

# Iraq



## Main objectives

In 2004, UNHCR's plan was to pursue solutions for refugees, returnees, IDPs and stateless persons with the Iraqi authorities and to strengthen the capacity of national institutions, particularly the Ministry of Displacement and Migration (MoDM) and the Iraqi Property Claims Commission (IPCC), which were created in 2003. Integral components of this work were: the coordination and facilitation of the voluntary return of Iraqi refugees and IDPs in safety and dignity, advising them on conditions in areas of return and supporting their sustainable reintegration; and protection and assistance to non-Iraqi refugees in Iraq, including legal and technical advice on property and nationality issues.

## Impact

- During 2004, UNHCR facilitated the return, mainly from the Islamic Republic of Iran and Saudi Arabia, of 14,000 refugees. In addition to

these returnees, an estimated 230,000 refugees returned spontaneously since May 2003, mainly from the Islamic Republic of Iran.

- Community-based assistance was provided in areas with high concentrations of returnees (former refugees and/or IDPs). Over 80 rural returnee-affected communities were supported, mainly with improved access to shelter, water, education, health, and income-generation activities.
- As the task manager of UN Cluster 8 for Internally Displaced Persons and Refugees, UNHCR led the process of developing the UN *Strategic Plan for IDPs in Iraq*, which provided guidance for the United Nation's protection and assistance interventions, as endorsed by the UN Country Team and the Emergency Relief Coordinator.
- Through the inter-agency Emergency Working Group, UNHCR was involved in inter-agency emergency assistance for newly displaced populations. Some 48,000 displaced persons from Fallujah were provided with emergency relief assistance from UNHCR's regional stocks which helped to alleviate their suffering.

- UNHCR provided the MoDM with strategic, policy and technical support. The Ministry's basic law was revised, its populations of concern determined and its role and responsibilities clarified and defined. Assistance was also provided for establishing clear organizational and administrative structures. By the end of 2004, MoDM branch offices were opened in Basrah, Amarah and Nassriyah, while preparatory work was underway for Najaf.
- In addition, a number of training sessions on the provision of protection and assistance were organized for the MoDM and other stakeholders, including key government and non-governmental counterparts. Subjects included protection concepts, guiding principles in dealing with IDPs, monitoring, emergency response, programme administration/finance, human resources and public relations.

## Working environment

### The context

The overall political climate and deteriorating security situation have had a significant impact on UNHCR's work in Iraq. The greatest obstacles to UNHCR's work, particularly in central Iraq, were clashes between armed insurgents and Multi-National Forces (MNF) together with Iraqi forces in Najaf, Mosul, Samarra and Fallujah and other places; general lawlessness and increased criminality; tensions among ethnic groups in certain parts of the country. Insecurity resulted in the decision not to send international staff back to Iraq after the 19 August 2003 bombing of UN headquarters in Baghdad. This drastically limited access to persons of concern throughout the country for implementing partners and UNHCR's national staff.

Persons of concern				
Main origin/Type of population	Total in country	Of whom UNHCR assisted	Per cent female	Per cent under 18
Returnees (from the Islamic Republic of Iran)	119,500	12,523	-	-
Occupied Palestinian Territory (refugees)	22,700	22,700	49	37
Turkey (refugees)	13,400	13,400	51	52
Islamic Republic of Iran (refugees)	11,400	11,400	48	47
Returnees (from Lebanon)	1,500	834	-	-
Syrian Arab Republic (asylum-seekers)	600	-	-	-
Islamic Republic of Iran (asylum-seekers)	500	-	-	-
Turkey (asylum-seekers)	200	-	-	-

Income and expenditure (USD) Annual and Supplementary programme budgets					
	Revised budget	Income from contributions <sup>1</sup>	Other funds available <sup>2</sup>	Total funds available	Total expenditure
<b>AB</b>	1,999,036	1,288,191	633,792	1,921,983	1,921,983
<b>SB<sup>3</sup></b>	50,951,144	12,620,428	16,019,752	28,640,180	24,241,621
<b>Total</b>	<b>52,950,180</b>	<b>13,908,619</b>	<b>16,653,544</b>	<b>30,562,163</b>	<b>26,163,604</b>

<sup>1</sup> Includes income from contributions restricted at the country level.

