

UNICEF CRISIS APPEAL FOR IRAQ'S CHILDREN

Action Update
5 - 17 May 2003



UNICEF believes children must be the top priority for Iraq right now. Nothing can build national consensus like children, and we believe hope for the future begins with making sure the present for Iraq children gets better every day.

Carol Bellamy Press Briefing, Baghdad, May 19, 2003

BACKGROUND

Insecurity Remains a Major Obstacle

The lack of security has been recognized as the main factor hampering improvement in the humanitarian situation in Iraq. While the situation is not described as a humanitarian disaster, the potential exists should the resumption of social services including regular salary payments to civil servants be further delayed. Daily reports of continuous shootings, lootings, and carjackings are fueling a climate of fear within the civilian populations. The ability of humanitarian workers to operate freely and in safety is severely restricted. Unless security is restored, humanitarian actors will not be able to fully provide the assistance needed. The lack of security undermines the resumption of basic social services without which the civilian population, including its most vulnerable children, will continue to suffer with untold consequences.

The mortal danger posed by unexploded ordnance (UXOs) was evident in the latest incident in Basra where 6 children were reported killed while playing with ammunition. The contamination of the Iraqi environment by UXOs and landmines is being characterized as one of the worst in the world. In Baghdad alone, there are an estimated 800 hazardous sites, the majority related to cluster bombs and caches of dumped ammunition. Garbage collection in the city is affected by the threats of UXOs. While it may take years, if not a decade, to clean the country of these remnants of wars, the threats to life should be urgently addressed to minimize the loss of life and injuries, especially of children.

In the three northern governorates, security is good, basic services are functioning at pre-war levels and schools have fully resumed. Teachers have partially received salaries for March.

UNICEF Offices Operating at Full Capacity in Baghdad

With an estimated 40 international staff already present throughout Iraq and a full corps of national staff, the UNICEF offices are operating at full pre-war capacity in Baghdad, Basra and the three northern governorates.

An additional sub-office will be opened shortly in Mogul. Damage to the Baghdad office due to looting was limited and the building was not burned. Most impressively, national staff report that they kept the office running for all but three days throughout the bombing campaigns, looting, and general unrest throughout the city. Moreover, the staff donated \$95,000 of their private resources to cover costs during the period when UNICEF was unable to move cash into the country. Trans-border operations to bring humanitarian supplies into Iraq are continuing on a daily basis from Jordan, Iran, Kuwait, Syria and Turkey.

UNICEF Executive Director Carol Bellamy Visits Iraq

In an effort to call attention to the urgent needs of children and women in Iraq and to thank staff for their hard work throughout the war and current unstable period, UNICEF's Executive Director Carol Bellamy visited Iraq 18 – 19 May. In Baghdad, she toured schools in Saddam City, now known as Sadr City, one of the hardest hit areas of the city in terms of humanitarian needs. Bellamy delivered supplies in a box and talked with teachers and students. In Erbil, in northern Iraq, she toured a maternal hospital, paying special attention to the fact that diarrhea among infants remains high in large part because mothers are using unsafe water to make infant formula. In response, UNICEF will initiate an awareness campaign on the benefits of exclusive breastfeeding.

ISSUES

Water and Sanitation

UNICEF found sewage treatment plants in Basra to be dysfunctional with sewage seeping into the irrigation channels where children often go for a swim. It is feared that sewage will further enter the city's municipal water supply system. A similar situation is found in Baghdad, where the al-Hurriya sewage treatment plant is out of work and sewage is floating into the surrounding residential areas. The problem at al-Hurriya has been chronic, but the situation worsened with the lack of electricity and maintenance. Solid waste continues to be a major problem in the cities where a garbage system is only partially in place.

Availability of drinking water remains a problem in southern Iraq and in some suburbs of Baghdad. In the South, desperation to obtain potable water is leading to the systematic damaging of water pipe lines. Holes are made in the pipes creating cross-contamination with sewage and reducing pressure in the pipes. Collected water, often of dubious quality, is often re-sold in the local markets. Chlorine availability is now sufficient in southern Iraq after UNICEF, ICRC and the coalition have brought in far over 300 tons of chlorine.

Health and Nutrition

As of May 13, the total number of confirmed cases of cholera in Basra increased to 24 in children under five. As a preventive measure, the decision was made to treat all acute diarrhea as cholera unless proven otherwise. The present rate of watery diarrhea is twice the average of what it usually is at this time of the year. WHO has delivered cholera kits for 5,500 patients to Basra. UNICEF, ICRC and the coalition delivered chlorine materials. A cholera monitoring group including UNICEF, WHO, NGOs and local government officials has been formed to address the issue quickly. UNICEF will soon kick-off a health-education programme regarding cholera prevention. Oral Rehydration Treatment (ORT) corners established by UNICEF in the past are functioning at Public Health Centres (PHC). UNICEF has offered to provide hospitals with water bladders and small water treatment units where needed.

