

**UNEVOC**INTERNATIONAL CENTRE
for Technical and Vocational
Education and Training

Supplement

3**UNEVOC
Forum****The Oil-for-Food Programme:
Some Challenges in Education for Iraq
in a Post-Conflict Situation**

This paper presents the education component of the Oil-for-Food Programme (OFFP). It aims at describing and analysing its implementation and learning from its strengths and weaknesses. Hopefully, Iraq and the concerned international organisations will benefit from these lessons in their attempts to renew the education sector right after the war in March and April 2003. The paper's coverage, however, is limited to an assessment of the implementation of education projects in secondary and higher education. It does not cover the monitoring of the distribution of educational commodities in the Centre/South of the country.

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His last mission was in Iraq where - as part of the Oil-for-Food Programme - he headed up the UNESCO Unit in Suleimaniyah and later the Needs Assessment of the Education Sector in Iraq.

Background

» Iraq has suffered another war in March and April 2003. The war was short and swift but the devastations on Iraq's institutional infrastructure were massive. Institutions, including education, disintegrated with the downfall of the then Government of Iraq. The 1st Gulf War (1990-91) preceded this unfortunate event, followed by the imposition of a strict economic sanction on Iraq by virtue of the UN Security Council Resolution (SCR) No. 661 (1990).

During the economic sanctions, the United Nations (UN) established in May 1991 the Inter-Agency Humanitarian Programme to meet the humanitarian needs of the Iraqis. On 20 May 1996, the OFFP commenced when a Memorandum of Understanding was signed by the UN and the Government of

Iraq based on the Security Council Resolution No. 986 (1995) as a "temporary measure to provide for humanitarian needs of the Iraqi people." This humanitarian assistance covered the provision of medicine, health supplies, food and other supplies needed by the civilian population. UN agencies were involved in the distribution of the humanitarian supplies under a caveat to regard the sovereignty of Iraq and the national unity of the population. Eventually, the Programme's coverage was expanded to include food, food-handling, health, nutrition, electricity, agriculture and irrigation, transport and telecommunications, water and sanitation, housing, settlement especially for the vulnerable groups and oil-industry spare parts and equipment.

The OFFP was funded exclusively from the proceeds of the Iraqi oil exports as authorised by the Security Council. 72 % of Iraqi oil-export proceeds were allocated to the humanitarian programme, while 25% were used as reparation war payments, 2.2 % were kept for UN administrative and operational costs, and only 0.8 % were used for the Weapons Inspection Programme¹. From the 72 % allocated to the humanitarian programme 50 % were earmarked for the contracting of supplies and equipment by the Government of Iraq for the 15 central and southern governorates and 13 % for the three northern governorates, where the UN implemented the Programme on behalf of the Government of Iraq. These figures may indicate that the OFFP is one of the better-funded emergency programmes of the UN in the world.

Implementation Strategies

» Four UN agencies – UNESCO, UNICEF, WHO and Habitat – implemented the education component of the OFFP. UNICEF's mandates included the pre-primary and primary education. UNESCO was in charge of the secondary education, including teacher training and vocational education, and higher education. WHO covered the medical colleges in universities. And Habitat was involved in building schools for primary and secondary education, complementing UNESCO's responsibility to rehabilitate buildings for higher education institutions and UNICEF's man-

date to build schools for primary education.

The implementation strategy in Northern Iraq, covering three governorates, was different from that in the Centre/South, covering 15 governorates. In the North, UN agencies implemented education projects in addition to providing the secondary schools and higher education institutions with educational commodities. In the Centre/South, project implementation was limited to the provision of educational materials with the UN undertaking the task of observation to

ensure the efficient and effective distribution of humanitarian materials to end users.

In the first three phases², the implementation of education projects was based on UN agencies procuring and distributing educational commodities and materials from a "shopping list" prepared by the local authorities and approved by the Government of Iraq and later on by the 661 Committee in New York. However, starting with phase 4, UN agencies implemented education projects using the usual project-oriented cycle.

Objectives for Education under the Oil-for-Food Programme

UN agencies, particularly UNICEF and UNESCO, pursued the three-pronged objective of (a) increasing access and participation; (b) enhancing the quality of education and increasing students' learning and achievements; and, (c) strengthening institutional capacity.

