



STRATEGIC PROGRAMME DOCUMENT

DRC – IRAQ

1. SUMMARY

In 2003, DRC was one of the first organisations to begin operations in Iraq after the invasion and ensured rapid-start-up to respond to the humanitarian needs of the displaced population. DRC has been working in Dyala governorate (north-central) since April 2003 and in Lower South (Basra) since March 2004. The programme has expanded over time and DRC is now providing assistance in 12 out of the 18 governorates in Iraq.

The Iraq programme has developed over the last years from a programme focusing on direct assistance to including a strong emphasis on capacity development within Protection, Livelihoods and Emergency Distribution, defined as follows:-

- **Protection.** Capacity building of duty bearers and local stakeholders and providing assistance to beneficiaries through the Protection and Assistance Centres in 3 governorates;
- **Livelihoods.** Developing and supporting livelihoods capacities and employability for individuals and local communities through an array of income generating activities, small and medium scale of rehabilitation of infrastructure and provision of essential shelter assistance
- **Emergency Distributions.** Provision of emergency assistance when/if such occur in the governorates where DRC is operational.

2. SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS

Decades of successive conflict and international sanctions have left devastating effects on Iraq and its population. After the 2003 invasion there were high expectations for creating a stable and democratic Iraq and establishing a strong market economy. Unfortunately, the events took a different direction and what transpired was a severe security deterioration. The infrastructure is now in a worse condition than before 2003; major social indicators are showing serious decline while the delivery of basic social services can hardly meet the demand. The serious blow to the already fragile situation was caused by the Samara shrine bombing on 22 February 2006. The outburst of sectarian violence that has escalated since resulted in movements of hundreds of thousands of people along sectarian lines.

2.1 Root causes of conflict and displacement

Iraq has a long history of multiple displacements caused by political, ethnic and religious agendas. During the 1970s, military attacks by the former regime led to fighting between Kurdish opposition parties and Iraqi Forces. The *Arabisation* policy, implemented by the former regime throughout the 1980s and 1990s, was a campaign that aimed to suppress opposition movements in Southern and Northern Iraq by changing the ethnic composition of both areas, destroying villages and causing displacement. Along the same line, Shia opposition groups were persecuted as well as their families and potential supporters. Many had to flee to neighbouring countries (mainly Iran & Syria).

In the 1980's, the Iran-Iraq war caused the displacement of hundreds of thousands from the border villages (mainly in the South and the Kurdish governorates) inside the main towns/cities. In the 1990's, the Shia's insurrection against the former regime that started right after the First Gulf War led to a brutal military campaign that caused the displacement of thousands.

In 2003, following the swift fall of the regime, large a number of Iraqis started to return having high expectations about restarting a new life in Iraq. Instead, the security situation

deteriorated, delivery of basic services collapsed while the employment opportunities became extremely limited. These factors caused the pace of return to slowdown; return subsequently stopped completely in February 2006 following the bombing of the Samara Shrine. The violence that started as a consequence caused new displacement of thousands of families mainly from the Centre and Centre-North to other safer/ homogeneous areas predominantly in the south, and also to some neighbouring countries (Jordan, Syria and Iran).

The return process was again revived as a consequence of security improvements following the military operations in early 2008. It is still unclear whether current returns are motivated on a true voluntary basis with all the key elements in place, e.g. physical security, rule of law etc, or whether it is based on an economical or other types of pressure in their existing environment.

Whilst it is expected that most refugees would return home when the conditions to ensure their safety and dignity are met, the conditions for return are generally not at a stage whereby it would be safe. It is unlikely that large-scale voluntary returns will take place anytime soon. The political future of Iraq remains uncertain, a great deal of heightened tensions and some insecurity have occurred during the recent provincial elections; it is anticipated that there will be concerns surrounding the general elections; as well as the impact of the MNF-I withdrawal amongst other varying regional and sectarian issues.

