UN-HABITAT · **Government of the Netherlands**

Policy Dialogue on Legislative Reform to Improve Land Governance

LAND-at-scale

Strategic Approach using Knowledge Management learnings and STDM

Addressing HLP Challenges in Iraq for Sustainable Land Governance

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Land at Scale Context and Core Objective

Project Duration

36 months (September 2023 – September 2026)

Funded by LAND-at-Scale/Netherlands Enterprise and Development Agency (RVO)

Overall Objective

- Facilitate policy dialogue on land legal framework reform
- Improve land governance for all Iraqis - IDPs and returnees
- Protect HLP (Housing, Land, and Property) rights

Outcomes

- The legal framework reformed to address challenges accessing HLP rights.
- Security of tenure for IDPs and returnees through increased local capacity by applying the STDM.

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Critical HLP Challenges in Iraq

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Historic and recent challenges have severely compromised Housing, Land, and Property rights, particularly for minorities such as the Yazidis.

1 — 1970s Ba'ath Regime

Arabisation policies confiscated land from minorities. Hundreds of thousands of Yazidis forcibly relocated, prevented from registering their lands.

2 — ISIL Impact

Yazidi communities forced to flee homes. Approximately 6,000 houses destroyed. Barriers to return include lack of official documents.

Destruction & Occupation
Houses destroyed, forced evictions, illegal occupation
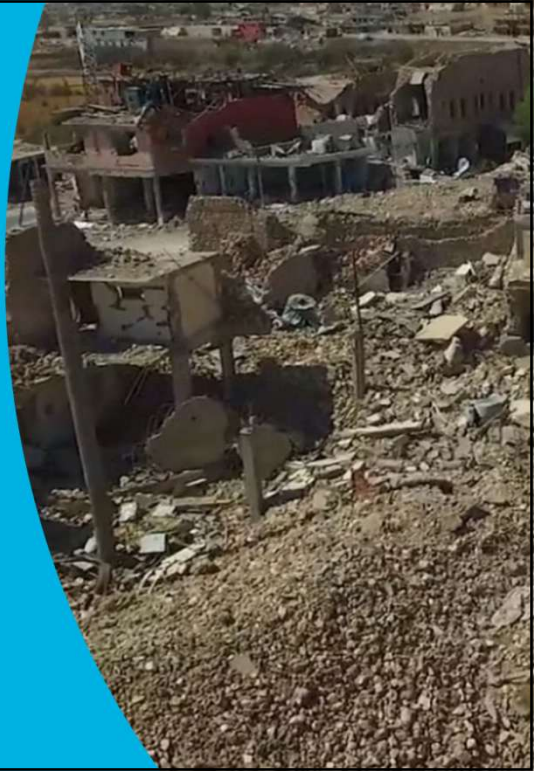
Lost Documentation
Missing property documents, outdated records

Complex Compensation
Lengthy claims procedures, lack of awareness

Women's Rights at Risk
Barriers to property access, inheritance discrimination

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The Social Tenure Domain Model (STDM)

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A Cornerstone for Secure Land Tenure and Empowering Local Capacity

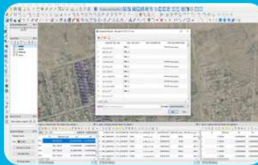**Pro-Poor & Participatory**
An affordable tool to map and register land relationships across the "continuum of land rights," ensuring accessibility for all.

Data Linkages
Create robust links between land units and their associated data, building a comprehensive land information system.

Defining Tenure Relationships
Clearly define and visualize the complex relationships between people, institutions, and land parcels for improved clarity.

Mapping & Boundaries
Facilitate the import and creation of accurate maps and land parcel boundaries, even in informal settings.

Assessment & Reporting
Generate essential documents like Occupancy Certificates and comprehensive reports for formal recognition and analysis.

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Strengthening Local Capacities
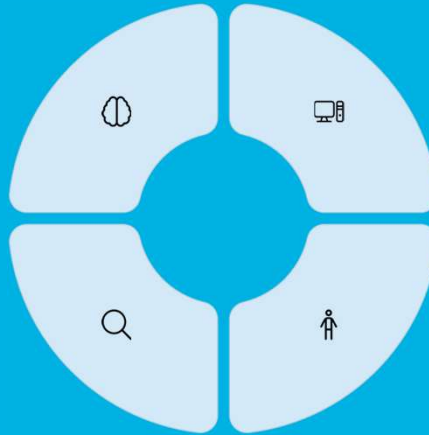
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Knowledge management ensures sustainability by facilitating understanding, learning, and application of solutions at the local level.

Awareness & Understanding

Present project goals to stakeholders, HLP rights and procedures with communities, inform about STDM approach

Technology & Capacity Development

Build municipal capacity in land governance, develop civil society skills, apply digital tools for HLP management

Research & Documentation

Understand land rights issues, conduct surveys on alternative property documentation, comprehensive HLP rights studies

Long-Term M&E

Implement monitoring and evaluation to measure impact and ensure sustainability across all project actions

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Step-by-Step Implementation of STDM

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Creating and validating tenure knowledge through community empowerment

Addressing Lack of Official Documents

Community agreement on informal documents demonstrating occupancy. Local authorities validate claims based on alternative tenure documents.

