

IRAQ

SITUATION REPORT



UNITED NATIONS

26 July – 1 August

OVERVIEW ►

As the scope and complexity of United Nations (UN) assistance in Iraq increases, significant energy is being invested in ensuring that programmes and projects are underpinned by a common, coordinated, planning and implementation approach. The partnership between the UN and Iraqi ministries, local authorities, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and other collaborators is pivotal to the overall success of our efforts to support Iraq's reconstruction. Some of these efforts are reflected in this week's report.

PROGRAMME ►

UN Iraq County Team Planning Workshop The Iraq UN Country Team (UNCT) held a two-day planning workshop [27-28 July] to review progress in implementation of UN programmes in Iraq and to validate the relevance of the current cluster structure, including agency participation. Participants also scrutinised the role of the cluster task manager. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq *ad interim*, Mr. Ross Mountain, emphasised the drastic progress achieved in coherent programming in just six months, which amounted to a cultural change in UN terms. The workshop, attended by 75 participants from 19 UN agencies, assessed that most of the clusters have established efficient coordination modalities within a policy framework in collaboration with Iraqi counterparts, reinforced by strong task managers with a commitment toward rapid implementation under existing security conditions. The difficulties faced by some of the clusters was assessed, in part, as a product of high turnover of task managers and variable involvement by agencies. The second day [28 July] was attended by international donors, NGOs and a senior representative from the Ministry of Planning and Development Cooperation (MoPDC). The session allowed those present to share and put forward recommendations on strengthening operations in providing humanitarian, reconstruction and development assistance, and monitoring implementation capacity of the UN.

Education

Centres of Excellence The UN Children's Fund, UNICEF, this week signed an agreement with the European Perspective (EP), an international NGO, to rehabilitate three schools in Al-Ta'meem Governorate. Some four additional proposals are expected to be finalized during the month of August.

Shared Commitment In Jordan, UNICEF hosted [20-25 July] a delegation of three senior Ministry of Education (MoE) officials designated by the Minister to review and expedite the implementation of UNICEF assisted programmes in the education sector. Fully utilising this opportunity, UNICEF organised a series of meetings with NGOs and UN agencies who are active cluster members. UNICEF has also finalised a website indicating key national educational data and is awaiting MoE approval to launch the site publicly.

Health

Chronic Medicine Needs The World Health Organisation (WHO) continued to coordinate the UN Health Cluster response to an appeal launched by the Iraq Ministry of Health (MoH) to help address an acute shortage of a number of drugs and medical supplies. With a European Commission contribution sourced through the UN Development Group Trust Fund, WHO is in the process of procuring US\$2.7 million worth of drugs and medicines. The UN Fund for Population, UNFPA, has also indicated that it will release US\$1 million in response to the appeal, while the UN Children's Fund, UNICEF, will release US\$2 million. WHO also facilitated discussions between the MoH and the Iraqi-Japan medical association which has indicated that it too will support the Ministry's request.

Health Rehabilitation Project for Iraq (HRPI) The International Organisation for Migration (IOM) Health Rehabilitation project for Iraq is in the final stages of signing a Memorandum of Understanding with the MoH. This agreement pertains to joint activities in the health rehabilitation sector and also covers IOM's future activities in the field of migration health and TB intervention in Iraq. As part of IOM's efforts to rebuild the healthcare network in southern Iraq, a contract has been signed with an Italian company to supply equipment to the Interventional Cardiology Centre to be established at Al talimi Hospital in Basra.

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Polio Eradication As part of its support to the MoH Polio Eradication, WHO conducted an advocacy meeting for 30 clinicians in Ibn Al Atheer Paediatric Hospital in Mosul on 31 July 2004.

Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)

UN/Iraqi Partnership UNHCR and IOM will continue to provide vital capacity building support inside Iraq. UNHCR specialists provided training [26-28 July] to Iraqi Ministry of Displacement and Migration (MoDM) personnel on basic programme management and conducted a three day workshop on International Legal Instruments and Protection. In the framework of a UNHCR sub-agreement, an international consultant has been identified and seconded to the Ministry to assist to develop the capacity of the Humanitarian Affairs Department with specific focus on their humanitarian response, information management, coordination and policy. From 29-31 July, UNHCR and IOM hosted consultations with the Iraqi IPCC (Iraq Property and Claims Commission) delegation to discuss capacity building assistance to be provided in the future by Cluster 8.

7,600 Iraqis assisted by Community Assistance Projects IOM implementing partners in Al Anbar Governorate, under the auspices of its IDP programme have launched two Community Assistance Projects (CAPs) in Ramadi. The first CAP will help rehabilitate a primary school and outfit two of the school rooms with sewing equipment and computer stations. These facilities will serve as vocational training centers for the surrounding area's displaced population. The CAP will also provide the necessary funding for trainers. The second CAP will rehabilitate sports facilities at eight schools which serve IDP and host community children. Sport kits will be provided and playgrounds will be rehabilitated. A many as 3,100 Iraqis will benefit as a result of these initiatives.

