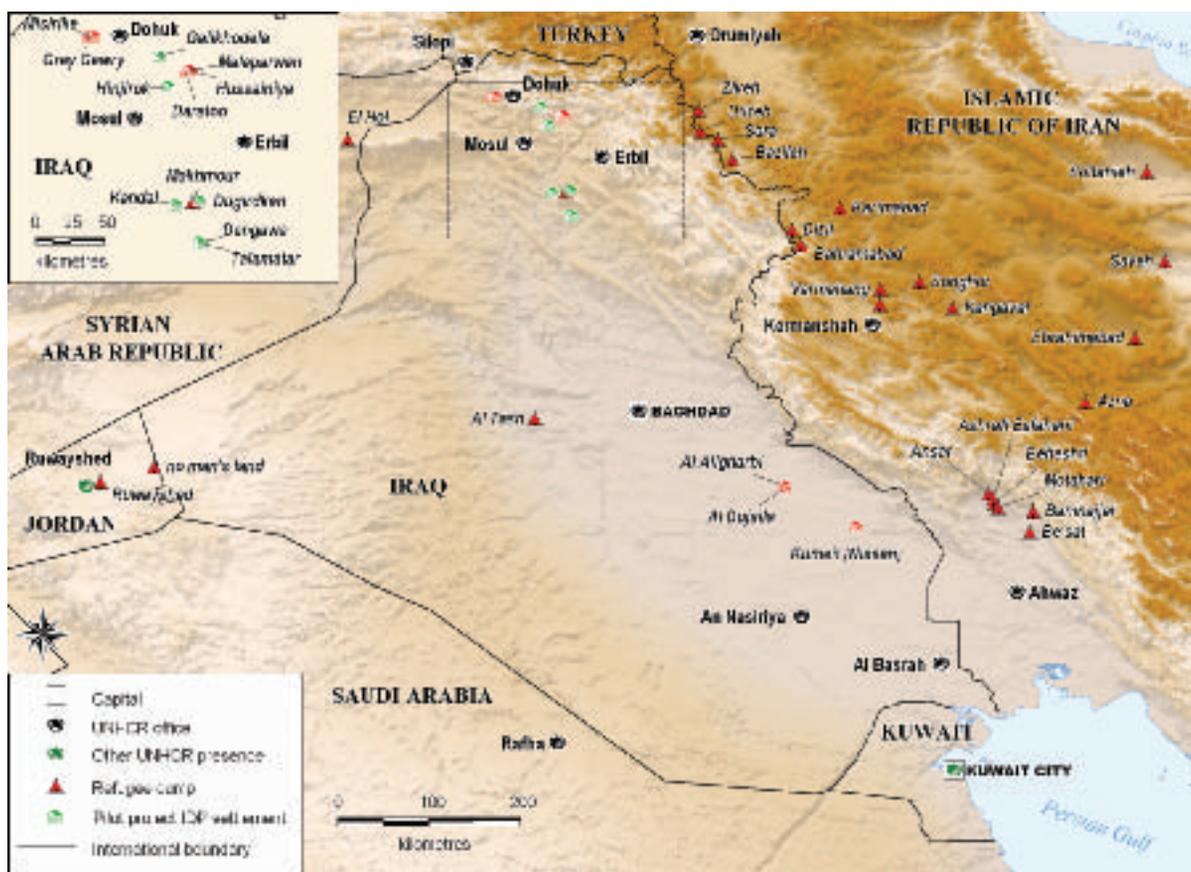


# Iraq



Iraq

## Main objectives

In early 2003, UN agencies were preparing for a possible outflow of Iraqis to neighbouring countries. At the same time, UNHCR was providing limited assistance to Iranian, Palestinian, Syrian and Turkish refugees in Iraq, and facilitating the return of those Turkish and Iranian refugees who expressed a wish to repatriate. A number of Iraqis were also expected to return from the Islamic Republic of Iran.

In May 2003, following the collapse of the Iraqi Ba'ath party regime, UNHCR switched direction and immediately began to plan measures to assist the repatriation of Iraqis from within the region, to provide assistance to the refugees residing in Iraq, and, if requested, to contribute to the IDP assistance and protection programmes that UNOPS had been running in the north.

