



Newsletter Volume II 2010

January / February / March

IOM Mission in IRAQ



IOM International Organization for Migration

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"Thank you PHSS [IOM Programme for Human Security and Stabilization]"

Foreword from the Chief of Mission

With relative stability following the recent elections, IOM is looking cautiously but optimistically ahead at the future needs of Iraq.

The number of emergency operations that IOM has implemented in the past three months – including a series of distributions for families displaced from Mosul – shows the fragility of Iraq's current situation. IOM remains confident in its ability to serve the people of Iraq in the face of instability and other challenges, but also more than ever needs the commitment of the international community to make its vital programmes and initiatives possible.

Over the next 18 months the Mission is seeking \$90 million to continue to expand and enhance its operations to address the needs of Iraq's vulnerable populations. This includes a comprehensive plan to base at least 75% of international staff in the Mission's three hubs across Iraq, while maintaining support capacity from the office in Amman. IOM has maintained a consistent presence in all 18 Iraqi governorates since 2003, and will continue to work directly on the ground with Iraqi beneficiaries and government counterparts, particularly the Ministries of Displacement and Migration, Labour and Social Affairs, and Interior.

Also essential will be IOM's continued cooperation with partner agencies. This past month saw the partnering of IOM and UNESCO to rehabilitate traditional "kahrez" well systems in northern Iraq. IOM intends to foster the partnerships it has achieved with other agencies to ensure the effective and efficient delivery of assistance to those who are most in need.

Sincerely yours,

Michael Pillinger
Chief of Mission, IOM Iraq

Distributions Benefit Families Throughout Iraq

In February and March IOM successfully implemented a series of essential non-food item distributions benefiting vulnerable families throughout Dahuk, Erbil, and Ninewa.

The first distribution took place on February 11 and assisted 39 vulnerable families living in the village of Kani Halan in Dahuk governorate. Following up on a visit by the Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary General to Kani Halan in January, IOM, in cooperation with the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), visited the village on February 8 to assess the most urgent needs of the residents. They found that many of the families, including particularly vulnerable female-headed households, were lacking the basic necessities to keep warm during the harsh winter months.

In response to the needs in the village, IOM mobilized supplies from its emergency distribution warehouse in the neighbouring governorate of Erbil and directly implemented a distribution of non-food items, including mattresses, blankets, and heaters. Having addressed the most pressing needs of the vulnerable families in the village, IOM is scheduling continued assistance to the people of Kani Halan with a comprehensive package of community and livelihood development initiatives through its Programme for Human Security and Stabilization (PHSS). This support will be linked to further assistance from partner organizations through IOM's referral mechanism.



A second series of distributions took place between February 28 and March 16, benefitting over 550 displaced families in Ninewa, Erbil, and Dahuk governorates. A spate of violent attacks against Mosul's minority Christian population forced a number of families to flee the city on February 24. The day after this displacement, IOM sent monitoring teams to the villages where the families were taking refuge and determined that the families needed basic household necessities. The families had fled with little more than the clothes on their backs because the violence in Mosul had occurred so suddenly. Through its supply chain capacity, IOM was able to respond as one of the first aid agencies on the ground less than 24 hours after the crisis struck.

Utilizing funding from USAID's Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA), IOM directly implemented distributions of non-food items to the affected families. The relief supplies were delivered from the IOM emergency warehouse. During the planning and implementation of the distributions, IOM worked in close cooperation with other humanitarian agencies on the ground, including ICRC, UNHCR, UNICEF and WFP, to ensure that the families received the highest quality aid in the most efficient manner possible.

As one of the lead organizations in emergency distributions, IOM has assisted over 55,000 families (an estimated 330,000 individuals) in more than 50 distribution projects in the past two years.

Returnee Success in Erbil

Marwan travelled from Erbil to London in 1998 in search of work opportunities and better life. The journey from Iraq to Europe was long and perilous. After crossing the border into Turkey, Marwan faced harsh weather and bandits as he was smuggled into Greece, Italy, and eventually the United Kingdom.

In 2003, Marwan married Haya, who had also made the dangerous trip from Iraq to London, and together they had two children. But life in Europe was not working out as well as they had hoped. Without asylum status or work permits, Marwan and Haya were mistreated by low-paying employers, could not get drivers' licenses and could not enroll their children in public school.

After hearing about the improved economy and standard of living in their home city of Erbil, Marwan and Haya made the decision to return home. To assist them with this transition, the couple enlisted the help of IOM's Voluntary Assisted Return and Reintegration programme.

IOM provided Marwan and Haya with the information they needed to make an informed and voluntary decision about their return. Once their plans were finalized, IOM helped the family with all of the arrangements necessary for returning to Erbil, including airport assistance from IOM staff, a travel stipend and continued reintegration support upon their arrival in Iraq.

With the help of an IOM reintegration assistance grant, Marwan decided to establish a small furniture business in partnership with his friend. IOM provided the necessary carpentry equipment and tools to get Marwan's business up and running. Haya, who has a university degree, is also working for the company. After six months, the couple returned to the IOM office to request further assistance to expand their business.

Marwan and Haya say that they are glad to be living and working again in their home country, where they do not face the same difficulties they did in the United Kingdom. While they caution that return is not the right option for everyone, the couple say they are happy with their decision.

Victims of Trafficking are Safely Brought Home

IOM assisted four female victims of trafficking from Ethiopia to leave Iraq and return to their home country in March.

