

Flygtningenævnets baggrundsmateriale

Bilagsnr.:	502
Land:	Irak
Kilde:	UNHCR.
Titel:	Facilitating the Transition from Asylum to Return and Reintegration in Iraq 2009-2010.
Udgivet:	1. juni 2010.
Optaget på baggrundsmaterialet:	7. juni 2010.

Facilitating the Transition from Asylum to Return and Reintegration in Iraq 2009 - 2010

Project Summary:

Project Title	Facilitating the Transition from Asylum to Return and Reintegration in Iraq
Implementing Agency	UNHCR
Implementation Period	2009 - 2010
Total Funding Requirements	USD 97,593,000
Project Goal	<i>Facilitate the establishment and consolidation of conditions which are conducive for the sustainable return of Iraq's displaced</i>

UNHCR June 2009

1. Introduction

Iraq is in a phase of transition. The conditions throughout the country are on a positive trajectory, with rates of violence calming down to the 2003 level, food insecurity affecting only a quarter of the 2005 figures and thousands of refugees and IDP families returning home. These improvements notwithstanding, Iraq's displacement crisis is still enormous. Hundreds of thousands of displaced Iraqi families inside and outside of the country are still struggling with the effects of conflict. Moreover, the impact of years of sanctions, deprivation, discrimination, acute poverty and neglect is extensive and severe. Livelihoods and infrastructure have been significantly damaged. The flight of large numbers of professional Iraqis further complicates reconstruction efforts.

Since late 2007, some IDP and refugee families have been able to return mostly to the Baghdad area. However, their reception, the provision of adequate standard of living as well as their assistance to reintegrate, has been insufficient. Many have faced security problems upon return. Many have faced housing problems as their properties have been taken over by others. Some returning internally displaced people have moved into the home of others who were themselves forced to move elsewhere or have occupied vacant public buildings, leading to a phenomenon of secondary displacement. Pressure on IDPs and refugees to return has not been accompanied by the social and economic measures that would make returns sustainable. UNHCR, taking into account these conditions, has not moved yet to promote return; but is assisting return on a case-by-case basis and preparing for the return of large numbers.

At this juncture, it is important to start activities which have impacts on making on-going return sustainable, while striving to maintain protection space in the neighbouring countries. If/when large numbers of Iraqis do return in the near future, the challenges to the local communities; the government of Iraq, the UN agencies and NGO community will be tremendous.

In this context, UNHCR's strategy centres around four priorities: 1) maintaining and enhancing the **protection space in asylum countries**; 2) developing and implementing more activity to enhance **conditions for return and reintegration**; 3) maintaining a major **resettlement** component for Iraqi refugees unable to return; and 4) enhancing assistance and protection for **non-Iraqi refugees in Iraq** and seeking durable solutions for them.

This project aims to ensure that return will be sustainable; towards this end, UNHCR is currently expanding its presence and increasing the delivery of targeted assistance inside Iraq.

In 2009 and 2010, UNHCR inside Iraq will focus on four areas of activities; (a) shelter, (b) protection and legal assistance, (c) cash assistance and (d) reintegration activities in conjunction with developmental actors.

2. Background

- A total of 195,000 IDPs and 25,000 refugees returned in 2008, the majority of them to **Baghdad**.
- A total of 154,000¹ families fled their homes in Baghdad to another area in the city (71,000) or other Governorates (82,000).
- A total of 62,000 Iraqis or 11,000 families returned to Baghdad between June and September 2008.
- 91,000 families or over 550,000 Iraqis are IDPs within Baghdad (71,000 from Baghdad plus another 20,000 from other Governorates).
- When the families who have fled or who have found refuge in Baghdad are combined, Baghdad holds the key to the fate of over 75% of Iraq's IDPs.
- 70 – 80 % of registered refugees in neighbouring states originate from Baghdad.
- Up to 80% of recent IDP and refugee returns have taken place to Baghdad.
- Approximately 50 - 65 per day are registering with the Ministry of Displacement and Migration (MoDM).²
- It remains unclear how many returnees have received the ID 1,000,000 returnee grant for families (individuals are not eligible).
 - Unemployment ranges from 40% to 50% and even higher within IDP and returnee communities.
 - Access to clean water is at 40%.³
 - The majority of IDPs do not receive assistance from Public Distribution Systems (PDS) nor assistance on a regular basis.⁴
 - Average access to electricity through the national grid is 1-5 hours per day (It is estimated that there are 50,000 generators in Baghdad).
 - Shelter continues to be one of the key concerns of returnees.

