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مركز المنصة للتنمية المستدامة
Platform Center for Sustainable Development



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Policy Briefs

Air pollution in Basra Governorate: A Lethal Cancer Concern with Elusive Alternatives

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A brief overview of the Iraq Policy Program

The Iraq Policy Program aims to bridge the gap between youth elites and decision-makers by training young elites to effect positive change through influencing the decision-making process. The program aims to empower participants to prepare policy papers and propose policy alternatives aimed at enhancing system performance and supporting its legitimacy. This program enables participants to communicate with decision-makers and understand the main difficulties and problems affecting the implementation and follow-up of public policies. Additionally, the program seeks to provide participants with a realistic understanding of the decision-making environment in Iraq, as well as an understanding of the opportunities and challenges of change.

The program stages

Preparation: Assisting participants in acquiring the fundamental skills to prepare policy papers and effective advocacy campaigns. **Discovery:** Clarifying important public policies in Iraq by experts through stakeholder engagement, frameworks and institutional procedures, practical realities, and discussions surrounding each public policy, as well as reform prospects. **Engagement:** Training participants to develop promotional campaigns and coordinate meetings with government officials to initiate their campaigns. **Enrichment:** Supervising participants to prepare a policy paper in their area of interest to enrich dialogues, develop policy alternatives, which can help address current challenges.

About the Center

The Platform for Sustainable Development is a registered center with the Non-Governmental Organizations Department at the General Secretariat of the Council of Ministers under the number (1S2106012). It serves as a space for thought, dialogue, and action towards positive change.

Vision

We seek to establish a platform for dialogue and policies that contribute to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals in Iraq.

Mission

Filling the gap between the state and society to ensure the essence of democracy by engaging citizens in the decision-making process through training, monitoring, analysis, research, awareness, and advocacy.

Strategic Goals

- Preparing a youth elite that rises to its social responsibilities through studying problems, proposing policy alternatives, and working towards their implementation.
- Utilizing knowledge outputs and encouraging youth to work towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals
- Presenting statistics and issues that occupy the political arenas and societal circles to reflect a deeper understanding of the Iraqi reality.
- Creating a network of active, informed, and committed citizens dedicated to the project of building the Iraqi government.



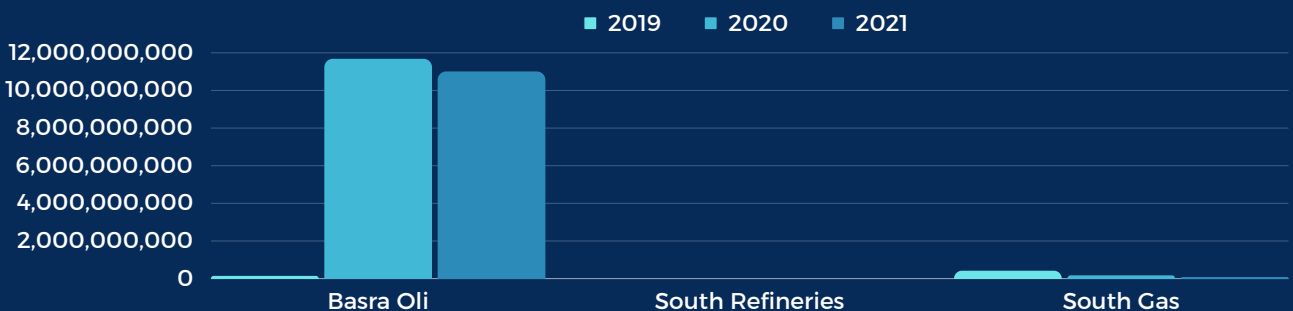
Iraq is grappling with the effects of climate change and is situated at the heart of the global issue. It is one of the top five countries most vulnerable to these effects. Emissions from oil fields are among the major air pollutants in Iraq, releasing thousands of tons of pollutants annually, resulting in numerous health issues. Studies have indicated that around 2,000 residents of Basra suffer from cancer as a consequence of air pollution, highlighting the severe environmental situation and its future negative impacts.

Oil companies, electricity generation companies, production factories, and vehicular emissions all contribute to air pollution, disturbing the environmental balance. Various types of air pollutants, including gases like ammonia, carbon monoxide, sulfur dioxide, nitrogen oxides, methane, carbon dioxide, and chlorofluorocarbons, lead to acid rain, which directly affects natural and non-natural resources as well as human health.

Health consequences include eye, nose, and throat irritation, coughing, chest tightness, difficulty breathing, lung and heart problems, heart attacks, disruptions in immune and nervous systems, and respiratory and reproductive system disorders.

Iraq ranks among the top countries in flaring natural gas, reaching 17.2 billion cubic meters in 2020 and 18.5 billion cubic meters in 2021, without implementing effective solutions to reduce emissions. To address these problems, there should be a shift towards utilizing natural gas by contracting with specialized companies to treat associated gas. These companies can effectively mitigate and reduce emissions according to a predefined schedule.