Persons of concern				
Main origin/Type of population	Total in country	Of whom UNHCR assisted	Per cent female	Per cent under 18
Various nationalities (refugees)	134,200	34,100	-	-
Returnees (from the Islamic Republic of Iran)	50,500	500	-	-
Asylum-seekers	400	-	-	-

## Impact

- By March UNHCR and the IFRC had sufficient stocks in place to meet the needs of 600,000 refugees. A regional approach was adopted, with supplies and equipment pre-positioned in strategically situated locations: Amman and Aqaba in Jordan, Iskenderun in Turkey and Kermenshah and Ahwaz in the Islamic Republic of Iran. UNHCR deployed emergency preparedness and response teams in all six of Iraq's neighbours, working with the Governments to prepare sites, provide material assistance, and ensure the temporary protection of refugees.
- In fact, very few Iraqis did leave the country. Some 2,000 people, mostly Palestinians and Iraqi Kurds, fled to Jordan. Palestinians and Iraqis were allowed to enter the country, where they were accommodated in the Ruwayshed camp near the border or in a camp in No Man's Land between the borders of Jordan and Iraq. Iranian Kurds, however, were not granted admittance to Jordan and were forced to remain in No Man's Land.
- As soon as the Government fell in May 2003, some Iraqi refugees informed UNHCR that they wanted to return. In July 2003, the first organized group returns took place from Rafha Camp in Saudi Arabia. By the end of the year, most of the 5,000 refugees who had been living in the camp for over a decade had returned. In late November, the first organized convoys began to take refugees from the Islamic Republic of Iran. Returnees received basic relief packages – put together from stocks pre-positioned earlier in the year in anticipation of a refugee exodus.
- Some IDPs also began to move back to their home towns and villages. In northern Iraq, UNHCR was invited to chair a UN inter-agency taskforce for return and resettlement of IDPs.

Inter-agency assessments carried out with local authorities identified a number of suitable villages where pilot IDP return projects were then launched. The aim was to avoid encouraging people to return to areas where there was a risk of upsetting the local equilibrium (e.g. provoking property disputes) and to focus principally on community-based initiatives, including the provision of water and housing.

- Throughout the autumn, efforts were made to build on these pilot IDP return projects in the north, and to link them to the UNOCHI-initiated National IDP Strategy. Other agreements have since been signed with NGOs operating in the south, to provide assistance to refugee groups inside Iraq, as well as to distribute basic relief items to Iraqi refugees who returned under the organized group repatriation movements from Saudi Arabia and to those who are still returning from the Islamic Republic of Iran.

## Working environment

### The context

UNHCR is working with three different categories of people in Iraq: refugees who had sought asylum in the country (Palestinians, Iranians of both Kurdish and Arab ethnicity, Turks, and Syrians); returning Iraqi refugees; and internally displaced Iraqis.

The previous regime had been generous to the Palestinian, Iranian Arab and Syrian refugees who had settled in the south and centre of the country, allowing them full access to food, health, medical and educational services, and local populations were largely hospitable. UNHCR had also received

Income and expenditure (USD)					
Annual programme and Supplementary programme budgets					
	Revised budget	Income from contributions <sup>1</sup>	Other funds available <sup>2</sup>	Total funds available	Total expenditure
AB	3,426,660	0	2,625,916	2,625,916	2,625,916
SB	37,737,663	1,089,599	19,708,255	20,797,854	20,797,854
<b>Total</b>	<b>41,164,323</b>	<b>1,089,599</b>	<b>22,334,171</b>	<b>23,423,770</b>	<b>23,423,770</b>

<sup>1</sup> Includes income from contributions earmarked at the country level.

<sup>2</sup> Includes allocations by UNHCR from unearmarked or broadly earmarked contributions, opening balance and adjustments. The above figures do not include costs at headquarters.

Note: The Supplementary programme budgets do not include a 7 per cent charge (support costs) that is recovered from contributions to meet indirect costs for UNHCR.

full cooperation from the local authorities as it endeavoured to provide assistance to Turkish and Iranian Kurd refugees north of Baghdad.

When the Government collapsed in May 2003, so did the entire support network for refugees in central and southern Iraq. Many found that once-friendly host communities turned hostile and some refugees were forced to leave their homes. UNHCR's workload therefore suddenly increased, and the organization found that it was working to meet new protection and assistance challenges in a decidedly unstable environment. In the Baghdad area, new agreements were signed with Governing Council and NGO partners to assist refugees. In the north, where a functioning public administration has evolved over the past decade, the working environment remained relatively stable. This has enabled UNHCR and its partners to continue to assist refugees and to begin to work out how to provide support to displaced people wishing to return to their home towns and villages.