		Families	Individuals	Ave. Size
Total – IDPs		90731	550099	6.2
Baghdad	Abu Ghraib	3218	20152	6.3
	Adhamiya	13443	81700	6.1
	Al Kadhumia	11492	68600	6.0
	Al Resafa	21091	126928	6.0
	Al Sader	4707	29919	6.4
	Karkh	25478	150163	5.9
	Mada'in	4811	33786	7.0
	Mahmoudiya	780	5142	6.6
	Tarmia	2729	15427	5.7
	Unknown	2982	18282	6.1

¹ MODM Summary Results of IDP Registration – February 2006 to July 2008

² Some returnees have expressed concern about the lengthy procedures and the rejection of some claims.

³ ICRC October 2008 Report. Also Baghdad's nearly six million people have access to half their needs of drinking water, said Sadeq al-Shammari head of Baghdad's Water Authority. Shammari said practically more than three million people in Baghdad have no access to running water

⁴ IOM

3. Assumptions and Needs

- While current returns have been dominated by IDPs, it is important to note that IDP returns often precede refugee returns. IDPs are located closer to their area of origin, have a higher mobility and more opportunity to visit or obtain information on the security situation and condition of their homes. IDPs are also often more impoverished (not having the means to obtain a passport or the funds to travel and sustain themselves abroad) and will often take the first opportunity to return, even in less than ideal circumstances. The sustainability of return, including the access/provision of basic services will have a significant impact (whether positive or negative) on the perception of other displaced Iraqis, including refugees, to return.
- MoDM and other agencies of the Government of Iraq (GoI) will continue to exert efforts, yet their capacity to provide sufficient, timely assistance and legal protection for IDPs, returnees and other groups in special needs is likely to remain limited. They will thus continue to be supportive of international assistance;
- MoDM has established two registration centers, one in Al Resafa and the second in Al Karkh to facilitate implementation of Order 101 (dated 08/08/08) on the evacuation of occupied homes and Order 262 concerning the grants to be paid to returnees. Despite the existence of the two National registration Centres which UNHCR and its partners will continue to support, additional outreach and capacity is urgently required;
- The security situation inside Iraq will continue to stabilize, although the threat level for minorities and other groups at risk will remain high, and the overall human rights situation may not improve swiftly;
- National NGOs (NNGOs) will be willing to enter into agreements with international NGOs and/or UNHCR. Security considerations, both relating to real threats, as well as the limitations put in place by the UN, will require the bulk of UNHCR's activities to be implemented via national staff and NNGOs;
- UNHCR is continuing to expand its presence inside Iraq. Additional office infrastructures will be erected in Baghdad in Diwan compound of which 19 offices will be for UNHCR staff and another 10 made available for other UN operational agencies. In addition, the UN continues to advocate for expanded logistics capacity including additional flights into Baghdad.
- Shelter and livelihood has been major difficulties, facing returnees and preventing their sustainable reintegration.



UNHCR garbage disposal campaign in Chikook IDP camp (2009)

4. Objectives

UNHCR aims to enhance its engagement in Iraq in order to *consolidate conditions which are conducive for the sustainable return of Iraq's displaced*. In pursuit of this goal, the objectives are set as follows.

