International Medical Corps was among the first international NGOs to establish lifesaving humanitarian programs in Iraq in the wake of the 2003 war. We have remained ever since, over the years assisting people in need across the country’s 18 governorates.

Since 2014, our efforts have focused on meeting the needs of Syrian refugees and conflict-affected Iraqis in northern and central Iraq who experience ongoing violence and insecurity. We incorporate primary healthcare and community health outreach, gender-based violence (GBV) prevention and response, and mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) services into our relief programs in Iraq.
International Medical Corps’ long history supporting the people of Iraq has enabled us to build trusted, valuable relationships with local government authorities, as well as with United Nations agencies and local and international nongovernmental organizations. Our approach to integrated services in Iraq enables our primary healthcare providers to work hand in hand with our MHPSS and GBV teams when needed.

We provide these services directly through static clinics, including department of health (DoH) clinics. Our teams provide quality healthcare and related services to vulnerable populations, such as GBV survivors and conflict-affected children and youth. In addition to displaced populations, we serve members of the communities that host them—a group that often also faces tremendous hardship.

To respond to the specific needs of women and girls, International Medical Corps has established 12 community centers in Anbar, Dohuk, Erbil, Ninewa and Salah Al-Din. Each center provides a range of essential services and outreach to respond to the complex needs of women and girls displaced internally within Iraq. This includes survivors of GBV and those returning to their homes after having fled war and persecution.

Today, International Medical Corps is making healthcare and other vital services available to people across seven governorates in Iraq.

We prioritize the training of health providers, managers and community representatives, to strengthen their abilities to manage and monitor local health and protection services.

International Medical Corps has trained staff on emergency response and, when requested during an emergency, can deploy teams focusing on gender-based violence prevention and response.
HEALTHCARE

International Medical Corps teams provide direct assistance to those who need it most while bolstering local health systems and their capacity to deliver services in camp and non-camp settings—all within the framework of the United Nations Iraq Humanitarian Response Plan. In the Kurdish Region of Iraq, we offer primary healthcare and basic reproductive health services in refugee camps and camps for internally displaced Iraqis in Dohuk and Erbil governorates.

We support local primary healthcare clinics in and around Mosul with medicine, physical repairs, staff training and other resources that enable them to once again provide care to residents after years of Islamic State control. In other parts of Ninewa governorate, we operate primary healthcare clinics in camps that are home to tens of thousands of people who were forced from their homes in the battle for control of Mosul and the surrounding area. We support static health facilities in Anbar, Baghdad, Diyala and Salah Al-Din governorates while retaining the flexibility to expand services to new areas should crises arise. Our extensive network of staff and partners enables rapid assessment, implementation and expansion of healthcare capacity as required.

In 2020, International Medical Corps deployed three mobile medical units and supported 29 primary healthcare centers and one hospital. Through this support, we provided 307,476 consultations, including 54,343 consultations for children under 5.

COVID-19

International Medical Corps strengthens the capacity of primary healthcare centers (PHHCs) to identify, isolate and refer suspected COVID-19 cases, to ensure continuity of other essential medical services and reduce risk of exposure for other patients who are seeking services. We also provide training to healthcare providers and community workers, enabling the latter to deliver risk-communication and health-promotion messages at health centers and in communities. Social media also has been a successful platform to raise awareness about the virus, during a time when mass-gatherings haven’t been appropriate. Our team also has distributed handwashing kits to families, to ensure hygiene. Moreover, International Medical Corps is addressing vaccine hesitancy and promoting COVID-19 vaccinations among refugees and IDPs in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, which hosts most of the country’s refugee population.

COMMUNITY HEALTH

Our Community Health Workers (CHWs) provide the essential link between patients and primary healthcare service providers, reaching those who might otherwise be unable to access critical services. Our staff also conducts disease surveillance, and promotes health awareness and good health habits in at-risk communities.

GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE (GBV)

International Medical Corps is a leader in implementing GBV prevention and response programs in Iraq. In partnership with local organizations, we provide GBV case management, empowerment and psychosocial services in community centers and safe spaces. International Medical Corps’ GBV referral system is linked to our primary healthcare and MHPSS network, ensuring integrated care. Our mobile GBV teams provide services to women and girls in remote areas.

Our experience has shown that community-led initiatives are vital. They help develop meaningful messaging for the local population, and are key to engaging with and building support from the government and community leaders required to achieve lasting impact. We mentor those interested in actively supporting GBV prevention and response, and in raising awareness of the consequences of GBV and available services. Our GBV outreach workers run community-based prevention and response campaigns, identify vulnerable women and girls, inform them of available services and make referrals if needed.

Additionally, International Medical Corps targets the most vulnerable girls from the ages of 11-18 through the adolescent girl’s initiative. In 2020, we reached 41,063 Iraqis with GBV awareness messaging. We operate 12 women and girls’ safe spaces (WGSS) in five governorates, where we provided a range of services and activities. International Medical Corps also co-chairs the national GBV sub-cluster and GBV working group for southcentral Iraq, and chairs the National Adolescent Girls Initiative.
MENTAL HEALTH AND PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT (MHPSS)

International Medical Corps places a particular priority on the availability of integrated MHPSS services for internally displaced Iraqis and host communities. To fill significant gaps in services, International Medical Corps provides integrated mental health services that include case management, community outreach and psychiatric consultations at both the community and clinic level. We provide MHPSS training, as well as training on a technique used in crisis settings known as psychological first aid (PFA), for our staff, Ministry of Health personnel and other service providers. At the national level, International Medical Corps also supports the Ministry of Health in developing and implementing a national MHPSS strategy, which in 2020 included supporting 35 psychosocial units within PHCCs across the country.

CAPACITY BUILDING

International Medical Corps provides training and capacity development for partner organizations, including governmental and nongovernmental entities, community leaders and members, and women’s committees. We strengthen local partners to ensure the sustainability of our interventions, improve technical capacity and provide high-quality services. Because of the lack of trained psychologists and psychiatrists in Iraq, much of our training focuses on mental health. We train case managers and other frontline health professionals to identify and manage simple cases, and to refer more-severe cases to specialists. At the same time, International Medical Corps supports the Ministry of Health in building and implementing its strategy for integrating mental health services at the primary health center level.

During emergencies, the percentage of common mental disorders can double, while those with pre-existing mental illnesses often lose access to care.

A pre-eminent first responder since 1984, International Medical Corps delivers emergency medical and related services to those affected by conflict, disaster and disease, no matter where they are, no matter what the conditions. We also train people in their communities, providing them with the skills they need to recover, chart their own path to self-reliance and become effective first responders themselves.

International Medical Corps is headquartered in Los Angeles, CA, and has offices in Washington, DC; London, UK; and Split, Croatia. For contact information, visit InternationalMedicalCorps.org/contact