



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Report on European Commission intervention to alleviate the situation of Iraq's Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons

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(Recommendation 208)**

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ACRONYMS

DCI: Development Cooperation Instrument

EC: European Commission

ECHO: European Commission's Humanitarian Aid Office

GAERC: General Affairs and External Relations Council

GoI: Government of Iraq

IDPs: Internally Displaced Persons

IfS: Instrument for Stability

IHL: International Humanitarian Law

IOM: International Organization for Migration

IRFFI: International Reconstruction Fund Facility for Iraq

JRC: Jordan Red Crescent

MoDM: Ministry of Displacement and Migration

MNF-I: Multi-National Forces-Iraq

NGO: Non-Governmental Organisations

PDS: Public Distribution System (for food rations)

PHC: Primary Health Care

SARC: Syrian Arab Red Crescent

UNAMI: United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq

UNDP: United Nations Development Programme

UNDG ITF: United Nations Development Group Iraq Trust Fund

UNHCR: United Nations High Commission for Refugees

UNICEF: United Nations Children's Fund

UN OCHA: United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

1. INTRODUCTION

Violence, a lack of security and difficult conditions in Iraq have forced an unprecedented number of people to flee their homes in search of refuge in other parts of Iraq or in other countries. The magnitude of this humanitarian and development challenge is considerable as current estimates reveal that a total of 5 million¹ refugees and IDPs are displaced from their homes in Iraq. Some Iraqis have recently returned to their homes or neighbourhoods. However, the number of such returnees may only increase significantly when real progress is achieved and a more secure situation proves to be sustainable in Iraq.

This Report has been compiled by the European Commission as part of the actions requested by the European Parliament following the 2006 budget discharge. It describes EC intervention to alleviate the situation of displaced Iraqis. The first part of this Report briefly sets out the current situation of refugees from Iraq, IDPs within Iraq and returnees to their homes or neighbourhoods in Iraq. Given the complex and multi-faceted nature of the topic, this Report does not touch on all of the issues or difficulties faced by the displaced, but provides an overview of the current situation. The second part of the Report focuses on the assistance the EC has provided to the displaced and their host communities from and within Iraq, examining the aims and main results of that assistance. EC support to refugees, IDPs and returnees includes humanitarian aid and development aid.

It is important to note that there is no consensus on the exact number of refugees and IDPs. Statistical variations result from different factors, including the ever evolving nature of the situation, the different methods of accounting for those arriving and leaving, and the fears of some of the displaced in making themselves known to authorities. While there are an estimated 1-1.5 million Iraqis in Syria, UNHCR has registered 216,370 Iraqis there, and in Jordan where the estimated number of Iraqis is 450,000-500,000 UNHCR has registered 54,258 Iraqis². In an effort to put together a balanced and comprehensive account of the situation, this Report draws on a wide range of sources including reports and statistics from International Organisations³, Government bodies⁴ and NGOs⁵.

¹ International Organization for Migration, Iraq Displacement & Return 2008 Mid-Year review.

² UNHCR Iraq Situation Update- August 2008.

³ Including the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), International Organization for Migration (IOM), International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (mainly the Iraqi Red Crescent).

⁴ Government of Iraq.

⁵ Including FAFO, (International) Crisis Group, Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, International Rescue Committee.

2. CURRENT SITUATION OF DISPLACED IRAQIS

In 2003, when coalition forces ousted the regime of Saddam Hussein, an immediate and massive flood of refugees was predicted. While ever increasing numbers of Iraqis did leave their homes, it was only after the bombing of the Al-Askari shrine in Samarra in February 2006 and the escalating sectarian violence which ensued, that the number of people forced to flee their homes grew significantly. Current estimates of 5 million displaced from and within Iraq include over 2 million refugees, most of whom have fled to neighbouring Syria and Jordan and about 2.8 million IDPs within Iraq⁶. The reasons for the high level of displacement relate to the continuing insecurity, and sectarian and criminal violence from which all ethnic and religious groups in Iraq have suffered.

Those who are displaced, whether they are IDPs in Iraq or refugees in other countries, are confronted with similar difficulties. As many Iraqis were forced to leave their homes in haste they did not have time to safeguard their properties and belongings or gather official documents prior to leaving. The most vulnerable among them look to their host societies for the provision of their basic needs such as food, clean water, shelter, sanitation and health care, as well as education or employment.