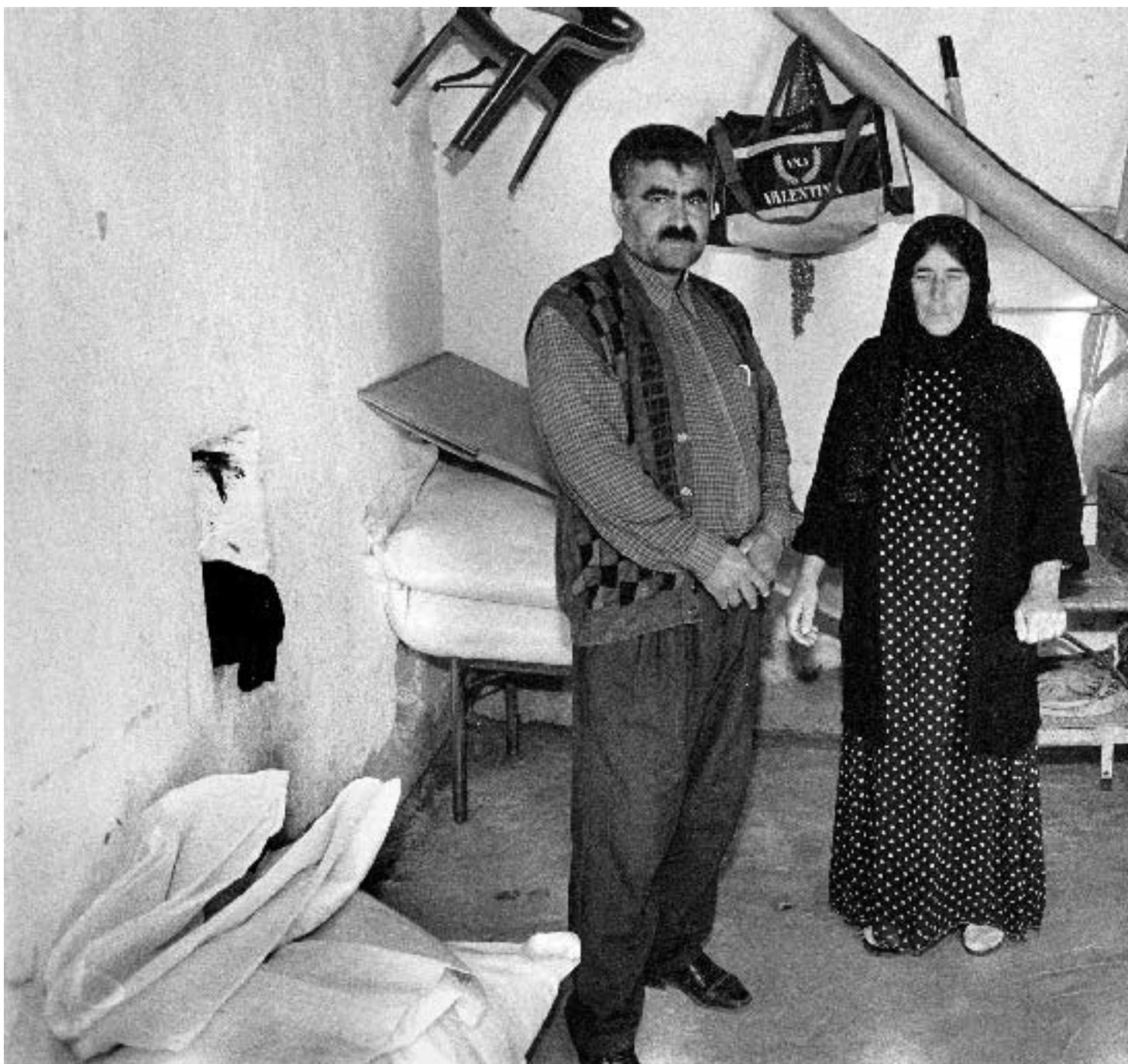
<sup>2</sup> Includes allocations by UNHCR from unearmarked or broadly earmarked contributions, opening balance and adjustments.

<sup>3</sup> The supplementary programme figures apply to the Supplementary Appeal for the Iraq Operation.

Note: The supplementary programme budget does not include a 7 per cent charge (support costs) that is recovered from contributions to meet indirect costs for UNHCR. The above figures do not include costs at Headquarters.

A number of IDPs and refugees returned only to suffer renewed internal displacement, due to insufficient local absorption capacities and ongoing conflict, and are now staying with relatives or in public buildings with little or no basic facilities. In addition, protection and assistance to refugees continued to pose particular challenges. Refugees, except those residing in the north, were exposed to various threats and hardships, not least because of the dire economic situation, but also because of continued instability in the country and the perception that they had supported the former regime.

