

Working environment

The context

The complexity of the operational, logistical and political environment in Iraq makes it a challenge for UNHCR to implement its protection and assistance programmes in the country.

Of the countries neighbouring Iraq, only Iran and Turkey are signatories to the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol. However, Jordan and the Syrian Arab Republic host the largest numbers of Iraqi refugees. Despite the significant socio-economic burden, both countries have been generous to Iraqi refugees, allowing them access to public services, including health care and education.

Nonetheless, the situation of Iraqi refugees throughout the region continues to deteriorate, as most of them do not have the right to work and cannot access the limited informal job market. Their needs are increasing as their savings have been depleted by prolonged displacement and hikes in the prices of basic commodities in the host countries.

Conditions inside Iraq are not yet conducive to safe and dignified mass returns. However, limited spontaneous returns are taking place, often driven by the economic hardships experienced in displacement. Reports from Iraq suggest that some people are returning to the areas where their religious or ethnic groups are the majority, not to their places of origin.

At the end of August 2008 more than 300,000 people were registered with UNHCR in the countries surrounding Iraq. However, it is believed that a total of some one to two million Iraqis are living in these countries, mainly in Jordan and Syria. UNHCR is also involved with an estimated 2.8 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) and some 42,000 refugees, including Palestinians, in Iraq.

The needs

The majority of Iraqi refugees in the countries neighbouring Iraq live in urban settings and constitute UNHCR's largest ever urban caseload. In Syria, there were twice as many Iraqis approaching the Office for assistance with health care in the first three quarters of 2008 than in all of 2007. Much of UNHCR's assistance

has been directed towards refugees with specific needs, including female-headed households, children and the elderly. As neither local integration nor voluntary repatriation is viable for many of them, resettlement remains the only durable solution for tens of thousands of Iraqis.

Inside Iraq, UNHCR is engaged with IDPs, their host communities and returnees as well as refugees. For all these people, the needs extend from physical and legal security to access to basic services, including food, non-food items, shelter, water, health, education and durable solutions.

Palestinians who fled recent violence in Iraq, especially those in camps in the border areas, live under extremely difficult conditions. UNHCR is working to relocate these refugees to safer locations, either within the region or beyond.

Main objectives

- Ensuring protection and access to essential services for Iraqi refugees in neighbouring countries, and promoting resettlement for those who need it.
- Maintaining asylum space for Iraqi refugees in neighbouring countries and improving their access to education and quality health care.
- Enhancing protection and access to essential services for refugees in Iraq and improving their living conditions.
- Monitoring population movements in and out of Iraq closely and ensuring timely and appropriate responses, including through the development of a rapid response plan and an individual case management strategy for spontaneous return.
- Cooperating closely with the UN and other partners and leading the consolidated efforts to address the needs of Iraqi refugees and IDPs.

Planning figures Iraq			
Type of population	Origin	Jan 2009	
		Total in country	Of whom assisted by UNHCR
Refugees	Islamic Rep. of Iran	10,800	10,800
	Turkey	15,700	15,700
	Occupied Palestinian Territories	14,400	14,400
	Various	730	730
Asylum-seekers	Syrian Arab.Rep.	1,210	1,210
	Islamic Republic of Iran	950	950
	Turkey	420	420
Returnees (refugees)		7,000	800
IDPs		2,770,000	400,000
Returnees (IDPs)		100,000	-
Stateless		130,000	-
Total		3,051,210	445,010
Outside Iraq			
Type of population	Country	Jan 2009	
		Total in country	Of whom assisted by UNHCR
Iraqi Refugees in neighboring countries	Jordan	450,000	65,000
	Syria	1,200,000	236,000
	Lebanon	50,000	12,000
	Egypt	40,000	15,000
	Turkey	7,000	7,000
	Islamic Republic of Iran	58,000	58,000
	Gulf States	150,000	2,700
Total		1,955,000	395,700

Key targets

Iraq

- Twenty protection and assistance centres and 34 mobile teams are established and expanded in central Iraq.
- Non-food items are provided to 25,000 IDP families.
- Some 13,000 IDP and returnee families receive emergency shelter assistance.
- Food, non-food items, water and other provisions are provided to some 20,000 refugees.

