

Cairo, Egypt, 24 July 2019 – I recently concluded a 4-day visit to Iraq where I saw firsthand a health system transitioning from emergency response to reconstruction, rehabilitation and resilience, while at the same time addressing the health needs of millions of vulnerable Iraqis and refugees.

The country's new national health priorities, including health financing, environmental health and sanitation, and universal health coverage (UHC), indicate a new chapter in Iraq's health sector. This means accessible, affordable health services and improved health and well-being for all Iraqis, everywhere throughout the country. In my meetings with His Excellency the Minister of Health of Iraq and his technical team, we agreed that this aspiring goal can only be achieved through strengthened coordination and collaboration between national health authorities, WHO and all health partners.

During my visit to Baghdad, I visited Al-Zwaya primary health care centre, where I saw the need to strengthen family medicine at the primary health care levels as a key component to achieving UHC.

In Erbil, I met with His Excellency the Kurdistan Minister of Health, the Governor of Erbil, and the Head and members of Parliament. Our discussions enabled me to better understand the need for new health legislation in the Region to ensure better access to quality health services, especially for those in need.

I saw the impact of the work that WHO, health staff and partners are doing to save the lives of the most vulnerable people in this country, including infants and children in Heevi Paediatric Hospital in Dohuk, where WHO has supported the establishment of a paediatric and neonatal intensive care unit. I saw babies born as early as 28 weeks surviving in the neonatal intensive care unit and children in life-threatening conditions recovering in the paediatric intensive care unit thanks to the collective support of WHO and donors. In both units, the beds were full of newborn infants and children while others waited to be admitted, highlighting the need for expansion to accommodate more people in need of care.



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[WHO Regional Director in Iraq to reinforce WHO support as country enters transition to development phase](#)

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