

Iraq



Operational highlights

- Hundreds of thousands of Iraqis continued to be displaced, both within and outside Iraq, by sectarian violence and the deterioration of social and economic conditions in the country.
- UNHCR sought more political and financial support for humanitarian activities in Iraq and in neighbouring countries now hosting millions of Iraqis.
- UNHCR provided protection, legal advice and material support where possible to some 44,000 non-Iraqi refugees and over 100,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Iraq.
- The Office distributed emergency relief items to 20,730 families (124,000 people) in Iraq.

Working environment

The bombing of the al-Askari Mosque in Samarra on 22 February 2006 resulted in retaliatory violence by Shi'a and Sunni militant groups and other armed elements. This triggered a dramatic change in the nature of violence in Iraq, with civilians systematically targeted through intimidation and acts of terror. The aim

is to expel ethnic and religious groups from their homes to create ethnically and religiously homogenous areas within the country. Also targeted in the violence were Iraq's religious and ethnic minorities, who constitute some ten per cent of the population.

The Ministry of Displacement and Migration, the Kurdish Regional Government and other organizations estimate that in the ten months since the Samarra bombing, more than 600,000 Iraqis have been displaced within the country. This brought the total number of IDPs in Iraq to some 1.8 million. An estimated two million Iraqis are refugees in the region, mainly in the Syrian Arab Republic and Jordan. In addition, a significant number of Iraqis have fled to Europe. Facilitated repatriation to Iraq could not take place in 2006 due to the security situation.

Mass displacement and insecurity contributed to the erosion of an already fragile national economy. The health and education services were in disarray, electricity and water cuts were frequent, and unemployment and inflation reached unprecedented levels. Fuel was expensive and in short supply. Food supplies were highly insecure, with disruptions or failure of the public distribution system in many areas of the country.

Achievements and impact

Main objectives

In the first quarter of 2006, given the changed situation following the Samarra bombing, UNHCR revised its initial objectives for the Iraq operation. The revised objectives were to protect and assist refugees in the country and in the region; protect and assist IDPs in the country; target assistance to facilitate the return and reintegration of IDPs where possible; build national capacity to protect and assist persons of concern to UNHCR; and prepare emergency response plans.

Protection and solutions

UNHCR continued to advocate for and provide advice to the Government on Iraq's accession to relevant international instruments and the development of national legislation on refugees and IDPs.

An inter-ministerial workshop on gaps in the protection of refugees in Iraq reached several important conclusions and made a number of recommendations. These included the recognition of refugees granted asylum by the former Iraqi regime, the revision of the 1971 Refugee Act and the issuance of special identity documents to Palestinian refugees.

UNHCR managed a number of complex operations in 2006, including the closure of the Al Tash refugee camp, the relocation of refugees from central to northern Iraq and life-saving assistance to some 200 Iranian Kurd refugees stranded in no-man's-land at the border with Jordan, and 300 Palestinian refugees on the Syrian border. The Office assisted with the resettlement of some 20 Iranian refugees in third countries. In addition, it completed pilot refugee status determination interviews using video facilities for some 180 cases in Ashraf in central Iraq.

UNHCR also issued refugee certificates to Iranian Ahwazi and Syrian refugees and followed up on the cases of detained refugees. Furthermore, the Office intervened with the Office of the Prime Minister, the Ministry of Displacement and Migration and the ministries of the Interior and Defence on improving physical protection for Palestinian and Syrian refugees in Baghdad.

Activities and assistance

Community services: Eight community-based organizations were established in Dohuk and Erbil. Members were trained to mobilize their communities to assess needs, distribute garbage bins, repair generators and implement other community initiatives. A community centre was maintained in Kawa refugee camp for some 1,300 Iranian refugees relocated from

Persons of concern					
Type of population	Origin	Total	Of whom assisted by UNHCR	Per cent female	Per cent under 18
Refugees	Turkey	16,800	16,800	50	51
	Occupied Palestinian Territory	15,000	15,000	49	33
	Islamic Rep. of Iran	11,800	11,800	49	45
	Syrian Arab Republic	700	700	51	38
Asylum-seekers	Islamic Rep. of Iran	1,000	1,000	40	29
	Syrian Arab Republic	900	900	43	78
	Turkey	300	300	50	26
Returnees (refugees) ¹	From various countries	19,800	-	50	54
IDPs		1,834,400	130,000	51	43
Returnees (IDPs)		150,000	-	50	43
Stateless	Stateless Bidoons	100,000	-	49	45
	Other	30,000	-	49	45
Total		2,180,700	176,500		