The instability of the situation in which many displaced Iraqis find themselves, together with poor diet and inadequate living conditions and sanitation, contribute to physical and mental health problems. Often, the traumatic manner in which the displaced fled their homes, the separation of families and extreme violence add further psychological trauma. Lack of financial resources, official documents and insufficient health care provisions mean that many displaced Iraqis do not have access to the necessary services. The plight of those displaced risks deteriorating further as many are deprived of work and have exhausted their savings, leaving large numbers of Iraqis to face an uncertain future. Women and children are particularly vulnerable to hunger, ill health and crime and there are reports of exploitation of the most vulnerable through child labour, begging and prostitution.

Most of those refugees who fled Iraq in a quest for asylum elsewhere are from what used to be the middle class of Iraqi society. Their departure from Iraq has created an extensive brain-drain and deprived the country of the very people needed to rebuild it. It is imperative to avoid that young IDPs and refugees be deprived of education, and that large numbers remain unskilled and vulnerable.

2.1. Situation of refugees from Iraq in neighbouring countries

While the number of persons from Iraq who have sought refuge in neighbouring countries and further afield is difficult to verify, it is estimated to be more than 2 million people. The majority of refugees are found in Syria and Jordan, but there are also significant numbers in Lebanon, Iran, Egypt, Turkey and the Gulf States. Neither of the two main host countries, Syria or Jordan, has acceded to the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of

⁶ IOM 2008 mid year review, see note 1, page 4.

Refugees, the cornerstone of International Refugee law, nor its 1967 Protocol, and displaced Iraqis are not formally recognised as refugees in either country.⁷

The large influx of refugees has placed a considerable strain on the economy, infrastructure and resources in the host countries, which in turn negatively affects the living conditions of the population at large. As prices of food, energy and real estate have increased since the influx of refugees⁸, resentment has begun to build up among the local populations making life more difficult for the refugees. However, despite fears to the contrary, the violence and sectarian divisions seen in Iraq have so far not been carried over to the host countries⁹.

The population of **Syria** is close to 20 million people and the number of refugees from Iraq in Syria is estimated to be 1-1.5 million¹⁰. A survey¹¹ recently carried out for UNHCR showed that the overwhelming majority of respondents fled to Syria because of a direct threat to themselves or their family.

Main reasons for coming to Syria ¹²
65% fleeing from direct threat to themselves or family
30% fleeing general insecurity in Iraq
2% because their home was destroyed
1% due to health problems
1% were deported or obliged to leave by force
1% other (incl. education reasons, submitting documents to embassies)

As the flow of people leaving Iraq intensified, the neighbouring countries gradually began to toughen policies. Visa restrictions for Iraqi refugees ensued because of security, demographic or economic concerns; Syria introduced visa requirements for Iraqis in September 2007. Refugees in Syria are spread through all Governorates and districts, with the highest number concentrated in Damascus City and rural Damascus.

Syria has a legal framework that grants open and free access to schools for all Arab children living there. The number of Iraqi children enrolled in school increased from 33,100 to 47,500 between school years 2006/07 and 2007/08. However, despite this increase a significant number of Iraqi children are still out of school.

The Syrian Government provides Iraqis with the same access to medical care as Syrian citizens. The Syrian Arab Red Crescent has expanded the number of clinics it operates

⁷ Although the host countries do not acknowledge Iraqi nationals as refugees, the UNHCR registers Iraqi nationals as refugees 'prima facie'.

⁸ "In Syria, government sources indicate that food prices have increased by some 35%, electricity by 27%, water by 21% and real estate by up to 300%." UNHCR Global Appeal 2008-2009.

⁹ International Crisis Group "Failed Responsibility: Iraqi refugees in Syria, Jordan and Lebanon" Middle East Report No 77- 10 July 2008, page 5.

¹⁰ UNHCR Iraq Situation Update – August 2008.

¹¹ UNHCR Syria: "Assessment on Returns to Iraq Amongst the Iraqi Refugee Population in Syria" (April 2008). Survey carried out by IPSOS market research company for UNHCR in March 2008. 994 interviews were conducted by a group of 15 interviewers.

¹² Extract from survey mentioned in note 11 above.

solely for Iraqis to meet increased demand. However, with the recent influx concentrated in specific regions, the burden on Syrian health services has increased significantly.

A survey of Iraqi refugees in Syria¹³ also showed that only 4% of respondents plan to return to Iraq, mainly as they feel they are under direct threat there. This could mean they face a prolonged stay outside Iraq. Therefore strategies aimed at assisting Iraqi refugees must focus not only on provision of basic and immediate needs of refugees but also on longer-term needs such as education and training.

