

UNICEF SYRIA EMERGENCY RESPONSE: Situation Report # 11 Displaced Children and Women from Iraq May 2008

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

In preparation for a programme expansion to Aleppo, in coordination with UNHCR and partners, UNICEF staff visited Primary Healthcare Centers (PHCs), SARC clinics and schools in Aleppo last week to assess the situation and identify needs. Meetings were held with the General Health Directorate and the Provincial Directorate of Education for Aleppo to gather information regarding the status of Iraqis and discuss modalities.

UNHCR announced on May 3rd a forthcoming survey that will gather information on non-registered Iraqi refugees throughout Syria. Little information is currently available on this group, so UNHCR's survey aims to address this knowledge gap and reveal the needs of this community.



An Iraqi girl takes her exam at Chahid Hossein Zain School in Sahnaya, Rural Damascus, which is supported by the European Union and UNICEF.

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UNHCR signed agreements with INGOs Premiere Urgence and Danish Refugee Council. Other INGOs, International Catholic Migration Commission (ICMC), Medecins du Monde, and French Islamic Relief, are still negotiating Memorandums of Understanding with the Syrian Arab Red Crescent.

The INGO International Medical Corps (IMC) opened its first comprehensive primary healthcare clinic in Sayeda Zeinab on May 25th.

UNICEF has recruited a field monitoring team, made up of staff seconded through the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) standing agreement. This team has put a mapping system in place to enable efficient monitoring of all Humanitarian Support programming and provide feedback and technical advice for real time improvement of interventions.

Although UNHCR / WFP food distribution to Iraqi refugees was interrupted at the main site in Damascus, distribution continued in other governorates throughout the month of May. Efforts to identify a new location for the Damascus-based food distribution site are ongoing by SARC, and distribution is expected to restart in mid-June.

DISPLACED CHILDREN & WOMEN FROM IRAQ

UNHCR has thus far registered 203,982 displaced individuals from Iraq as refugees in Syria. In an effort to expand registration and ease the process for refugees who have difficulty travelling to Damascus, UNHCR has set up mobile registration units in Aleppo, Hassakeh, Homs, Tartus and Deir Ezzor. This should clarify the extent of refugee movement outside of Damascus.

As of May 31st, UNHCR identified 7,029 at-risk refugee children or adolescents from Iraq, 81 unaccompanied or separated children, and 4,754 women at risk.

In 2008 alone, UNHCR identified at least 200 survivors of sexual and gender based violence (SGBV) among refugees from Iraq.

Since February 2007, UNHCR submitted 11065 Iraqi refugees for resettlement, however, only 1112 individuals actually departed for resettlement countries (584 to the US, 144 to Canada, 112 to Sweden, 100 to the Netherlands and the rest to other countries). The Iraqi government recently gave \$195 million to encourage Iraqi refugee return; however, UNHCR continues to support resettlement as conditions in Iraq are not yet conducive to return.

Two refugee camps at the Iraq-Syria border host the majority of Palestinian refugees from Iraq as they await a solution: 726 Palestinians in Al Tanf camp* and 1,962 in Al Waleed camp. In addition, 309 Palestinians from Iraq are isolated in Al-Hol camp in northeast Syria with temporary admission status. Humanitarian protection and basic assistance are provided mainly by UNRWA, UNHCR, UNICEF and the Palestinian and Red Crescent, as well as several NGOs, but physical and psychological conditions remain strained.

116 Palestinian refugees from Iraq in Al Tanf camp were temporarily resettled to Chile in April 2008. An agreement was finalized with Sudan for the resettlement of an additional 2000 Palestinians from Al Tanf and Al Waleed camps to Khartoum. Resettlement discussions concerning the remaining Palestinians from Iraq are still underway with additional countries.

UNICEF RESPONSE

Health & Nutrition

UNICEF's health and nutrition support focuses on several elements: improving public health systems by establishing a nutrition surveillance system and sustaining routine and supplementary immunizations; working in primary healthcare through preventive health services, training and community awareness; and, reaching out to the most vulnerable populations, including many of the underserved areas where Iraqi refugees reside.

- **Nutritional surveillance system in place in 20 Primary Healthcare Centers. To date, over 900 Iraqi children under five have been screened.**
- **Trained 12 trainers on nutrition surveillance for expansion to at least 80 more health centers (MoH, SARC, UNRWA) this year.**
- **400 health workers trained on primary child healthcare from 20 MoH clinics.**
- **Routine immunization, and two mopping-up immunization campaigns, carried out serving both Iraqi and Syrian families.**
- **Emergency medical supplies pre-positioned to cover 40,000 people.**

Nutrition Surveillance Update: UNICEF conducted eight training courses on nutrition surveillance, two for Quneitra and three for Damascus and Rural Damascus Primary Healthcare Centers (PHCs); training courses covered a total of 140 health workers. Additionally, new nutrition surveillance cards are being printed for these PHCs to use in monitoring. UNICEF continues to conduct supervisory visits to all 20 PHCs to ensure quality surveillance.

UNICEF and International Medical Corps (IMC) met to plan for the training of IMC health workers on nutrition surveillance to be implemented in the recently opened IMC clinic in Sayeda Zeinab. UNICEF has provided IMC with educational health materials, such as posters and CDs, to be used in the clinic.

UNICEF recently released 52 cartons of high energy biscuits for distribution in SARC/UNICEF Child Friendly Spaces and PHCs in Sayeda Zeinab. These biscuits will be distributed among Iraqi families as a nutritional supplement for children.

