

IRAQ

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OVERVIEW ►

As the Coalition Provisional Authority and their Forces (CF) prepare to handover to an interim Iraqi Government the United Nations (UN) agencies and their non-governmental organisation (NGO) partners continue to work along side Iraq authorities in order to ensure that humanitarian needs of all Iraqis are met. Insecurity is nonetheless hampering efforts, with particular concern expressed at the capacity of the water, sanitation and health sectors to meet summer-time needs. Against this backdrop a scene of massive population movements – including those Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), has emerged and rallied UN agencies, through the Cluster approach, to assess, then address their needs in a cooperative and coordinated manner. Recent survey results from the UN refugee agency, UNHCR, are alarming. As sovereignty looms on the horizon the UN continues its efforts to ensure free and fair democratic elections can be held for the first time in the Iraq's long history.

HUMANITARIAN ►

Humanitarian Imperatives During the first months of this year, a UNHCR NGO partner was funded to do a District Profile survey in Thi Qar Province. During the period January-March, the NGO conducted interviews with councils, authorities and tribal leaders of villages/towns and cities in over 300 communities representing a total of 1,750,000 people. Information was collected about returnees, returnee-affected communities and others throughout the governorate. The findings of the report on major public service sectors, including the judiciary, water, health, education, police and social welfare system are alarming, validating and reinforcing similar findings from previous reports for Basra and Miysan provinces. According to this and other reports, the humanitarian situation in the south has been deteriorating over the past months. There are water, electricity and fuel shortages. Hospitals are short of essential supplies, schools are overcrowded, returnees and IDPs continue to occupy public buildings and unemployment is endemic. The International Organisation for Migration (IOM) confirm the situation in the south is tense, with increased kidnappings, "car-jackings", black market activities and porous borders reported. Accordingly, the procurement of the remaining Non-Food Items (NFIs) for the Contingency Warehouse in the south are being finalised. The stocks cater for 1,000 families.

Massive Displacement Since the fall of the former regime last April, there have also been population movements of on a massive scale. For instance, the pre-war population of Basra city was estimated at around 1.8 million. Based on latest Ministry of Trade (MoT) Public Food Distribution statistics, the numbers benefiting from the food assistance are now 2.3 million. The total city population being estimated at close to 3 million. These figures indicate that the inhabitants of the city increased by 1.2 million since April last year. The pattern is similar in most urban centres of the south and even more so in the holy cities of Najaf and Karbala.

Resources/Capacities Overstretched The MoT has documented the spontaneous return of 155,000 refugees from Iran during the past year. Many of the rural poor, mostly spontaneous returning refugees and IDPs, have moved to cities where services and access to assistance are relatively better. The impact of such large population movements on existing urban infrastructure remains enormous. Power transformers fail regularly due to overload (increased appliances and illegal connections). Water pipelines often run dry as thousands of new connections are made illegally and with no supervision. Housing is in short supply with two or three families to a room. UNHCR and NGO district profiles in the south indicate health professionals are overworked, ill-paid and unprotected. Buildings are derelict, hospital wards overcrowded, equipment and supplies low and erratic.

Floods Assistance Updated reports indicate that 1,897 families were affected in the floods in Missan. Out of these 1,698 are in Khair District, which is the worst hit, with populations still camping in the open. IOM is about to start distributing (through partners on the ground) NFIs to support over 1,000 vulnerable families.

Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Iraq ad interim (SRSG ai) Update The SRSG a.i., in his capacity as Humanitarian Coordinator traveled to Geneva 16-17 June to update the Interagency Standing Committee (IASC) Working Group on the situation in Iraq and the various efforts underway in Amman regarding contingency planning, revised guidelines for civil-military interface, and the UN's ongoing programmes underway in Iraq. He

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highlighted the achievements realised despite the challenges of operating from Amman and the security threats faced by UN staff, NGOs and others inside Iraq. The IASC group endorsed the ongoing emergency planning efforts and the effective use of cluster coordination mechanisms. At the same time, the IASC members stressed that, although there were many lessons to be learnt from the Iraq experience, it was also important to note that in many aspects, Iraq is unique and should not be a model for other humanitarian crises.