Figure (1): Analysis of the amount of gases burned in the flares according to the three companies (Basra Oil, Basra Refineries, South Gas) (2019, 2020, 2021)

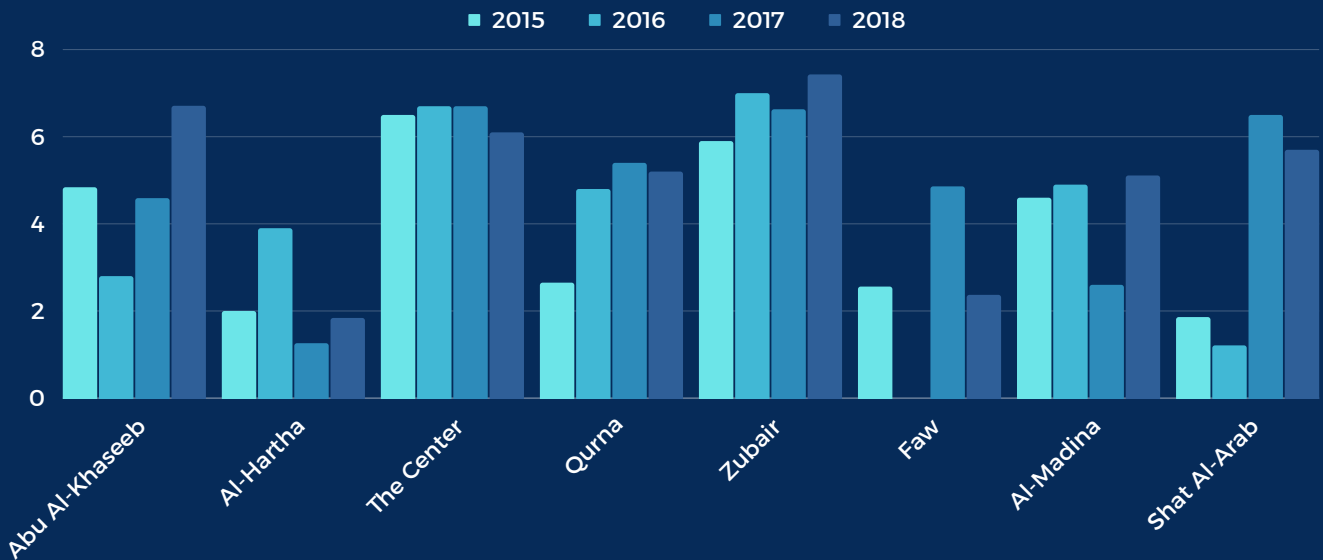




Air Pollution and Its Relationship with Cancer:

Air pollution has numerous adverse health effects on many citizens. The data in Figure (2) below illustrates the extent of cancer prevalence and its correlation with air pollution in Basra Governorate, along with the main reasons making residents susceptible to cancer.

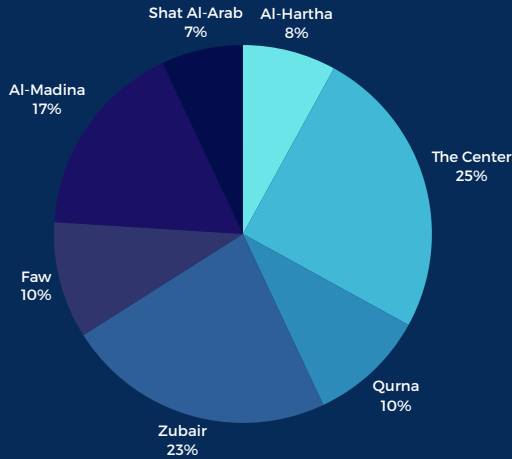
Figure (2) Infections with cancerous diseases in the districts of Basra Governorate (thousands)



The best alternatives to reduce pollution and mitigate its hazards include reclaiming agricultural lands and supporting farmers to make Basra an environmentally friendly province. Planting areas surrounding oil companies and pollution-emitting stations is crucial. Investing in large areas helps decrease air pollutants. Relying on seawater and cultivating the maximum area of the province reduces cancer rates, supports the economy, provides employment opportunities, and makes Basra self-sufficient in agricultural crops, eliminating the need for importing any materials. Furthermore, it enables us to export many products to other provinces or outside the country.



Figure (3) Rates of cancer incidence in each district (2015-2018)



The best alternative for reducing pollution and its hazards is the reclamation of agricultural lands and supporting farmers, making Basra an environmentally friendly governorate. Planting surrounding areas near oil companies and polluting stations would reduce air pollution, decrease cancer cases, stimulate the economy, provide employment opportunities, and make Basra self-sufficient in agricultural crops, reducing the need for imports and even enabling exports to other provinces or countries. The best choice is to shift towards agriculture, which is the most important resource after oil. The oil policy has become detrimental to our

social environment and human resources. Moreover, the government should adopt long-term strategic decisions and policies to combat cancer in Basra, as the problem, albeit with a political character, could worsen in the coming years.

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YOUR JOURNEY IN POLICY WORK STARTS WITH US



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