Among many basic drugs, there is an urgent need for the provision of pentostam to treat visceral leishmaniasis or black fever. Visceral leishmaniasis is a protozoal infection transmitted by sand flies and is endemic in the governorates of Baghdad, Missan, Thi Qar and Basra. WHO is working with the State Company for Drugs and Medical Supplies to reactivate drug purchase and distribution activities.

A UNICEF rapid nutrition assessment was conducted in Baghdad. The survey shows that 7.7 per cent of children under age five are suffering from acute malnutrition, compared with last year's figure of 4 per cent. Acute malnutrition signifies that a child is actually wasting away. Rapid assessments are used by humanitarian agencies in the immediate aftermath of emergencies. Although the samples they are based on are limited, they are considered sufficiently reliable to guide an initial aid response. UNICEF advises that unsafe water from disrupted water services may be playing a significant role in the findings. Poor water quality is largely to blame for a rapid increase in cases of diarrhea among children in recent weeks.

Child Protection

Iraq is littered with UXOs, landmines, and all sorts of ammunition abandoned by Iraqi soldiers. In Baghdad alone, there are an estimated 800 hazardous sites, the majority related to cluster bombs and caches of dumped ammunition. These remnants of war pose lethal dangers to civilians, especially children who are attracted to the explosives or step onto mines while playing. In southern Iraq, children are reported to dismantle UXOs to retrieve copper. Items range from large missile systems to grenades and ammunition of all calibers and types. It is believed that "sympathetic detonations" will become more common as temperatures increase during the summer. Collection and destruction of all ammunition scattered in residential areas and schools need to be accompanied by a full-fledged national awareness campaign on the dangers of such items.

Assessments of the institutions for children show that most of them have been severely looted and in some cases occupied by families claiming to be IDPs. In Baghdad, some of the children who remained in the institutions during the war have been removed under duress by armed gangs. Other children have joined the ranks of street children. There are reports of drug use – a new phenomena in Iraq. As is already being done in the three northern governorates, UNICEF will ensure that a network of trained social workers continue checking up on de-institutionalized children who had gone to stay with extended families prior to the war.

As the lead agency for child protection, UNICEF will coordinate a country-wide child protection assessment with 5 international NGOs. An initial meeting to ensure the use of a commonly agreed upon methodology is planned for the end of this month in Erbil.

Education

An estimated 80 per cent of schools are functioning in southern Iraq and 100 per cent in the three northern governorates. Initial assessments carried out in Basra and Thi Qar governorates showed that around 20 per cent of schools have been looted. While old textbooks continue to be in use, children have reportedly ripped out pictures of the former President. A textbook focusing on civil and national education is no longer used by teachers. Iraqi education officials say that a revision of the curriculum needs to be undertaken by Iraqis. Final school year exams are expected to start on May 21 and will be prepared by individual schools. Grade six primary school students will sit for exams prepared at governorate level. UNICEF will assist in the printing of the exam booklets. Unfortunately, students completing secondary school will not be able to take their exams as the national structure responsible for developing the exam has not been re-activated.

Director Generals (DGs) heading the education administration in Basra and Nassiriya have been appointed by the newly-established governing bodies. The DG in Thi Qar was selected by the newly established Town Advisory Council while the DG in Basra was reportedly appointed by clergy of Najaf. UNICEF has established close working relations with both directorates. The Directorate in Basra has been completely looted and the administration is housed in a teacher training institute.

ACTION

Water and Sanitation

In Baghdad, UNICEF is supporting pumping vehicles to clear drains and sewage spills in affected areas. Twenty-six trucks have been hired to collect garbage in high-risk areas. A contractor was hired to clear garbage from three hospitals and some residential areas. A larger campaign is planned for Thawra City (formerly known as Saddam City). Water tankering continues at locations in Baghdad where water plants are not functioning at a rate of 28 tankers or 510,000 litres per day. Water is delivered to hospitals, child institutions and residential areas. UNICEF continues to overhaul generators and supply fuel. UNICEF also delivers 44,700 litres of cooking gas per day.

