



**Danish Refugee Council**

---

# **Quarterly Report**

**(SYRIA)**

**PERIOD COVERED = JULY – SEPTEMBER 2008**

---

## DRC SYRIA

*Please use Times New Roman 12 consistently throughout the document*

### 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 for a while a country of asylum for Iraqis with the 1<sup>st</sup> 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 since 2003 its most serious influx of refugees. The Iraqi flow was divided into several phases with a 1<sup>st</sup> 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. In early 2008, the mixed Iraqi refugee population of Syria (estimated at 1.5 million people) is facing illegality and lack of resources (due to the long displacement) which put at risk its 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 support has become as one of the reasons explaining the resentment of locals against Iraqis.

### DRC'S PRESENCE

#### DRC history

Given the humanitarian crisis, DRC has decided to carry out a pre-assessment mission in March 2007 when a team came, and took the 1<sup>st</sup> contacts with the relevant Syrian authorities (mainly the Syrian Arab Red Crescent) and other stakeholders.

Since July 2007, DRC is effectively present in Damascus and has been looking for authorisations to operate. Since summer 2007, DRC (like 7 other INGOs) has received accreditation from the Prime Minister office, as a preliminary step before operating.

Donors were contacted and submitted proposals. A Memorandum of Understanding between the SARC and INGOs was drafted in September 2007 and since then

	<p>under revision by the relevant local authorities.</p> <p>The version of the MoU presented by SARC on the 9<sup>th</sup> of January 2008 has been completed with an annex outlining the operational modalities, which give more flexibility to INGOs especially with regard to the financial management. After a long negotiation period, DRC has signed its MoU with the SARC on the 7<sup>th</sup> of March 2008.</p>
<b>Brief narrative description of current DRC programme</b>	<p>In Syria, DRC intervenes at the community level, assisting Iraqi refugees either through socio-economical services (recreational, social, psycho-social activities, vocational training, skills development...) delivered via community centres, or by renovating the Syrian educational facilities welcoming Iraqi children.</p> <p>The programme intends to be inclusive (of hosting population) and based upon the community mobilisation. Depending on authorisations, DRC wishes to define a community profiling.</p>
<b>Strategic objective of programme</b>	<p>Protection and promotion of durable solutions for the Iraqi refugees and population affected by the displacement of Iraqis in Syria.</p>
<b>Immediate objectives of programme</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Address immediate subsistence needs of Iraqi refugees,</li> <li>○ Promote socio-economic support to Iraqi refugees through community services,</li> <li>○ Improve the Syrian governmental capacity to absorb a significant number of Iraqi refugee children in the existing educational facilities.</li> </ul>
<b>Target group(s)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Vulnerable Iraqi refugees = 33,244 people targeted among which, <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ 29,404 benefiting from community services,</li> <li>○ 3,840 from NFIs distribution,</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Host community members (proportion to be defined),</li> <li>● 6,825 children (both Syrian and Iraqi),</li> </ul>
<b>Main sector(s) /type(s) of intervention</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Community services: information/counselling, social/educational activities, income generation, and quick-impact projects.</li> <li>○ Relief: NFI distribution,</li> <li>○ Education: school rehabilitation</li> </ul>

<b>List of donors</b>	<p>2 main donors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ DANIDA (Danish Government),</li> <li>○ UNHCR,</li> </ul> <p>and potentially UNICEF, ECHO, SIDA...</p>
-----------------------	--

