



# UN-Iraq Humanitarian Update

## December 2005 and January 2006

### 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 regular programme assistance.

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 UN Deputy Humanitarian Coordinator in Baghdad as well as NGOs and other stakeholders there. EWG members focus on the material and protection needs of communities affected by either military conflict or ethno-religious tensions.

#### Emergency Situations and Humanitarian Response Activities

**Anbar:** The Governorate of Anbar remained a focus of humanitarian need throughout the period, even though the overall security situation was calmer at the end of the period when compared to the past months. NGO monitors reported that at least 4,903 families remained displaced with many being temporarily sheltered in public buildings or tented camps and some were mixed with host communities. Many more displaced families are thought to have returned to their points of origin despite fears of insecurity and inadequate return standards in order to avoid spending the cold winter season in poor living conditions in temporary accommodation.

In support of Iraqi government activities and in liaison with the relevant ministries and NGOs, the UNCT completed its response to provide 4,907 affected families across Anbar province with targeted distributions of winter non food items. These distributions, which were implemented by an international NGO partner and availed of resources from IOM, UNHCR, UNICEF, and OCHA grants, included: 2,367 sets of children's clothes; 3,041 pieces of plastic sheeting; 2,231 kerosene heaters; 2,507 kerosene stoves; and 1,595 blankets. In addition, UNICEF undertook the water

trucking of over 7.7 million litres of water to various locations in Anbar.

Emergency food distributions of two-week rations to 5,000 vulnerable IDP families were completed by an international NGO using an OCHA small grant. The distribution which began November targeted IDP areas which were either inaccessible to the government's Public Distribution System (PDS) rations or under-served due to either irregular or incomplete rations.

The rehabilitation of 11 Primary Healthcare Centre (PHCs) across the Governorate by WHO was nearing completion and the construction of a Primary Healthcare training hall was finished. WHO maintained an expanded immunization campaign and preventive interventions to control diseases such as malaria, leishmania, typhoid, cholera, rabies, brucellosis and TB. Furthermore, the surveillance system to maintain a polio free status and to monitor communicable diseases throughout Anbar was ongoing.

The UN and its partners continued to monitor the IDP situations in other parts of the country where NGO reports suggested a need for winter items such as blankets, heaters, and warm clothing for displaced and vulnerable families. UNAMI is consulting with the

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relevant UN agencies and OCHA to determine how best to prioritize and meet these needs.

#### **Flooding in Basrah:**

In mid January approximately 100 families were displaced from their houses in Basrah Governorate as a result of floods. A reported 70 houses sustained major damage or destruction. Working with the local Iraqi Red Crescent Society and the Basrah Governor's office which took the lead in coordinating assistance to the displaced families, UNAMI coordinated the UN's support to the delivery of immediate relief items to the affected families. This followed a rapid needs assessment which was jointly undertaken by UN agencies on the ground. The Iraqi Civil Defense was deployed to evacuate people where necessary and they built sand dikes to prevent the flood water from advancing further.

Subsequently a more detailed joint assessment by the UN agencies was carried out to identify the extent of damages and families' intentions for recovery. UNHCR distributed 70 tents, 500 blankets, 100 stoves and 70 plastic sheets. WHO provided technical assistance to the Basrah Health Directorate to equip and staff a temporary tented primary health care facility. UNDP gave funding to Basrah Provincial Council to rent a water pump to drain flood water from the affected area.

At the close of the period, the UN was closely monitoring incidents of flooding affecting six other Governorates as a result of early and particularly heavy seasonal rainfall in areas that generally are flood-prone. As this situation evolves the possibility of a coordinated response through the EWG mechanism will be evaluated.



Flood affected village – UNHCR



Temporary accommodation for flood victims - UNHCR

## **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 residents and 4,000 hospital patients and staff to have continued access to potable water. In addition essential chemicals were delivered to the Ministry of Municipalities and Public Works (MoMPW) and the Mayorality of Baghdad to assist the authorities with water purification.

In December and January, WFP dispatched 2,678 metric tonnes (MT) of food commodities to Iraq, bringing the total to 28,321 MT of food delivered

during the last 11 months. Under vulnerable group feeding activities, an estimated total of 13,206 MT of wheat flour, vegetable oil and pea-wheat blended food was distributed to approximately 2,180,000 beneficiaries including pregnant and lactating women, TB patients and malnourished children at 933 Primary Healthcare Centres and Community Child Care Units. Under the Food for Education activities, approximately 7,363 MT of high energy biscuits and 1,522 MT of vegetable oil were distributed to approximately 1,750,000 primary school children.