The first objective of increasing access and participation was meant to improve the gross enrolment ratio and, eventually, to universalise enrolment, including the marginalised groups such as girls and students living in remote and rural areas. Measured by increasing enrolment over a period of

time, interventions included the construction and/or rehabilitation of more schools and the provision of better classroom accommodations, amongst others.

The second objective, enhancing quality education, was measured by increasing students' learning and achievement, using indicators like dropout, failure rates and level of teachers' quality. Even before the OFFP, many teachers were already leaving the profession for greener pastures, forcing the Government of Iraq to hire less competent teachers, which affected the quality of teaching and learning.

The third objective, strengthening institutional capacity, was measured by the educational system's capacity to plan, coordinate, facilitate, implement, monitor and evaluate education projects. It was to improve the institutional capacity of the system, which was adversely affected by the long years of isolation of Iraq from the international community. Thus, the system's education managers did not have the opportunity to enhance their skills and knowledge in new techniques of organisational management as well as in educational policy and strategic planning.

Achievements in Education under the Oil-for-Food Programme

The achievements of UN agencies in education under the OFFP were commendable. From 1996 until 2003, education projects were implemented in areas like construction and rehabilitation of schools, provision of school desks and furniture, provision of laboratory equipment and other didactic materials, training of secondary-school teachers and faculty members from higher education institutions, including education managers and students, as well as strengthening the educational system's capacity to plan and better implement education projects.

Specific achievements³ here are categorised under the three-pronged objective of access, quality and institutional capacity. On increasing access, UNESCO completed the reconstruction of 135 school buildings for secondary education and 32 academic buildings, including dormitories and staff houses, for higher education. A total of 153,500 school desks were distributed before the 2nd Gulf War. On enhancing quality education, 11,083 secondary education teachers and 1,822 faculty members of universities and technical institutes participated in training activities on various subject areas and in modern interactive teaching techniques. In-

ternationally procured education equipment, valued at \$72 million, was delivered and installed. Regarding the strengthening of institutional capacity, UNESCO undertook the professional development of 874 secondary and 71 higher education managers. Additionally, UNESCO supported other activities to strengthen capacity such as a labour market survey in the Suleimaniyah Governorate, school mapping, the computerisation of school records and the establishment of a multi-media resource centre. UNESCO also strengthened research and management, education planning and strategic policy development in higher education.

Projects Aiming at Increased Employability

The underlying objectives of education projects in the OFFP were to enhance the overall capacity of the education sector. However, some projects were implemented aimed at enhancing the skills of senior students in universities and technical institutes as future workers thereby increasing their employability.

1. The Summer Work Internship Project

The Summer Work Internship Project was implemented in coordination with the University of Suleimaniyah in the Suleimaniyah Governorate. The main objective was to help

students gain more skills in their chosen field by giving them the opportunity to immerse themselves in an actual work setting in different occupational groups such as agriculture, manufacturing, communication, media, and social services.

UNESCO and the University of Suleimaniyah coordinated the implementation of the project for two months every summer. A committee headed by a senior professor from the University screened volunteer students. The committee was also responsible for identifying the work place for the students. If chosen, a student would actually work in

his/her preferred field. The committee, through a supervisor, would evaluate the performance of the student, with a special emphasis on work-related skills.

2. The Chalk Factory

The Chalk Factory was a UNESCO project under the OFFP, in coordination with the three northern governorates. Its objective was to produce so much chalk that the country would not have to import any chalk anymore. The target was to produce 20 million chalk-sticks every year for distribution to the schools.

The Chalk Factory was built inside the compound of a gypsum factory in Suleimaniyah. UNESCO did its overall management in coordination with the local authorities in the three governorates. Although the factory had not been used as a training area for vocational students, it could one day serve the purpose in addition to its original objective to produce quality chalks for use in the classrooms.

When UNESCO's programmes in Iraq were

phased out, the Chalk Factory was operational and was producing, on a test run, 1 million chalk-sticks every month.