The population of **Jordan** is close to 6.2 million and the number of Iraqi refugees is estimated to be 450,000-500,000¹⁴. The Norwegian NGO FAFO completed a study in May 2007 of Iraqi refugee numbers and needs in Jordan and concluded that the population of Iraqis in Jordan is almost exclusively urban. Migration of Iraqis to Jordan is predominantly a migration of families, 77% of whom arrived in 2003 or later, and 1 in 5 household heads is female. The study reveals that close to 70% of Iraqi residents in Jordan are of working age (15+ years) and of these, about 30% are working.

In Jordan, Iraqi refugees are categorised into "guests", "visitors", "investors" or "residents". Initially most Iraqis did not require an entry visa and usually obtained short-term residency permits subject to renewal but with which they were not entitled to work. Procedures became gradually more restrictive and since May 2008 Iraqis wishing to enter Jordan must have visas prior to arrival. Healthcare is not free and few Iraqis have adequate health coverage.

Almost all households in Jordan are connected to the public electricity network, the water network and the sewage network. Accordingly, pressure is put on the various public services in Jordan, particularly energy, water, health, education and security. Jordan is one of the ten water-poorest countries worldwide.

The FAFO study outlines that 57.9% of the Iraqis questioned have no plans to return to Iraq. One in five Iraqis has concrete plans to emigrate to a third country, a wish held particularly by persons belonging to non-Muslim religions. Iraqi children were not permitted to attend public schools in Jordan until authorities announced in July 2007 that State schools were to open their doors to Iraqi children. Children wishing to enrol were required to bring their school documents and not to have been absent from school for more than three years. UNHCR claims that in 2006-2007 some 14,000 Iraqi children were said to be attending schools in Jordan and these figures increased to 24,600 for the 2007-2008 school year. The FAFO Study reveals that of the Iraqi children enrolled in school, over 73% are enrolled in private schools. The Government of Jordan has recently announced that all Iraqi and Jordanian children will be exempt from paying contribution fees and paying for textbooks for the 2008-2009 school year, and this should also be the case in the following school year. These changes in policy are in line with requests from the International donor community. The FAFO Study also states that an increasing number of Iraqis are now benefiting from public services due to the fact that their savings and remittances are decreasing and they can no longer afford to access services from the private sector.

¹³ UNHCR "Assessment on Returns to Iraq Amongst Iraqi Refugee Population in Syria" see note 11 page 6.

¹⁴ UNHCR Iraq Situation Update – August 2008.

2.2. Situation of refugees from Iraq in Europe

While Afghanistan remained the leading country of origin of asylum seekers worldwide in 2007, Iraq was the second. In 2006 and 2007, Iraqis constituted the major source of asylum applications in the EU¹⁵, with 57,661 applications out of a total number of 397,509. Iraqi citizens claimed asylum in 89 countries worldwide in 2007, with 18,600 claims lodged in Sweden.¹⁶ In the first half of 2008, Germany was the Member State which received the largest number of asylum applications, numbering 3995 in the period from January to June¹⁷. One quarter of all positive decisions granting refugee status in Europe in 2007 was issued to Iraqi asylum seekers.

Iraqi asylum applicants in the EU 26 in 2006 and 2007¹⁸

	No. of applications				
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total
2006	4,123	3,234	4,871	7,147	19,375
2007	9,361	8,838	9,938	10,149	38,286

2.3. Situation of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)

Recent figures show that there are currently about 2.8 million¹⁹ IDPs in Iraq, most of whom are based in the centre of the country. There are also about 42,000 refugees from other countries living in Iraq—mainly Palestinians, Turks, Iranians and Sudanese.²⁰ Unfortunately, Iraq remains an extremely dangerous place for humanitarian organisations to effectively carry out their work and those that are active in Iraq are forced to maintain a low-profile approach.

When IDPs arrive in a new location in the country they are obliged to register with Governorate-level authorities and they face a significant level of bureaucracy. Various official documents are required and entry and registration is increasingly restricted by local authorities based on security, economic or demographic concerns. In some cases, IDPs are required to have family or origins in the particular governorate and, in other cases, they are only granted permission to remain if they originate from particularly volatile parts of the country.

Shelter is a major concern for IDPs. Rental prices have increased, particularly in areas which play host to large numbers of new arrivals. Some IDPs have been forced to squat in public buildings and earlier this year the Government of Iraq issued an eviction order for all such persons. This order was later postponed until such time as other housing arrangements could be made for IDPs, but there are reports of eviction threats being made and actual evictions being carried out against IDPs in some locations. There is a nationwide Public Distribution System for food rations in place in Iraq but some Iraqis are

¹⁵ This figure refers to 26 Member States (no data for Italy).