Also, while in Geneva, the SRSG a.i. met with senior representatives of UNHCR, IOM, the International Committee for the Red Cross (ICRC), the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), World Health Organisation (WHO) and UN Environment Programme (UNEP). On 18 June, he attended the Humanitarian Liaison Working Group donor briefing and described the UN's achievements and contingency planning and preparedness activities. He also reinforced messages related to monitoring the humanitarian situation in Iraq, especially in the south where water and electricity shortages combined with rising temperatures (over 50C) were highlighted.

HUMAN RIGHTS ►

Human Rights Training Nottingham University (United Kingdom) with support from the OHCHR, concluded human rights training in Amman (13-20 June) for officials of the Iraqi Ministry of Human Rights. At the end of the training, officials from the Ministry had a chance to meet colleagues from Iraqi human rights NGOs visiting Jordan on route to Beirut to attend a training of trainers on managerial skills organised by Cluster 9 (Governance and Civil Society). That workshop is due to commence Monday 21 June. Growing interest has been expressed in participating in training opportunities planned by Cluster 9, with numerous inquiries received from NGOs inside Iraq. Preparation of other training activities is now underway, with a training of trainers on human rights expected to take place in July/August. Cluster 9 has invited the newly appointed Minister of Justice and the Minister of Human Rights to hold consultations in order to identify human rights priorities of the interim Government, including discussion centring on legal and judicial reform. The consultations will take place in July and will outline the areas in which the UN can provide support.

Dispelling Rumours Rumours have been circulating across Iraq which indicate an increase in migration of Iraqi Christians to other countries – spurred apparently in the belief that certain countries may be willing to readily accept them. To counter such rumours, the Chaldean Babel Patriarchate of Baghdad issued a letter on 14 June directed at its parishioners. The letter stresses that similar stories are part of bogus-schemes to gain financially from people's insecurities. The letter adds further that some of the countries mentioned as “possible destinations” have, contrary to the rumours, actually implemented stricter measures to prevent the immigration of Iraqis.

CLUSTER COORDINATION FOR IRAQ ►

Education and Culture (Cluster 1)

Educational Workshops A workshop on Higher Education Reform in Iraq will be held in Beirut June 21-24, 2004 for a team of 40 senior higher education officials from Iraq (presidents, deans, and senior staff from the Ministry of Higher Education) headed by the new Minister of Higher Education. The workshop is organised by the World Bank, UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) Regional Bureau in Beirut, and the British Council. UNESCO is also planning to organise a workshop in Beirut in July for the adaptation of a data entry programme for EMIS, developed by UNESCO. The workshop will be attended by the Director General of Planning at the Ministry of Education (MoE) and specialists in educational statistics and computer programming.

Capacity Building Additional UNESCO assistance includes: Provision of conferencing facilities for MoE in cooperation with the World Bank; establishment of a computer training laboratory in the Ministry in Baghdad, and; Cooperation with The Open University (UK) to develop and enhance the Ministry's online presence.

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Safeguarding Cultural Heritage The 1st Plenary session of the International Coordination Committee for the safeguarding of the cultural heritage of Iraq was held at UNESCO Headquarters in late May. Chaired by the Iraq Minister for Culture, some 25 experts participated in the meeting as well as representatives of international organisations. Concrete recommendations to protect and rehabilitate Iraqi's cultural heritage were outlined. This meeting was followed by a Cultural Forum (26-27 May) at UNESCO, where 15 Iraqi intellectuals, in the Minister's presence, discussed the role of culture and arts in Iraq.

Stolen Heritage Earlier this month (1-2 June) UNESCO participated in the INTERPOL regional meeting in Amman to fight illicit trafficking in cultural property stolen in Iraq.

Health (Cluster 2)

Lifesaving Supplies The UN Children's agency, UNICEF, is providing Emergency Health Support to children and their families in Iraq in close coordination with the Iraqi Red Crescent and the MoH. Supplies delivered to Baghdad from Jordan during the period 3-17 June 2004 included three Rubbhalls (temporary storage facilities); Numerous stationery items and training materials for use by the Nutrition Research Institute (NRI) and in UNICEF supported breastfeeding programmes; Four-thousand Weight for Height charts, and eight million capsules of vitamin A, for nationwide distribution. Four million Oral Re-hydration Salts sachets were also delivered to MoH in Baghdad - three million will be distributed to all governorates within the next two weeks, one million will remain in the store in Baghdad as an emergency backup. UNICEF also supported the distribution of kerosene refrigerator spare parts to 10 south/centre governorates; Distributed 2000 megaphones to support health education services; Delivered 20 AC units to the main paediatric hospital in Baghdad; Finalised a hearing-aid distribution plan with the MoH and completed assessments of bids for rehabilitation of 11 Public Health Centres.

