

# UNICEF CRISIS APPEAL FOR IRAQ'S CHILDREN:

## ACTION UPDATE

22 April – 4 May 2003



Iraqi children still face grave threats to their survival, health and general well-being.

Unless immediate priority is put on protecting children from these threats, thousands of Iraqi youngsters will die unnecessarily – and hundreds of thousands more will be injured, fall prey to disease, suffer from abuse and exploitation, or fall behind in school.

## BACKGROUND

The humanitarian situation in Iraq remains of concern to UNICEF. The situation is highly volatile, impacting humanitarian operations. Children are injured or killed by unexploded ordnances (UXOs) on a daily basis when touching or playing with UXOs. Several convoys with humanitarian workers have been raided on the road from Jordan to Baghdad. Of more concern, however, is that looted and destroyed institutions that had been repaired and re-equipped were again looted and destroyed by armed gangs, such as in the case of the al-Rashad psychiatric hospital and the al-Rustumiya water treatment plant in Baghdad. It is now impossible to restore the water plant again unless complete security is guaranteed. Until then, waste water produced by around 3 million people (around 60 per cent of Baghdad residents) is being pumped untreated into the Tigris River that also serves as a water source for populations further south. Stocks of water treatment chemicals will soon be depleted in southern Iraq and it is feared that outbreaks of diarrhoeal diseases may become epidemic, if the chemicals are not made available urgently.

Ministries and related warehouses have been destroyed and looted, and civil servant staff who have resumed their duties are currently working without salaries. Rebuilding the administration and bringing in most urgent supplies remains crucial. Some of the main issues include:

- 1) Vaccine stocks (for human treatment as well as that for live stock) in the country have been destroyed due to power cuts and need immediate replenishment.
- 2) There is a shortage of even basic medical drugs.
- 3) Water and sanitation treatment facilities are working at only limited capacities with drinking water being a major problem in southern Iraq.
- 4) Fuel, both for transportation and cooking has become difficult to acquire.
- 5) Food ration supplies have entered northern Iraq and Baghdad and serious shortages will be avoided if humanitarian operations are facilitated to meet needs in time.

A hopeful sign is the re-opening of schools for children, albeit at a slower pace than wished for.

UNICEF, through the dedication of its national staff, has continued to operate in Iraq throughout the war in the health, water, sanitation, nutrition, education and child protection sectors. All three UNICEF offices in northern Iraq remained functional.

In Baghdad, national UNICEF staff resumed activities once major hostilities in the capital ceased. Trans-border operations were staged mainly from Kuwait, Iran, Turkey and Jordan. International staff has returned to Iraq, to resume activities in the three offices in northern Iraq (Erbil, Dohuk, Suleymaniyah), as well as in Baghdad and in Basrah, where a new office was opened on May 5.

## ISSUES

### *Water and Sanitation*

Water and sanitation facilities have been damaged due to warfare or looting and are only partially functional in many parts of the country. The amount of water leakage leading to water loss and cross-contamination with sewage networks is increasing as people tap water networks illegally in search of water. In Basrah, the local water plants produce about 20-30 litres of water a day per person, with the main water plant working at only 50 per cent capacity. The local sewage pumping station is working at only 40 percent capacity. Of major concern is the shortage of water purification supplies with stocks in southern Iraq expected to be soon depleted. In Baghdad, the al-Rustumiya water sewage plant has been looted for a second time after repairs. As a result, untreated sewage generated by 3 million people is being dumped into the Tigris River. As there is no on-going garbage collection, solid waste is piling up in public spaces creating a fertile ground for the spread of diseases.

### *Health and Nutrition*

Health facilities have been equally targeted by large-scale looting decimating stocks of necessary medicines and equipment. Basic items are missing such as anti-tuberculosis drugs, metronidazole infusion against parasites or albumin for micronutrient deficiencies. Vaccine stocks in the country have been entirely lost in south/centre Iraq. This is due to breakdowns in the cold chain linked to electricity cuts. In Northern Iraq stocks of Diphtheria, Pertussis and Tetanus (DPT) and Bacillus Calmette-Gur in (BCG) vaccines will soon be depleted. Yet, hospitals continue providing services as much as possible, despite limited capacities and overcrowded facilities. However, limited transportation caused by fuel shortage makes it difficult for the population to reach the health facilities. A sharp increase in incidents of diarrhoeal diseases among young children has been reported in southern Iraq (ten-fold increase in Zubayr compared to last year) and in Nassiriyah three to five children with typhoid are seen every day. Cases of endemic black fever or leishmaniasis are increasing due to the hot season. Children weighed and measured in towns south of Basrah have shown that 60 per cent are malnourished. Inadequate food intake in combination with increased incidences of diarrhea and disease have contributed to this increase in high level of malnutrition.