In neighbouring countries

- Some 400,000 Iraqis are registered.
- Approximately 30,000 refugees are referred for resettlement.
- Food is provided to more than 250,000 people in Syria and Jordan.
- Non-food items are given to 75,000 families.
- Some 35,000 families receive cash and coupons assistance.
- Return assistance is given to some 20,000 families.
- School uniforms are provided for 50,000 children in Syria and Jordan.
- Five thousand children get education grants.
- Informal education is provided for 10,000 children.
- More than half a million beneficiaries receive assistance for primary, secondary and other education.

While encouraging respect for the principle of *non-refoulement* and regularization of the refugees' legal status in their respective host countries, UNHCR will continue to register refugees and provide social and legal counselling.

Up to 30 per cent of Iraqi refugees registered with UNHCR have been identified as having specific needs. The Office will continue to provide protection, food, non-food items and cash assistance to them.

In 2008, UNHCR greatly enhanced its outreach capacity. The Office works closely with 37 community centres and community-based organizations in Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria. UNHCR field offices conduct regular home visits and participatory assessments to monitor the well-being of Iraqi refugees. Safe houses have been established and specialized staff identify and counsel victims of sexual and gender-based violence.

UNHCR provides assistance for both formal and informal education, including rehabilitation and construction of schools, distribution of uniforms and stationery, support for private school attendance, and after-school and vocational classes. Some 300,000 Iraqis received assistance with health care during the first half of 2008 through public, private and charitable medical centres in the neighbouring countries.

From 2007 through to mid-2008, more than 40,000 refugees were submitted for resettlement to 16 countries. By October 2008 over one third of them had departed. In 2009, the Office is seeking accelerated departures and additional resettlement opportunities for those identified as being most vulnerable.

Strategy and activities

UNHCR is leading the strategy to address the humanitarian needs of Iraqi refugees through the Consolidated Appeals Process (CAP) in the countries neighbouring Iraq. Inside Iraq, the process is being coordinated by the United Nations Assistance Mission in Iraq (UNAMI).

The Office's strategy for Iraqi refugees in neighbouring countries focuses on:

- Maintaining protection space through close contacts and cooperation with host governments while seeking more international support.
- Providing basic assistance to Iraqi families and individuals with specific needs.
- Ensuring access to public services, including education and health.
- Promoting resettlement as a durable solution for those who need it.
- Developing and implementing an individual case management approach for spontaneous repatriation.

The Office will also continue to assess the progress of those who have returned spontaneously to Iraq, and provide them counselling, limited transportation and livelihood grants on a case-by-case basis.

Given the difficult operational environment inside Iraq, UNHCR's strategy consists of reinforcing the Government's ability to protect IDPs, returnees and refugees and enhancing its protection and monitoring capacity; making available legal and socio-economic assistance to IDPs and returnees; and ensuring the provision of protection and assistance to refugees inside Iraq.

The Office will work closely with the Iraqi Government in assisting refugees, IDPs and returnees in 2009. In March 2008, UNHCR re-established an international presence in Baghdad. In addition to Baghdad, UNHCR has an international presence in Erbil and Mosul, as well as six smaller offices headed by national staff. Some 14 protection and assistance centres and 34 mobile teams continue to operate throughout Iraq. This

network of UNHCR offices and partners has reinforced the systematic monitoring of population movements and will also monitor the security and socioeconomic situation of IDPs, returnees and refugees in all the 18 governorates of Iraq.

In 2008, the Office launched an emergency shelter programme in conflict-affected areas as a confidence-building measure and to mitigate further displacement. In 2009, UNHCR will expand the geographical coverage and number of beneficiaries, prioritising conflict-prone and returnee locations. UNHCR will increasingly focus its interventions in central Iraq, from where most of Iraq's displaced originate.

