



# UN-Iraq Humanitarian Update August 2005

## United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI)

### Introduction

As part of the UNAMI mandate to coordinate and deliver essential humanitarian assistance, the UN Country Team (UNCT) in collaboration with Iraqi authorities and NGO partners, has a leading role in emergency preparedness and response activities for Iraq. By using the Cluster approach to address areas of common concern, UN agencies combine resources and expertise to implement coordinated emergency humanitarian responses and to provide regular programme assistance to affected populations.

When emergency situations arise, the UN Humanitarian Coordinator manages the humanitarian response of the UNCT and its NGO partners through the Emergency Working Group (EWG) in Amman. The EWG benefits from the

participation of the Deputy Humanitarian Coordinator in Baghdad as well as NGO's and the Iraqi authorities there. EWG members focus on the material and protection needs of communities affected by either military conflict or ethno-religious tensions. At the same time, there is intensive liaison by the EWG with relevant Iraqi and MNF-I authorities to ensure optimal coordination, access to those in need and information exchange between concerned actors.

In August, the EWG met twice to assess humanitarian needs, to coordinate implementation of emergency responses, and to update contingency plans with regard to the emergency situations mentioned below. In addition to this, the UNCT in Baghdad continued to work closely with the office of the Prime Minister to support the development of a specialised cell to enhance coordination and planning in the Iraqi government's emergency response efforts.

### Emergency Situations and Humanitarian Response

**Al Aemma Bridge Update:** The UNCT rapidly mounted a coordinated response to the terrible human tragedy which occurred on 31st August at al-Aemma Bridge in northern Baghdad, when an estimated 2,000 people were left dead and injured from a stampede on the bridge. Approximately US \$ 500,000 was pledged to contribute to alleviating the suffering of the injured and the

loss of loved ones, and the UNCT response was launched in full cooperation with the Iraqi government as well as international and local NGOs, and most notably the Iraqi Red Crescent Society (IRCS).

In the immediate aftermath, WHO worked with the Ministry of Health (MoH) to provide emergency oxygen supplies to nine hospitals in Baghdad for five days to cover the needs of 2,700 patients per day. WHO also rented 15 mobile cold storage vans to assist the health authorities in transporting

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and storing human remains. UNICEF supplied the MoH with 100 emergency health kits, with each kit sufficient to cover the needs of 1,000 people for three months. UNHCR made 50 large tents available for use as temporary shelter at hospitals treating the injured.

Using the significant financial contributions from the UN Development Group Iraq Trust Fund (UNDG ITF), the Italian government and IOM, UNOPS started implementing within days, an emergency project to distribute emergency relief packages to the families affected by this incident. The packages consist of staple food items and cash assistance intended to help cover incidental expenses such as transport, medical fees and lodging. Working closely with the IRCS, community organizations and the MoH, 500 hundred families who lost loved ones were assisted; with an estimated further 700 families to be served. A second phase will provide similar assistance to the wounded and their families.

**Tal Afar Update** The city and surrounding districts of Tal Afar in the northern Governorate of Ninewa were the principle focus of emergency humanitarian interventions in August, as a result of sustained military operations throughout the month. The fighting resulted in significant displacement of civilians, and some reports suggested between 5,000 and 7,000 families were recently displaced from Tal Afar city to surrounding locations. Access to residents and internally displaced persons (IDPs) in

affected locations was difficult and sporadic due to insecurity, but the UNCT was able to provide some relief assistance and make contingency stocks and funds available to further respond if necessary. There is some likelihood of clashes continuing in the run up to the referendum on the constitution in mid October.

A partner NGO of IOM completed a cycle of distributions of food and non-food packages to nearly 245 displaced families located outside Tal Afar city, and is currently planning to cover an additional 340 IDP families. IOM also released 400 tents and non food items (NFIs) to another NGO partner for a distribution to target 16,320 IDPs inside and to the south of the city.

UNICEF, working closely with the IRCS and the MoH, sent the following items to Tal Afar: 15,000 jerry cans; 3,000 collapsible water bags; 43,200 water purification tablets; 7,200 bars of washing soap; 7,200 bars of toilet soap; and seven emergency health kits with each kit sufficient to cater for 1,000 people for 3 months.

WHO acting on a request for drugs and medical supplies from the MoH, procured approximately USD \$ 100,000 of emergency items for immediate delivery. WHO also provided technical and logistical support to the central MoH emergency operations cell and field bases in order to coordinate the health response to the crisis.