3. The Labour Market Survey

The Labour Market Survey was a study aimed at determining the relevance of students' training in vocational schools in relation to what the labour market needs. Under the sponsorship of UNESCO, this survey was conducted in the Suleimaniyah Governorate. The basic premise of the study is the belief

that vocational schools in any community are one of the more important instruments for economic growth.

The study found that there was a wide disparity between the needs of the labour market and the skills acquired in vocational schools. There is a need for new fields to be introduced in response to the qualifications and skills required by both the public and private sectors, if not to review the whole vocational education curricula.



Impact of the Oil-for-Food Programme on the Education Sector

>> To determine the impact of education projects under the OFFP on the overall quality of the education sector would require a full-blown impact study. Unless a direct correlation is established between the outputs of education projects under the OFFP and indicators of quality education, it is difficult to categorically say that the present condition of the education sector is the direct consequence of the OFFP. Additionally, the education sector, just as other sectors in Iraq, was adversely affected by the war in March and April 2003. Not so much in Northern Iraq, but in the Centre/South, school buildings were damaged, looted and/or burned, destroying likewise equipment and education facilities. This war, therefore, became an intervening event that will have had an impact on the present condition of the education sector.

Let us look at the condition of the education sector⁴ after the OFFP was phased out after the Security Council had approved Security Council Resolution No. 1483 (2003), which aimed at the lifting of sanctions against Iraq.

In secondary education, 4,042 schools were offering secondary education courses to a total of 1,443,959 students, 62 % were males and 38 % were females. Gross enrolment ratio at the intermediate level was 57.1 % and 22.7 % at the preparatory level. There were 77,368 teachers, indicating a teacher-student ratio of one teacher for every 19 students. While 98 % of the teachers had the basic qualification of a bachelor degree, 54 % of them did not have the opportunity to participate in any in-service training courses. There was a shortage of

secondary education books. The national average for the textbook-student ratio was one textbook for every six students. There was also an acute shortage of school buildings, forcing authorities to resort to school shifting, which shows that 48 % of the secondary schools were operating on a single shift and 52 % were either in double or triple shifts.

In vocational education, 231 vocational schools were offering various fields of specialisations such as industrial (57 %), commercial (14 %), agricultural (4 %), household-related (1 %) and other professions (24 %). The total number of students enrolled was 73,941, of which 81.5 % were males and 18.5 % were females. The gross enrolment ratio in vocational education was a low 4.3 %. It is, however, important to note that the vocational cycle competes with other streams at the preparatory level such as the preparatory cycle and the teacher training for students. There were 5,137 teachers. Thus, the teacher-student ratio was one teacher for every 14.4 students, which is considered as excellent noting the time needed for a vocational teacher to spend with each student supervising skill formation. 91 % of the teachers had a bachelor degree, but 65 % of them need to enhance their knowledge and skills by attending in-service training courses. Just like at secondary level, there was a shortage of books in vocational schools where the textbook-student ratio was one textbook for every five students. There was also a shortage of school buildings. 57 % of the schools were operating either in double or triple shifts.

In teacher training, 151 schools were offering pre-service training for a total of 54,632 students, of which 38 % were males and 62 % were females. This indicates that females still prefer the teaching profession. The total number of teachers was 3,193. Hence, the teacher-student ratio was one teacher for every 17 students. An insignificant percentage of teachers were under-qualified, not having the minimum qualification of a bachelor degree. But a high 68 % of the teachers needed further training. The textbook-student ratio in teacher training institutes was also one textbook for every five students. School buildings were a serious problem, with 73 % of the technical institutes operating on double shifts.

20 universities, 37 technical institutes and 9 technical colleges were offering higher education courses in Iraq. The total enrolment in the 20 universities, including one Commission for Computers and Informatics, was 247,364. In the technical institutes and colleges, about 66,000 students were enrolled. The total number of faculty members teaching in the universities was 19,112, showing a teacher-student ratio of one faculty member for every 13 students. Faculty members in the technical institutions/colleges were 1,783, revealing a teacher-student ratio of one faculty member for every 37 students. There was disparity in the distribution of students and teaching staff amongst the universities with a high concentration in fields like administration, economics, education and mass communication and a low concentration in medicine and agriculture. Amongst the technical institutes/colleges, the preferred fields were engineering and technology, administration

and medicine. There was a high demand for more books and equipment in the field of information and communication technologies. Some representatives of higher education were of the opinion that the revision and updating of the curricula and

restructuring of the organisational set-up of the higher education system were most urgent.