2.2 Situation of refugees, IDPs and other affected groups

Iraq continues to be faced with one of the largest displacement crises in the world. The estimated number of displaced (as per IOM Sept 08 report) since February 2006 is almost 1.6 million individuals. This figure, combined with the estimated 1.2 million individuals who were internally displaced before February 2006, results in a total of more than 2.8 million individuals displaced within Iraq to date. It is estimated that an estimated 2 million Iraqis fled to neighbouring countries, (Jordan, Syria and Iran).

In the last few years a strong focus has been placed on the security situation in Iraq, whilst this has been essential, the current stability has highlighted the need for other areas that have been neglected. One of the major and protracted problems is the combination of a young, poorly educated and unemployed population, poor basic service delivery and infrastructure. If not addressed, the situation has the potential to implode, thereby reducing the gains achieved. If security improvements are not followed by adequate improvements in the key areas such as employment, education, health etc, one would see a trend of increased criminality and radicalisation of society. It should be noted, that women's needs and access to services has been largely marginalised and not seen as a priority even though they represent a minimum of 50% of the adult population. Some of the main reasons for this is linked to security, but also to social and traditional attitudes and behaviours.

2.3 Actual and potential capacity and willingness of duty-bearers

The Iraqi authorities have started to play a much stronger role by taking a more decisive management of security and government affairs. A great deal of emphasis was placed on overcoming the differences among the major political parties in order to focus on the reconstruction and development of the country. It is, however, important to note, that this will require some time and continued support to the Iraq will be essential. It will take time to move from the inherited bureaucratic and centralized decision making system to an efficient and transparent democracy. In view of this, it is essential for the international community to bridge the gap and ensure that the most vulnerable are protected and supported during this period of transition.

2.4 Humanitarian activities by other assistance actors

In August 2008, the Security Council, emphasising the importance of Iraq's stability and security for its people, the region and the international community extended the mandate of the Organisation's Mission in Iraq for another year. In view of the continued humanitarian situation in Iraq and also affecting Iraqi refugees in neighbouring countries, the international community has called for a Consolidated Appeals Process (CAP) for 2009, led by the UN Secretary General in New York. The process was across two pillars, a national CAP inside Iraq and a regional CAP for countries hosting Iraqi refugees, thereby focussing on filling humanitarian gaps in Iraq and on sustaining the refugee population outside.

The main assistance actors (besides the Iraqi Government) are UN agencies, INGOs, MNFI, PRT and USAID funded agencies and contractors.

Over the next three years security developments remain uncertain, not only within Iraq, but also the regional dynamics. Whatever the security scenario, it is important that social and economical development remain a priority. Whilst the longer term priority of developing a transparent planning, fiscal responsibility and delivery of services will take time to put in place effectively, it is essential for support to be continued on a micro level by organisations such as DRC in order to create an environment which addresses vulnerability, access to human rights and basic protection and conducive for return, whether this be for refugees or the internally displaced population.

2.5 Summary of constraints to durable solutions and resulting opportunities for DRC

The security situation, limited capacity of international and national stakeholders, and the availability of funds can be seen collectively or individually as having a direct impact on durable solutions. If security improvements are not coupled with appropriate levels of reconstruction and development, and more importantly effective delivery of basic services, this would not lend itself well to a sustainable environment.

In order to achieve durable solutions, the capacity of the Iraqi authorities, the service provision and support of the international community, their capacity to understand the environment and design an appropriate response with adequate funds will need to be continued for a considerable period.

3. DRC'S VISION AND PROGRAMME IN THE AREA

DRC's programme objective remains the protection and promotion of durable solutions to displacement affected populations on the basis of humanitarian principles and human rights.

3.1 Vision and exit criteria

DRC's vision and exit strategy is to ensure (as much as feasible) that the duty bearers have the capacity to meet the needs of the rights holder. This in turn will lend itself to a conducive environment for returnees thereby leading to a durable solution. DRC does not, in the foreseeable future expect that the Iraqi authorities will be able to bridge the protection gaps and meet the needs of the displacement affected population, but will continue to structure its programme strategy and advocate in order to ensure that these needs are addressed.