## MAIN DEVELOPMENTS DURING THE PAST QUARTER

<b>Main external developments and challenges faced during the past quarter – in terms of politics, displacement situation and security</b>	<p>The positive political climate witnessed before summer has been followed up during summer by the visit of the Syrian president Bachar Al–Assad to France (for the Revolution national day – 14<sup>th</sup> of July) and by the 2 day-visit of the French president to Syria in September.</p> <p>Indirect peace discussions between Syria and Israel are still going on via Turkish negotiators.</p> <p>Sadly, on the 27<sup>th</sup> of September, a bomb-truck exploded in the southern Damascus suburb killing 17 civilians close to a school and Iraqi refugee affected area. The terrorist act remains without explanation at the date of today.</p> <p>Regarding the Iraqi displacement, figures are as vague as before and official estimates unchanged: 1.5 million Iraqi refugees according to the Syrian government. Deportations of refugees are very scarce so far, even though negative rumours of changes in the Syrian policy are disseminated and make refugees more vulnerable.</p> <p>The situation of the Palestinian refugees (coming from Iraq) is still very precarious. The 2,700 individuals gathered in the 3 camps located in the No man’s land between Iraq and Syria are likely to be resettled in Chile and Sudan. UNHCR expects 8,000 other Palestinian individuals to flee Iraq and look for refuge in Syria.</p> <p>In terms of return to Iraq, UNHCR has shifted its position and started assisting refugee families who ask for UNHCR support in their return trip by providing them with information and financial package (max. 500 USD per family). DRC expressed its concerns in terms of safe and sustainable return to Baghdad and central Iraq. UNHCR decision has been made unilaterally and DRC agreed on helping UNHCR qualify/quantify the returning families from Syria and in Iraq before defining a clear regional position on return.</p>
--	--

<b>Main internal achievements and challenges during the past quarter</b>	<p>Summer has been firstly dedicated to the re-organisation of activities and structures related to the 6 community centres taken over previously. Children were entertained by the team via outdoor activities (museum, land park, picnic...) to compensate the summer closure of schools. Simultaneously, new activities have been either taken over from UNHCR (clowns shows, psycho social support...) or developed by DRC (skills development including sewing and handicraft courses, and football for teenagers...).</p> <p>In parallel, volunteers were recruited and activities have started in the 2 new centres</p>
--	--

established in Jaramana and Qudsaya.

The main challenge in the Community Services programme remains the coordination. In the 3 “ex-SARC” centres, DRC plays an administration role by renting and equipping premises. DRC is as well supposed to coordinate activities and develop its own ones. Unfortunately, UNICEF and UNHCR teams hardly cooperate in those centres where space is very limited. DRC, though many requests have been formulated, has never received from those actors the list of activities, their schedules and the number of beneficiaries assisted. Therefore, the report done by DRC about centres’ achievements is still not complete.

Besides, the school rehabilitation project launched in June has gone on. The sub-MoU was signed with the Ministry of Education on the 16/07. The sub-agreement with UNHCR was signed on the 24<sup>th</sup> of July. The tender was launched and led to the selection of 2 contractors working on 2 separate pools of schools on the 24<sup>th</sup> of July. Works effectively started in the 7 schools on the 26<sup>th</sup> of July. The main challenge faced by the project was the timeframe as the indoor works (phase 1) should have been completed by the 7<sup>th</sup> of September, beginning of the school year. DRC has managed to meet the deadline and achieve the works on time. Simultaneously, outdoor works continue with sunshades and new classrooms’ construction.

Finally, DRC has recruited its School Rehabilitation Coordinator (local - July), its Education project manager (international - who started in late August) and its Finance officer (local - in late July).

In late September 2008, DRC Syria has carried out its 1<sup>st</sup> Annual Review in Syria. National staff and refugee representatives (centres’ coordinators) attended the review. The national staff benefited very much as the exercise was made also to sensitise them about DRC, NGOs, humanitarian work, code of conduct and other HAP-quality principles.

---

**Main funding developments during the past quarter**

UNHCR and DANIDA remain the 2 donors of the DRC Syria programme. SIDA has come as the next potential partner but funds pledged should be confirmed at a later stage.

The 2008 programme does not need further funding and one of our challenges will be to spend the funds allocated in a shorter period of time (7 months instead of 8 for UNHCR, and 13 for DANIDA).

UNRWA has been approached for its Damascus vocational training centre where we could place Iraqi refugees. At the same time, UNRWA has expressed its wish to develop a partnership with DRC in support to Palestinian refugees. Discussions are only starting now.

---