Meeting Patient Needs Meetings were held in Baghdad between the WHO and MoH-Kimadia officials, to review the drugs availability situation. For the month of May, there was no stock available at the warehouse level for five types of drugs (out of the list of 60 drugs, deemed 'essential' in combating chronic diseases). Discussions with the MoH to find adequate solutions for patients needs are ongoing. Using funds provided by UN Population Fund (UNFPA) for emergency response, WHO procured some US\$30,000 worth of laboratory kits for testing blood for Hepatitis C, Hepatitis B and HIV. Each kit allows 480 tests to be carried out by the Enzyme Linked Immuno Sorbent Assya (ELISA) technique, which is mostly used in screening blood donations.

Supporting Iraqi Ministries WHO continues to support the MoH through the provision of oxygen for medical use (to the 57 hospitals in Baghdad, Kirkuk and Mosul) and housekeeping activities (in the main hospitals in Mosul City). WHO has extended this support for a third time and has advised the Minister of Health that these operations will continue until August 2004, allowing the MoH to explore other sustainable solutions. Meanwhile, the rehabilitation of the National Blood Transfusion Centre (Stage 2) has progressed, with the project site being handed over to the contractor with a total contractual cost of ID400 million and duration of 120 days.

Disease Control Following two suspected cases of hemorrhagic fever (one each from Dahuk and Suleimaniyah governorates) WHO has made arrangements for the blood samples from these cases to be sent to Cairo for laboratory investigation. During the reported period, laboratory supplies and equipment valued at about \$200,000 was procured by WHO for the rehabilitation of the Public Health Laboratories of Baghdad, Mosul, Basrah and Najaf have arrived in Amman and are undergoing the customs clearance formalities.

Nutrition With UNICEF support, ten containers of High Protein Biscuits (165 MT) have been delivered to Iraq; three containers delivered directly to the three northern governorates Erbil, Sulaimaniya and Dohuk and seven containers dispatched to Kerbala, Najaf, Muthana, Thiqr, Missan, Basra and Diwania governorates. Breastfeeding training/educational slides and stationary supplies (including 96 text books) will be distributed to all breastfeeding programme managers at governorate level for training activities. The MoH partnered WHO in conducting a

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workshop (14-17 June) entitled 'Improving Health Communication Strategies for the Prevention and Control of Micronutrient Malnutrition', which aimed to improve and strengthen national health communication plans in Iraq.

Medical Emergency and Health Evacuation Programme for Iraq (MEHRPI) IOM's MEHRPI completed the installation, and calibration, of equipment for the Burn-ward unit at the Basra General hospital this week through its contractor. The necessary training for staff to operate equipment was also conducted. In addition, the MEHRPI has finalised the procurement of equipment, furniture and stationery for the medical evacuation units at the MoH in Baghdad and Basra. The units are a key part of the capacity building activities of IOM and the Iraqi MoH. Under the auspices of the MEHRPI, and in close coordination with the Kuwaiti MoH, progress of selecting the most appropriate health institute to provide training to Iraqi Medical staff in techniques of modern interventional Cardiology is underway.

Forthcoming Meetings UNICEF will meet with the Preventive Health Directorate Deputy Director-General next week to review and plan support of supplies distribution to the southern governorates. A separate meeting will be held with the Health Centres Unit Manager where UNICEF reconstruction support for the Centres will be examined.

Infrastructure and Housing (Cluster 4)

Environmental survey The UN Development Programme (UNDP) technical survey on the environmental impact of some 40 sunken vessels in the ports and waterways has now been completed and the narrative text currently under elaboration. The final report should be available by beginning July 2004.

Dredging and Wreck removal Improved access to Iraq's main seaports and waterways are crucial for reconstruction efforts and large-scale delivery of humanitarian supplies. Ports and waterways suffer from heavy silting accumulated over the years and insufficient dredging of the approach channels. A \$24m UNDP project for a survey and subsequent dredging, is now close to its initial stages of implementation. An evaluation of tenders from seven qualified bidders for the seven-day dredging survey is currently underway. On the basis of this survey, full dredging work should commence in September 2004 and be completed within 14 weeks, with existing channels opened by the end of December. However, difficulties are being faced with regard to finding interested contractors for a complementary project to assess the operational/technical capacity of the remaining dredging fleet which is not currently operational, and for its repair and maintenance.