¹⁶ UNHCR Asylum levels and trends in Industrialised countries 2007.

¹⁷ UNHCR Monthly data January-June 2008.

¹⁸ UNHCR Asylum levels and trends in Industrialised countries 2007.

¹⁹ IOM 2008 Mid-Year Review, see note 1, page 4.

²⁰ UNHCR Global Report 2007.

not in possession of the official documents which would allow them access to the PDS.²¹ Many IDPs complain that their PDS rations arrive late, are missing key items or are insufficient.²²

Absenteeism from schools among IDP children is high due to family financial difficulties, a lack of necessary documents, the travel distance to schools, or the necessity to look after family members. In areas where there are many IDPs, schools struggle to find sufficient resources and teaching staff to accommodate the influx of children. IDP families who have gone to the north of Iraq experience difficulties finding Arabic-language schools for their children. Without any income and especially where the period of displacement is prolonged, the priority for most IDPs is to find work, yet most IDPs experience great difficulties doing so.

The situation of IDPs must be addressed first and foremost by Iraqi authorities. The Iraqi Government's Ministry of Displacement and Migration has recently developed a new policy on Internal Displacement. Recognising the unprecedented scale of the current situation, the policy seeks to find durable solutions and to build an effective, realistic and comprehensive framework to respond to the needs of IDPs. The policy sets out the rights and needs of IDPs and stresses the need for coordination and cooperation between the different Iraqi ministries and the International Community.

2.4. Situation of Returnees

A returnee is considered to be a person who returns to their original neighbourhood or home.²³ Figures relating to returnees are particularly difficult to ascertain given, for instance, that some of the displaced return only temporarily for food rations or pensions. Towards the end of 2007, the numbers of people being displaced began to decrease and some refugees returned to their homes in Iraq, partly due to a subsiding level of violence there. According to the Iraqi MoDM, in the last quarter of 2007 over 3,600 IDPs and about 30,000 refugee families returned to Iraq and a UNHCR update published in May 2008 estimated that there had been 60,000 IDP and 50,000 refugee returns since summer 2007.

There are various reasons why some Iraqis are returning to their homes, including improved security conditions, difficulties linked to their status in other countries or deterioration of conditions in their temporary place of displacement. A recent UNHCR survey of Iraqi refugees in Syria showed that the overwhelming majority of refugees do not yet wish to return to Iraq mainly as they believe their lives to be under direct threat there or due to fears given the general insecurity in the country.²⁴ Many returning Iraqis are, upon their arrival, confronted with finding their property destroyed or occupied by others. A recent IOM assessment of returnees and the state of their property upon their return showed that 56% of returnee property is accessible and in good condition, 26% is partially destroyed, 9% is completely destroyed, and 8% is occupied by others.²⁵

²¹ IOM has recently reported that 70% of the IDPs assessed report "intermittent or no access to PDS rations, 14% have no access to health care, and 30% cannot access the medications they need". IOM 2008 Mid-Year Review.

²² IOM, see note 1, page 4.

²³ IOM "2008 mid-year review", see note 1, page 4.

²⁴ See table Annex A.

²⁵ IOM "2008 mid-year review", see note 1, page 4.

3. EUROPEAN COMMISSION INTERVENTION TO ALLEVIATE THE SITUATION OF IRAQI REFUGEES AND IDPS

From the beginning, the EC has watched with concern the situation of refugees from Iraq, IDPs within Iraq and returnees to their homes or neighbourhoods in Iraq. EC support to refugees, returnees and IDPs has been granted both as **humanitarian aid** and **development aid** for more durable solutions. Strategies aimed at improving the immediate conditions of refugees and IDPs run parallel with longer-term considerations such as education and training. So far, total EC support amounts to **€140.08 million**²⁶.

The EC has supported Iraq and neighbouring countries through regional programmes and through specific programmes for Iraq. Various financial instruments have been used for this support including, prior to 2006, the Asia and Latin America Regulation,²⁷ the Human Rights thematic instrument and the Rapid Reaction mechanism and, more recently, the Development Cooperation Instrument and the Instrument for Stability.