¹ While UNHCR did not facilitate the voluntary return of Iraqi refugees and IDPs in 2006, spontaneous returnees benefited from UNHCR's reintegration activities. Please see the 'Activities and assistance' section below for more details.



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Two hundred Iranian Kurds have been stranded on the Iraqi side of no-man's-land at the border with Jordan. UNHCR provided life-saving assistance to them.

central Iraq. In northern Iraq, Iranian refugees attended courses in vehicle mechanics, carpentry, hairdressing and information technology, as well as language classes to improve their self-reliance. IDPs and returnees in northern and southern Iraq also received vocational and livelihood training.

Domestic needs and household support: Several hundred Syrian and Palestinian refugees in Baghdad received cash allowances to cover household needs and rent. Sudanese, Turkish, Syrian, Iranian and Palestinian refugees and asylum-seekers received non-food items, subsidized fuel and in-kind, as well as cash, assistance.

Education: A school was constructed in Kawa camp, and seven school buildings in Makhmour camp were rehabilitated. Refugee families with special needs received transportation allowances and money for school fees to enable their children to attend school.

Food: Some 140 Sudanese, 16,000 Turkish, 1,300 Iranian and 240 Palestinian refugees, as well as Syrian asylum-seekers, in the camps in north and central Iraq

received regular food rations. UNHCR covered 50 per cent of the food ration costs for Turkish and Iranian refugees.

Health and nutrition: Refugees received health care, vaccinations, medical check-ups, referrals and treatment from mobile teams and at local health facilities. UNHCR handed over a health centre in Kawa camp to the local authorities. Returnees received health training in Erbil and Dohuk. Four health facilities were rehabilitated in returnee-hosting communities in the south.

Income generation: Some 50 income-generating groups benefited from grants. Projects in brick-making and other livelihood activities, as well as a traditional revolving loan system, were established for returnee families and host communities in northern Iraq.

Legal assistance: UNHCR managed a network of 14 legal aid information centres with mobile teams throughout Iraq. About 25,000 refugees and others of concern were provided with legal advice and information; selected cases were represented in court.

Outreach activities delivered legal information to approximately 50,000 people.

Operational support: Implementing partners received operational support that covered programmes and security measures. UNHCR also covered the cost of translating major reports and policy papers, which were shared with the relevant government ministries.

Sanitation: The Barika, Kawa, Makhmour and K70 refugee settlements and camps benefited from functioning sewage systems. Latrines and bathrooms were constructed and maintained as needed, as were garbage collection and disposal systems. Hygiene awareness training was provided.

Shelter and other infrastructure: In northern Iraq, IDPs and returnees were helped to build some 50 homes. In southern Iraq, 14 bridges and access roads, as well as six electricity systems, were rehabilitated in returnee communities. Some 140 family houses for Iranian refugees were constructed in Kawa camp in Erbil.

Transport and logistics: Warehouses were maintained in Baghdad, Erbil, Dohuk and Basra in Iraq as well as in Kuwait to store supplies for Iraq. A warehouse in Amman maintained a regional stockpile for 200,000 beneficiaries. The Baghdad warehouse was closed by the end of 2006 due to the security situation and lack of funds. UNHCR distributed emergency relief items to 20,730 families (124,000 people) displaced by militia-led violence and 574 families displaced by flooding in the governorates of Anbar, Basrah, Thi-Qar, Najaf, Kerbala, Muthanna, Missan, Baghdad, Sulaymaniyah and Dohuk.

Water: UNHCR ensured that refugees in Kawa camp had access to clean and safe drinking water by constructing a water supply and distribution network and regularly checking water quality. In some instances water was supplied using tankers.

