



IOM Iraq Newsletter
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IOM's emergency distribution warehouse in Erbil

Foreword from the Chief of Mission

Half-way through the year, the situation in Iraq remains alternately encouraging and challenging. Assistance is still needed at all levels to assist vulnerable populations, foster stability, and build the capacity of the government.

Displacement continues, fuelled by new conflicts such as the military campaign along the Iran-Iraq border. Those who have been displaced, whether recently or in the past, require assistance and long-term follow up in order to ensure that they do not become marginalized. Similarly, the small numbers of individuals who are returning to their former communities need sustained attention to prevent further displacement and uprooting.

The problems facing Iraq are bigger than any one agency's capacity to resolve them. Cooperation and coordination among humanitarian partners is vital for the effective and sustainable delivery of assistance.

IOM Iraq's adoption of a comprehensive management structure – the Joint Operations Cell (JOC) – last year has been a major success. The JOC converges IOM's programme activities into specialized service areas, maximizing efficiency and resources. IOM currently has over 260 staff working in Iraq, including six full-time international staff. In the coming months, it is planned that more international staff will be based in Iraq to provide expertise and support for operations on the ground.

Gradual improvements in security and infrastructure have boosted the confidence of IOM and its partners that a stable, self-sustaining Iraq is possible in the future. However, to make this a reality, it is crucial for the international community to continue to support Iraq and its people through this fragile period of transition.

Sincerely yours,

Michael Pillinger
Chief of Mission, IOM Iraq

Distributions Help Families Displaced by Border Conflict

Ongoing Iranian military actions against Kurdish separatists along the Iran-Iraq border have displaced hundreds of families in the governorates of Erbil and Sulaymaniyah. Many of the families have lost their homes and livestock in artillery attacks, leaving them without shelter or a livelihood.

In response to the urgent needs of these families, IOM directly implemented a series of emergency distributions benefitting over 500 families (an estimated 3,000 individuals) throughout the months of June and July. Funding for the distributions was provided by USAID's Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA).

IOM staff worked in close cooperation with local authorities, including the Ministry of Displacement and Migration (MoDM) and community leaders to identify the needs of the displaced families. Utilizing supplies from IOM's emergency warehouse in Erbil, each of the families received a kit of items tailored to meet their specific needs.

The kits included blankets, furniture, plastic mats, a fan, a gas stove and an ice chest. These items will ease the



difficulties of displacement and return for these families, and help to rebuild a sense of stability.

Having addressed the most immediate needs of the families, IOM is scheduling continued assistance with a comprehensive package of community assistance and livelihood development initiatives through its Programme for Human Security and Stabilization (PHSS).

Migration Support Returning Home

In October 2000, Ahmed travelled from the city of Erbil in Northern Iraq to the United Kingdom in search of better work opportunities. Because of his English language skills and friends in the UK, he assumed that it would not be hard to start a new life there.

Reaching the UK was a risky and difficult process. Ahmed had to be smuggled through Turkey and then into Greece. When he finally arrived in the UK, he found that life there wasn't nearly as easy as he thought it would be. Without a visa, Ahmed had little chance of finding a well-paying job, and he found the culture of the UK difficult to adapt to.

In 2009, with the situation in Erbil improving, Ahmed began thinking about returning home. Through his friends in the UK, he learned about IOM's assisted voluntary return and reintegration programme. After contacting the IOM office and reviewing his options, Ahmed decided to go back to Iraq.

IOM made all of the necessary arrangements to ensure that Ahmed would have a smooth trip home. When he arrived at Erbil airport, he was met by IOM staff and given transportation back to his family. After 10 years away from home, he was very happy to see them.

IOM staff continued to work with Ahmed to help him reintegrate back into the community, and he received an in-kind grant to start his own small business. In partnership with a friend, Ahmed now runs a successful appliance store, where he sells and services televisions, satellite receivers, and other related products. Business is going so well that he is planning to open a second branch in the city.

While acknowledging that it is not the right decision for everyone, Ahmed says that he is glad that he returned home. Since 2003, IOM Iraq has assisted 17,703 Iraqis to voluntarily return back to their country.