From the outset, the EC has worked with international organisations with experience in the region, and has cooperated closely with authorities in the host countries in an effort to identify and analyse the needs of refugees and host communities alike and strengthen existing structures in those countries. This strategy thus avoids setting up parallel structures and endeavours to work towards the integration of Iraqis in the social and economic life of their host countries. Furthermore, instead of singling out Iraqi refugees, which would inevitably render such groups more vulnerable targets, the approach of the EC is to build synergies and complementarities with ongoing programmes in the host countries. EC services, including the delegations in Baghdad, Amman and Damascus carefully monitor the situation of displaced and returning Iraqis. Two experts recruited by the EC are currently updating the analysis of the situations in Jordan and Syria and are contributing to the 2008 EC projects aiming to assist the countries concerned in facing this challenge.

3.1. European Commission humanitarian relief

3.1.1. EC humanitarian assistance from 2003 to 2006

In 2003, the EC allocated €8 million in humanitarian assistance specifically targeting IDPs in Iraq. As part of this €8 million, €3 million was allocated to a project implemented by the International Committee of the Red Cross and covered emergency supplies for 75,000 IDPs, 320 tonnes of flour for hospitals, a humanitarian air transport service and protection activities for IDP. The other €5 million was also allocated to the ICRC for food, non-food items, medical kits and rehabilitation of water/sanitation facilities in conflict affected areas and targeted up to 2 million beneficiaries.

3.1.2. EC humanitarian assistance in 2007

In 2007, the deterioration of the humanitarian situation caused by unremitting violence resulting in increased refugee flows led the EC to provide a new package of €17.8 million in humanitarian aid specifically targeted at displaced Iraqis. Of this amount, €7.8 million was allocated to IDPs in Iraq and €10 million was allocated to refugees in neighbouring countries, primarily Jordan and Syria, but also Turkey and Lebanon.

²⁶ Including projects prepared under the 2008 budget.

²⁷ ALA was the principal instrument of development cooperation with Iraq until 2006.

The task of humanitarian intervention in Iraq is severely hampered by the security constraints in the country which limit the capacity of humanitarian organisations in their operations on the ground. In neighbouring countries implementation conditions are sometimes difficult, as the local authorities might display some reticence towards those programmes.

The **Humanitarian aid in favour of those affected by the internal conflict in Iraq** of €7.8 million aims to ensure that the most vulnerable segments of the population have access to water, sanitation and habitat assistance. It also assists families of detainees and internees in re-establishing and maintaining contact with their detained or interned relatives, and ensuring detainees and internees are afforded treatment and conditions of detention/internment that conform to International Humanitarian Law and internationally recognised standards.

The **Humanitarian aid in favour of refugees from Iraq** comprises eight projects in neighbouring countries and one coordination project in Iraq for an amount of €10 million. These projects include:

- § In **Syria**, a project amounting to €99,357 includes the provision of basic health services and humanitarian assistance items to extremely vulnerable Iraqi refugees and Syrians and results are expected to include consultations and medicines for 3,005 out-patients. Another project of €350,000 aims at the provision of psychosocial and social support to Iraqi refugee families. The expected results include psychological counselling and/or psychological care for 400 children and adults. A third project of €1,389,999, aims to deliver proper and affordable primary healthcare services to the most vulnerable Iraqi groups and the expansion of the SARC health care system to areas outside Damascus where Iraqi displaced are concentrated. A fourth project of €600,000 aims to ensure the availability of a sufficient amount of clean drinking water for Iraqi and Syrian populations in two areas of Damascus, seven SARC dispensaries and 30 public schools.
- § In **Jordan**, one project amounting to €99,896 includes access to low cost primary healthcare consultations and free essential drugs for Iraqis in the region of Hashemi Ash Shamali in Amman. Additional support of €70,000 will assist vulnerable Iraqi families to gain access to psychosocial support and a safe space. Group activities will help to build confidence and skills, and the distribution of non-food items to support hygiene and health. Targeted vulnerable Iraqi families will benefit from improved domestic and personal hygiene conditions (3,500 households better equipped), access to counselling, group support activities, and training workshops.
- § Another project, implemented in **Jordan, Lebanon and Syria** of an amount of €4,480,748 aims to enhance UNHCR's protection intervention, and identify and assist Iraqi women and children at risk of prostitution, gender-based violence and child labour. The expected results include UNHCR protection and resettlement for Iraqi, including legal aid. Iraqi children will have better access to education and extremely vulnerable Iraqis will gain access to health assistance.
- § In **Turkey**, a €500,000 project includes improving the protection situation of Iraqi asylum-seekers and Iranian refugees' from Iraq in Turkey through better access to

existing social support systems, reducing vulnerability, and enhancing UNHCR's protection intervention capabilities by identifying local capacities and gaps at local level. The expected results include access to social services and referrals to local health services. Refugee children will have access to education and be provided with educational supplies.