UNICEF has taken over water distribution from the pipeline delivering water from Kuwait to Um Qasr. However, distribution is slow due to lack of water and distribution issues in the community. Water tankering has increased from an initial 20 to 30 water tankers a day to 49 water tankers (May 5) and 67 tankers (May 11). This resulted in the provision of 2,010,000 litres of water per day. The number is expected to increase to 100 tankers per day shortly. So far, a total of 20 million litres have been delivered to communities and hospitals. In Safwan and surroundings, there are 50,000 people of which 40,000 depend entirely on UNICEF supported water distribution. Together with ICRC, UNICEF is undertaking a water leak-detection project in southern Iraq. The population is tapping into water pipelines by shooting or breaking holes into water pipes to collect water leading to great loss of resources. Water obtained through illegal tapping is often sold in the markets and is usually of dubious quality. Repairs and communication strategies are being prepared to address this problem.

UNICEF delivered 130 metric tons of chlorine gas to Basra from Iran and collected 200 empty chlorine cylinders of 100kg each to be refilled in Kuwait. UNICEF has placed orders to procure an additional 100 metric tons of chlorine and 200 metric tons of soap for health facilities responding to the cholera outbreak. As a member of the cholera monitoring team in Basra, UNICEF and the local authorities are setting up a distribution plan for chlorine for the city. Six monitoring teams have been set up to monitor chlorine levels from water treatment plants to the end users. As of May 13, enough chlorine supplies for affected areas were reported to be available.

UNICEF arranged transport of 25,000 chlorine tablets and 9,000 kg of chlorine granular powder as well as 89 water containers to Mosul. In the three northern governorates of Iraq, UNICEF initiated the rehabilitation of 52 rural water projects.

Health and Nutrition

UNICEF is carrying out needs assessments of primary health care centres together with NGOs. Volunteer health care workers are being trained in basics of child health care in Baghdad. Basic vaccines have been ordered to cover needs in Baghdad for three months. UNICEF is discussing with Iraqi health officials the resumption of the expanded programme of immunization. UNICEF carried out a needs assessment in the Baghdad Institute of Sera and Vaccines and the Central Health Laboratories to determine necessary follow-up activities regarding cold chain equipment. An inventory has been prepared to refurbish the administrative sections for this programme in the Ministry of Health.

Two health kits for 20,000 people and 1,000 doses of pentostam to treat visceral leishmaniasis have been airlifted into Kuwait for distribution in southern Iraq. Four tons of high protein biscuits and oral rehydration salts were trucked in from Iran. 78,000 sachets of ORS arrived in Basra for distribution. An additional 10 tons of ORS were sent to Baghdad from Kuwait as well as 90,000 doses of measles and rubella vaccines and 150,000 doses of DPT, which will be distributed to PHCs and the pediatric hospital in Basra where walk-in cold rooms have been repaired. UNICEF in northern Iraq distributed 1,000 cartons of ferro-folic acid to antenatal care units. UNICEF provided 10,000 litres of kerosene to the health department to run kerosene refrigerators for vaccines.

Child Protection

UNICEF and Enfants du Monde are providing counseling services for children of the al-Rahma institution in Baghdad. The institution also receives food, toiletries and other necessary items. Two hundred and twenty children of the 1,025 Palestinian refugees driven from their homes are currently living in a camp in the Baladiyat area of Baghdad. They have been supplied with high protein biscuits, milk, diapers and three school kits. In addition, sanitary towels have been distributed to women. Tents for the families are being installed.

In the three northern governorates, all child care institutions are functioning according to pre-war status. UNICEF has continued supporting the monitoring of the situation of children that have been reintegrated into their families by social workers. Remaining WES contingency supplies were delivered to orphanages.

Education

A total of 370 schools-in-a-box have been distributed to schools in the South, each containing materials for 80 students and their teachers. UNICEF has requested local education authorities in Basra and Nassiriyah to prepare minimum budgets for office and school furniture. A total of 58 schools in Baghdad have been supplied with fans, light bulbs and electrical fittings after having been looted. UNICEF is following up on reports that teaching in southern Iraq has become more religious and girls forced to wear veils.

UNICEF in the northern governorates is initiating a back-to-school project providing assistance to defray costs to families. UNICEF is facilitating the transport of 2,000 children to school. School materials for 20,000 children were supplied to an area of Sulaymaniyah governorate that was formerly under the control of the Iraqi government. Also in Sulaymaniyah, the installation of a four-colour offset machine was accomplished in the textbook printing press. Stationeries were provided for the final examinations and the construction of 13 two-classroom schools was initiated. Primary school teachers attended a psycho-social support training.

UNICEF is continuing its support to refugees in camps in Syria and Jordan. In both countries, UNICEF has provided teaching and psycho-social training. In addition, it has provided non-food items to the refugees.