Figures 1 and 2 below show the growth rate of the number of secondary schools and

higher education institutions. The growth rate of student enrolment is shown in Figures 3 and 4 below. The gender distribution is shown in figures 5 and 6.

Figure 1 shows that the growth rate of secondary schools (SEC) between 1997 and 2003 was 30 %, while the growth rate of vocational schools (VOC) was minus 34 %. The growth rate of teacher training institutes (TTI) was phenomenal at 208 % during the same period.

Figure 1: Number of Institutions at Secondary Level (1997 and 2003)

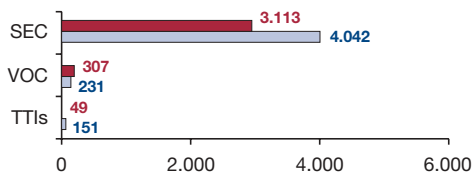


Figure 2: Number of Institutions at Higher Education Level (1997 and 2003)

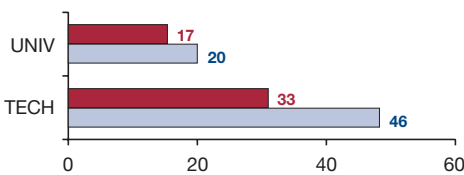


Figure 2, relating to higher education institutions during the same period, shows that the number of universities (UNIV) grew by 18 % and the number of technical institutes and colleges (TECH) by 39 %.

■ 1997 ■ 2003

TTIs: Teacher Training Institutes
 VOC: Vocational Schools
 SEC: Secondary Schools
 TECH: Technical Institutes and Colleges
 UNIV: Universities

Figure 5: Male (M) and Female (F) Enrolment at Secondary Level (%) (1997 and 2003)

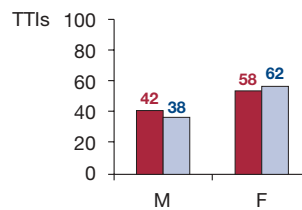
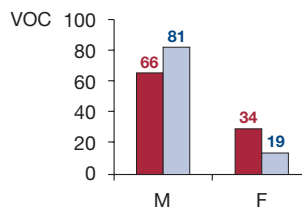
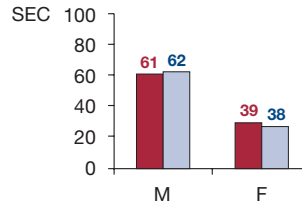


Figure 5 shows a slightly declining participation of female students in secondary schools, from 39 % in 1997 to 38 % in 2003. The worst situation can be found in vocational schools with 34 % of participants being female in 1997 and only 19 % being female in 2003. The participation of females in teacher training institutes was rising from 58 % in 1997 to 62 % in 2003, with the participation of women permanently being higher than that of men.

Figure 6: Male (M) and Female (F) Enrolment at Higher Education Level (%) (1997 and 2003)

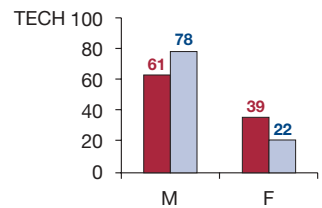
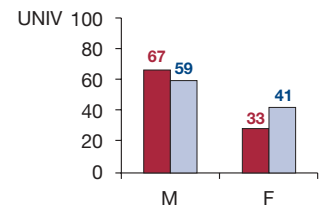


Figure 6: As can be seen, the trend is similar in higher education with a drastically declining participation of female students between the period 1997 (39 %) and 2003 (22 %) in technical institutes/colleges and a rising percentage of females being enrolled in universities.

Figure 3: Number of Students at Secondary Level (1997 and 2003)

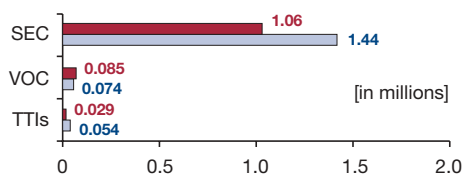


Figure 3 shows the growth rate of enrolment in secondary education schools. The growth rate of secondary education students (SEC) between the years 1997 and 2003 was 36 %, while the growth rate of the number of students in vocational schools (VOC) was minus 14 %. The growth rate of students in teacher training institutes (TTI) was 86 % during the same time frame.