§ In **Iraq**, support amounting to €500,000 aims at mobilising and coordinating effective humanitarian action in partnership with national and international actors to develop and implement a comprehensive humanitarian information management strategy for Iraq and promotion of humanitarian principles and International Humanitarian Law. The expected results include improved understanding of the humanitarian situation through the mapping of the response needs and gaps and improved humanitarian coordination in response to the humanitarian situation in Iraq.

3.1.3. EC humanitarian assistance in 2008

The EC has recently announced the allocation of €20 million to provide more protection and relief to Iraqi refugees, IDPs and other vulnerable persons in Iraq, Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, Egypt, Turkey and Iran. The objectives of this assistance include support for coordination in order to ensure an adequate, timely and needs-based humanitarian response for the victims of the conflict.

Intervention activities will include, in the area of protection, support for refugee registration, prevention of deportations and 'refoulement', and support for activities targeting victims of sexual violence, human trafficking and child labour. Emphasis will be placed on basic needs including food distribution to the most vulnerable Iraqis, distribution of mattresses, blankets and school kits. Technical and material assistance will be provided to national Red Crescent societies and targeted support will be provided to health structures. In areas with high concentration of Iraqis, action will involve maintenance of basic water and sanitation infrastructure. There will be timely and appropriate support for basic services in case of sudden and significant population movements as a direct result of conflict and violence.

3.2. European Commission development assistance

Following the events of 2003, the International Community established the International Reconstruction Fund Facility for Iraq, with the aim of providing a co-ordinated response to the reconstruction challenge. Most EC aid in support of Iraq's reconstruction was initially channelled through this Fund, including assistance for refugees²⁸.

3.2.1. EC development assistance in 2005

The EC contributed a first package of assistance of €1.4 million to the UNHCR under the 2005 AENEAS²⁹ regional programme. The programme provided support for the registration of Iraqi refugees in Lebanon, Syria and Jordan.

²⁸ See State of Play of July 2008 available at: http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/where/gulf-region/country-cooperation/iraq/iraq_en.htm

²⁹ The objective of the AENEAS regional programme was to assist Third countries in improving the management of all aspects of their migratory flows.

3.2.2. EC development assistance in 2006

In 2006, the EC allocated €10 million in support of IDPs in Iraq to the International Reconstruction Fund Facility for Iraq. The EC contribution was channelled through the United Nations arm of the IRFFI. This contribution was granted in view of offering durable solutions for the IDPs in Iraq, the number of whom had increased dramatically in 2006 following the bombing of the Al-Askari shrine in Samarra. For this purpose, the UNDG-ITF created a comprehensive framework for conflict management interventions for communities affected by the crisis. This was done with the aim of complementing the National Reconciliation Plan and the Baghdad Peace Initiative supported by the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI).

The EC contribution was pooled with other donors' funds within the Cluster F (Refugees, IDPs and Durable solutions) for the implementation of projects in that sector. Total contributions in Cluster F amount at present to \$23 million. The support helps the national authorities in ensuring protection and assistance for displaced people in an effort to prevent further displacement and find durable solutions. The projects under Cluster F include monitoring and emergency assessments; distribution of emergency aid, water and non-food items and establishment of camp facilities; improvement of infrastructure, services and protection climate in urban and rural communities impacted by displacement; conflict management and resolution within and between communities, and improvement of the national capacity to provide protection-oriented emergency responses.

By the end of 2007, this Cluster F programme has, among other actions, delivered³⁰:

- § Life-saving assistance to over 600,000 IDPs and 15,266 refugees, distributed in a timely manner to persons of concern
- § The provision of adequate and sustainable housing to facilitate the socio-economic (re)integration of over 5,600 returnee/refugee families in their communities in addition to the provision of emergency shelter to over 42,036 IDPs and 7,254 refugees
- § Health awareness/safe drinking water campaigns through mobile teams targeting over 42,000 persons, including IDPs and host community women
- § Education materials provided to over 430,000 IDP students
- § Vocational training and income-generating projects to improve the socio-economic well-being of some 28,803 vulnerable persons in Iraq
- § Legislative and policy support to the Government of Iraq: a draft Revision of Iraq's 1971 Refugee Act, a draft National Policy on Displaced Persons

Support has also been provided for the construction of low-cost self-help shelter units. This will assist IDPs in their integration with their host communities by supplying adequate and affordable shelter. This support has also developed a coordination mechanism among relevant ministries of the Iraqi Government involved in addressing shelter needs of IDPs and returnees.