Lured to Erbil by a recruiting agency with promises of easy, well-paying jobs in hotels and restaurants, the women found upon arrival in Iraq that the situation was far different than they had been led to believe. The women were forced to work as household maids against their wills, and did not receive any salary. When the women tried to leave Iraq, they were stopped at the border and held in prison as undocumented migrants.

With the assistance of a local NGO, the women were released from prison and accommodated at a women's centre in Dahuk. After being informed of the stranded migrants, IOM Iraq mobilized funds and arranged for the women to be flown back home. IOM facilitated exit formalities, flight bookings and airport procedures from Erbil. Upon the safe arrival of the women in Ethiopia, IOM Addis Ababa provided additional support and transportation to their homes.





IOM and UNESCO Partner to Restore "Kahrez" Wells

On March 21, IOM signed an agreement with the United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) to jointly renovate traditional "kahrez" wells throughout Iraq.

Kahrez wells are man-made irrigation channels that have traditionally been used to deliver irrigation and drinking water in hot, arid regions throughout the Middle East and Africa. Using gravity, kahrez wells deliver underground water to the surface without the need for pumping.

This joint UNESCO-IOM project seeks to revitalize and develop rural communities suffering from drought, food insecurity, displacement, and poverty by restoring kahrezes as clean and reliable sources of water.

IOM has recruited an international consultant with extensive kahrez experience to manage this new project in the governorates of Erbil and Sulymaniyah. The consultant visited Iraq in March to make an initial assessment of the condition of kahrezes in select northern villages. Following the assessment, the consultant worked with IOM monitors to develop a "short list" of wells suitable for renovation.

Restoration work on the kahrez wells will take place over the next several months, providing much-needed sources of water for the coming summer.

S.A.I.T. Offers First Aid Training for UN Staff Entering Iraq

The Security Awareness Induction Training (S.A.I.T.) programme has signed a partnership agreement with the Jordanian Red Crescent to provide First Aid training courses in Amman on behalf of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI).

The First Aid training courses will be offered to S.A.I.T. participants as an optional supplement to their security training course. First aid training is a vital skill in the high risk and unstable environment of Iraq.

S.A.I.T. was established in February 2004 as a induction programme for the staff of UN agencies and implementing partners operating in Iraq. The four-day S.A.I.T. training course covers a range of subjects including convoy and travel procedures, communications, explosive, mine and ambush awareness and avoidance, medical evacuation procedures, hostage survival, hijacking and incident management.



The S.A.I.T. course has become mandatory for all UN staff entering the country, and since the programme's inception over 3,500 staff members have been trained in preparation for their deployment. In 2008, S.A.I.T. began operating in Islamabad, Pakistan, and the programme plans to further expand its global capacity in the future.

Between January and March, six S.A.I.T. courses and two S.A.I.T. refresher courses were conducted in Amman, training a total of 95 participants.

IOM Completes Border Management Assessment in the Kurdistan Region

Following up on a previous border management assessment conducted in November 2009, IOM Iraq, in cooperation with an external expert, conducted a second assessment of border management in the Kurdistan region in March.

The assessment was conducted under the framework of Phase III of IOM's Capacity Building in Migration Management Programme (CBMMP), which aims to expand previous capacity building achievements in central and southern Iraq to the Kurdistan region, with the goal of strengthening effective migration management throughout Iraq.

Together with CBMMP staff, the external expert visited the Haj Omran border crossing point with Iran and met with officials at four Bureau of Migration and Displacement (BMD) offices involved in the return of Iraqi families from Iran. The purpose of the assessment was to examine the current immigration and inspection procedures for international travelers and evaluate the training and migration information management processes at border checkpoints overseen by the BMD.

Utilizing the information gathered in the assessment, IOM will issue a report with recommendations to assist the Government of Iraq in aligning its immigration practices with international standards. The report will identify specific equipment and training needs for BMD staff and ultimately allow for the government to more effectively and efficiently manage border flows and meet the needs of Iraqis returning from Iran.



PHSS Helps Returnee's Business to Grow in Basrah

IOM Iraq's Programme for Human Security and Stabilization (PHSS) provides livelihood assistance for Iraq's vulnerable un- and underemployed displaced, returnee, and host community families.

One recent PHSS beneficiary, Mr. Yosif, is working hard to ensure the success of his new business. Mr. Yosif is originally from Basrah, but the poor security situation and lack of work there forced him and his family to relocate to Mosul. Life in the new city was very difficult, and Yosif struggled to find enough work as a carpenter to feed his family of five children, as well as his sister and mother.

When the situation in Basrah improved, Yosif decided to return home with his family. Rebuilding your life after having been away can be very difficult. To help Yosif and others like him to reintegrate successfully back into their communities, PHSS provides grants and other assistance for motivated individuals to start and cultivate their own small business.

Yosif applied for and received a PHSS grant that provided the essential equipment and materials he needed to start up his own business selling plastic goods. The business has given Yosif the opportunity to secure a regular income for himself and his family. Since receiving PHSS assistance and starting his business, Yosif can now afford to rent his own small house, provide three meals a day for his entire family and send two of his children to the local school.

Mr. Yosif's business is developing well. He is employing a full-time worker and hopes to increase his workforce. With increasing customers, demand for Mr. Yosif's products is high. "I intend to expand my business and I've seen new products in Baghdad that my customers have been requesting. I have more and more new customers since receiving the PHSS grant," Yosif said.

IOM 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 242 staff inside Iraq, and 123 in Amman. Staff in Iraq operate out of three hubs: Erbil, Baghdad, and Basrah, as well as sub-offices throughout the country.

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, and the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI).



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Note:
Beneficiary names have been changed.