At the same time, the Office began to prepare for the voluntary return of Iraqi refugees from countries within the region. Preparations were made in close cooperation with the new Ministry for Displacement and Migration of the Iraqi Governing Council (IGC). UNHCR has also played an active part in the UN Country Team's planning exercise for the humanitarian reconstruction of Iraq. At the end of 2003, the Office was nominated Task Manager for the United Nations Cluster for Internally Displaced Persons and Refugees, under Pillar One of the UN integrated strategy (Basic Services and Humanitarian Response).

The key characteristics of UNHCR's return operation in Iraq are: partnerships; building local capacity; and providing community-based assistance that benefits both returnees and the villages into which they are reintegrating. With this in mind, UNHCR's local and international partners have been discussing needs with beneficiary communities (to date, principally in the north of the country), and putting together packages focusing principally on water, shelter, and, if necessary, schools and clinics. Community members carry out much of the work themselves, with external technical input when necessary.

## Constraints

The overriding constraint on operations in Iraq has been the absence of law and order. Other problems include the urgent need for effective national and local public administration, the nationwide housing shortage, inadequate water supplies, and the scarcity of employment opportunities.

Following the attack on the UN offices in Baghdad on 19 August, international staff members were withdrawn from the country (first from the centre and south, and subsequently from the north). Offices were established in Amman and Kuwait to support the national staff who remained in the country, and field offices along the Iraqi border with the Islamic Republic of Iran were strengthened. Responsibility for maintaining the programme devolved to some 100 national staff members and the staff of implementing partners with whom UNHCR had managed to sign sub-agreements, and who continued to operate inside Iraq.

Since autumn 2003, only UN national staff are authorized to work in offices that do not fully comply with the UN's Minimal Operational Security Standards – none of UNHCR's offices in Iraq currently meet these standards. Road travel in the south is severely restricted. In the north, the operating environment has generally been easier, despite occasional incidents. In the centre and the south, it has been very difficult for national staff to access beneficiary communities – both refugees and returnees. For example, the area surrounding the Al Tash camp, home to a large population of Iranian Kurds, was unstable throughout the year.

Meanwhile, the new Ministry for Displacement and Migration faces numerous challenges. Previously, UNHCR liaised with a number of ministries (including those for Labour and Social Affairs, Foreign Affairs, Interior, and Health) via an inter-ministerial unit responsible for refugee-related issues. Some staff who had worked in this unit were transferred to the new Ministry, but many higher level officials are new appointees.



Iranian refugees of Kurdish origin were stuck for more than a decade in Al-Tash camp near Ramadi. Here, a refugee woman and her child are at the clinic in the camp. *UNHCR/T. Voeten*

## Funding

The operation was well funded in 2003, both in the emergency preparedness phase and following the reorientation of the programme after the fall of the previous government.

## Achievements and impact

### Protection and solutions

Many of the 30-40,000 Palestinians who had been living in flats and houses in Baghdad, and who had been assisted and protected by the previous Government, found themselves subject to acts of intimidation when it collapsed in May 2003. In summer



2003, UNHCR began to register Palestinian refugees and provide them with identity cards. The exercise has been on hold since the autumn, owing to the lack of security in the capital.

Iranian Arabs, who had been living as farmers in the south were faced with hostile reactions following the fall of the previous Government in the summer. UNHCR intervened with religious and community leaders, asking them to mediate between the

refugees and their Iraqi neighbours, and refugees subsequently reported that the situation had improved.

Most of the 600 Syrian refugees registered with UNHCR in Baghdad wish to return to Syria, provided that safeguards are put in place. The Office has initiated contact with the Syrian authorities to facilitate their voluntary repatriation.

UNHCR has embarked upon negotiations with the Iraqi authorities and the Turkish Government regarding the voluntary repatriation of Turkish refugees from the Makhmour camp.

UNHCR and the Ministry for Displacement and Migration still consider that conditions are not conducive to the promotion of voluntary repatriation to Iraq. Nonetheless, refugees have been approaching UNHCR requesting assistance to go home. Letters regarding the modalities for the organized voluntary return of Iraqi refugees from the Islamic Republic of Iran have been exchanged between the IGC and the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) on one side, and the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran and UNHCR on the other, and small-scale return movements have been taking place since November 2003. UNHCR is also exploring the possibility of concluding tripartite agreements with the governments of other countries, both in the region and further afield.

The lack of security has been seriously restricting UNHCR's capacity to conduct returnee monitoring. The Office is now therefore trying to establish monitoring networks with other Iraqi national bodies, UN partners, and, if and when possible, international NGOs. The organisation is also conducting a profiling exercise of IDPs in Iraq and refugee groups in the region, in order to gain a more accurate picture of their needs and intentions.