### *Child protection*

Large numbers of unexploded ordnances (UXOs) resulting from former Iraqi weapon's depots and the most recent war pose

grave threats to children. On a daily basis children are reported injured or killed while playing with unsecured ammunition materials. A survey undertaken in Kirkuk by the Mine Awareness Group (MAG), in collaboration with UNICEF, found that three to four children are being injured by landmines on a daily basis. The report shows 249 casualties in Kirkuk Governorate. Among them 133 are children and 116 women and men. 73% of accidents involving children are caused by playing with UXO and many of the injuries are flash burns. The situation in child institutions is daunting, and there is need to provide them with basic care, security and food. In Baghdad, more than 70 children have disappeared. UNICEF has found some of these children to be with armed gangs claiming to 'protect' them. UNICEF has voiced concerns that the children may actually be forced into begging and prostitution.

### *Education*

Schools are slowly re-opening across the country, however, full resumption of education will require major efforts. As one quarter of primary age school children did not attend school prior to the war, there are fears that more children will not find their way back once schools restart. In Nasiriyah, classes were reported to remain largely empty as children are engaged in helping out with household chores, mainly the provision of cooking materials as cooking fuels are hardly available in the city. Many schools have been used as ammunition depots and even living quarters for soldiers. Full resumption of school requires the immediate replacement of looted classroom equipment, restoration of water and electricity supply, improvement in security as well as issuance of salaries to teachers, school caretakers and administrators.

## **ACTION**

### *Water and Sanitation*

- UNICEF procured water purification supplies such as chlorine gas, bleaching powder, aluminum sulphate, chlorinators, and tablets for a value of US\$ 3.8 million. These supplies will cover the needs on water treatment chemicals for south/center Iraq for 2 months.
- Water tankering continued in Baghdad, Basrah and surrounding towns, Mosul, Kirkuk and al-Fao for hospitals and communities.
- UNICEF has engaged engineering teams to repair water and sewage plants in Baghdad, Basrah, Mosul and Kirkuk
- Oil for Food Programme supplies of water, sanitation and shelter worth over US\$ 2 million have reached northern Iraq since 28 March via the Turkish border.
- 12 water compact units will be installed in northern Iraq each serving 10,000 people
- UNICEF supported garbage collection in Mosul, Kirkuk and Baghdad with a special focus on disadvantaged urban areas such as the former Saddam city (now al-Sadr City).
- UNICEF carried out assessments of water and sanitation facilities in Basrah and northern Iraq

### *Health and Nutrition*

- UNICEF procured vaccines for a value of US\$ 3.8 million. This will cover the vaccine requirements of the three northern Governorates, the Basra and Baghdad areas for 3 to 6 months.
- Four mobile health teams vaccinated school children against measles, mumps and rubella in Sulaymaniyah
- UNICEF cleared two hospitals in Baghdad from heaps of garbage.
- UNICEF provided fresh meat and vegetables to the Central Paediatric Hospital in Baghdad.
- UNICEF provided vaccines and immunization equipment for refugee camps in Jordan.
- UNICEF delivered drugs, medical supplies and equipment to hospitals in Baghdad, Basrah, Nassiriyah, Mosul and Kirkuk including cold chain equipment, health kits and supplementary nutrition.
- UNICEF carried out a needs assessment of health institutions in Basrah and Nassiriyah.

### *Child Protection*

- UNICEF has searched for children missing/abducted from an orphanage in Baghdad and was able to bring back 34 children. The fate of an additional 26 children thought to have been abducted is followed up intensively.
- UNICEF in Sulaymaniyah organized a children's painting contest assisting children to overcome trauma and stress.
- UNICEF is preparing to set up a Mine Action Team in Basrah.

### *Education*

- UNICEF is procuring 4,700 school in the box kits to cover learning material needs of about 350,000 children.
- UNICEF established a kindergarten in al-Hol camp in Syria.
- In Northern Iraq, UNICEF assessed damages in 197 schools occupied by internally displaced persons during the conflict
- UNICEF has prepared distribution plans for educational materials for Kirkuk and Khanaqin districts to support the resumption of schooling.
- UNICEF distributed school in the box kits for 3,200 children in towns south of Basrah.

### *UNICEF Presence*

- International staff returned to northern Iraq where activities were expanded from the three northern governorates to Taamim and Ninivah governorates.
- The UNICEF Representative returned to Baghdad on May 1. UNICEF national staff were able to mitigate much damage and looting inflicted to the UNICEF office.
- International staff have settled into Basrah to open a new UNICEF office to support intensified emergency response in southern Iraq
- UNICEF has been coordinating humanitarian response activities for Iraq in the water and sanitation and child protection sectors from Amman and Kuwait.

