Reconstruction and Improving Living Conditions in Anbar" (ARILA) project aims to improve the conditions for improved livelihoods in the three eastern Anbari districts of Heet, Ramadi and Fallujah, to assist a post-conflict transition towards sustainable economic development and to support lasting structural change.

Project name	Assisting Reconstruction and Improving Living Conditions in Anbar (ARILA)
Commissioned by	Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)
Project region	Anbar
Political partner	Ministry of Planning, Iraq
Duration	11/2021 – 06/2025

The ARILA project contains three interlinked components: (1) citizen-centred public services, (2) strengthened citizen-state dialogue and (3) promotion of entrepreneurship and vocational training.

ARILA ensures a close and collaborative partnership with local administrations, especially the Governor's Office and relevant directorates. For the implementation of interventions, ARILA also draws on the strength of implementing partners such as the Near East Foundation (NEF), Mercy Corps or Ambero/*Bildungswerk der bayerischen Wirtschaft* (bbw) and contracts specialised international and Iraqi consulting firms, such as Canadian Leaders in International Consulting (CLIC) as well as local construction companies.



Photo left: preparatory work is going on at the Fallujah Water Treatment Plant.

Photo right: Civil Society Organisation representatives with Mercy Corps staff after training of capacity building on community engagement as part of peace education activities.

### Citizen-centred Public Services

During the first year of implementation, ARILA conducted a series of participatory dialogue sessions to assess and identify local priorities for basic infrastructure. Seven to eight infrastructures per district have been shortlisted for rehabilitation and reconstruction. In 2023, GIZ finished the rehabilitation of the Water Treatment Plants in Fallujah and Heet serving more than 8.000 people. Another measure is the rehabilitation of a football pitch in Heet that will serve the local youth and football teams. The football pitch is close to the Heet Youth Centre, a central hub for ARILA's implementation in the district, which is supported with additional sports equipment and a computer lab. Within Ramadi City, three areas have been developed into recreational parks for the residents.

To strengthen the local administrations' capacities to maintain and expand citizen-centred services, more than 70 technical staff in the directorates for electricity, water resources, youth, and sports, as well as staff in the municipal and mayor's offices, have received training on operation and maintenance and sustainable service delivery.

### Strengthened Citizen-State Dialogue

To improve state-citizen relationships, ARILA aims at strengthening linkages and foster dialogues between communities and local government representatives along social challenges and potential conflict drivers in the communities (e.g. access and quality of basic service delivery).

To achieve this ARILA follows a twin track approach. On the one hand, ARILA strengthens and enables local government structures to effectively and inclusively respond to the needs and concerns of the communities, including women and other vulnerable population groups. On the other hand, ARILA aims at creating avenues for community members to voice their specific needs to the government, e.g. regarding inclusive service provision that meets the specific needs of all population groups.

In 2022 ARILA supported the formation of Joint Community Government Communities in the three districts and facilitated various

dialogue sessions. As a result, Community Action Plans have been developed of which selected projects have been implemented in 2023. In 2023 the focus was on intensifying the dialogue between local government representatives and communities. In addition, activities began to reactivate and strengthen the units in charge of citizen complaints in the directorates and to support them in the development of innovative feedback and complaints mechanisms.

### Promotion of entrepreneurship and vocational training

ARILA supports the Anbari populations' access to livelihood and employment opportunities by strengthening local vocational and job-skills training providers as well as supporting start-ups and entrepreneurs to scale their businesses. ARILA's implementation in this regard is guided by the assumption that a solidly educated local labour force in Anbar can fill the vacancies created by scaled businesses resulting in income generation and business growth.

Near East Foundation is implementing a business development and financing facility for micro-, small- and medium enterprises in Anbar. NEF established entrepreneurship hubs at central locations in each of the districts. These hubs are located at government-run facilities and co-hosted by local NGOs, which are being selected on a competitive basis. Local entrepreneurs can access trainings on business skills at Siraj Centres but also via a web-based training platform accessible via a smart phone. Up to 500 entrepreneurs with promising business ideas and scaling potential will receive financial support via needs-based micro grants.

Through Ambero/bbw, ARILA facilitates high-quality and in-demand technical and vocational trainings in cooperation with the Directorate of Labour and Social Affairs and the Al-Anbar Vocational Training Centre in Ramadi. In order to assess which skills are actually in demand on the labour market, CLIC has conducted a detailed Labour Market Assessment. The results were shared with Anbari partner institutions and are being used by Ambero/bbw in providing demand-oriented trainings.

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