Mine Action (Cluster 7)

Future Activities UNDP-supported mine clearance activities continued in the south of the country, with the team clearing below surface, a total of 50, 968m² of land. It also located and destroyed five pieces of unexploded ordnance. The security situation continues to be a challenge toward conducting an effective mine action programme. A meeting was held in Amman, Jordan, with two mine-action organisations working in Iraq to discuss the current situation and the future direction of the Mine Action Programme.

Refugees and IDPs (Cluster 8)

IDP Strategy Last month, Cluster 8 was tasked by the SRSG a.i./Humanitarian Coordinator, to produce a draft IDP strategy for consideration by the Iraq UN Country Team (UNCT) and subsequent submission to the UN Emergency Relief Coordinator. Over the last three weeks, Cluster 8's IDP Working Group developed a Draft Strategic Action Plan drawing from the Cluster (collaborative) approach which has been adopted for the Iraq operation. Prior to its finalisation, two days of informal consultations will be held on 22/23 June to discuss the Draft Strategic Action Plan before submission to the UNCT.

UN Capacity Building/Assistance The Ministry of Displacement and Migration (MoDM) plans to open offices in Basra and Amarah in June 2004 with support from Cluster 8 agencies. MoDM indicated interest in expanding the

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Cluster-funded legal advice centers (now operational in southern Iraq). During the period January until the end-April, some 2,137 families approached the Ockenden legal aid office, one of the main such legal aid facilities. Among those approaching the office, 1,278 families requested legal assistance, including 58 property cases and 1,220 notary/translation cases.

A Place to Call Home An agreement was signed on 16 June between UNHCR and the Kurdish Regional Government (KRG) authorities in Suleymania on the use of land in Barika Town, Suleymania Governorate. The local authorities agreed to the building of 250 houses benefiting 250 Iranian Kurdish refugee families that spontaneously moved from Al-Tash camp in Alanbar Governorate, to northern Iraq and have so far been living in tents or rented houses funded by UNHCR. The authorities approved the use of land for as long as the beneficiaries enjoyed refugee status and remained inside Iraq and agreed not to remove anyone from the houses during this time. UNHCR, through an implementing partner, will together with the beneficiaries construct the housing units, improve the electricity network and connect the houses to the electricity supply and provide adequate water and sanitation facilities. Upon completion of the construction, the refugees and their host community will also enjoy access to primary and secondary education, medical facilities, electricity, water and garbage collection.

Refugees Assisted Return On 20 June 2004 KRG authorities in Erbil granted agreement to UNHCR for the commencement of assisted voluntary return of Iraqi refugees from Iran to the three northern governorates (3NGs). The first movement will take place next week and will be carried out through UNHCR's implementing NGO partner. UNHCR is working with a number of NGOs and UN Office of Project Services (UNOPS) to facilitate the reintegration of returning IDPs and refugee families in the 3NGs. Refugees returning from Iran will be supported through ongoing reintegration programmes.

Fallujah & Ramadi IOM continues to monitor the situation in Fallujah and Ramadi where it appears that tensions are on the rise again between CF and the local population. Distributions to 165 IDPs in Joolan have been completed. All received mattresses, kitchen sets, cooking stoves, kerosene lamps, cold boxes and clothes. Plans to distribute NFIs (mattresses, cooking stoves, kitchen sets, etc) to 474 IDPs whose homes were partially destroyed in Askari, Shorta, Jughafi, Dubhat, and Nazal are on-going.

Governance and Civil Society (Cluster 9) - also see *Human Rights* section

Countrywide Living Conditions Survey A video-conference was held with UNDP New York to discuss the preliminary findings of the countrywide living conditions survey undertaken jointly by UNDP, FAFO-AIS a Norwegian NGO, and the Iraqi Central Statistics Office (CSO). With the participation of representatives from the World Bank, World Food Programme (WFP), UNICEF and WHO, in-depth discussions took place on the methodology and sectoral results as well as the validity and consistency of data. It was agreed that the initial results would not be disseminated until the accuracy of the data had been re-checked, the two outstanding Governorates surveyed, and the Central Statistical Office had validated the findings. A UNDP expert is to be appointed to work with FAFO to review the data.

