
Quarterly Report

January – March 2008

Iraq Programme

BACKGROUND AND CONFLICT

Description of conflict

In March 2003 a US led coalition invaded Iraq and overthrew the government of Saddam Hussein. The Iraqi army was soon defeated but resistance started almost immediately, mainly supported by the previously dominating Sunni group and redundant militaries. They were soon assisted by radical Islamic insurgents who wanted a possibility to fight US forces. Al-Qaida established itself in Iraq and attacks started to target also civilians in markets and buses with bombs, rockets and small arms. The central (predominantly mixed Sunni/Shia) areas of Iraq are worst affected by the conflict whilst the southern (Shia dominated) and north (Kurdish) are relatively more secure. The sectarian violence between Shia and Sunni increased considerably after the Samara bombing in February 2006 but has slowed down since then, partly because people are not staying in mixed neighbourhoods any longer. An other factor is the so called “surge”, an increase of US forces from the middle of 2007, which also helped reducing the open violence. During the end of March 2008 the fighting increased again in the south, but this time between different Shia fractions. The ongoing conflict in Iraq is very serious and there has only been minor improvements, politically or military, during the last year. The Iraqi government seems not able to work for full reconciliation and the conflict can not be solved militarily. Neighbours and other countries with vested interest in Iraq are looking to their own interests before that of Iraq. The humanitarian catastrophe is likely to continue for the foreseeable future.

Displacement situation

Iraq is experiencing its, and the Middle East's, worst displacement in modern time with some 2.5 million persons displaced within the country and almost similar numbers as refugees abroad. Displacements occurred both before and after the invasion of Iraq in 2003 but the Samarra Al-Askari Mosque bombing on 22 February 2006 triggered a wave of sectarian violence that accelerated the uprooting. Old caseloads include the Marsh Arabs in the south (suppressed by Saddam's regime), stateless persons (Bedouins), various Kurdish groups, displacement as result of the Iraq – Iran war, and Sunnis and Shiites displaced for political reasons. Caseloads after the fall of the Saddam regime has been mainly IDP and refugees due to sectarian, military and criminal violence but also secondary displaced Arabs fleeing Kurdish areas (as previously displaced Kurds return to places of origin) and refugees returning from especially Iran and Saudi Arabia. The internal movements are from mixed areas to religious and ethnically homogenous ones with Shiites moving south, Sunnis to Anbar in the west and everyone to the three, relatively safe, Kurdish governorates in the north.

The displacement has slowed down during the end of 2007 and beginning of 2008 and refugees have started to return in small numbers, mainly from Syria. This is in part due to less violence in Iraq but the major factor behind is that many displaced are running out of resources and possibility to support themselves. Visa requirements and work restrictions in neighbouring countries are also playing a part. Much displacement has also been noted within governorates as districts/neighbourhoods are increasingly becoming polarized into Sunni and Shia areas and most Governorates are trying to restrict entry by new IDPs.

Some figures related to the complex pattern of displacement in Iraq:

- 2.5 million IDPs in total (IOM Feb. 2008)
- About 2 million Iraqi refugees in surrounding region (IOM)
- 1.2 million has become IDPs since February 2006 (IOM)
- 10,000 families have returned to Baghdad in December (MoDM)
- Some 50,000 refugees, mainly Palestinians, Turks and Iranians are in Iraq

There are major numbers of refugees in neighbouring countries like Jordan, Syria, Egypt, Lebanon and Iran who fled the violence in Iraq. It is estimated that there are some 500,000 - 750,000 in Jordan and maybe up to 1.4 million in Syria, the two biggest recipients. The resettlement of refugees is extremely slow.

DRC'S PRESENCE

DRC history

DRC has been working in Diyala governorate (north-central) since April 2003 and in Lower South (Basra) since March 2004. DRC was one of the first agencies to begin operations in Iraq after the invasion and ensured rapid-start-up to respond to the humanitarian needs of 60 000 secondary-displaced Arab IDPs, who mainly fled the Kurdish north to the Arab south of Diyala governorate. As the security situation deteriorated, DRC expatriate staff left Diyala in April 2004 and continued implementation by remote management. During late 2005, the security situation further deteriorated and resulted in a downscaling of activities in Diyala which has continued during 2006 and 2007.

In Lower South, DRC opened its office in Basra in March 2004 but was soon after forced to relocate expatriate staff to Kuwait due to security concerns. The operation start-up was consequently delayed, but picked up during 2005 and has further improved since.

In 2006 the two operations (Diyala and Basra) were joined together with the same management. In September 2007 DRC took over activities in three south central governorates from Ockenden International and all management for Iraq operations were centralized to Amman. In 2008 activities were started in the Kurdish area and Thi Qar.