Finally, support of €0.7 million for border and migration management was granted from the 2006 AENEAS programme. This operation is implemented by the IOM.

³⁰ Information from the Seventh Six-month Progress Report on Activities Implemented under the UNDG ITF of the IRFFI. Report of the Administrative Agent of the UNDG ITF for the Period 1 July to 31 December 2007, 1 May 2008.

3.2.3. *EC development assistance in 2007*

As the number of refugees has increased significantly in neighbouring countries, it was decided for 2007 to focus assistance on special structural support for Iraqi refugees in Syria and Jordan. This assistance is aimed primarily at improving the health and education services provided to refugees, as the scale of service provision represents a considerable burden for these two countries. This support has been channelled through the respective State systems, as requested by the Governments of Syria and Jordan, in an effort to strengthen existing structures in the host countries and to avoid the creation of parallel structures. This strategy aims at facilitating the integration of refugees into the social and economic life of their host countries. An amount of €38.68 million has been made available for this purpose, €35.68 from the DCI envelope and €3 million from the IfS.

In **Syria** support of €9 million was set aside for primary and secondary healthcare facilities to help the Syrian Government provide Iraqi refugees with improved access to medical health care. The programme is implemented with the Syrian authorities through the reinforcement of the existing Health Sector Modernisation programme and it provides support in the upgrading of primary healthcare centres located in areas that serve Iraqi refugees. Therefore, the programme helps in maintaining the performance and the quality of health services in Syria.

The expected results include the upgrading of 50 primary healthcare centres and 8 hospitals with medical equipment, medical consumables (tubes, syringes etc), drugs for chronic diseases and vaccines. There is also an emphasis on training as health workers are to be trained in management and maintenance of equipment, on health information, education and communication and on reproduction/reprinting of existing materials (on good hygienic practice, infection prevention and nutrition). Health workers will also be trained in crisis management. Training will focus on communication with and between different sectors at Governorate level and coordination between sectors at different levels.

Also in **Syria**, the IfS finances an ongoing education project, implemented by UNICEF, with a total budget of €3 million. The objective of this project is to increase the enrolment of school children, in particular Iraqi children, and improve absorption capacity of schools to facilitate the social integration of children and to ensure that the educational system complies with national standards for the school physical and pedagogical environment. The project rehabilitates school buildings, and provides teaching materials, equipment and furniture.

In **Jordan**, €26.68 million has been allocated in support of the education sector. The programme aims to consolidate the performance and quality of education services and to increase the managerial capacity of the Government of Jordan and specifically the Ministry of Education. This programme complements the support given to the Jordan education system by an ongoing 2006 EC-funded programme to support Jordan's National Education Strategy. The objective of this programme is to contribute to the stabilisation of the education system in Jordan and to work towards preventing a deterioration of the performance and quality of education services given the influx of refugees from Iraq.

The main expected results include an increased enrolment of Iraqi children during the next two school years, and an improved physical and learning environment.

3.3. Future EC Assistance Strategy

3.3.1. Assistance Programme for 2008

The Assistance Programme for 2008, currently under approval, foresees a further increase in measures and funding aimed at assisting refugees, IDPs and returnees in Iraq. Support in 2008 is expected to amount to €43.5 million over 5 main programmes. Building on the initiatives of earlier years, priority will be given to the provision of basic services, working closely with other actors active in addressing the plight of the refugee communities.

The programme **Support to the return and reintegration of returnees and IDPs inside Iraq**, with a proposed allocation of €6 million is to be implemented by the UNHCR. It aims to create a protective environment and facilitate durable solutions for returnees and IDPs inside Iraq and to provide assistance to local communities impacted by displacement and/or relocation. A needs-based approach will be adopted. The programme will contribute to *shelter rehabilitation* as access to housing remains a critical need and an essential element in the sustainability of returns. Homes will be rehabilitated or partially rebuilt to benefit returnees and conflict-affected populations. Priority will be given to vulnerable families and individuals. *Community-based projects* will provide improved services in the sectors of water, health and education for the benefit of IDPs, returnees and host communities. Finally, communal services (water purification plants and networks, electricity, health centres, primary schools, etc) will be rehabilitated.

