

Assisting Reconstruction and Improving Living Conditions in Anbar (ARILA)

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 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 centers 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, which undermined the opportunities for employment and entrepreneurship.

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. 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 draws on the strength of implementing partners such as Near East Foundation (NEF), Mercy Corps, IBF/PPO, Oxfam, Al.Bahaa Organization (‘Makers of Baghdad’), Welthungerhilfe and Ambero/*Bildungswerk der bayerischen Wirtschaft* (bbw), contracts specialised international and Iraqi consulting firms, such as Canadian Leaders in International Consulting (CLIC) as well as local construction companies.

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Citizen-centered 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. Based on that GIZ has implemented 20 rehabilitation measures and handed them over to the respective partner institutions: e.g. 12 low-voltage transformers installed in Ramadi, a drinking water network established in Fallujah, one



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 activi-

drinking water treatment plant rehabilitated in Heet and one in Fallujah, a renovated and equipped youth center in Heet and three smaller local recreation facilities in Ramadi. Furthermore, three infrastructure measures have been implemented by the grant recipient Mercy Corps: a public park in Falluja, additional voltage transformers and the installation of street lighting in Heet.

To also strengthen the local administrations' capacities to maintain and expand citizen-centred services, more than 233 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, maintenance and sustainable service delivery. Furthermore, public service delivery is going to be better targeted at women and vulnerable groups.

In addition, together with Oxfam climate change adaptation plans have been developed on a district-level with input from government representatives, community members and other stakeholders to improve climate resilience. Pilot projects include water level monitoring systems, solar power installations and air pollution monitoring stations.

Strengthened Citizen-State Dialogue

The ARILA project is dedicated to fostering meaningful dialogue between communities and local governments to address critical social challenges, including access to and the quality of basic services. By prioritising the needs of women and vulnerable groups, ARILA works to build trust and mitigate potential conflict drivers within communities. Its holistic approach not only improves the capacity of local authorities to respond inclusively and effectively but also supports citizens to voice their concerns and engage in decision-making processes. This dual focus ensures that state-citizen relationships are strengthened in a sustainable and participatory manner.

To enhance participation, ARILA implemented 16 capacity development measures for administrative staff and civil society actors. These included training on methods for participation, advocacy, inclusion, diversity and innovative formats for citizen-state dialogue on climate change. Efforts also focused on reactivating and improving complaint units in service directorates. Key measures included equipping administrative offices, improving information accessibility (e.g., screens, materials), installing anonymous feedback boxes and launching a complaint hotline.

By integrating capacity development, innovative complaint mechanisms and climate-sensitive dialogue formats, ARILA aims to foster more inclusive governance structures while promoting social cohesion. These initiatives not only address immediate needs but also contribute to long-term community resilience, supporting individuals and institutions to collaboratively tackle future challenges.

Promotion of entrepreneurship and vocational training

ARILA enhances livelihoods in Anbar by strengthening vocational training providers in Fallujah, Ramadi and Heet as well as supporting entrepreneurs and start-ups to scale their businesses. This approach aims to align a skilled local workforce with growing business needs, fostering income generation and economic growth.

NEF provided training in entrepreneurship, financial literacy, and business development to 648 individuals, including 184 women and 464 men. Afterwards, NEF awarded grants to 534 individuals in sectors such as construction, manufacturing and services. 78% of all participants reported income increases or higher business profits. Additionally, the project strengthened 15 small and medium-sized enterprises through climate adaptation training, the integration of solar energy and recycling projects, contributing to cost and resource efficiency.

Together with partners, the consulting consortium Ambero/bbw developed nine standardised occupational profiles based on local market needs, including office administration, electrical and photovoltaic installations and female healthcare. Curricula incorporated essential skills like climate adaptation and resource conservation. After a three-stage training programme for 52 vocational trainers, they already provided qualification trainings to 473 participants, including 68 women and 405 men, enhancing their skills and soft competencies.

The Iraqi grant recipient Al-Bahaa Organisation trained 131 participants, including 30 women and 76 men in graphic design, social media management and digital marketing, with 42 participants securing full-time employment.

In December 2024, Welthungerhilfe built on these structures and began offering additional vocational training programmes to meet labour market needs.

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