Given the continuing precarious security situation, the Office adopted innovative ways to deliver protection and assistance. Various mechanisms were developed to maximize the effectiveness of remote management, including policy and operation meetings with government and non-governmental counterparts in Amman and Kuwait; technical monitoring of IPs by external firms; provision of additional support and training for national staff as well as the allocation to IPs of additional resources for staff safety and monitoring.



Iraq: Iranian refugees of Kurdish origin were "stuck" for more than a decade in Al-Tash camp near Ramadi. Here, an older couple in their house. *UNHCR/T. Voeten*

## Constraints

The major constraints for UNHCR were its lack of international presence, restrictions on the movement of national staff and the withdrawal of most international NGO staff. As a result, access to refugees and others of concern was severely curtailed, making it extremely difficult for UNHCR to carry out its usual protection and assistance functions.

Attempts to respond to some of the needs were further complicated by fresh population displacement,

particularly as a result of a second attack on Fallujah in November 2004, and because thousands of persons returned into situations of internal displacement. UNHCR estimates that in the south nearly one in seven persons is currently or was recently displaced. The three northern Governorates still held three-quarters of a million IDPs despite efforts by local authorities to enhance the absorption capacity of certain return areas. By the end of 2004, there were still 1.2 million persons displaced throughout Iraq. In addition, large numbers are believed to have left Iraq in the course of 2004, mainly to Syria and Jordan.

UNHCR continued to follow up with the Iraqi authorities on the issue of statelessness, in particular during the preparation for the January 2005 elections where the question of out-of-country voting was raised. However, very little progress was actually achieved due in part to the complexity of nationality issues in Iraq, stemming primarily from contradictory laws (the Interim Constitution, the Coalition Provisional Authority Orders as well as parts of the previous Iraqi citizenship legislation), and other political priorities such as addressing continued security concerns. It is hoped that this problem will be more concretely addressed in 2005 once the Iraqi Constitution has been drafted.

## Funding

The operation was adequately funded, with generous support by donors, who agreed to the use of 2003 emergency preparedness resources for the 2004 operation.

## Achievements and impact

### Protection and solutions

UNHCR facilitated the voluntary return of 14,000 refugees from neighbouring countries, mainly the Islamic Republic of Iran, with smaller numbers from Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Lebanon and other countries. These refugees clearly expressed their wish to return despite UNHCR's stance that conditions in Iraq were still unfavourable. Most of them returned to the far south and to the north, with fewer numbers to the centre of the country. UNHCR ensured that returnees were well-informed about conditions in Iraq,



including its limited absorption capacities. To address some of the practical problems, such as obtaining documents, UNHCR established Legal Aid and Information Centres (LAICs) throughout Iraq. In addition, returnees were provided with information brochures, counselling and legal advice.

To facilitate the recovery of homes for refugees and IDPs, UNHCR supported the establishment of the IPCC by means of legal and technical advice for the IPCC statute, instructions and guidelines. UNHCR commissioned research papers from Basrah University Law School about existing Iraqi legislation related to land, housing and property. Furthermore, UNHCR submitted a proposal to the Iraqi Interim Government on the establishment of out-of-country structures to enable Iraqis in the region to file property claims.

More than 23,000 refugees inside Iraq were provided with protection and assistance, in camps, villages and urban areas. Direct beneficiaries included: 13,000 Turks, 7,060 Iranian Kurds, 2,400 Palestinians and 540 Syrians. The local authorities in the Governorate of Sulaymaniyah expressed their readiness to allow Iranian Kurdish refugees (some 270 families) from the Al Tash Camp to move in, and allocated land for settlement. In 2004, 47 Iranian refugees benefited from resettlement (mainly family reunification).

## Activities and assistance

**Community services:** For refugees in the Al Tash and Makhmour camps and other settlements, several community centres were constructed, rehabilitated and furnished. Special cash allowances were provided to 72 vulnerable Syrian refugee families in Baghdad.

**Crop production:** As part of community-based reintegration and income-generating projects, small scale agricultural projects were established.

**Domestic needs/Household support:** Individual vulnerable refugees received assistance on a case-by-case basis, mainly in urban areas; in addition, refugees were provided with kerosene. A household assessment was conducted among the Iranian Kurdish refugees who moved from the Al Tash Camp to Sulaymaniyah. The results of this assessment served to identify beneficiaries,

particularly with regard to the allocation of housing and accommodation allowances.

**Education:** While urban refugee children accessed Iraqi schools, those residing in camps were provided with education through UNHCR projects. Training and incentives were provided to teachers and allowances to refugee students. In areas with larger concentrations of returnees, UNHCR constructed or rehabilitated schools and classrooms. UNHCR monitored access to primary education and encouraged secondary education, particularly for refugee girls. In addition, short courses were offered on basic literacy, Arabic language and computer skills.