- Demonstrating to neighbouring asylum states that UNHCR is not only providing protection and assistance in the region but is also working to facilitate the conditions inside Iraq for sustainable return.
- Facilitating emergency assistance from the international community, pending the Government's expansion/capacity to address the needs of the displaced and returnees.
- Ensuring a coordinated and accountable response by the international community to addressing the needs of populations affected by displacement particularly in relation to shelter (thereby avoiding an *ad hoc* response by multiple competing actors).
- Encouraging the GoI to assume responsibility for the "hidden populations", who are currently reliant on support from religious charities, political and non-government groups.
- Obtaining timely and accurate Country of Origin Information (COI) in order to inform refugees on conditions inside Iraq and the viability of return.
- Establishing and consolidating linkages with groups at the "grass roots" level (i.e. with national NGOs and tribal leaders) who will be critical actors in advocating for, as well as providing future assistance and support to, the displaced and returnees.
- Assisting the most vulnerable IDPs and returnees, in particular women to support outreach activities, identify needs, ensure equitable access to services and coordinate responses at the local level.
- Allaying the concerns of some actors in the GOI and neighbouring states that UNHCR is at best "sustaining displacement" or at worst "obstructing returns".



UNHCR NFI distribution in Shorish Collective Town (2008)

5. Implementation Strategy

In order to provide sufficient oversight to this expanded role, UNHCR will significantly increase its national and international presence throughout Iraq, with an additional 60 national staff and the redeployment of the bulk of the international staff from Kuwait and Amman to Baghdad and key provincial centres. In pursuing this, the Office will need to recruit close protection staff (PSDs), so that international staff can travel to field locations. In addition, UNHCR will hire a number of ‘international monitors’ to ensure quality standard of implemented activities. They will conduct field monitoring and coordination.

In parallel to expanding its own presence, UNHCR will establish Community Return Centres (CRCs) and work on expanding a national non-governmental organization (NNGO) network in support of return and reintegration.

- UNHCR will initially identify 20 - 30 NNGOs with existing activities in areas of high displacement and likely return. Priority will be given to those NNGOs which can demonstrate a positive impact on vulnerable communities (confirmed by field visits of our national staff), have been legally registered, and who are familiar with working with international agencies. In this Phase UNHCR will enter into a sub-agreement with an INGO to provide the necessary (“umbrella”) coverage and support to selected NNGOs. After monitoring and evaluation of the impact of the initial grants/support, the expansion to a second group of NNGOs working in priority areas, particularly with women and other vulnerable groups, will follow, including in areas such as Mosul, Kirkuk, Diyala and Anbar.
- Upon the identification of pockets of IDPs and concentrated returnee areas, UNHCR and its partners will provide immediate and significant emergency NFIs to assist the most vulnerable people while also enhancing the credibility of the assistance provider. The distribution of NFIs and reporting of NFIs will provide an initial opportunity for UNHCR and the INGOs to review the capacity of NNGOs to access areas and to deliver assistance.
- If the security situation deteriorates and the access of INGOs and the UN becomes increasingly restricted then national NGOs and Community Return Centres will hold the key to maintaining a link with vulnerable communities in Baghdad and the central governorates.

Planned UNHCR presence in 2010

	INTERNATIONAL	NATIONAL
BAGHDAD	28	59
AL-WALEED	0	6
BAQUBA	0	6
BASRA	1	8
DOHUK	0	6
ERBIL	3	13
HILLA	0	2
KARBALA	0	2
KIRKUK	2	6
KUT	0	2
MISSAN	0	2
MOSUL	2	6
NAJAF	2	3
NASSIRIYAH	0	5
RAMADI	0	3
SAMARA	0	3
SULAIMANIYA	0	7
TREBIL	0	3
TOTAL	38	142

6. Activities

SHELTER

Under this activity, UNHCR includes: (a) distribution of non-food items, (b) distribution of construction material, (c) rehabilitation of damaged houses, (d) construction of basic shelter units, (e) advice on property claims to individuals, and (f) community-based projects directly related to housing, mainly water and sanitation. Following on the successful implementation of the “Sadr City” initiative in 2008, UNHCR will further:

