

Quarterly Report

(SYRIA)

PERIOD COVERED = JANUARY – MARCH 2011

DRC SYRIA

BACKGROUND AND CONFLICT

Description of conflict

The US led invasion of Iraq in 2003 and the subsequent civil conflict have caused the displacement of about 4,5 million of Iraqi civilians: 2,5 million have fled in other regions of Iraq and 2 million have travelled abroad being more or less welcomed in neighbouring countries, mainly Syria (1.5 million), Jordan (0.5 million), Lebanon and Egypt.

Displacement situation

Syria has been a country of asylum for Iraqis with the 1st flow of Shias fleeing the Saddam's persecution in the 90s. After having closed the border with Iraq in the 90s, Syria has been facing extensive influx of refugees since 2003. The Iraqi displacement was divided into several phases with a 1st wave of wealthy Iraqis followed by the arrival of Sunnis after Falluja siege (2004). The Samarra bombing in February 2006 has initiated a wide sectarian violence in Iraq which has been pushing on the roads to Syria most of the Iraqi communities and sects' members (Shias, Christians, Yazidis...). Since October 2007, Syria has changed its policy regarding Iraqis and imposed visas restrictions only allowing entrance to business men and placing lots of its "Iraqi guests" in an illegal status.

Since early 2008, the mixed Iraqi refugee population of Syria (estimated at 1.5 million people) has been living in illegality and challenged by the lack of resources (due to protracted displacement) which put at risk their ability to live decently and with dignity in a country already affected by unemployment, and poverty. The Iraqi crisis has put an additional stress on inflation and the job market. Criminality has emerged. Prostitution of young Iraqi women in need of cash has become as one of the reasons explaining the resentment of locals against Iraqis.

DRC'S PRESENCE

DRC history

Given the humanitarian crisis, DRC carried out a pre-assessment mission in March 2007 to initiate contact with the relevant Syrian authorities (mainly the Syrian Arab Red Crescent) and other stakeholders.

Since July 2007, DRC has effectively been present in Damascus.

	<p>DRC (and 7 other INGOs) received accreditation from the Prime Minister office during the summer 2007, and started negotiations on operational modalities with the Syrian Arab Red Crescent mandated by the government to coordinate INGOs' assistance to Iraqi refugees.</p> <p>A Memorandum of Understanding between SARC and DRC was signed on the 7th of March 2008. Since April 2008, DRC has been implementing a multi-sector program focusing on Protection and Education activities.</p>
<p>Brief narrative description of current DRC programme</p>	<p>The 2011 programme is designed to consolidate the DRC intervention, since 2008 focusing on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Protection</u> includes Women empowerment projects, and community services aimed at counselling (on legal/social/educational aspects) and social rehabilitation (recreational / social activities, literacy courses, after-school program, skills development...) delivered in 7 centres; • <u>Education</u> includes School rehabilitation (restructuring, extension and equipping), Quality education (remedial extra-curricular education, training of schools' staff) and Vocational education. <p>In 2009, DRC expanded its geographical coverage (mainly concentrated on Damascus and suburbs) to 2 displacement affected cities of Homs and Daraa.</p>
<p>Strategic objective of programme</p>	<p>Protection and promotion of Durable solutions for the Iraqi refugees and population affected by the displacement of Iraqis in Syria.</p>
<p>Immediate objectives of programme</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that immediate subsistence needs of most vulnerable displaced in 6 communities are met by end of 2011, • Provide Protection to the displaced population and enhance its Self-Reliance whatever durable solution is chosen, • Promote access of displaced youth to mainstream and/or vocational Education, • Strengthen the capacity of duty-bearers to assist displacement affected groups.
<p>Target group(s)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Services: 5,000 individuals /month (60% Iraqis), • Women empowerment: 600 women at risk (40% Iraqis), • School rehabilitation: 4 public schools and 3,200 children, • Quality Education: 5,000 children (35% Iraqi) + teachers, • Vocational Education: 460 adolescents at risk (75% Iraqis),

Main sector(s) /type(s) of intervention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community services: information counselling (social, legal, educational), social-recreational activities, skills development... • Woment empowerment: vocational training, life skills, social/legal/psychological counselling, tool kits, business coaching, micro-grant, kindergarten, cash and in-kind assistance... • School rehabilitation: restructuring, extension, maintenance, equipping, and MoE's staff training, • Quality education: remedial-literacy classes, extra-curricular activities, awareness campaign and school's staff training, • Vocational education: vocational training, business management training, life skills, social support, cash assistance.
List of donors	<p>5 donors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ UNHCR, ○ DANIDA (Danish Government), ○ SDC (Swiss Government), ○ SIDA (Swedish Government), ○ UNICEF,