## **IMPACT**

The unstable security situation is limiting access to many parts of the country making it difficult to adequately measure the impact of emergency response activities. However, since initiating trans-border operations on March 29, UNICEF has sent 364 water tankers into southern Iraq totaling 12,234,530 litres to mitigate the shortage of clean drinking water, particularly in towns south of Basrah and the city itself. Ten of thousands of people have benefited from this provision of clean water.

Special attention was given to hospitals, where extensive assessments were carried out on needs and prevalence of particular diseases. While priority was put on providing drugs for diarrhoeal diseases and leishmaniasis, medical equipment and supplies were delivered to institutions accessible and in need. Oral Rehydration Salts (ORS) supplies benefited 100,000 under five children in Basra and ThiQar areas and 200,000 in Baghdad.

Polio, BCG, DPT, Tetanus, Hepatitis B and Measles vaccines were administered to 510,000 under five children in Basra and ThiQar. Vaccines for 150,000 pregnant women, emergency health kits for 100,000 people, and High Protein Biscuits have been delivered to facilities in southern Iraq. In Baghdad, health kits for 100,000 people were also delivered.

Discussions with civil servants returning to the health, water and sanitation facilities have resulted in common definitions of priorities and targeted emergency response. The collection of garbage in residential areas of Baghdad and Kirkuk areas and particularly in hospitals avoided the proliferation of diseases linked to unsanitary conditions. The hiring of engineer teams to repair sewage and water treatment plants has contributed to improving and accelerating water supply where water systems have been damaged, particularly in Baghdad. Further assessments carried out in southern and northern Iraq will lead to required follow-up actions.

UNICEF contributed to the full resumption of education in the three northern governorates repairing water and sanitation facilities as they were damaged by internally displaced people (IDPs) temporarily located there. A UNICEF assessment

of all schools formerly hosting IDPs reflects that 10 per cent of 198 schools need follow-up repairs.

UNICEF is monitoring the situation of institutionalized children and has ensured that more than half of the children abducted from an orphanage in Baghdad were found and that basic needs such as care and food for these children were met. Children treated in the central pediatric hospital were provided with fresh meat and vegetables contributing to their physical well-being. In southern Iraq, delivery of 80 schools-in-a-box supported the return of 3,200 primary school children to classes.

UNICEF in its media campaign has been strongly advocating for a focus on the vulnerabilities and needs of children during and after the war. It has emphasized the great dangers of contaminated water supplies leading to diarrhoeal diseases for the already weakened Iraqi children and urged respective stakeholders to address the situation as fast and effectively as possible. It has also pointed out the great risks of large depots of ammunition that remain unaccounted for and scattered UXOs that are leading to daily injuries or death of children. UNICEF has further pointed out the need for immediate resumption of school classes giving back a sense of normalcy to their lives.

## FUNDING RECEIPTS AND REQUIREMENTS

Table 1: FUNDS RECEIVED/INDICATED AGAINST IRAQ FLASH APPEAL AS OF 5 MAY 2003			
DONOR	AMOUNT RECEIVED/ INDICATION (US\$)	DONOR	AMOUNT RECEIVED/ INDICATION (US\$)
Governments		UNICEF National Committees	
Australia	5,722,892	Australia	1,139,677
Belgium	1,076,426	Belgium	215,285
Canada	6,085,908	Finland	215,285
Denmark	1,014,493	France	861,141
ECHO	4,155,226	Germany	1,076,426
Finland	753,501	Italy	1,076,426
France	2,152,852	Japan	1,000,000
Greece	200,000	Korea, Republic of	300,000
Ireland	1,076,428	Netherlands	484,392
Italy	1,614,643	Norway	27,777
Japan	5,000,000	Portugal	215,285
Korea	1,000,000	Slovenia	114,842
Luxembourg	430,571	United Kingdom	782,473
Netherlands	3,229,279	US Fund	520,000
Norway	2,040,100		
Portugal	107,643		
Spain	1,076,430	Others	
Sweden	500,000	IRAQ-Enfants du Monde	414,010
United Kingdom	11,000,000	UNMAS	100,000
United States	11,000,000		
SUB-TOTAL:	59,236,392	SUB-TOTAL	8,543,019
<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>		<b>67,779,411</b>	

UNICEF is thankful to the above-mentioned donors who have contributed/expressed indications to support its efforts in responding to the humanitarian needs of children and women in Iraq.

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