3.2 Objectives

The aim for the next three years is to provide livelihood support (and emergency assistance where/if necessary) and in parallel, to strengthen the capacity of duty bearers and national stakeholders. This is further defined by the following programme objectives:

1. Alleviate the immediate subsistence needs of the displacement affected populations and other groups affected by emergency situations.
2. Provide appropriate livelihood assistance which addresses the needs of displacement affected groups with a focus on supporting returnees in attaining durable solutions.
3. Strengthen the capacity of local stakeholders to address the protection needs of the displacement affected population.

DRC's 6 years' experience of working in Iraq has enabled the organisation to model and adapt the programme in order to meet the needs effectively and thereby leading to durable solutions. The programme activities are formulated to meet the needs of the targeted population and in parallel work on the capacity development of the duty bearers and civil society stakeholders.

DRC's programme focuses mainly on sustainable livelihood solutions through strengthening income generating capacities and employability, infrastructure rehabilitation and household shelter assistance. Improved livelihoods will remain a critical contribution particularly in the rural communities in terms of lifting the poverty level and increasing the resilience of the beneficiary population towards external threats and stresses. The experience has shown that, in the given context, these type of activities can bring the most effective and sustainable improvement of the livelihoods of the Iraqi population.

The livelihoods support aims to create sustainable improvement of the socio-economic position and access to services for the targeted population and communities. The strategy is to work on parallel levels, namely: communal and household. Responding to the communal needs will improve the living conditions for the community as a whole, decrease potential tension between displaced and host communities.

One of the main reasons DRC's livelihood support component constitutes a sustainable impact is that the results and impact of these interventions are less dependent upon the security situation. Whereas a more stable environment tends to promote conducive conditions for business expansion and thereby giving DRC more access, DRC would still be able to operate under volatile conditions, targeting key communities, whether this be infrastructure and shelter improvements through to beneficiaries of vocational trainings and in-kind grants.

Parallel to a continued focus on livelihood support, DRC wishes to strengthen the capacity of local stakeholders and duty bearers to monitor and address the humanitarian needs within emergency and self-reliance as well as to promote durable solutions including a potential re-integration should the necessary preconditions be in place for return. The extent to which DRC can increase the involvement of national partners in present activities and whether new activities can be initiated focusing more on return and strengthening the re-integrations capacities depends on whether a more conducive operational environment develops and hence the displacement patterns.

Throughout the project period, DRC proposes to retain the capacity and resources to address emergency needs in case of a deterioration or additional displacement. Though the security situation has been improving during the past 18 months, thereby emergency

responses are less required, the volatile situation and continuing tensions could change the priorities.

3.3 Application of operational principles

Gender – DRC has witnessed an increase in the influence of conservative groups in addition to Iraq's strong tribal traditions. In the given context of deteriorated security and the humanitarian situation this has placed additional strains on vulnerable groups with special protections needs. Given the particular needs of women, and their marginalization in the Iraqi context, DRC will focus programming to ensure that the needs of women, particularly that of widows and female headed households are addressed as a priority.

Community-based approach – this is defined by the inclusion of all relevant stakeholder representatives in programme planning, assessments, delivery and monitoring. This approach ensures acceptance and the feeling of ownership and responsibility. The community approach will remain the main programme tool as it enables constructive participation of the local communities and authorities in needs assessment, programme implementation and monitoring.

Integrated programming - The DRC programme components have been designed in order to complement one another as much as possible, ensuring that quick impact projects are linked into the same communities where we provide livelihood support and capacity building etc.

Strengthening accountability – DRC is committed under the Humanitarian Accountability Partnership ensuring quality and accountability of humanitarian action.

Environment - DRC coordinates with the authorities and communities on all project implementation and promotes the use of local resources and approaches in order to minimise a negative impact on the environment.

Capacity building – DRC has been cooperating with various stakeholders from, Governorate councils to grass root NGOs, depending on the local context and types of projects.