IMPACT

UNICEF as the lead agency for water and sanitation has consolidated efforts to respond to the cholera outbreaks in Basra by establishing a monitoring group overseeing the distribution of chlorine to the water supply network. This group encompasses all actors from the water treatment plant to the end user. It has helped secure enough chlorine to purify water for southern Iraq, together with the ICRC and the coalition. UNICEF continues to provide safe water for populations in southern Iraq, in some towns supplying over 80 per cent of the population's daily drinking water. UNICEF is working to reinstall damaged and looted water and sanitation infrastructure in southern Iraq and Baghdad to ensure that water supply resumes to at least pre-war levels and that sewage facilities are resuming services. UNICEF monitors the functioning – or disfunctioning – of two major sewage treatment plants in Basra city and Baghdad and works on provision of necessary follow-up and repair activities. Solid waste is being collected in hospitals and residential areas of Baghdad, thereby removing hotbeds for diarrhea.

UNICEF is working with local authorities to establish lists of water and sanitation staff formerly on the payroll in an attempt to secure national human resources to repair and operate the facilities. Monetary incentives will support the return of national staff. This is expected to have a significant impact on the vital services of providing safe water and ensuring treatment and disposal of liquid and solid waste.

UNICEF has been engaged in reactivating routine immunization by assessing the cold chain situation and placing orders for missing equipment and vaccines. Immunization activities have resumed in towns south of Basra and will soon be carried out again in the whole of southern Iraq and Baghdad. UNICEF has ensured that hospitals in southern Iraq are supplied with safe water. In collaboration with local health authorities in southern Iraq, UNICEF has outlined a health education programme to target caretakers of children. The programme aims at creating awareness on preventive measures with regard to water and hygiene to avoid diarrhea and dehydration in children. Provision of oral rehydration solutions to primary health care centres and hospitals has ensured that adequate treatment is available for children in danger of dehydration.

Schools have reopened in most parts of the country, although not all students have returned to classes. UNICEF has encouraged students to attend by providing learning and teaching materials for over 3,000 students in selected towns in southern Iraq and is supplying looted schools in Baghdad with necessary electrical equipment such as lights bulbs and fans for over 120,000 students.

Children living in institutions in Baghdad receive regular visits from UNICEF staff to follow up on their needs in terms of food and daily living needs and monitor their psychological wellbeing.

In addition to providing supplies, UNICEF is contributing to the revitalization of the local basic social service administrations. UNICEF is able to capitalize on its knowledge and experience in working with the Iraqi technical staff and administration. It is closely working with water and sanitation, education and health administrations

to carry out needs assessments, and to provide basic services to the population by distributing humanitarian goods to the communities. More importantly, UNICEF seeks to encourage the return of Iraqi civil servants to their jobs to ensure the sustainability and expansion of existing service delivery systems in the core sectors of water and sanitation, health and education.

FUNDING RECEIPTS AND REQUIREMENTS

Table 1: FUNDS RECEIVED/INDICATED AGAINST IRAQ FLASH APPEAL AS OF 20 MAY 2003			
DONOR	AMOUNT RECEIVED (US\$)	DONOR	AMOUNT RECEIVED (US\$)
Governments		UNICEF National Committees	
Australia	5,834,420	Australia	1,139,678
Canada	6,085,910	Belgium	215,286
Denmark	1,014,510	Finland	325,055
ECHO	2,152,860	France	861,144
Finland	753,501	Germany	3,271,810
Ireland	1,087,060	Italy	1,184,015
Italy	958,023	Japan	1,000,000
Japan	5,000,000	Korea, Republic of	300,000
Korea	1,000,000	Netherlands	484,394
Norway	2,040,100	Norway	27,778
Portugal	109,769	Portugal	215,286
Spain	1,076,430	Slovenia	114,842
Sweden	600,250	United Kingdom	782,475
United Kingdom	11,146,520	US Fund	520,000
United States	11,000,000		
		Others	
		IRAQ-Enfants du Monde	414,010
		UNMAS	96,000
		PSFR	246
SUB-TOTAL:	49,859,353	SUB-TOTAL	10,952,019
Governments	AMOUNT IN PIPELINE (US\$)	UNICEF National Committees	AMOUNT IN PIPELINE (US\$)
Andorra	65,862	US Fund	1,480,000
Belgium	1,076,426		
ECHO	4,116,356		
France	2,152,853		
Greece	200,000		
Italy	656,620		
Japan	10,280,000		
Luxembourg	430,571		
Netherlands	3,229,279		
SUB-TOTAL:	22,207,966		1,480,000
GRAND TOTAL		84,499,338	

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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