17 September 2018  Gladys Gbegnedji

In Iraq, 15 UN Volunteers like Gladys Gbegnedji (Spain, left) review and improve construction designs and develop technical tender documentation. They support dozens of Iraqi engineers by ensuring adequate contract management and monitoring.

Iraq: Taking on the challenge of rebuilding Mosul

The Funding Facility Stabilization of Iraq was established by UNDP in June 2015, to help newly retaken areas from ISIL to return to normal life. The programme is currently implementing more than 1,100 reconstruction and rehabilitation projects in 28 locations in Iraq.

"I can see every day that our impact is huge. Kids can go back to school. Families can return to their villages, because electricity, water supply and sanitation services have been restored. They feel safer, because hospital and clinics have become accessible again. --Gladys Gbegnedji, UN Volunteer Civil Engineer with UNDP Iraq"

Gladys supports a team of twenty-four local engineers, directly involved in the
reconstruction of water treatment plants, schools, electrical substations and hospitals. "My responsibilities include conducting field visits to assess reconstruction projects, review and improve construction designs and develop technical tender documentation," she explains.

Gladys comes from the private sector and has 15 years of experience as Civil Engineer. She worked within some of the largest construction companies worldwide in Spain for 10 years. After spending two years in Ghana and contributing to the construction of nine hospitals there, she decided to offer her expertise to the United Nations and to volunteer with UNDP in Iraq.

She describes it as a rewarding experience. "I remember with special affection when we went to visit several schools in Tel Kaif, a city of 40,000 inhabitants north east of Mosul," she recalls. Iraqi forces recaptured the town from ISIL in January 2017.

"A year and a half later, the rehabilitation of the schools was already completed, and kids were attending classes. Everybody was so grateful to UNDP and to the work done by our team. They all wanted to take pictures with us. That day, I felt really happy and proud."

Many Iraqi women engineers, like Deman Hussain Jalaby (left), are part of the reconstruction and rehabilitation efforts in Iraq. Here, a project for the construction of water wells and a steel reservoir tank is underway in Karamless, an Iraqi town where more than 350 houses, out of 754 damaged, have been restored already (UNDP Iraq/Claire Thomas, 2018)

The surge of violence in Iraq has produced three million internally displaced persons across the country and over 11 million Iraqis in need of humanitarian assistance.

Over 90 per cent of displaced persons live in host communities, predominantly in the Kurdish Region, which experienced a 30 per cent increase in population over two years due to the crisis. Moreover, many Syrians have taken refuge in Iraq.

UN Volunteers, both Iraqis and internationals, have been serving in Iraq since 2011, mainly as Engineers, Community Development Officers, Protection Officers and Programme Officers.

UNV Civil Engineer Gladys Gbegnedji (Spain) and UNV Deputy Executive Director Mr Toilly Kurbanov visit an electrical substation in the Christian majority town of Hamdaniya, which has been rehabilitated with the support of UNDP’s Funding Facility for Stabilization. (UNDP Iraq/Claire Thomas, 2018)
During my visit to Baghdad, Mosul and Erbil, I met more than 50 UN Volunteers, including 15 Iraqi nationals. Many I saw in action taking up assignments alongside UN staff, **rebuilding hope, one family and one volunteer at a time**. Seeing them at work in this country of determination and resilience showed me how local and international volunteers can make a difference for the future of Iraq. UN Volunteers bring know-how, empower civil society and help strengthen local institutions. --Toily Kurbanov, UNV Deputy Executive Coordinator

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**Arab States**

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**Sustainable Development Goal:** SDG 10: Reduced inequalities, SDG 11: Sustainable cities and communities, SDG 17: Partnerships for the goals