Monitoring & Evaluation

DRC regards monitoring as particularly important in remote managed programmes. DRC is committed to regular and systematic monitoring of activities and impact. In Iraq, DRC has 6 different monitoring systems:

- Internal - DRC staff visit projects and beneficiaries regularly during and after implementation. Beneficiaries and local stakeholders are interviewed. Progress and outcome is monitored against set indicators and reported on to donors and as part of the annual review.
- Donor field staffs – donor field staff regularly visit and monitor DRC activities.
- External monitoring – donors hire external companies for monitoring and evaluating.
- Peer reviews – the field staff from agencies operational in the same area and in the same type of activities are conducting peer reviews to share experiences.
- Project reviews – the programme components that are seen as strategically important are subjected to external evaluations
- Annual reviews – a global review is carried out in conjunction with head office and regional colleagues.

DRC is keen on having intensive and inclusive monitoring. We are aware of the challenges of self-monitoring and this is why field staff are accompanied by local authorities and community representatives, depending of the nature of project. All monitoring visits are recorded in monitoring reports. DRC is always looking for further improvements in the field of monitoring and the methods used, and strive to ensure best practice and maximum impact is achieved.

4. ENABLING FACTORS

4.1 Security and logistics

Security in Iraq remains the major concern when planning and designing programming. Although the number of incidents have significantly declined comparing to the levels in 2006 and 2007, the situation is still prone to rapid changes and almost all areas are witnessing violent incidents. It has to be noted that different areas in Iraq have their own specifics that often don't follow the general pattern which requires good insight into the local developments in order to understand the dynamics. In addition to the insecurity caused by various armed groups that are following political agendas, the level of criminality is very high and has a negative effect on the development of the country.

DRC Iraq Programme has developed security arrangements in all areas where it is operational and takes all measures of precaution that involves close monitoring of the situation and proactive critical information gathering.

Logistic systems are adopted in accordance to the situation and the remote management system.

4.2 Stakeholders, partners and coordination

DRC's strength lies in having a very established programme, with in-house expertise that has evolved through a long presence and understanding of the context. Our reputation has been established through ensuring a strong strategic direction from the outset coupled with a flexible approach which ensured that programme activities continued irrespective of changing dynamics. Due to DRC's participatory approach we have gained the trust of the local communities and authorities and consequently have gained access to areas not so readily accessible to other organisations.

DRC is a strong advocate of having a broader programme approach and coordination of all actors active in Iraq. This position is promoted by proactive participation in the main coordination and policy making forums such as the Sector Outcome Teams (SOTs), NCCI (DRC is currently Chair of the Board of the NCCI), OCHA coordination, Iraq Humanitarian Forum and during bilateral meetings with all relevant stakeholders. DRC was also voted by its peer INGOs to sit on the Humanitarian Country Team (this body was established by the Humanitarian Coordinator and includes representation heads of Agency of WHO, UNICEF, UNHCR, OCHA, IOM, ICRC, WFP and 4 NGO seats).

4.3 DRC's capacity

4.3.1 Organisation and staffing

The programme is managed by international staff consisting of the Country Director, 2 Programme Managers, a Regional Finance and Administration Manager all based in Amman, Jordan. Furthermore, DRC is currently advertising for an M&E and Compliance Manager to join the team. The day-to-day management responsibility for the implementation

and monitoring of the programme lays with the Country Director, who reports to the HQ Programme Co-ordinator for the Middle East. The international Programme Managers are responsible for specific sectors/projects in co-operation with their national staff colleagues.

Core to DRC's approach is the capacity and commitment of its national staff as well as a strong remote management structure. DRC employs just over 130 national staff across Iraq, many of whom have been with DRC since the start of operations. DRC has offices in 8 Governorates, giving DRC a strong understanding of the dynamics and needs in Iraq.

4.3.2 Funding

The programme is presently funded by Danida, UNHCR and IOM.

Copenhagen, April 2009