

[Around four million Iraqi children in need says UNICEF, ahead of investment conference in Kuwait](#)

12 February 2018 – Nearly a quarter of all Iraqi children are living in poverty, and in the wake of more than four years of violence, families are being pushed to “extreme measures” in order to survive, said the United Nations Children’s Fund ([UNICEF](#)) on Monday, as a major conference on rebuilding the country was set to open tomorrow in neighbouring Kuwait.

“Children are Iraq’s future,” [said](#) Geert Cappelaere, UNICEF Regional Director for the Middle East and North Africa, adding that “the Kuwait Conference for Iraq this week is an opportunity for world leaders to show that we are willing to invest in children – and through investing in children, that we are willing to invest in rebuilding a stable Iraq.”

The joint UNICEF and The UN Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) assessment entitled [Committing to Change – Securing the Future](#), which is being presented at the conference, concludes that without investment to restore infrastructure and services in war-ravaged cities such as Mosul, the “hard-won gains to end conflict in Iraq are in jeopardy.”

The Government-led battle to liberate swathes of Iraq last year occupied by Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Da’esh) terrorists since 2014, led to widespread destruction of homes, schools, hospitals and recreational spaces.

Since 2014, the UN verified 150 attacks on educational facilities, and around 50 attacks on health centres and their staff. Half of Iraq’s schools are in need of repair, and more than three million children have suffered disruption to their time in the classroom.

As displaced families try to return, the poorest often have little choice but to live in the ruins of their homes, in conditions that are hazardous to children. More than 21,400 homes have been destroyed or damaged in Mosul alone, according to UN figures.

The report indicates that some of the neediest families simply took their children out of school to work, and “many children were forced to fight.”

“Children are hardest hit in times of conflict and urban crisis recovery and reconstruction should be prioritized, adequately supported and quickly implemented,” said Zena Ali Ahmad, Arab Region Director for UN-Habitat.

The UN agencies are appealing at the conference – which runs 13 to 14 February – for commitments to restore basic infrastructure and services for children, including psycho-social support.

A UN Spokesman announced Monday that [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres will

attend the Conference and is expected to urge the international community to support the reconstruction of Iraq.