Constraints

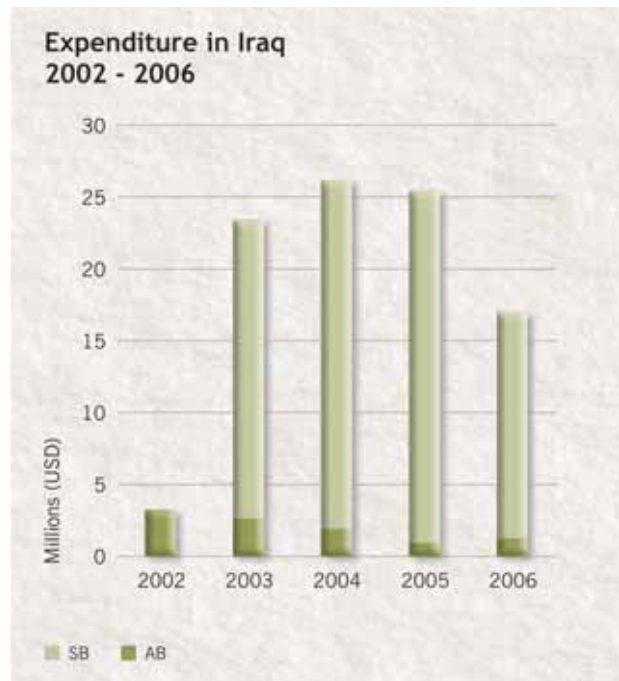
The escalation of violence and lack of international presence outside the north of Iraq hampered operations. Capacity-building activities were also disrupted by the change of ministers and the turnover of staff in the Ministry of Displacement and Migration. Implementing partners were hampered by a reliance on remote management and the difficulties of operating in areas of armed conflict.

Due to funding shortfalls, a number of activities were suspended. These included the registration of refugees in central Iraq, the establishment of additional legal aid information centres and the disbursement of grants for

several income-generating and community-based quick-impact projects. Several warehouses also had to be closed.

Financial information

The unpredictability and uncertainty surrounding Iraq affected the humanitarian operation as a whole and funding in particular. In April 2006, UNHCR launched its supplementary appeal for Iraq and neighbouring States. The budget was USD 29.8 million, 70 per cent of which was for assistance to refugees and IDPs inside Iraq. Due to a funding shortfall, UNHCR was forced to cut staffing and operational and administrative costs in Iraq and neighbouring countries in the second half of 2006. However, with the introduction of a strengthened advocacy campaign for displaced Iraqis, fresh contributions in the latter part of 2006 and a positive response by donors, the supplementary appeal was funded at 80 per cent by the end of 2006.



Organization and implementation

Management

An inspection of UNHCR's operations inside Iraq in 2006 reviewed the structure and modus operandi of the operation. Given the growing insecurity and decline in the number of returnees, UNHCR decided to reduce the size of its cross-border base in Kuwait and the number of national staff in Baghdad and southern Iraq. On the other hand, the presence in Erbil was strengthened by the deployment of one international staff member.

Working with others

UNHCR operated inside Iraq within the framework of the UN Country Team, which grouped 16 UN agencies and programmes and two affiliated bodies under the overall coordination of the UN Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) and the Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator. Within the UN Country Team's cluster approach, UNHCR headed Cluster F with responsibility for Refugees, IDPs and Durable Solutions; IOM served as deputy cluster lead and UNAMI, UNOPS, UNICEF, UN-HABITAT, WHO, UNEP, ILO, UNIDO, WFP, UNDP OHCHR and FAO were cluster members. ICRC, IFRC and the Iraqi Red Crescent participated in the IDP working group. The Ministry of Displacement and Migration in Baghdad participated in some of the meetings via video and telephone conference facilities.

UNHCR worked closely with UNRWA in the provision of protection and assistance to Palestinian refugees in Iraq, who are outside the purview of UNRWA's mandate. Efforts to find a safe haven for Palestinians inside Iraq, relocate them to Gaza or gain them admission to other countries were not successful.

Overall assessment

With the enormous needs of IDPs in Iraq exceeding the capacity of any single agency, the inter-agency collaborative approach has been strengthened. This focuses on the interventions set forth in the emergency response strategy jointly developed with members of the IDP working group, Cluster F and the Ministry of Displacement and Migration.