Standing proudly in front of his small grocery shop in the city of Baqubah, Mahmood is amazed how much his life has changed from a few years earlier.

Increasing violence in Baqubah forced Mahmood to flee from his home in 2007. With few other options, he and his mother, father and two younger brothers moved to Baghdad. Life there was very difficult.

"During my time in Baghdad, I was mostly unemployed," said Mahmood. "Some days I was able to find work as a handyman, but it was hard to make enough money to put food on the table."

Mahmood's father is nearly seventy years old, and suffers from high blood pressure and other health problems. For Mahmood, earning enough money to support his family is his highest priority.

When conditions in Baqubah began to improve last year, Mahmood made the decision to return home with his family. However, returning home after being away for several years can bring its own set of challenges.

To help himself reintegrate into his community and rebuild his former life, Mahmood turned to IOM for assistance. Through IOM's Programme for Human Security and Stabilization (PHSS), Mahmood was given a modest in-kind grant to start a small business.

Mahmood had experience running a fruit and vegetable stand, so he decided to make use of his knowledge of the local market and start his own grocery store. IOM assisted Mahmood with developing a business plan and purchasing the



supplies he needed to get started.

Today, the shelves of Mahmood's store are packed with colorful packages of biscuits, detergent, cereal and other household essentials.

"I am working every day now," said Mahmood, "and I want to expand my market."

Through his new business, Mahmood now has a steady income and is able to afford food and medicine for his family. His younger brothers are in school, and Mahmood occasionally asks them to help out at the store.

Mahmood is proud that he is able to support his family and his community with his store. By sharing his story, he hopes that other returnees will be inspired to start their own small businesses and contribute to the stability and prosperity of Iraq.

**Names and locations have been changed.*

Programme for Human Security and Stabilization (PHSS)

Through the Programme for Human Security and Stabilization (PHSS), IOM Iraq is working closely with the Iraqi Ministry of Displacement and Migration (MoDM) and Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (MoLSA) to develop a wide-ranging set of grassroots economic development programmes. PHSS currently operates in the 12 governorates of Anbar, Babylon, Baghdad, Basrah, Diyala, Erbil, Kerbala, Missan, Najaf, Ninewa, Sulaymania and Wassit, and supports the efforts of Iraqis to rebuild their local economies while encouraging locally focused, broad-based economic development. PHSS Phase II is supported by the Governments of Australia, Germany and the United States.

Closing Workshop Held for Latest Phase of Capacity Building Programme

IOM's Capacity Building in Migration Management Programme (CBMMP) organized a closing workshop on June 15-16 in Erbil to present the activities and achievements of its third phase in the Kurdistan region.



Participants included officials from the Kurdistan Regional Government and Central Government.

IOM began implementing the CBMMP for the Government of Iraq in August 2004, with the support of the Government of Australia. The programme was designed to support the establishment of an effective and modern migration management system for Iraqi ministries with migration functions.

During the workshop, the key activities of the CBMMP were presented. These activities included trainings in migration management, immigration intelligence, document examination, and residency law; the establishment of an Immigration Training Center in Sulaymaniyah; and two border management assessments (presented by the Canadian expert hired to do the assessment) with recommendations aimed at improving migration management in the region.

Joint IOM – World Vision Security Training Held in Amman

The first joint IOM *Security Awareness Induction Training* (SAIT)—World Vision *Hostile Environment Awareness Training* (HEAT) course was conducted in Jordan on April 25-28.

The SAIT-HEAT course is a collaborative effort between IOM and World Vision International, and is designed to provide World Vision staff with the training necessary to operate safely in hostile field environments including Afghanistan and Pakistan.

With humanitarian organizations increasingly becoming the targets of violence, it is essential for staff to be able to identify threats and effectively manage their personal security.

SAIT is recognized as the premier security awareness training for humanitarian staff operating in dangerous environments, and is mandatory for all United Nations staff entering Iraq.

Since 2004, over 3,500 staff members have been trained in preparation for their deployment to Iraq.

S.A.I.T. Security Awareness Induction Training



Assistance for Families Returning After Decades of Displacement



In May, IOM Iraq distributed essential relief items to 48 families who recently returned to Iraq from Iran after nearly twenty years of displacement.