- Rehabilitate and construct 11,680 homes and small commercial shop-fronts, benefiting mostly the vulnerable returnees and their host families as well as IDPs and returnees who have no home to return to. Land for the “one-room shelter” project, which is part of the government land allocation scheme, will be sourced from provincial and national governments. The Office will also distribute solar panels for most vulnerable people especially women so as to supplement unreliable electricity supply. Furthermore, UNHCR plans to work with provincial authorities on different allocation and shelter construction projects, pending a national land policy (which is a longer-term initiative). Initial indications are that such projects can be carried out in many governorates in particular, Kerbala, Anbar, Baghdad, Diyala and Najaf.
- From the NNGO Support Programme some 10 NNGOs involved in shelter programmes will be supported. UNHCR has already identified several reliable NNGOs who assisted in implementation of the Sadr City initiative. It is also expected that UNHCR will engage an INGO to oversee several elements of the shelter construction programme.
- UNHCR will redeploy the post of Shelter Advisor from Amman to Baghdad (current staff member has been provided by the Swiss Development Corporation) to oversee implementation of the programme.
- UNHCR will also implement community projects in the areas of returns, covering sectors that directly related to shelter such as water and sanitation.
- UNHCR will make expertise available for the Government with the aim to support them in settling property disputes.



UNHCR shelter rehabilitation Programme in Mosul (2008)

PROTECTION AND LEGAL ASSISTANCE

UNHCR already has 14 protection and assistance centres (PACs) and 35 mobile teams in 18 governorates. Expanding on this, Community Return Centres will be established. The activities of these centres will utilize contacts/activities with Iraqi civil society which has been developed at a considerable cost by the MNF-I (prior to their draw-down) and other international agencies.⁵ They will further enhance the identification of the locations, numbers and needs of the most vulnerable IDPs and returnee groups to provide required protection and assistance.

Six CRCs will initially be established throughout Baghdad to support the GoI's initiatives to enhance the sustainable return of displaced persons and groups. The location of the CRCs will be based on the number of IDPs being hosted within a particular community, areas of origin of refugees in neighboring states, destination of returnees, location of MoDM offices, creating a stabilizing effect along "ethnic-fault lines," and security (including proximity of Iraqi Security Forces / Joint Security Stations (ISF/JSS), while also seeking to achieve a balance between ethnic, sectarian and tribal affiliations. The CRCs are additional measures to expand UNHCR's reach-out in the field. Serving almost as UNHCR field hubs, they are intended as UNHCR's 'extended arms' in Iraq. As second phase, ten additional CRCs will be established in other Governorates such as Anbar, Basrah, Diyala, Kirkuk, Mosul, Salah-al-Din, Kerbala.

- UNHCR will enter into sub-agreements with I/NNGOs⁶ to manage, in collaboration with MoDM and local authorities. In the case of Baghdad, the INGO will be administratively responsible for specific geographical areas i.e. Mansour, Doura, Karkh, Resafa, Al Hurriya, Adhamiya, and Al Sadr/Thawra.
- Agreements will include a "sunset clause" with time specific indicators and deliverables to avoid dependency on UNHCR for both INGOs and NNGOs. Linking to other development partners and PRTs will also be important. By the end of 2009, INGOs will have responsibility for selecting, training, and monitoring the performance and impact of NNGOs identified in their specific area of responsibility. These NNGOs will form part of UNHCR's partner list and be disseminated in external documents.
- The CRCs will be responsible for identifying IDPs, returnees, and other vulnerable groups, articulating their needs, submitting requests for assistance to local/provincial/central authorities. Should no response be forthcoming, support would be sought from other UN agencies, INGOs or bilateral donors. UNHCR direct assistance could include the provision of shelter and NFIs;
- These 16 centers will be maintained and their protection activities will further be expanded. The establishment of mechanisms for property restitution and compensation through legal advice and support will be one of the priority areas of intervention; approximately 100 cases per months will be dealt with.