Figure 4: Number of Students at Higher Education Level (1997 and 2003)

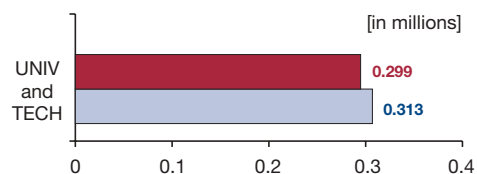


Figure 4: In higher education the growth rate of an aggregate enrolment in the universities and technical institutes/colleges was 5 % (the percent share of technical education in 2003 being 21 %, as compared to 79 % in universities).

Comparing the conditions of secondary education in 2003 with the situation in 1997, one would notice the positive growth of the number of schools and students in secondary (SEC) and teacher training institutes (TTI); but negative in vocational schools (VOC). A positive growth of the number of higher education institutions was found for both universities (UNIV) and technical institutes/colleges (TECH) in the same period.

If the growth of schools and enrolment were the basis for judging the success or failure of the education component of the OFFP, then there seems to be an indication of success in secondary education, teacher train-

ing and in higher education, but not in vocational education. The data show an urgent need for action with regard to the participation of girls as a marginalised group with female enrolment going down in practically all sub-sectors except in teacher-preparation programmes. The teacher-student ratio was on the positive side, which was reported as good, except in teacher-training institutes and colleges with 37 students per teacher. The other indicators such as availability of textbooks and other didactic equipment and the quality of teachers have always been a problem in spite of interventions through the OFFP.

Lessons Learned

>> The experiences made under the OFFP are excellent to draw lessons for countries in a post-conflict situation. Even if Iraq may still be considered in a conflict state because of the unstable security situation, the education sector has started leapfrogging towards a path for renewal. With activities moving toward reconstruction, recovery and developmental phases, Iraq and all the international organisations wanting to be involved in its reconstruction may be interested in the following lessons:

- 1 There is a need to balance the interests of different ethnic groups in Iraq, which may not always be complementary but could also be in conflict in many instances.
- 2 There is always a need for accurate and reliable information for future decisions. This may be a serious problem noting that databases, also in education, were destroyed during the war in March and April 2003. It is important to note that a project aiming at equipping the Ministry of Education with the Education Management Information System (EMIS) is a priority project of the Ministry of Education in Iraq. A situation analysis may identify the correct problems that need to be addressed.
- 3 Since money is scarce, it is important to set priorities. One may want to im-

mediately consider the development of skills for greater employability as a priority activity.

- 4 International organisations need to coordinate rather than compete. It is a known fact that even international organisations have their respective interests. But working together for the country would produce more results than working for one's own interest.
- 5 There is a need to work as partners in an environment suffering from a post-conflict situation. Teamwork is essential between and amongst international staff working in one organisation and even more so amongst international staff working in different organisations, including the local partners.
- 6 Respect for the culture of the place is one of the guiding principles in the pursuit of one's mandate.

The aforementioned may just be a few amongst the thousands of lessons that can be drawn from the experiences of individuals and organisations who were involved in the OFFP in Iraq. What is important to note is that tasks are enormous in a country that is in a post-conflict situation. Internal political will and sustainable international support are two main ingredients of a blueprint for renewal.



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References

- 1 Office of the Iraq Programme, "Oil-for-Food: A Fact Sheet," 20 September 2003.
- 2 The OFFP activities were implemented in phases, each phase consisting of 6 months.
- 3 Regarding the achievements in education, UNESCO's accomplishments were used as examples in this paper. Suffice it to say that UNICEF achieved similar outputs in the construction of school buildings for pre-primary and primary schools, in training teachers and administrators, in providing education supplies and materials and in conducting non-formal education projects. WHO assisted the medical colleges. And Habitat built secondary schools.
- 4 Data were taken from the UNESCO Database, August 2003.