**Food:** All refugees returning through Hajj Omran and Salamsheh border crossing received dry food and water during their journey back home.

**Health/Nutrition:** Refugee camps, their surroundings and local health systems received health assistance. UNHCR renovated health centres, provided equipment and medicines, vaccination campaigns, maternal and child care, first aid, hygiene education, nutrition awareness campaigns, tuberculosis screening, and other public health interventions. In several returnee-affected villages, health facilities were constructed and handed over to local authorities. Limited individual medical care was provided on a case-by-case basis. This included wheelchairs, crutches, therapeutic beds, optical and dental services, and psycho-social counselling, particularly for women affected by violence, domestic tension, psychosomatic stress and financial problems.

**Income generation:** In order to promote self-reliance, quick-impact projects provided some short-term employment for local populations in returnee-affected communities. The livelihood of more than 5,000 vulnerable returnee families was improved through material assistance and cash-for-work projects.

**Legal assistance:** UNHCR supported the local authorities and other partners on international protection standards, reintegration and human rights in line with UNHCR policies and international norms. UNHCR funded six LAICs, which benefited more than 7,000 persons, offering legal counselling and assistance. Together with the International Organization for Migration (IOM), UNHCR provided the MoDM with time-limited financial support for office rents, salaries and other office expenditure. An

international consultant was seconded to work in the MoDM Baghdad office for the period from July to December 2004, focusing on humanitarian response, information management, coordination and policy.

**Livestock:** As part of community-based reintegration and income-generating projects, small-scale livestock projects were established.

**Operational support (to agencies):** Implementing partners received funds for management, staff safety, and communication. Training sessions, workshops and meetings were organized for various partner agencies.

**Sanitation:** In Al Tash and Makhmur refugee camps, sanitation facilities were adequately maintained, and hygiene education was provided.

**Shelter/Other infrastructure:** For returnees, UNHCR assisted up to 2,500 shelters. UNHCR projects targeted the most vulnerable groups in rural areas and included the distribution of shelter materials to 250 host families to improve their accommodation. The standard housing assistance was modest, with minimum access to electricity, sanitation and safe water, and was designed to preserve basic norms of privacy, particularly for women. UNHCR provided rental subsidies to the most vulnerable families in Baghdad. In addition, 277 vulnerable Iranian refugee families who moved from Al Tash camp to the north were allocated 250 new housing units in Sulaymaniyah.

**Transport/Logistics:** UNHCR facilitated the return of over 12,400 Iraqi refugees from the Islamic Republic of Iran: 8,600 through the border crossing of Shalamsheh in the south; and 3,800 through Hajj Omran in the north. In the South, the transit centre in Basrah was managed by an international NGO partner, which also distributed food and other material assistance and provided transport to final destinations. In the north, prefabricated units were set up at the border reception area and at a transit centre in Diyana to supplement existing local infrastructure.

**Water:** Water facilities were installed, rehabilitated and regularly maintained to secure a supply of safe water to refugees, returnees, and IDPs as well as local host communities. Activities ranged from the construction and rehabilitation of shallow wells,

pipes and pumps to the installation of compact water units, pumping stations, treatment plants and distribution networks. In addition, public health surveys on water use were conducted.

## Organization and implementation

### Management

UNHCR has eight offices in Iraq, five in northern Iraq, two in southern Iraq and one in Baghdad, supervised by the UNHCR Iraq Operations Unit in Amman and the suboffice in Kuwait. During the course of 2004, UNHCR adjusted its operation through the closure of the two offices in Amarah and Najaf, and the gradual reduction of its international staff from over 50 to 15 and its national staff from over 100 to 60.

### Working with others

UNHCR works within the framework of the UN Country Team and cooperates closely with the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) and other UN agencies, as well as IOM, the Red Cross/Red Crescent Society, international and national NGOs, and various civil society actors and community-based organizations representing beneficiary populations. As the task manager for UN Cluster 8, UNHCR leads the UN response with regard to displacement issues, including IDPs and refugees. To enhance national ownership, UNHCR strove to establish close and effective partnerships with the Iraqi authorities, mainly the MoDM.

## Overall assessment

Despite considerable constraints, UNHCR was able to maintain its plan and managed to achieve a number of results related to the facilitated repatriation, the reintegration scheme, returnee monitoring, and capacity building of the MoDM, while providing basic assistance to refugees in Iraq. Despite its limitations, remote management has on the whole proved to be viable and indeed the best option under the circumstances.