Voluntary return operations (for both refugees and IDPs) face considerable complications over property issues, and there is a risk that if these are not properly addressed, new conflicts may arise. The right to return and the right to recover property are closely connected. In 2003, UNHCR called for the establishment of an equitable Iraqi-led restitution framework in Iraq. This involves an inter-agency approach to ensuring access to a just process of mediation, and solutions for those who have nowhere to go. The Office also provided comments to the CPA on the

Draft Order on the Establishment of the Iraqi Property Claims and Compensation Commission as well as the guidelines that are currently being drafted.

Another major issue in the Iraqi context is that of nationality. It is believed that hundreds of thousands of people may be stateless, as a result of the previous regime's laws or decrees. UNHCR has therefore initiated dialogue with competent Iraqi institutions, chiefly the Ministry of Displacement and Migration, the Ministry of Justice, and members of the drafting committee working on the new nationality law.

## Activities and assistance

**Community services:** Community involvement has been a key feature of the planning and implementing of rehabilitation activities in returnee villages in northern Iraq. Refugee committees have increased community self-reliance in the Al Tash camp, and special attention has been paid to the recruitment of women as community counsellors.

**Domestic needs/Household support:** In early 2003, UNHCR and IFRC stockpiled non-food items for roughly 600,000 persons in neighbouring countries. Some of these were subsequently distributed to Palestinian refugees who had been evicted from their homes in Baghdad, returnees from Saudi Arabia and the Islamic Republic of Iran and IDPs returning to their home villages in northern Iraq. UNHCR has also distributed subsistence cash grants to extremely vulnerable Palestinian and Syrian refugees in the Baghdad area, and to Turkish and Iranian refugees in the north.

**Education:** As well as repairing two schools in Al Tash, UNHCR and its partners are constructing schools and housing for school teachers in returnee areas in the north and south of the country. In coordination with UNICEF, the Office is also distributing school kits, uniforms and travel allowances to refugees in the Baghdad area.

**Food:** Food assistance was provided to vulnerable individual refugees and to returnees as they passed through the Basra transit centre.

**Health/Nutrition:** UNHCR and its partners provided basic health services and medical supplies, and undertook minor repairs to health facilities in Al

Tash and Makhmour camps. Support was also provided to refugees in Baghdad to enable them to access medical treatment in the capital.

**Income generation:** Some refugees in Al Tash are participating in tailoring projects. Others work as casual labourers cleaning and maintaining the camp. In the north, a pilot village development project was launched, involving a series of small-scale projects such as training on permaculture, training in marketing agricultural products, traditional straw-bale house building, and poultry and livestock rearing. Other such projects will now be introduced. UNHCR is also working with others in an effort to find employment for refugees in Baghdad (notably the Palestinians).

**Legal assistance:** UNHCR and the Palestinian Red Crescent carried out a registration exercise of Palestinians in Baghdad. The Office updated registration records for the other refugee populations in Iraq, and ensured that refugees had identity cards. Returnees to the north were able to access legal counselling.

**Operational support (to agencies):** UNHCR supported its partners with funds for their administrative and staffing costs including costs for special cash transfers. In November and December, UNHCR organised two capacity-building training sessions in Amman for the Government, UN Agencies, NGOs, and other agencies as well as for its own national staff in Iraq.

**Sanitation:** UNHCR and partners rehabilitated the sewage system and purchased cleaning materials for Basra Transit Centre. Toilets and sanitary facilities in Al Tash and Makhmour refugee camps were improved. Sanitation work was also included in the community rehabilitation activities in returnee villages in the north.

**Shelter/Other infrastructure:** UNHCR funded the renovation of the Tanouma Transit Centre (Basra). Rental subsidies were provided to Syrian and Palestinian refugees in Baghdad. In the north, some 2,800 people benefited from self-help shelter programmes in 2003. UNHCR procured materials (some on the international market, some locally) to build a further 4,000 houses in northern Iraq.

**Transport/Logistics:** UNHCR funded warehouse rental, loading, unloading, transport, and

distribution of non-food items at the Tanouma Transit Centre in the south, and in Dohok, Erbil, and Suleymaniya in the north. International logistics support was supplied from the Islamic Republic of Iran for the south, from Turkey for the north, and from Jordan for the centre. UNHCR has maintained regional contingency stockpiles, and set up an effective monitoring and tracking system.

**Water:** Some 2,500 returnees in the north benefited from the refurbishment of deep and shallow wells. Water supply systems were also upgraded in Makhmour and in settlements in southern Iraq. The water system was rehabilitated at Tanouma transit centre.