MAIN DEVELOPMENTS DURING THE PAST QUARTER

Main external developments and challenges faced during the past quarter – in terms of politics, displacement situation and security	<p>The forming in December 2010 of a new government in Iraq hasn't triggered a significant return of refugees to Iraq, whose majority does not believe in the new authorities' capacity to resolve the security, economical and political crisis faced by the country since 2003.</p> <p>In Lebanon, the government had to resign in January due to defection of the 8th of March-led opposition. A new prime minister (Mr. Mikati), supported by Hesbollah, was assigned by the President but hasn't managed to form a government so far.</p> <p>Inspired by Tunisia, Egypt and Libya, an <u>uprising in Syria</u> started in mid-March 2011 initially in Deraa due to imprisonment of adolescents tagging against the government. The movement has been spreading over the country and demonstrations for freedom, democracy and reforms take place quite every day but especially during the week-end after the Friday pray. A heavy repression of protest has been occurring and, as of 31/03, around 150 protesters are reported killed, mainly coming from 3 cities: Deraa (south), Baniyas (seashore), and Douma (Damascus suburb). The situation is very confusing and as usual access to reliable information is challenged.</p> <p>Regarding the <u>Iraqi displacement</u> (not affected yet by the uprising), official estimates remain unchanged: more than 1 million Iraqi refugees reside in Syria according to the Syrian government. There has been a significant decrease in UNHCR</p>
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	<p>number of registered Iraqi refugees in Syria (from 220,000 in Dec. 2009 to <u>130,000 in March. 2011</u>).</p> <p>The regional situation, confirmed during the latest discussions held in the frame of the Regional Response Plan, takes definitely the path of a protracted displacement.</p> <p>Deportations of refugees arrested due to criminal and illegal works still persist but are not increasingly reported. The situation of the Palestinian refugees (coming from Iraq) is still very precarious. 2,700 individuals were gathered in the 3 camps located in the No man's land between Iraq and Syria. Resettlements to Chile, Australia, Canada, Finland, Italy and Sweden led other Palestinian residing in Syria to join the camp of al-Tanf with the hope of also being resettled. For that reason, UNHCR closed the camp of Al-Tanf in February 2010, transferring 250 refugees to the camp of al-Hole, whose residents should be resettled in the coming months.</p>
<p>Main internal achievements and challenges during the past quarter</p>	<p>The first 2011 quarter was dedicated to closure of the 2010 programme and launching of the 2011 operations.</p> <p>The <u>community services</u> unit kept developing activities in the 7 community centres of Damascus/rural Damascus funded by UNHCR and Homs/Daraa supported by DANIDA. The Learning Difficulties scheme was evaluated by external consultants, and the beneficiary application form needed for DRC database was endorsed by SARC.</p> <p>In the sector of <u>women empowerment</u>, a graduation ceremony was organised on 18/02 for the 113 beneficiaries of the 2010 pilot scheme. Simultaneously, 130 women were selected and enrolled in the 2011 project, starting in February for 6 months.</p> <p>In <u>hardcore education</u>, DRC focused on completing the equipment delivery to 28 schools, greening of 11 schools and ensuring a proper handover to the MoE. Meanwhile 25 schools were assessed and 4 were suggested to UNHCR for the 2011 programme with a focus on active learning environment via school restructuring, supplies and training of teachers.</p> <p>Regarding the <u>soft education</u>, the same 3,000 children (among which 40% are Iraqis) supported in late 2010 resumed from mid-Feb. remedial education/extra-curricular activities and free exam classes in 11 public schools located in Sayeda Zeinab, Qudsaya, and Homs.</p> <p>Finally, DRC Syria started up for the 3rd consecutive year a 6-month <u>vocational training</u> scheme assisting 230 adolescents at risk in February 2011 in partnership with UNRWA</p>

Main funding developments during the past quarter	<p>The UNHCR/DRC sub-agreement was signed 25th February 2011 for about 3 million USD.</p> <p>A DANIDA amendment request was submitted in late March and funds were re-allocated in favour of school works and community services. The SIDA budget received extra-funding of 500,000 SEK.</p> <p>DRC submitted the 2011 women empowerment proposal to SDC in late January. Finally, discussions with the World Bank have been going and the DRC proposal - endorsed by the World Bank – was sent to the Japanese government for approval.</p>
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