The reintegration process will remain a challenge in the year to come, with returnees competing with local communities for access to public services and often inadequate local resources. Their reintegration is hampered by insecurity, property disputes, the presence of landmines and unexploded ordnance, documentation problems, the housing shortage, poor access to health services and schools, as well as the lack of employment opportunities (e.g. in one governorate, unemployment among returnees ran at 90 per cent). Efforts to develop mechanisms for the redress of past human rights abuses have only just started.

Monitoring mechanisms were strengthened to better assess populations of concern, assistance needs and prospects for durable solutions. Through returnee monitoring carried out by IPs at border-crossing points, in villages and LAICs, UNHCR collected more than 15,000 household or village survey questionnaires. This information underpins area assessment reports and has been entered into a country-wide returnee monitoring database.

Iraq's many complex displacement issues need to be addressed through a comprehensive and coherent national strategy, owned and led by the Iraqi government. To this end, UNHCR has been advising the MoDM in identifying relevant stakeholders and issues, and organizing a local and national consultation process, which should lead in 2005 to a National Conference on Displacement Challenges and Durable Solutions. In the 2005 post election period, UNHCR will further develop its support to national and local authorities and keep on building the MoDM's capacity, thereby enabling the Ministry to assume greater responsibilities for persons of concern to UNHCR.

## Offices

### **Amman (Jordan)** - Iraq Operations Unit

Kuwait City (Kuwait) - covering southern Iraq

Baghdad

Basrah

Nassriyah

Erbil

Sulaymaniyah

Dahuk

Kirkuk

Mosul

## Partners

### **Government agencies**

Basrah University Law School

Ministry of Displacement and Migration

### **NGOs**

Agency for Technical Cooperation and Development

Concern for Kids

Counterpart International

Danish Refugee Council

International Rescue Committee

INTERSOS

Islamic Relief

Millennium Relief and Development Services

Mission East

*Ockenden* International

People in Need

*Qandil*

Rehabilitation, Education and Community Health

Relief International

Save the Children

The Salvation Army

*Un Ponte per l'Iraq*

War Child

### **Others**

United Nations Human Settlements Program

UNOPs

## Financial Report (USD)

Expenditure breakdown	Current year's projects			Prior years' projects
	Annual programme budget	Supplementary programme budget	Total	Annual and Supplementary programme budgets
Protection, monitoring and coordination	496,697	3,805,623	<b>4,302,320</b>	0
Community services	2,464	1,080,036	<b>1,082,500</b>	61,161
Crop production	0	47,390	<b>47,390</b>	0
Domestic needs / household support	132,712	117,388	<b>250,100</b>	0
Education	230	571,077	<b>571,307</b>	88,900
Food	27,635	11,885	<b>39,520</b>	2,211
Health and nutrition	22,670	483,988	<b>506,658</b>	17,165
Income generation	600	931,235	<b>931,835</b>	4,554
Legal assistance	39,715	973,992	<b>1,013,707</b>	6,885
Livestock	0	28,233	<b>28,233</b>	0
Operational support (to agencies)	150	1,921,365	<b>1,921,515</b>	367,360
Sanitation	120	123,929	<b>124,049</b>	15,031
Shelter and infrastructure	2,466	2,981,664	<b>2,984,130</b>	3,072,779
Transport and logistics	111,927	1,237,511	<b>1,349,439</b>	118,993
Water	4,082	983,415	<b>987,497</b>	314,363
Instalments with implementing partners	0	8,108,050	<b>8,108,050</b>	(4,069,402)
<b>Sub-total operational activities</b>	<b>841,468</b>	<b>23,406,781</b>	<b>24,248,249</b>	<b>0</b>
Programme support	1,080,515	834,840	<b>1,915,355</b>	0
<b>Total disbursements</b>	<b>1,921,983</b>	<b>24,241,621</b>	<b>26,163,604</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Instalments with implementing partners</b>				
Payments made	0	18,776,105	<b>18,776,105</b>	
Reporting received	0	(10,668,055)	<b>(10,668,055)</b>	
<b>Balance</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>8,108,050</b>	<b>8,108,050</b>	
<b>Prior years' report</b>				
<b>Instalments with implementing partners</b>				
Outstanding 1 January				5,204,520
Payments made				298,615
Reporting received				(4,069,402)
Refunded to UNHCR				(1,433,591)
Currency adjustment				(142)
<b>Balance</b>				<b>0</b>
<b>Unliquidated obligations</b>				
Outstanding 1 January				8,069,992
Disbursements				(4,034,412)
Cancellations				(756,678)
<b>Outstanding 31 December</b>				<b>3,278,902</b>