Watching Brief: The joint-World Bank/UNDP Watching Brief on the macro-economic situation in Iraq was finalised in January 2004 and is now available electronically. Prepared shortly after the conflict, and bearing in mind the changes that have taken place in the economy since that time, a review will be taken as to the validity of the data and possible updating of information.

Employment Assistance Services (Cluster 10)

Muthanna and Baghdad Activities under UNDP's Iraq Reconstruction and Employment Programme (IREP) in the south have doubled over the past month since the arrival of new management in the field. There has been a major transfer of financial/operational responsibilities to the field that will accelerate implementation rates and humanitarian delivery. Over the period 1 March to 20 June 2004, 332,000 worker days were generated and 7,200

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workers are currently paid by the Programme. The launch of IREP activities in the centre and north of the country has commenced by UNDP with evaluation offers from local contractors who will be selected on a competitive basis, modelled on the precedents set in the south. The two teams should be in place by early July. Within the framework of IREP, contracts have also been signed with seven international NGOs to the value of some \$200,000 each.

Workforce Development and Veteran's Services (WDVS) IOM's implementing partner in Baghdad continues to provide technical assistance to Ministry of Labour (MoLSA) staff on a variety of administrative and operational issues on a daily basis. During this reporting period, IOM has assisted the Finance Department of the Baghdad Employment Centre with Standard Operational Procedures to track the centres human and material resources.

UN SECRETARY-GENERAL ►

UNSG Appeal for Support The Special Adviser to the Secretary-General, Lakhdar Brahimi, delivered a message from the UN Secretary-General (UNSG), Kofi Annan, to the Ministerial Conference of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference in Istanbul on Monday (14 July). Highlighting the challenges ahead of the Iraqi people the UNSG appealed to the participants: "All of you have an interest in helping the country to surmount the many challenges it faces, including the creation of adequate conditions for elections, and convening the national conference, which offers an opportunity to increase popular participation in the political transition. I appeal to you to respond favourably to the Interim Government's request for support. The United Nations, for its part, will continue to provide reconstruction, development and humanitarian assistance, from both within and outside Iraq, as circumstances permit."

Iraq Election Preparations Iraq's silent majority remained eager to express its opinion through the ballot as long as it was given fair means to do so and was protected from reprisals, affirmed Ms. Carina Perelli, Director of the UN Electoral Assistance Division, during a press briefing in New York (Wednesday 16 June).

Ms. Perelli declared the process of selecting independent electoral Commissioners, who will oversee the Iraq elections, as extremely successful, despite the unrest in Iraq, with 1,878 nominations received, and 25 candidates extracted from those nominations. Subsequently, 14 names had been put forward for positions as Commissioners, ranked by merit, and four for Chief Electoral Officer. The only change to the originally-agreed process was that the Governing Council's plenary had decided to request the UN to select the successful Commissioners and Chief Electoral Officer, as the candidates were not well known to the Council's members. Importantly, agreement has also been reached on a whole package of electoral modalities for conducting the elections. The entire country will be treated as one national district, utilising proportional representation. The participation of independent candidates and ad-hoc political organisations will also be facilitated. The Electoral Commission will certify each list of candidates for the 275-seat National Assembly. The Assembly will be responsible for choosing the Head of State. Political parties will be required to disclose their financial contributions. Parties found to be associated with a militia or have an armed wing will be disqualified by the Commission. Any individual able to prove himself or herself an Iraqi would be allowed to vote, regardless of the reason for which they might have lost their nationality rights under the previous regime. Ms. Perelli estimated that some 30,000 polling stations would be needed countrywide, which meant approximately 120,000 to 130,000 individuals working on polling and vote counting.

Those individuals would be trained by the Electoral Commission, including through cascade training; however, the members of the Commission were to be trained by the United Nations (in Mexico) and other international trainers.

Ms. Perelli pointed out that the first stage during which an improved security situation would be vital for the successful conducting of elections would be the registration process, which should begin no later than September.

Improved security would be necessary thereafter for certification and polling. Ms Perelli concluded her briefing stating that the team was on track to hold elections by the deadline. Among the objectives for the next seven and one half months, Ms. Perelli cited: the need for civic education, led by the United Nations, as the honest broker of the agreements, to explain the electoral arrangements to the Iraqi population; and ensuring a fully-staffed Electoral Commission, with deployment in all Iraqi provinces by July and voter registration started no later than September.

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