In addition to the establishment of protection and assistance centres throughout Baghdad, UNHCR will expand its links with national NGOs. These will facilitate an increase in individual and community-based assistance programmes targeting areas where IDPs and returnees are concentrated. The existing protection and assistance centres will continue to provide advice to IDPs, returnees and others on issues related to property restitution and personal documentation.

Where possible, the Office will register asylum-seekers and determine their status. It will provide protection and assistance to the needy, while also promoting local integration and seeking resettlement opportunities.

UNHCR assists Palestinian refugees, especially those stranded in border areas between Iraq, Jordan and Syria, through the provision of life-sustaining assistance, including food and health care, while seeking their urgent relocation to safer places. In 2008, the Government of Sudan signed a statement accepting the relocation of some 2,000 Palestinians from Al Waleed camp, on the border between Iraq and Syria, to Sudan. The Office is also actively pursuing all relocation opportunities for these refugees.

Constraints

The volatile security situation inside Iraq, significant increases in the prices of commodities, high unemployment rates and the lack of self-reliance opportunities, as well as instability and extremist threats, constrain the delivery of UNHCR's programmes both in Iraq and in the refugee hosting countries.



An Iraqi woman shows her new asylum-seeker certificate while enjoying a meal to end her Ramadan fast in Amman, Jordan.

Organization and implementation

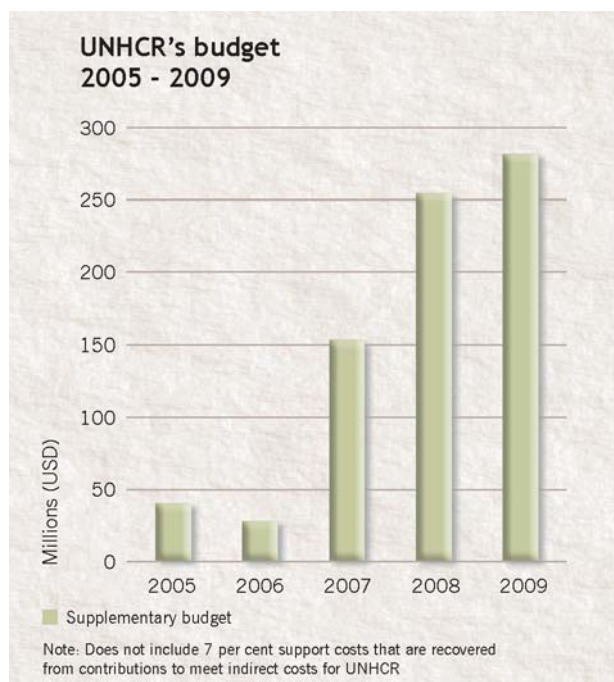
UNHCR presence	
Number of offices	9
Total staff	571
International	89
National	292
JPOs	1
UNVs	92
Others	97

Coordination

UNHCR is leading the Consolidated Appeals Process for Iraqi refugees in the region and participating actively in the same process in Iraq, under the overall coordination of UNAMI. The Office will strengthen its links with other UN agencies through the UN Country Team and participate in discussions with development agencies. The Office leads the protection and shelter clusters under UNAMI's overall coordination in Iraq.

Financial information

The budget for the Iraq supplementary programme has increased significantly over the last few years, from USD 40 million in 2005 to over USD 271 million in 2008, during the establishment of large-scale refugee operations, mainly in Jordan and Syria. In 2009, the Office is appealing for USD 299 million to cover its activities throughout the region, but with an emphasis on the expansion of its presence and activities in central Iraq.