Mapping & Registering HLP Claims

Mobile mapping records household claims on-site. Participatory demarcation with satellite maps, community validation, and data integration into STDM.

Issuance of Occupancy Certificates

Multilateral validation with signatures from beneficiaries, neighbours, authorities, and UN-Habitat. Certificates include parcel maps, family photos, and occupancy rights descriptions.

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HLP & COMPENSATIONS Approach field

Foundation: Awareness
Building a fundamental understanding of HLP rights among all stakeholders.

Data Collection & Surveying Mobile tools
Establishing community and institutional agreements for the collection and use of HLP data.

Verification & Validation
Thoroughly verifying all collected HLP data and claims to ensure accuracy and legitimacy.

Documentation & Certification
Issuing formal HLP rights documentation, including Occupancy Certificates, to rightful claimants.

Capacity Building & Awareness

6 Training Sessions

Delivered training and capacity building sessions to build foundational understanding.

84 Attendees 20% Women

26 Awareness Sessions

Conducted extensive awareness sessions to raise understanding across communities. **4793 Brochures** were distributed.

800 Total Attendees

Reached a wide and diverse audience across all training and awareness sessions.

300 Women Attendees

Empowering women through participation in dedicated sessions and engagement.

HLP Legal Adm & Technical Capacities Suvey

- **RERD staff:** Strong on HLP laws (70%), mainly focused on land registration. Mediation skills lower (39%). Basic IT, but gaps in CAD, databases, and GIS use.
- **NGOs/CSOs:** Over half strong in HLP legal advice & dispute resolution. All apply victim-centered. They all non-discriminatory standards.

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Data Collection & Surveying

Digital Data Capture

Utilizing customized digital KOBO forms in mobile device for efficient and accurate data collection in the field.
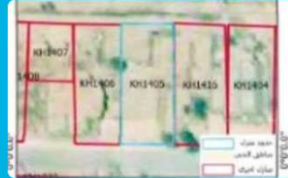
Property Boundary Surveys Surveys

Conducting precise field surveys to delineate and record property boundaries.

Comprehensive Documentation

Ensuring thorough legal and photographic records for all collected data and households.

Data Integrity / QA

Implementing quality assurance protocols to guarantee data accuracy and reliability. Guidelines and Agreed with CSO and Goverments.

Validation & Certification

HOUSING, LAND AND PROPERTY RIGHTS (HLP) IN SHELTER

DUE DILIGENCE GUIDELINES

Efficient Claims & Compensation Compensation Processing revision revision

Streamlining data verification and documentation review led to the successful processing of **1231 HLP Claims** and **567 Compensations filed**.

4967 Households benefited 51% Male 49% Female

Formal Title Deed Issuance

Rigorous quality control and validation ensured the accurate production and issuance of **1231 Occupancy Certificates 996Title Deeds**.

Multi-Level Government Validation Validation

Achieving successful Certificate endorsment by Local Governments, Muktar, Municipality & Federal Government.

Program Impact & Sustainability

- Conducted **26** awareness & **6** capacity building sessions over **900 attendees**.
- Processed **567** Compensations files & **1231 Ocupancy Certificates**.
- **996** Title Deeds.
- Strengthened local ownership & partnerships with **Ministry of Justice, RERD** and Civil Society - CSO. NGOs : **HIIL** – Legal innovation for HLP issues. **Dak Organization** – Women's HLP rights advocacy. **Mosul Space Organization** – Chatbot services for HLP issues. **Legal Oasis** – Mobile legal assistance for land matters. **Right to Information** – Web-based HLP rights support.
- **ToRs** developed for specialized **research on sustainability** as an M&E impact tool, with a focus on women. A deeper analysis of household power dynamics provides a clearer picture of both immediate and long-term impacts on society

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Historic Victory: Yazidi Land Rights Recognised After 47 Years

On 27th December 2022, Iraq's Council of Ministers made history by approving a legal decree granting Housing, Land, and Property (HLP) rights to the Yazidi minority—ending nearly five decades of systematic discrimination and marking a transformative moment for one of the world's most persecuted communities.

Legal Foundation

Federal endorsement of occupancy certificates creates a path to full ownership and permanent security.

Gender-Inclusive

Prioritizes female-headed households, ensuring joint registration and protection of all family members.

Strategic Partnerships

High-level advocacy with international bodies, securing formal legal recognition through an MOU.

"This decree represents more than legal recognition—it's restoration of dignity, security, and hope for future generations of Yazidis who can now call their ancestral lands truly their own."

The successful formalization process demonstrates how sustained advocacy, international support, and government commitment can transform the lives of marginalised communities, setting a precedent for minority protection across the region.

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Conclusion and Next Steps

Consolidating tenure security through knowledge

Synthesis of Achievements

UN-Habitat with tools : STDM in LAS and knowledge management has addressed Iraq's complex HLP challenges.

Tenure security improved through capacity building to guarantee sustainability and formal recognition.

Way Forward

Continue strengthening local capacities, ensure sustainability, maintain monitoring, and promote knowledge exchange for replication in similar contexts.

"Success in improving tenure security based on effective STDM application and strong knowledge management strategy to empower communities and institutions."

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