In Mosul, IOM partners will implement a CAP to construct 250 latrines for IDP communities. Some 500 IDP labourers will be hired by this project. While in Babil Governorate, another CAP has commenced to improve access to potable water for at least 4,000 IDPs and vulnerable people in Al Kassem in the Hashimiya District. Jerry-cans and hygiene kits will also complement water-trucking efforts in order to improve overall levels of hygiene and sanitation awareness at the household level.

Refugee Assistance and Protection Islamic relief - implementing partner of the UN Refugee agency, UNHCR, continues to assist over 500 Syrian refugees in Baghdad and Al Anbar Province. UNHCR has been providing monthly rental allowances to 50 families, transportation allowances for 130 refugee students, material assistance (monthly) to 80 of the most vulnerable families as well as health expenses on a case-by-case basis for chronically-ill patients and those in need of urgent surgical attention. UNHCR's protection staff are presently examining the circumstances surrounding the sudden detention, and consequent release, of several Syrian refugees last week.

US\$7.1 million lower south reintegration project A UNHCR return and reintegration project targeting 20 return communities in the lower south, has been approved by the Iraqi Strategic Review Board (ISRB), chaired by the Iraqi Minister of Planning and Development Cooperation. The US\$7.1 million project will further expand on activities that were started earlier this year.

Palestinians Assisted Return Following the signing of a sub-agreement between UNHCR and the MoDM, assistance to Palestinian families in Baghdad continues. The Ministry has started paying rental subsidies for 400 evicted Palestinian refugee families in the Capital. UNHCR continues to support returning Palestinian refugees from Jordan with cash assistance for transport and rental payments until the end of the year. Almost all the refugees state that their final destination will be Baghdad. Since May, over 120 Palestinians have returned to Iraq, having exhausted their hopes for an alternative to the refugee camps in eastern Jordan.

Bridging the Digital Divide Information technology training was held by IOM [16-22 July] for the IT Department of the MoDM. UNHCR met with the Iraqi participants of the training on 18 July to discuss possible ways of UNHCR assisting the IT Department as well (creation of a database, website).

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Movement Monitoring Workshop UNHCR organised a returnee monitoring workshop [20-21 July] to train implementing partners to begin return monitoring in northern Iraq. Since last month, UNHCR has been allowed to use the Haj Omran border-crossing for Facilitated Returns from Iran to the three Northern Governorates. Two movements have taken place with 240 Iraqis (mainly Kurds from Dohuk and Erbil) coming home. The third and fourth movements are scheduled to take place in the coming few days. Over 12,500 Iraqi refugees came home under the UNHCR facilitated return over the last few months mainly from Iran, Saudi Arabia and Lebanon.

Third Country Nationals (TCNs) On the 27th of July, IOM assisted 20 Somali nationals and 6 Sudanese to leave Jordan. Originally arriving as TCNs from Iraq, they were accepted for resettlement in Australia.

Governance and Civil Society

Donor Assistance Coordination - Ministry of Planning and Development Cooperation UNDP has developed, in close consultation with MoPDC, a project to provide assistance to the Ministry in a number of areas including support for developing policy frameworks, modern management techniques, preparation of socio-economic reports and studies, modernized data collection techniques, and donor assistance coordination. In order to ensure that UNDP is able to deliver practical services as rapidly as possible, UNDP has contracted an international consultant to work with the Country Office to develop a plan of action in consultation with two MoPDC Deputy Ministers. The support options set out by the consultant recognised the urgency of operationalising the Donor Assistance Database (DAD) as rapidly as possible (DAD was developed by a private firm contracted by the US Government. to develop this database for Iraq). The establishment of a team of highly trained national professionals within MoPDC is seen as essential to enable data to be gathered efficiently, analysed and brought to bear on the decision-making processes of the Interim Government. A range of possible areas of support and collaboration were identified and discussed with the MoPDC (including the Council for International Cooperation, CIC), UN Iraq Team, and the firm itself. Identified areas included database training and options on how MoPDC and Ministry of Finance could support effective line Ministry-Donor Consultative Groups and provide a systematic mechanism through which line ministries can regularly update the DAD.