The **Water Loss Reduction Programme in Zarqa- 'Managing Jordan's scarce water resources in areas of large concentration of Iraqi refugees'** has a budget of €12 million. It will support the Government of Jordan in managing the increasing water demand due to the influx of Iraqis. Given Jordan's scarce water resources, priority is given to water loss reduction measures in order to raise the efficiency of existing water networks. The objective is to reduce water loss in the Governorate of Zarqa, one of the poorest in Jordan and with one of the highest concentrations of Iraqi refugees.

The programme **Emergency support to the Syrian education sector affected by a large influx of Iraqi refugees** has an envelope of €10 million. It will assist the Syrian public authorities in coping with the strain caused, in the education sector, by the large influx of Iraqi refugees through the provision of rapid assistance. The implementation of this action will lead to an improvement of the learning conditions in schools where there is the highest concentration of Iraqi children.

EC support II (2009-2011) to education in Syria in areas affected by a large influx of refugees from Iraq with a proposed €4 million envelope will contribute to the fulfilment of the right of all children in Syria to have access to education. This is the second phase of a programme implemented by UNICEF, of which the first phase was funded under the IfS. The programme contributes to expanding the capacity and maintaining the performance and quality of primary and secondary education for both Syrian and Iraqi pupils.

The **Support to Syria's solid waste and medical waste management in areas affected by a large influx of Iraqi refugees** has a proposed envelope of €10 million. As refugee flows have put an increased strain on solid waste services, this programme will provide critical equipment as well as support to improve solid waste management services in particular for rural Damascus where there is the highest concentration of Iraqi refugees.

In July the EC also adopted a new assistance programme (€1.5 million) under the **Instrument for Stability** to support and protect vulnerable Iraqi women and female-headed households and victims of human trafficking. The main objective of the programme is to raise awareness among vulnerable Iraqi groups of the risks and consequences of trafficking in persons and sexual exploitation. Under the programme long-term assistance will be provided to vulnerable groups through vocational training and economic empowerment activities.

4. CONCLUSION

With 5 million Iraqis living in temporary conditions across several countries, the scale of the challenge that faces Iraq and the International Community is considerable. The EC has already provided considerable support to assist the refugees and IDPs. The Commission is committed to continuing to help the plight of displaced Iraqis. Once the programme for 2008 is approved at the end of this year, the EC will have provided a total of over €94 million in reconstruction assistance for displaced people and €45.8 million in humanitarian assistance. The EC is increasing its support to refugees and host communities in the neighbouring countries, working in close cooperation with the national authorities. Neighbouring host countries are presently under enormous pressure to provide protection and adequate services to the refugees while maintaining services for their own citizens. In May of this year EU Ministers also encouraged the Iraqi Government to use its own resources to help neighbouring countries to cope with the additional burden of refugees.³¹

While the main responsibility for adequately meeting the immediate and longer term needs of displaced and returning Iraqis lies with Iraqi authorities, the International Community has a responsibility to protect displaced Iraqis and to support neighbouring host countries in their efforts to protect and assist the refugees. The majority of Iraqis will not return to their neighbourhoods until such time as they feel the security situation has improved and continues to improve, and until they know that living conditions have improved and public services provision is adequate. The basic needs of the displaced people must be addressed in order for increased returns to take place. A coordinated approach by all actors committed to responding efficiently and effectively to the needs of those internally and externally displaced by the continuing crisis in Iraq is essential.

EC support to Iraq's refugees and IDPs (Figures in €millions)

	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	Total
Reconstruction	-	-	1.4	10.7	38.68	43.5 ³²	94.28
Humanitarian	8	-	-	-	17.8	20	45.8
Total	8	-	1.4	10.7	56.48	63.5	140.08

³¹ GAERC of 26-27 May 2008.

³² Projects prepared under the 2008 budget.

ANNEXES

Annex A

Plans to return to Iraq	
89.5% are not planning to return	
4% are planning to return	
6.5% do not know	
Main reasons for those who do not want to return	
61% are under direct threat in Iraq	
29% because of the general insecurity in Iraq	
8% their home has been destroyed/ is occupied in Iraq	
1% do not have a job in Iraq	
1% have no relatives left in Iraq	

Source: UNHCR Survey of Iraqi refugees in Syria, March 2008

Annex B

Enrolment of Iraqi refugees in schools in Jordan

Currently enrolled		Was enrolled before	Never enrolled	Sample size	
Total		78.2	19.1	2.6	1,565
Gender	Male	76.6	20.7	2.7	793
	Female	79.8	17.6	2.6	772

Source: FAFO Study of May 2007- Iraqi refugee numbers and needs in Jordan