While accession to international refugee and statelessness instruments was not a priority for the Iraqi Government, its readiness to revise the 1971 Refugee Act provided an opportunity to safeguard the legal framework for refugees. Meanwhile, the implementation

of the 2006 Nationality Law requires continued monitoring.

For many refugees in Iraq, particularly for those of Arab origin (Palestinians, Syrians and Iranian Ahwazis), resettlement may be the only durable solution. Pending resettlement, temporary relocation to a safe site should be pursued.

The delay in signing a tripartite agreement between the Governments of Iraq, Turkey and UNHCR and the lack of prospects for the local integration of Turkish refugees have seriously limited durable solutions. While local settlement efforts for Iranian refugees continue in the area administered by the Kurdish Regional Government, the safe and dignified return to their country of origin for those who wish to do so depends on securing the necessary agreements with the respective country of origin, including permission for UNHCR to monitor the returnees.

Insecurity, political considerations and the inability of host communities to absorb many more IDPs resulted in various Iraqi governorates restricting access to their areas. This situation may get worse if neighbouring countries also close their borders to Iraqis. The occupation or destruction of housing by militia groups and criminals will add another complication to any future return process.

Partners

Government agencies: Ministry of Displacement and Migration, Ministries of Interior, Housing, Justice and Human Rights, the Kurdish Regional Government, and local authorities at governorate and district levels.

NGOs: Fourteen international and two national NGOs worked as implementing partners. In addition, UNHCR coordinated closely with the NGOs Coordination Committee in Iraq (NCCI) which supports a network of about 80 international and 200 national NGOs in and around Iraq.

Others: FAO, ILO, IOM, OHCHR, UNAMI, UNDP, UNEP, UN-HABITAT, UNICEF, UNIDO, UNOPS, UNRWA, WFP, and WHO.

Budget, income and expenditure (USD)

	Final budget	Income from contributions ¹	Other funds available ²	Total funds available	Total expenditure
AB	2,562,465	0	1,260,055	1,260,055	1,260,055
SB ³	18,952,834	5,475,521	10,257,213	15,732,734	15,732,733
Total	21,515,299	5,475,521	11,517,268	16,992,789	16,992,788

¹ Includes income from contributions earmarked at the country level.

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

³ The SB figures apply to the Iraq Operation. The budget does not include a 7 per cent support cost that is recovered from contributions to meet indirect costs for UNHCR.

Financial Report (USD)

Expenditure breakdown	Current year's projects			Previous years' projects
	AB	SB	Total	AB and SB
Protection, monitoring and coordination	562,766	2,456,591	3,019,358	0
Community services	0	160,520	160,520	265,652
Crop production	0	0	0	1,100
Domestic needs and household support	0	687,815	687,815	363,978
Education	0	221,683	221,683	340,336
Food	0	24,327	24,327	21,934
Health and nutrition	0	168,257	168,257	182,941
Income generation	0	1,168,542	1,168,542	469,610
Legal assistance	0	1,903,807	1,903,807	700,410
Livestock	0	0	0	19,376
Operational support (to agencies)	0	1,476,026	1,476,026	969,414
Sanitation	0	204,756	204,756	76,655
Shelter and infrastructure	0	1,639,144	1,639,144	2,296,404
Transport and logistics	0	738,386	738,386	121,319
Water	0	367,715	367,715	532,515
Instalments with implementing partners	0	3,190,517	3,190,517	(6,361,644)
Sub-total operational activities	562,766	14,408,083	14,970,849	0
Programme support	697,289	1,324,650	2,021,939	0
Total expenditure	1,260,055	15,732,733	16,992,788	0
Cancellation on previous years' expenditure				(128,367)
Instalments with implementing partners				
Payments made	0	10,978,457	10,978,457	
Reporting received	0	(7,787,941)	(7,787,941)	
Balance	0	3,190,517	3,190,517	
Previous years' report				
Instalments with implementing partners				
Outstanding 1st January				7,644,401
Reporting received				(6,361,644)
Refunded to UNHCR				(950,351)
Adjustments				(4,301)
Balance				328,105