Ministers of Justice and Human Right forge path ahead Iraq's new Minister of Human Rights, Bakhtiar M. Amin, and Iraqi Minister of Justice Malek Dohan al-Hassan met in talks [26-27 July] with representatives of UN agencies designing and implementing a strategic plan to strengthen good governance and civil society in Iraq. The UN Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), the UN Development Programme (UNDP) and the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) convened the meeting. Participants discussed the Ministries' priorities, strategies and explored the support that the UN could provide to promote and protect human rights in Iraq. The delegations examined law reform, institution and capacity-building, human rights and educational issues. Attendees agreed to cooperate in designing projects to address past human rights violations and the current human rights situation in Iraq, as well as establish/strengthen Iraqi institutions for the protection of human rights.

Supporting the Iraq Supreme Audit Board Iraq's Interim Government has identified the nation's democratisation process as a key policy priority. As a result, in June 2004, the Iraqi Government introduced a new Financial Management Act (FMA). The FMA stipulates that the Supreme Audit Board (SAB) – the external audit institution - apart from auditing the annual budget of the Government, should promote 'good governance', honesty, transparency and accountability in the use and public management of public resources. In response to a number of discussions held with the Ministry of Planning (MoP) and SAB, a meeting was held in Jordan [1-2 August] between the UNDP Governance Team, the General Manager and Assistant General Manager of the SAB, to examine the capacity building proposal submitted, and to develop a detailed work plan to design, develop and implement a customized training programme based on the INTOSAI/ARABOSAI model. Following the meeting, UNDP will be responsible for developing a substantive and detailed work plan regarding the possible assistance UNDP could provide, particularly in terms of securing financial assistance to plan and start the institutional strengthening programme of the SAB. A proposal is to be developed for submission to the UN Trust Fund.

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Human Rights

In Mosul, representatives of human rights organisations and activists, including academics, met on 22 July to discuss strategies to address human rights problems in the Ninawa Governorate. The immediate outcome of the meeting was to form a committee to coordinate human rights organisations in Mosul in order to maximize opportunities for training and funding, and to develop contacts with other national and international human rights actors. The democratically elected secretary of the committee is a long standing contact of the United Nations, who in June 2004 attended training on management skills organised by UNDP and UNAMI in Beirut. The committee acknowledged the recommendations of the report on the Situation of Human Rights in Iraq, issued in early June by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, and pledged to continue working for the implementation of its recommendations. The formation of this committee is a welcome development which will facilitate the coordination of activities, interventions and exchange of information between the UN and Mosul partners.

Mine Action

Best Practices A meeting was held last week at the UN Development Programme Office in Jordan where three National Mine Action Authority (NMAA) senior staff, en route to Baghdad, debriefed participants on their one-month Mine Action Exchange Programme (MAX) mission to Yemen. The MAX participants emphasised the important lessons learnt during their mission, and outlined how the NMAA can now benefit. Of particular value was the first-hand opportunity to see a well established and functional mine action programme. One of the important observations was the necessity of conducting a landmine impact survey in Iraq to provide the basis for strategic planning. In addition, the participants learned how the quality assurance, priority setting, resource allocation and data flow/reporting worked in the Yemeni programme. Yemen has signed the Ottawa Treaty.

Activities Update UN-supported landmine/UXO clearance activities continued in Basra. The security situation has been calm with no reported incidents. Approximately, 643,460 m² land was cleared visually, a total of 33,428 items weighing 18,190 kg were recovered for demolition and a total of 15,890 items weighing 10,843 kg were destroyed.

SRSG a.i. ►

The SRSG a.i. met with the Minister of Human Rights and the Minister of Justice, to discuss a number of policy issues, including examination of the role and scope of UN assistance in Iraq. Discussions were also held with the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and UN Office of Project Services (UNOPS) examining plans for an employment conference to support on Iraqi Employment Strategy foreseen for November. The SRSG a.i. also conducted follow-up meetings with UN Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), UN Development Programme (UNDP), and UNOPS staff following the UNCT Workshop, exploring how best the UN can operationalise recommendations and continue to strengthen common services, including information collection and dissemination in conjunction with Iraqi counterparts.

IAMB ►

The UN Security Council was briefed [Monday 26 July] in closed-door consultations on the report of the international oversight body for the Development Fund for Iraq (DFI), set up last year to take over management of Iraq's petroleum revenues. Following the meeting, UN Controller Jean-Pierre Halbwachs, who chairs the International Monitoring and Advisory Board (IAMB), told reporters that he had relayed the Board's concerns on key issues to the Council. He said one was a lack of "metering" to measure the crude being extracted at the source, and because of this, "there could be no guarantee that all the oil could be accounted for." The second issue concerned barter. As a result of that practice, "money does not go into the DFI," Mr. Halbwachs said. The IAMB also had concerns about sole-sourced contracts, he said, noting that there had been a number of audits of the problem. He noted that on the general problem of sole-sourced contracts, "if you don't go to bids to get a contract, you are not sure that you actually got a very good price for it."