⁵ The MNF-I have vetted and established contacts/working relationships with some 200 NNGOs throughout Baghdad. It is in the MNF-I and UNHCR's mutual interests to ensure that these contacts and working relationships are not lost.

⁶ Depending on the availability of funding, willingness of INGOs to become engaged inside Iraq, and movement restrictions on UNHCR staff, UNHCR may directly manage the work of the RACs.

- Priority interventions will include:
 - Establishing a systematic assessment and reporting on the needs of the displaced, returnees and host communities;
 - Supporting to the two existing National Registration Centers and enhancing the capacity of MoDM and relevant government institutions to assess, prioritize and respond to needs of the displaced, returnees and their communities in which they live;
 - Providing emergency support and assistance to returning Iraqi refugees and IDPs, as well as to the communities that will be absorbing them;
 - Identifying IDP locations, being the point of contact for returnees and IDPs including those at risk of eviction;
 - Facilitating the identification of needs together with relevant government ministries, NGOs, UN agencies and bilateral donors;
 - Providing information/checklists to returnees (and other vulnerable groups) of required documents, including the registration of returnees to receive assistance. Provide necessary legal and administrative support as required;
 - Facilitating the acquisition of government assistance, provision of property/land documentation, PDS certificates, marriage/death, and custodianship of children either directly by CRCs or by referring returnees to relevant national NGOs, UNHCR's PACs or National Registration Centres. A lack of support in completing, filing and following up on forms have been identified as one of the primary concerns of returnees;
 - Coordinating, providing support, and training to MoDM and returnee registration centers in each location;
 - Meeting regularly with ISF and local/district authorities, to relay concerns/needs of displaced/returnees;
 - Reporting on the implementation of Order 101, including the evictions of houses being occupied by squatters;⁷
 - Assisting, as required, with the transfer of food ration cards and the provision of additional food distributions to returnees;⁸
 - Monitoring house repairs and distribution of emergency shelter kits;
 - Monitor access to education,⁹ health¹⁰ and other social services; and
 - Continuing support to UNHCR's Emergency Shelter programme through the identification of urgent shelter needs.

⁷ In early October squatters were given one month to vacate the occupied house Order 101. Claimants are required to produce the deed of the property, proof that they have de-registered as an IDP, four IDs and confirmation from Baghdad Beladiyah, and several other departments. Claims are then forwarded to the ISF, with the eviction due to commence two days later. These procedures included getting a Residency Card (RC) from the Local Government authorities, having the RC certified by the Municipality, and obtaining a certificate from the Committee of Displaced and Refugees (CDR) in order to confirm where the claimants originated from. Criteria also includes vulnerability and destitution.

⁸ According to UNHCR surveys a number of IDP groups report that the PDS ration baskets are only half complete and distributed 1-3 times a month. In addition up to 25% of the families are not able to access their food rations due to lack of appropriate documentation.

⁹ Attendance at schools varies widely between IDP locations. From almost zero attendance of young girls to relatively high. Reasons for non-attendance include the need to work, lack of transport to school, insecure environment, lack of school materials, cost. Some IDP locations report that 25% of children do not receive sufficient food, with a complete reliance on PDS.

¹⁰ A number of IDP locations are located in under-served areas some 2 – 5 kms away from the nearest functioning health centre.

CASH ASSISTANCE

UNHCR studies indicate that a lack of financial assistance upon return is hampering sustainable reintegration and is preventing many refugees from repatriating. It is therefore necessary to support the “transition” from the receipt of financial and other forms of assistance from UNHCR in asylum countries to the provision of limited support upon return, which is expected to help longer term self-reliance. In order to do so, most vulnerable returnees will be provided with cash and cash for work so as to facilitate their reintegration upon return.

