



UNESCO strengthens MoE Iraq's capacities in online distance learning to respond to COVID-19

The closure of schools and disruption to learning brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic have highlighted the need to utilize online and distance modes of learning to promote learning continuity. Distance learning, known synonymously as online learning or e-learning, serves as a critical tool in the response to the interruption of educational service provision. Providing training in distance learning methodologies also recognises the increasing role that technology can and will play in improving quality and access to education. To facilitate this new mode of learning, teachers need to be equipped with the appropriate skills and knowledge and supported to adapt to new learning settings.

To equip the teachers with ICT and online distance learning competencies, UNESCO, with funding from the European Union, and with technical support from the Regional Bureau for Education for Arab States in Beirut has developed training materials and trained 30 Master Trainers from the Ministry of Education and General Directorates of Education in Rasafa 3, Basra, Qadissiyah and Thi Qar on ICT based Online Distance Learning.

Following this workshop, UNICEF will cascade the training through the Master Trainers to 4,000 teachers in the 4 target governorates (Rasafa 3, Basra, Qadissiyah and Thi Qar).

The distance learning training responds to the direct request from HE the Minister of Education for training on distance learning for teachers in Iraq, and builds on materials developed to support COVID-19 regional responses by the UNESCO Regional Bureau for Education in the Arab States.

This initiative is part of the EU funded “System building and capacity strengthening for the Ministry of Education and its Directorates of Education” project. The project forms part of UNESCO and UNICEF’s wider effort to support systems building and capacity strengthening for the Ministry of Education and its governorate-level Directorates of Education, reinforcing the joint commitment of EU, UNESCO and UNICEF to supporting improved learning outcomes and equitable and inclusive education for all girls and boys in Iraq.

The training, delivered virtually over two weeks to the cohort of Master Trainers, comprised of 5 core Modules: (i) Teaching online (ii) The essentials of remote learning (iii) Blended learning and flipped instruction, (iv) Assessment in online distance education and (v) Content creation, with a sixth Module

introduced 'Kodrat'; the UNESCO online platform serving as a resource for distance learning for teachers, in Arabic, launched in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Subsequently trainers received additional sessions on how to deliver interactive and engaging training for teachers online, learning how to model learner-centred best practices.

The group of Master Trainers welcomed the interactive online training opportunity; speaking at the conclusion of the final training session, Dr. Shroq Bashar, Deputy Director General at the General Directorate of Preparation, Training and Educational Development commented *"E-learning and training is one of the most important forms of education at the present time as it has opened local and international educational outlets, as well as saving time, effort and cost through the use of interactive programs and digital content that was absent from the educational institution in Iraq"*.

Media contact: Husamaldeen El-Zubi (h.el-zubi@unesco.org)