



UNESCO Restores Traditional Aqueduct Systems, Delivers Clean Drinking Water to Northern Iraq



UNESCO is helping to restore traditional aqueduct systems, called *karez*, in Northern Iraq to improve access to clean water. In 2009, the organization conducted the first ever comprehensive study of karez in Iraq, and found that many Iraqi households still depend on them for drinking water and growing crops. However, it was also discovered that recent drought conditions and the lack of upkeep has caused the drying up of 70% of karez, leaving many communities vulnerable. Even more disturbing, people have abandoned their homes: since 2005, over 100,000 people in the region were displaced as a result of their karez failing.

By January 2010, UNESCO inaugurated the restoration of the first karez at the small village, Shekh Mamudian in Erbil Governorate. The work resulted in the return of a steady flow of water for the village of 500 people. The community is currently using the water to grow crops and support sheep husbandry, activities that were not possible since 2006.

UNESCO continues to restore karez in Iraq, and expects to provide new access to water for 20 communities by the end of September 2010, reaching some 10,000 people.