Mother and child at a Primary Healthcare Centre- WFP

## **Advocacy and Human Rights**

In the regular bi-monthly report on the human rights situation in Iraq, the UNAMI Human Rights Office expressed concern at the repeated bombing campaigns and killings, targeting civilians, religious leaders and mosques. Women and children continued to be negatively affected by the ongoing conflicts and they remained a significant proportion of those killed. The report expressed particular concern at the discovery of detainees in Ministry of Interior detention centres

who were reportedly systematically abused while in detention. (Click [HERE](#) to go to the full report.)

UNAMI continued to advocate and follow-up with the relevant government authorities on the issue of frozen NGO bank accounts in Iraq. UNAMI cooperated closely with the NGO Assistance Centre in Baghdad to collect NGO claims and forward them to the Committee responsible for granting exemptions to the Cabinet

decree which instructs the Central Bank of Iraq to freeze the bank accounts of all unions, civil society organizations, and NGOs established during the previous regime. The necessary details were circulated to the UNCT and partners, and the results of this exemption process are being monitored to ensure its effectiveness.

## IDPs, Refugees and Durable Solutions

UNHCR continued to advocate for the relocation of the Iranian Kurdish Refugees residing in 'No Man's Land' between Iraq and Jordan to a site in Erbil Governorate. Following a joint mission by UNHCR and UNICEF to the border, needs assessments were completed and an action plan was developed.

A number of public announcements were issued by UNHCR confirming the closure of a camp in Anbar Governorate. The new site in Erbil officially began receiving refugees in November and by the end of 2005, 206 families from Anbar had relocated to Erbil. The new site has a functioning health centre and a primary school opened in late December with 241 primary level students enrolled. UNHCR is also facilitating student access to secondary schooling in the area.

Since the first announcement of the closure of the camp, 1,419 refugees moved to Sulaymaniyah Governorate where they received a transportation allowance and a reinstallation grant. UNHCR has provided assistance to enable 250 families to construct their homes and an additional 100 homes are still under rehabilitation.

UNHCR conducted a needs assessment and situation survey among Iranian Ahwazi refugees living in the south of the country to identify their protection and material assistance issues.

UNHCR provided humanitarian aid distributions to 109 Darfuri Sudanese refugee families in a camp in Anbar Governorate.

Voluntary repatriation convoys from Iran through the border crossing in the south continued in December and January. UNHCR facilitated the return of 98 individuals in December and 16 individuals in January. The overall number of returnees to Iraq in the period 2003 to 2005, including spontaneous and UNHCR-facilitated returns is estimated at over 310,000 individuals.

IOM continued its support to a community centre in Baghdad for women from displaced families. The centre offers courses in literacy, sewing, computing, cooking, general health and mother childcare and it has a kindergarten where women can leave their children while attending classes. The centre provides an ideal place where women gather, socialize and exchange experiences.

The 'Strategic Plan on Assistance and Durable Solutions for IDPs in Iraq' was endorsed by the UNCT in December. The purpose of the Strategic Plan is to ensure that the development process places sufficient importance on the IDP situation in Iraq. The Ministry of Displacement and Migration (MoDM) confirmed its agreement on the process and framework to develop

and implement the national policy. UNHCR, IOM and partners are supporting the MoDM to undertake an IDP intentions survey, conduct consultations and initiate the drafting of the national policy components.

At a meeting in Amman, the IDP intentions survey template, processes and structures were agreed upon with representatives from the MoDM, the Ministry of Planning and Development Cooperation and the Kurdistan Regional Government together with UNHCR, IOM and UNOPS who are supporting this initiative.

National policy consultations are a key activity being led by UNHCR. There was a workshop with NGO partners, IOM, MoDM and KRG representatives to outline the principles of protection of displaced persons and to familiarize participants with the process to develop the national policy.

The pilot phase of the consultations already started in Dohuk, Erbil, Missan and Baghdad Governorates. NGO partners carried out separate consultations with IDPs, host communities and mixed groups including local authorities and returnees. The outcomes of the consultations are being shared with the MoDM and the KRG to ascertain feedback on how to improve the tools and obtain more useful data.

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