The majority of the families had fled Iraq during the 1991 war after being caught up in fighting between Iraqi and American forces. Originally from Basrah governorate, the families crossed the border and relocated to the city of Ahvaz in the Iranian province of Khuzestan.

While the families were able to sustain themselves in Iran through farming and raising livestock, they encountered difficulties in obtaining documentation from the government and sending their children to non-Arabic schools. Upon learning that economic conditions in parts of Iraq, particularly Babylon governorate, had improved, the families made the decision to return.

After returning to Iraq, the families settled in makeshift camps in three locations across Babylon. Because the families returned with almost no resources, the conditions in the camps are extremely challenging. In addition, the families lack proper identification and ration cards, thus making it difficult to obtain services from the government.

IOM learned of the returnee families through its monitoring teams which operate in all 18 governorate of Iraq. The monitors determined that the returnee families were in urgent need of basic household items to make conditions in their temporary shelters more bearable.

In order to meet these needs as rapidly as possible, IOM arranged for a distribution of relief items in coordination with the Iraqi Ministry of Displacement and Migration (MoDM), the Babylon Provincial Council, the ICRC and UNHCR. IOM directly implemented the distribution of household items - including gas cooking ranges and cylinders, ice chests, and plastic mats - to a total of 48 families on May 13-14. Further to this assistance, IOM referred the families to the NGO Relief International, which will assist the families with getting their official identification and ration cards, as well as other legal issues.

Returning home after being away for so long can be extremely difficult. By monitoring the return situation in Iraq and identifying immediate and long-term needs, IOM strives to help returnee families to integrate successfully back into their communities and reduce the possibility of further uprooting and displacement.

Community Assistance Project Rehabilitation of a Water Network in Erbil



Before rehabilitation



After rehabilitation

Access to clean, reliable drinking water is a major concern in Iraq, particularly in regions that have been affected by drought.

In Yadi Qizlar, Erbil, IOM is working to ensure that the water needs of the local community are met by rehabilitating a water storage tank and extending the pipe network.

Years of neglect and an influx of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and returnees had put a substantial strain on the water system, and threatened the health and livelihoods of the community members.

Together with a partner NGO, IOM repaired damage to the village's water tank, excavated and replaced broken pipes, and extended the water network to reach every home in the area. Work on the project began in April and was completed in June.

This project will not only help to prevent waterborne disease and ensure that livestock and crops can be maintained, it will also ease tensions and build trust between the community members and displaced/returnee families.

Funding for this community assistance project was provided by the US Department of State's Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration.

Community Assistance Projects

IOM's Community Assistance Projects (CAPs) contribute to the stability of IDP, returnee and host communities by enhancing basic services for communities that have been adversely affected by civil, political and military disruptions. Working closely with local and national authorities, IOM utilizes its nationwide network of monitors and programme staff to assess critical needs in vulnerable communities, develop and implement projects to address these needs, and monitor the implementation to ensure efficiency and transparency.

In communities with returnees, CAPs work hand-in-hand to enhance the effectiveness of IOM's reintegration assistance. IOM's reintegration programs ensure that returnees receive individual assistance in rebuilding their lives, and CAPs ensure that their communities are rehabilitated simultaneously, providing a solid foundation for stable, successful return and reintegration.

Since 2003, CAPs have served over 2.3 million beneficiaries throughout Iraq.

The IOM Iraq Mission was set up in January 2003 in preparation for the overwhelming humanitarian need following the collapse of the former regime.

IOM maintains valued partnerships and close coordination with local Iraqi authorities and various Ministries. IOM is a member of the UN Country Team (UNCT) for Iraq, and works closely with the UN system and the Iraqi authorities in support of the Iraqi National Development Strategy 2007 - 2010.

IOM currently employs 267 staff inside Iraq, and 106 in Amman. Staff in Iraq operate out of three hubs: Erbil, Baghdad, and Basrah, as well as sub/satellite offices in all 18 governorates.

Who supports us?

IOM Iraq is currently supported by the Governments of Australia, Canada, Denmark, Germany, Japan, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, the United Kingdom, the United States, the United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI).

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