- In accordance with UNHCR’s Individual Case Management system, in which financial support is provided to Iraqis electing to voluntarily repatriate, UNHCR will provide a “Returnee Transitional Allowance” to some 10,000 families for a period of six months. Needy IDP and IDP returnee families will also be supported through cash-for-work type projects, so as to provide them with additional income.
- In order to enhance data management of returns, UNHCR will, in coordination with MoDM, put in place a comprehensive bio-metric registration system for returning IDPs and refugees. The planned system would cover a total of 500,000 returnees in 2009 and would be available at locations such as RACs and MoDM offices throughout Iraq.
- Community and national institutions engaged in activities which will directly and indirectly facilitate the return of the displaced will also be supported. This will include, in particular, agencies involved in property restitution and compensation, the Independent Human Rights Commission and advocates for the rule of law and good governance.

REINTEGRATION

UNHCR will contribute to providing a bridge between identified humanitarian priority needs and the assistance services provided by the Government, UN agencies, INGOs, bilateral agencies and humanitarian and development agencies. It is within this context that the Office’s engagement with reintegration activities would take place. UNHCR will coordinate its activities within the IASC’s cluster approach and with the UN Iraq Sector Outcome Teams, in line with its policies and criteria as this project is not intended to respond to chronic social problems or assume the responsibility of local and national authorities. UNHCR’s activities will thus feed into a wider, comprehensive response to the need for assistance and, when feasible, link up with social assistance services, packages offered by government authorities and civil society in this regard. As such, this project proposal does not include specific reintegration related activities.

7. Expected Results

- This project will provide a linkage between IDPs, returnees and host communities with Government Departments (MoDM, MoLSA on registration of assistance, property restitution, legal advice and assistance, re-employment of Government staff, assistance to students to validate their curriculum/exams from asylum countries).
- The findings and assessments of the CRCs will facilitate and enable UNHCR to be more proactive in the implementation of Prime Minister's Order 101 and Decree 262 in relation to ensuring the evacuation of occupied homes as well as the provision of financial assistance to returnees.
- The CRCs will become a reliable source of information to UNHCR offices in neighboring countries so that accurate and timely country of origin information can be provided to Iraqi refugees on conditions in areas of return.
- Early identification of widows, orphans, elderly persons, disabled individuals, unaccompanied minors and other groups in special need among the population of concern will be prioritized and provision of appropriate humanitarian assistance.
- Through the funding of some 30 or more national NGOs, UNHCR will be able to establish a comprehensive network of contacts and partners throughout Baghdad. This network will be the eyes, ear's and hands of UNHCR and its partners, and one of the main tools for enhancing the effectiveness and timeliness of its programmes as well as the overall humanitarian efforts;
- By developing linkages with scores of national NGOs, should the security situation deteriorate, UNHCR would continue to be in a position to implement at the community level in Baghdad;
- UNHCR's delivery of emergency assistance will be linked to other developmental programmes of other UN sister agencies, institutions and PRTs; and
- Improved accommodation (including rehabilitation of shop-fronts) to 11,680 families will be provided.



Children in Baghdad (2009)

8. Budget

Support to Return/Reintegration	
Returnee Transition Allowance	9,000,000
Registration	1,600,000
Support to Property Restitution and compensation (legal advice/support)	800,000
Returnee Monitoring (Independent HR Com) - border and community level	1,600,000
Six Return and Assistance Centres in Baghdad	860,000
Ten Return and Assistance Centres in other Governorates	1,830,000
Support to NGOs	
National NGOs (Shelter, Women, micro-grants)	1,925,692
Shelter Programme	
Shelter	62,938,899
Solar Power Initiative for Shelters accommodating most vulnerable (women etc.)	3,528,364
Subtotal	84,082,955
Staffing	2,639,420
Administrative Support	4,984,818
Additional Needs Sub-Total	91,707,193
HQs Support Costs 7%	5,885,807
TOTAL	97,593,000

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