**Anbar Update:** Military operations continued to affect the western districts of Anbar Governorate with approximately 800 families displaced to 21 different locations. IOM completed a third cycle of emergency distributions of water, food and NFIs which began at the end of July to a total of 4,739 IDP families in 47 locations surrounding Al-Qa'im; and priority was given to the newly displaced 800 families. UNICEF organised private water trucks to deliver drinking water on a daily basis to a total number of 7,000 IDPs in Anbar Governorate.



Organizing food packages  
Al Aemma Bridge Incident  
- UNOPS



Waiting to register - UNOPS



Registering beneficiaries -  
UNOPS



Anxious for news - UNOPS

## Providing Regular Programme Assistance

UNICEF maintained the daily trucking of water to certain residential areas and hospitals in Baghdad using private contractors, permitting approximately 180,000 people to have continued access to clean drinking water in August. 600 tons of essential chemicals were delivered to a main warehouse of the Ministry of Municipalities and Public Works (MoMPW) to assist the Baghdad water authorities with water purification.

WFP supported the Ministry of Education with approximately 5,201 metric tonnes of high energy biscuits and 806 metric tonnes of vegetable oil having been distributed by the project

to date to various primary schools in Iraq to the benefit of over 800,000 children. WFP has to date delivered into Iraq an approximate total of 14,783 metric tonnes of wheat flour, vegetable oil and pea-wheat blend to support the MoH in distributing supplementary food to malnourished children under five years, pregnant and nursing mothers, and TB patients. A total of 9,517 metric tonnes was distributed to over 500,000 beneficiaries in various health facilities in the country.

UNHCR supported handicapped members of Turkish refugee families with 15 people receiving treatment and physiotherapy sessions in Dohuk Governorate. A total of 69 patients with serious health complications were referred to medical and surgical specialists in the Governorate. In Erbil Governorate, UNHCR shelter construction and community development

activities progressed with one village water system 70% complete and the village school more than 60% complete. The majority of the 182 beneficiaries of a housing construction scheme in northern Iraq finished laying the foundations and building the walls of their new homes.

UNHCR signed agreements with three NGOs to rehabilitate and furnish four primary health care centres, to train 60 medical staff and to establish seven community outreach health teams in rural returnee villages in two Governorates in southern Iraq. In addition to this, UNHCR worked with three NGOs to provide shelter support with the construction of 200 houses and the rehabilitation of 80 houses across three southern Governorates.

## Advocacy and Human Rights

The Human Rights Office of UNAMI published its first bi-monthly human rights report for the period of July and August 2005. (Click [HERE](#) to see the report in full.) The report underlines several key issues notably: a continuing concern for the lack of protection of civilians in regard to their civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights; allegations linked to deficiencies in the administration of the justice system; the flagrant

disregard for human life demonstrated by armed opposition groups; and the impact of special security operations in central and northern areas of the country resulting in population displacements.

Police evicted 20 families including 18 IDP families from a military building in Diyala Governorate before a suitable solution was found for alternative accommodation. The local Ministry of Displacement and Migration office was aware of this development and IOM was assessing the immediate needs of the evicted families.

Evictions also affected IDP families temporarily residing in public buildings such schools across other areas of Iraq, including Tal Afar and western Anbar.

The UNCT and its partners continued to urge the relevant authorities to respect humanitarian space and the human rights of civilians, and to facilitate safe unimpeded access of humanitarian actors to those in need.

## IDPs, Refugees and Durable Solutions

During the month, 686 persons were assisted by UNHCR to return to Iraq. Using organised convoys, 301 persons returned from Iran via the southern border and 322 persons returned through the northern border. In addition, 63 persons returned from Jordan on an individual or family basis. The total number of organised returns to Iraq from abroad throughout the period August 2003 to August 2005 stands at 22,518 people. UNHCR continued to support six independent legal aid and

information centres in Baghdad and in the north and south of the country. These centres provide objective, professional and free legal aid and legal representation for selected cases. Since 2004, these centres have provided information and legal advice to more than 20,000 persons assisting them in obtaining necessary documentation, as well as accessing basic services and filing property claims. Representatives from IOM and UNHCR held a three day meeting in Baghdad with the new head of the Iraq Property Claims Commission (IPCC). Progress was made on several topics including proposed amendments to the statute governing the

operation of the IPCC, voluntary dispute resolution, and the establishment of an out-of-country programme for individuals living outside Iraq.

At the IPCC headquarters, installation of a VSAT satellite dish was finished and testing of the VSAT system was underway to provide a reliable internet connection via VSAT to the Geneva based IPCC database. 200 professional email accounts were created and IPCC staff received training in the use of this system.