## Organisation and implementation

### Management

In March 2003, all international staff members left Iraq, leaving national staff to continue to monitor events inside the country. In May, the international staff moved back to existing offices. Additional staff were deployed (mostly on mission), new Iraqi staff recruited, and new offices opened in Basra, Mosul and Kirkuk. Plans were made to open up to eight more offices.

Following the 19 August attack on the UN offices in Baghdad, international staff were pulled back to offices in Amman and Kuwait. Throughout the autumn, national staff came out to meet them when possible, and many took part in technical training workshops.

### Working with others

UNHCR established close working relationships with the new Iraqi Ministry for Displacement and Migration as well as the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) as well as UN sister agencies, IOM and NGOs. The maintenance of strong coordination structures will be crucial to the success of programmes in 2004.

## Overall assessment

The Iraq operation has been complex from the start. UNHCR and its partners were well prepared to receive a refugee outflow in March, and were ready to move ahead on a reoriented programme designed to meet the needs of refugees, returnees, and, to the extent it required, IDPs. Despite the security constraints, the organization did manage to continue to provide assistance through to the end of the year, thanks to the efforts of national staff and implementing partners.

Offices
<b>Baghdad</b>
Al Amara
An Nasiriya
Al Basrah
Dohuk
Erbil
Kirkuk
Mosul
Suleymaniah
Partners
<b>Government agencies</b>
Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs
Ministry of Displacement and Migration
<b>NGOs</b>
American Refugee Committee
Concern for Kids
Counterpart International
InterSOS
Islamic Relief
Mission East
Ockenden International
<i>Qandil</i>
<i>Un Ponte per</i>
<b>Others</b>
UNVs



## Financial Report (USD)

Expenditure breakdown	Current year's projects				Prior years' projects	
	Annual programme budget	Supplementary programme budget	Total	notes	Annual and supplementary programme budgets	notes
Protection, Monitoring and Coordination	782,277	3,662,764	4,445,041		1,340	
Community Services	21,908	61,222	83,130		17	
Domestic Needs / Household Support	119,583	121,760	241,343		15,237	
Education	28,477	21,090	49,567		7,580	
Fisheries	852	0	852		0	
Food	22,261	1,516	23,777		0	
Health / Nutrition	44,181	11,582	55,763		51,181	
Income Generation	8,745	12,000	20,745		1,000	
Legal Assistance	35,606	206,206	241,812		2,063	
Operational Support (to Agencies)	5,616	941,026	946,642		258	
Sanitation	153	154,922	155,075		0	
Shelter / Other Infrastructure	3,611	1,543,296	1,546,907		12	
Transport / Logistics	17,763	291,192	308,955		4,666	
Water (non-agricultural)	17,986	199,993	217,979		9,927	
Instalments with Implementing Partners	0	5,204,520	5,204,520		0	
<b>Sub - total Operational</b>	<b>1,109,019</b>	<b>12,433,089</b>	<b>13,542,108</b>		<b>93,281</b>	
Programme Support	1,389,573	422,097	1,811,670		0	
<b>Sub - total Disbursements / Deliveries</b>	<b>2,498,592</b>	<b>12,855,186</b>	<b>15,353,778</b>	(3)	<b>93,281</b>	(5)
Unliquidated Obligations	127,324	7,942,668	8,069,992	(3)	0	(5)
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,625,916</b>	<b>20,797,854</b>	<b>23,423,770</b>	(1) (3)	<b>93,281</b>	
<b>Instalments with Implementing Partners</b>						
Payments Made	0	7,700,055	7,700,055		0	
Reporting Received	0	2,495,535	2,495,535		0	
<b>Balance</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>5,204,520</b>	<b>5,204,520</b>		<b>0</b>	
Outstanding 1st January	0	0	0		0	
Refunded to UNHCR	0	0	0		0	
Currency Adjustment	0	0	0		0	
<b>Outstanding 31 December</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>5,204,520</b>	<b>5,204,520</b>		<b>0</b>	
<b>Unliquidated Obligations</b>						
Outstanding 1st January	0	0	0		126,499	(5)
New Obligations	2,625,916	20,797,854	23,423,770	(1)	0	
Disbursements	2,498,592	12,855,186	15,353,778	(3)	93,281	(5)
Cancellations	0	0	0		33,218	(5)
<b>Outstanding 31 December</b>	<b>127,324</b>	<b>7,942,668</b>	<b>8,069,992</b>	(3)	<b>0</b>	(5)

Figures which can be cross-referenced to the Accounts:

- (1) Annex to Statement 1
- (3) Schedule 3
- (5) Schedule 5