DRC does not expect to re-enter Iraq with international staff in the near future, but plans to continue implementation of activities by remote management from Amman. DRC is implementing projects funded by Danida, UNHCR and IOM. The difficult security situation is the all overriding concern and is affecting all programs in different ways.

Brief narrative description of current DRC programme

DRC is presently implementing programs in Basra, Diyala, Missan, Wassit, Kerbela and Thi Qar Governorates plus newly started capacity building activities in the three northern governorates of the Kurdish Regional Government (KRG). There is about 120 national staff inside Iraq.

All implementation takes place in close co-operation with local stakeholders like Ministry of Displacement and Migration (MoDM), Governorates, local councils and committees, UNHCR, IOM and other parties.

Emergency distribution of non food items and water, supported by IOM or UNHC, is taking place in Diyala, including to some of the most dangerous areas in Iraq. Also in Missan, Kerbela and Wassit DRC has the capacity to do emergency distributions when needed.

	<p>Income generation activities are implemented in four governorates. In Basra, Thi Qar and Diyala in the form of small in kind grants (IKG) and vocational trainings to vulnerable households. In Missan, Kerbela and Wassit DRC provides support for small business set ups.</p> <p>Shelters, being of 4x4 m concrete block extensions, are constructed in Basra and shelter kits/winterization (windows, door and plastic sheets) in Basra, Thi Qar and Diyala.</p> <p>Infrastructure is Quick Impact Projects (QIPs) like repair of water supplies, electricity lines, bridges, schools, roads etc. These projects are implemented in all southern Governorates.</p> <p>Legal protection in the form of three Protection and Assistance Centres (PACs) manned by lawyers, and social workers take place in the south central areas.</p> <p>Capacity building exist in one form or another in all our activities but three interesting projects are; a) subgrants to LNGOs in Diyala, b) support to the Governorate Emergency Cell (GEC) in seven governorates including KRG and c) capacity building of unemployed persons in cooperation with industrial schools in Basra.</p>
<p>Strategic objective of programme</p>	<p>Protection and promotion of durable solutions to displacement affected populations on the basis of humanitarian principles and human rights.</p>
<p>Immediate objectives of programme</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Displacement affected population have their immediate subsistence needs alleviated • Displacement affected groups are supported in restoring, protecting and developing self-reliance capacity. • Local stakeholders' capacity to protect fundamental rights of displacement affected groups has been strengthened.
<p>Target group(s)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internally displaced, including old caseloads, newly (after February 2006) displaced and secondary displaced in Diyala • Returnee refugees • Refugees • Host communities and households •
<p>Main sector(s) /type(s) of intervention</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shelter and infrastructure • Income generating activities • Capacity Building • Protection and legal aid • Emergency distributions
<p>List of donors</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Danida • UNHCR • IOM
<p>MAIN DEVELOPMENTS DURING THE PAST QUARTER</p>	
<p>Main</p>	

<p>external development s and challenges faced during the past quarter – in terms of politics, displacement situation and security</p>	<p>The situation in Iraq is still characterised by the ongoing sectarian, military and criminally related violence as has been described above. The security improved during the second half of 2007 and beginning of 2008 but in the end of March Iraqi Government (IG) security forces attacked Mahdi militia in the south. The resistance was harder then expected and MNF-I had to intervene on the IG side. The tension is still high in the south and the border to Kuwait is closed.</p> <p>Politically the Iraqi government has taken a few minor steps for reconciliation but major decisions on things like oil ownership or the referendum has not been addressed.</p> <p>The main challenge, apart from security, is the protection need of all Iraqis displaced in and outside the country and of their vulnerable host communities. Even as there is less displacement ongoing and people have started to actually return in small numbers, the needs of the people is not less. As been described above this humanitarian catastrophe is now directly affecting some 4.5 million Iraqis. Most of them, whether in or outside Iraq, are in dire need of health, education, income, shelter, water, electricity and sometimes even food and non food items.</p> <p>UN has lately become more active in assisting Iraq humanitarian interventions with OCHA back in Amman, a new Humanitarian Coordinator and an effort to coordinate information and assistance through a CAP and other initiatives.</p>
<p>Main internal achievements and challenges during the past quarter</p>	<p>We have managed to sign sub-agreements for 2008 with UNHCR for both south and north Iraq after some delay and adjustments. The agreements are on a considerable higher level then last year.</p> <p>We have spent a lot of time trying to adjust to new priorities within the UNHCR protection and legal aid sector and it is not yet finalized.</p> <p>Cooperation and funding with IOM has further improved during the period.</p>
<p>Main funding developments during the past quarter</p>	<p>Proposals for 2008 were prepared and signed with DANIDA, UNHCR south Iraq and UNHCR north.</p> <p>Three agreements on income generation activities were signed with IOM during the period for Missan, Kerbela and Thi Qar.</p> <p>Generally the situation regarding funding for humanitarian projects in Iraq has improved since a year back.</p>