

## Main objectives

- Co-ordinate and facilitate the voluntary, safe and orderly return of Iraqi refugees and asylum-seekers.
- Provide protection and assistance to refugees living in Iraq, and, where appropriate, facilitate their voluntary repatriation.
- Contribute to orderly and sustainable return and reintegration programmes for internally displaced persons in designated areas of return.
- Promote the reduction of statelessness, as well as a secure status for stateless persons.



## Working environment

### Recent developments

When the United Nations re-entered Iraq in early May 2003, UNHCR set to work to establish a presence throughout the country so that it could monitor conditions in areas of potential return, and assist and offer protection to refugees and returnees.

From the beginning, the Office prioritised the establishment and strengthening of links with local partners, other United Nations organisations, and the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA). Support from community leaders proved essential, for example in defusing tensions between refugees and local residents, and in designing projects to support returnee reintegration. Local NGOs were tasked with the implementation of a number of activities. UNHCR held a series of consultations with the Minister for Migration and Displacement shortly after his appointment and agreed to some broad plans and initial allocations of

responsibilities. The Office initiated capacity-building and training programmes for the new ministry.

From the end of July 2003, UNHCR began to facilitate the voluntary return, via Kuwait, of small groups of Iraqi refugees who had spent the past twelve years in the Rafha camp in Saudi Arabia, and who were desperate to leave. Spontaneous return from the Islamic Republic of Iran ensued, and international and local partners are working to assist returnees in southern Iraq.

In Iraq, efforts were stepped up to assist refugees – Syrians, Turks, Iranians of Kurd and Arab ethnicity, and Palestinians. Following the collapse of the Baathist regime, these people, who had received a high level of assistance and support, faced increasing difficulties.

A series of UNHCR-implemented pilot projects for the return and reintegration of refugees and IDPs was launched in the northern governorates of Erbil and Dohuk, where there was no apparent evidence of major ethnic or property disputes. These projects aimed to provide shelter kits to returnee families and to upgrade water supplies for returnees and host communities.

### Planning figures

Population	Jan. 2004	Dec. 2004
Refugees	110,000	n/a
Returnees	2,000	n/a
<b>Total <sup>1</sup></b>	<b>112,000</b>	<b>n/a</b>

<sup>1</sup> All figures are estimates. The situation in Iraq is so volatile that it is currently not possible to assess how many people will leave from or return to Iraq in 2004.

### Constraints

The situation in Iraq is so unpredictable that it is currently impossible to describe constraints expected in 2004 with any accuracy. Insecurity, the risk of mines and unexploded ordnances, and a lack of access to



Iraq: UNHCR conducts the registration of Iraqi returnees after they had spent many years in exile. AP / D. Lopez-Mills

basic services and finding employment in areas of return will remain the greatest obstacles.

## Strategy

### Protection and solutions

UNHCR aims to increase protection activities on behalf of refugees living in Iraq. It will endeavour to register them and provide documentation and legal advice as required. The Office will also support the establishment of a framework securing the rights of refugees in Iraq, and advocate the creation of national protection structures.

UNHCR aims to begin to facilitate voluntary repatriation as soon as conditions are conducive to return. It will work to ensure that returns are voluntary and based on well-informed decisions, taken in the light of accurate knowledge of security conditions, and the availability of basic services and reintegration assistance. In cooperation with partner agencies, the Office will facilitate travel arrangements. Repatriating refugees will be registered using voluntary repatriation forms that serve

as temporary identification documents in Iraq. UNHCR will monitor returnees to ensure that their rights are respected.

The Office will also strive to ensure that due consideration is given to the protection needs of certain categories of Iraqis abroad.

### Assistance

UNHCR will work with the Iraqi Governing Council, the CPA, and governments in countries of asylum, as well as other United Nations agencies and NGO partners, to organise the return of Iraqi refugees and IDPs. Returnees will be registered and assisted with transport.

On their return, returnees will receive material assistance to help them to reintegrate. Water and housing are two of the most prominent requirements, and UNHCR plans to initiate shelter and water supply programmes for returnees. Efforts will be made to launch community-based reintegration initiatives that will, for example, promote the creation of employment opportunities.

Looking further ahead, the Office will build partnerships with development-oriented international institutions in order to ensure that returnees are involved in national reconstruction programmes.

### Desired impact

As soon as conditions are conducive to return, UNHCR will endeavour to ensure sustainable repatriation and IDP return that is voluntary, safe and gradual, and to deliver initial reintegration support. Durable solutions will be sought for IDPs.

## Organisation and implementation

### Management structure

UNHCR's main country office is in Baghdad. Regional offices have been set up in Basra (for the south), Baghdad (to cover the centre), and Erbil (for the north). A number of smaller offices have been established throughout the country to maximise field presence and outreach.

### Co-ordination

UNHCR is participating actively in the co-ordination structure established by the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq, with the Iraqi Governing Council (notably with the Ministry for Migration and Displacement), the Coalition Provisional Authority and NGOs, both international and local. It will also intensify co-operation with longer-term development agencies.

*Detailed planning for 2004 activities is being finalised. Financial requirements under a Supplementary Programme will be published in a separate appeal document.*

### Offices

Offices
<b>Baghdad</b>
Al-Amarah
An-Nasiriya
Basra
Duhok
Erbil
Kirkuk
Makhmour
Mosul
Sulaymaniyah

### Partners

Partners
<b>Government agencies</b>
Ministry for Migration and Displacement
Ministry for Reconstruction and Development
<b>NGOs</b>
American Refugee Committee
Concern for Kids
Counterpart International
INTEROS
<i>Qandil</i>
Reach
<i>Un Ponte Per</i>
<b>Others</b>
UN Habitat
UNV

### Budget (USD)

Activities and services	Annual Programme
Protection, monitoring and co-ordination	1,036,057
Community services	115,000
Domestic needs	206,213
Education	98,700
Food	12,000
Health	133,808
Income generation	25,300
Legal assistance	43,189
Operational support (to agencies)	16,035
Sanitation	9,400
Shelter / other infrastructure	53,600
Transport / logistics	55,055
Water	43,600
<b>Total Operations</b>	<b>1,847,957</b>
Programme support	1,522,679
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,370,636</b>

Returnee girl in northern Iraq. UNHCR / P. Mountzis



Iraq