Partners

Governments

Ministry of Migration and Displacement, Kurdish Regional Government (Iraq)
 Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation (Jordan)
 Ministries of Education, Health, Higher Education, Office of the Governor of *El Hassake* (Syria)

NGOs

Al Bassel Hospital (Heart Institute) (Syria), Beiruni Hospital (Syria), CARE (Australia), Caritas (Austria), Caritas (Egypt), Caritas Migrants Center (Lebanon), Caritas (Jordan), Catholic Relief Services USCCB, (USA), Common Charity Committee (Syria), *Couvent Ibrahi Al-Khalil* (Syria), *Croix Rouge Francaise* (CRF), Danish Refugee Council, Evangelical Christian Alliance Church, Syriagreek Orthodox Patriarchate Of Antioch (Syria), International Catholic Migration Commission, International Medical Corps, USAinternational Relief And Development Foundation (USA), Intersos (Italy), Jordan Hashemite Charity Organization, Jordanian Alliance Against Hunger and Food Security, Jordanian Red Crescent Society, Jordanian Women's Union, *Maison du Bon Pasteur*, (Syria), Mercy Corps, Middle East Council of Churches Lebanon, Mizan, Jordan-Nippon International Cooperation (Japan), Norwegian Refugee Council, Palestinian Red Crescent Society, *Premiere Urgence* (France), Questscope (Jordan), Refugee Egypt, Relief International (USA), Save the Children Federation (USA), Syrian Red Crescent Society, Syrian Women's Association (Syria), *Terre des Hommes* (Italia), *Terre des Hommes* (Syria)

Others

IOM, UNAMI, UNDP, UNESCO, UNICEF, UNIFEM, UNFPA, UNOPS, UNRWA, WFP, WHO

Budget (USD)											
Activities and services	2009 Supplementary programme										
	Egypt	Iraq	Islamic Rep. of Iran	Jordan	Lebanon	Saudi Arabia	Syrian Arab Republic	Turkey	Regional activities	HQ	Total
Protection, monitoring and coordination	46,223	8,876,019	170,000	3,501,775	2,231,965	0	5,451,780	158,134	0	0	20,435,896
Community services	19,161	938,400	24,631	3,580,000	230,000	0	1,564,775	333,544	325,886	0	7,016,397
Domestic needs	807,062	7,361,000	152,474	16,908,000	851,000	50,000	33,839,440	387,000	7,000,000	0	67,355,976
Education	651,843	755,600	0	5,877,000	540,000	0	18,314,195	44,100	0	0	26,182,738
Food	0	1,300,000	0	0	0	0	19,747,200	0	200,000	0	21,247,200
Health	279,416	1,232,200	314,617	7,569,143	868,500	0	26,850,000	179,750	350,000	0	37,643,626
Income generation	32,847	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	32,847
Legal assistance	103,859	5,289,120	5,354	2,508,500	1,105,500	0	7,222,076	420,806	1,600,000	0	18,255,215
Operational support (to agencies)	105,839	4,159,752	7,929	1,896,143	290,000	0	590,425	10,000	940,000	0	8,000,088
Sanitation	0	312,680	0	0	0	344,909	0	0	300,000	0	957,589
Shelter and infrastructure	0	31,128,550	81,388	0	0	0	1,200,000	0	4,300,000	0	36,709,938
Transport and logistics	1,003,650	6,982,230	33,607	0	0	0	9,328,300	54,800	2,200,000	0	19,602,587
Water	0	1,370,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	200,000	0	1,570,000
Total operations	3,049,900	69,705,551	790,000	41,840,561	6,116,965	394,909	124,108,191	1,588,134	17,415,886	0	265,010,097
Programme support	61,734	6,101,387	0	3,126,282	449,980	0	3,605,994	364,650	0	2,664,319	16,374,346
Total	3,111,634	75,806,938	790,000	44,966,843	6,566,945	394,909	127,714,185	1,952,784	17,415,886	2,664,319	281,384,443

Note: The budget excludes 7 per cent support costs (USD 16,934,748 in 2008 and USD 18,526,563 in 2009) that are recovered from contributions to meet indirect costs for UNHCR.