* UNHCR is currently advocating to find alternatives for additional Palestinians from Iraq who wish to move to Al Tanf camp. According to UNHCR, many Palestinians say that they are running out of financial resources and would prefer to join the camp, as assistance is provided and there might be a chance of resettlement.

Immunization: UNICEF provided expertise and support for WHO to procure seven cold chain rooms required by Ministry of Health (MoH).

Water and Sanitation (WASH): UNICEF conducted supervisory visits to primary schools to assess the condition of WASH facilities from a health point of view in preparation for the school rehabilitation this summer. The ICRC model for provision of drinking water in schools was assessed and will be standardized as part of UNICEF's school rehabilitation package, initially agreed with MoE to be applied in 140 schools.

An Iraqi boy is weighed for nutrition purposes at a UNICEF/MoH PHC in Jaramana.

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Community Mobilization: The Syrian Association for Health Planning and Development (SAHPD) and UNICEF are conducting community mobilization efforts to increase use of Al-Hosseiniyya and Al-Diabiyya, two PHCs in Sayeda Zeinab. 24 Iraqi community volunteers go door-to-door in Sayeda Zeinab, visiting 205 Iraqi families and 45 Syrian families, and educating them on basic healthcare practices for children, healthy environmental practices, and PHC services available to them. The families visited thus far were selected according to the following criteria: location in Sayeda Zeinab, presence children under five, and presence of pregnant women. The volunteers gathered information on: the ages and health status of children, mother's health, the number of children enrolled in school, and type of residence. High energy biscuits provided by UNICEF were also distributed.

Following these community mobilization efforts UNICEF met with volunteers and Iraqi families to evaluate the outcome. As a result of this outreach, the number of Iraqi patients in the two PHCs increased from three to thirty per day.

Trainings: Preparation is underway for a Training of Trainers that will be conducted for health workers on the Integrated Management of Childhood Illness (IMCI) during June 2008. IMCI is a program present in 5 PHCs, which are supported by UNICEF in areas with a high concentration of Iraqi refugees. UNICEF seeks to improve IMCI services by offering training to these health workers.

Education

UNICEF's education support focuses on building capacities of schools to adequately respond to the influx of Iraqi refugee children. Priority actions include: enhancing learning environment through provision of education supplies and equipment, making schools a healthier environment for children through upgrading access to water and sanitation facilities and conducting basic rehabilitation, and promoting educational quality through application of Child Friendly School framework.

- UNICEF has provided 140 Syrian schools in Rural Damascus with educational supplies and water & sanitation (WASH) equipment benefiting 111,345 primary school-aged children, including 20,000 Iraqi pupils (out of a total of 47,500 enrolled Iraqi students).
- Training on Child Friendly School framework has been conducted for 60 schools (targeting 7 members per school).

Education Supply Distribution: In the context of the EU-funded UNICEF project, supply delivery for the 100 phase-2 schools is completed for 31 of the 35 items. Delivery began for the 183 phase-3 schools at the end of May with items such as TV sets, white boards and fans. Until now, supply delivery has focused on schools in Damascus and Rural Damascus; however, schools of Quneitra and Aleppo will soon follow. It is expected that nearly one third of the 35 items will be delivered before the end of the current school year.

Child Friendly School Initiative: 28 information/sensitization and basic training workshops on the child friendly school (CFS) framework were conducted, April 25-May 23. 7 team members were invited from each of the 140 schools of the EU-funded MoE-UNICEF project. The rationale behind this training is to equip a critical mass of school staff with understanding, skills and knowledge about the CFS framework so that they can act as a steering group for the school improvement plan. This group can promote the CFS idea among their colleagues and be the catalyst for tangible and meaningful change in schools. The training effort will be pursued during the summer to cover the 183 schools of phase 3.

School Rehabilitation: In coordination with the Provincial Education Directorate of Rural Damascus, UNICEF recently agreed to fund the rehabilitation of 220 schools, to be implemented this summer by the Provincial Directorate. The rehabilitation will include the installation of a drinkable water scheme and the repainting of all target schools. The two partners have agreed on a strong field monitoring mechanism that will allow timely implementation and ensure quality. UNICEF is currently assessing the feasibility of rehabilitating an additional 103 schools in Damascus, Quneitra and Aleppo.

Child Protection

UNICEF's child protection support focuses on creating a protective environment for children and adolescents, and building capacities on national and community levels to effectively run and sustain this environment.

Over 12,000 children have benefited from UNICEF's psychosocial support activities.

Open Day Activities: Two Open Day Activities were organized at CFSs by SARC/UNICEF volunteers during the month of May: one in Sayeda Zeinab on May 10th (attended by 113 children) and one in Jaramana on May 31st (attended by 89 children). Additionally, more than 200 children benefited from an Open Day Activity held in Al-Tanf camp under the supervision of Palestinian Red Crescent/UNICEF volunteers on May 30th.

Al Tanf Update: UNICEF sent three recreational kits to the two CFSs in Al Tanf camp; the kits contain toys and art material for the benefit of more than 300 children. Other supplies are in pipeline for these CFSs, along with water and sanitation facilities, enabling these spaces to open in two weeks. UNICEF is partnering with UNRWA, the Palestinian Red Crescent, and the NGO Movimondo, to extend programming in Al Tanf camp for children and adolescents.

Iraqi boys playing chess in the Child Friendly Space set up in Douma UNHCR registration center, Rural Damascus.

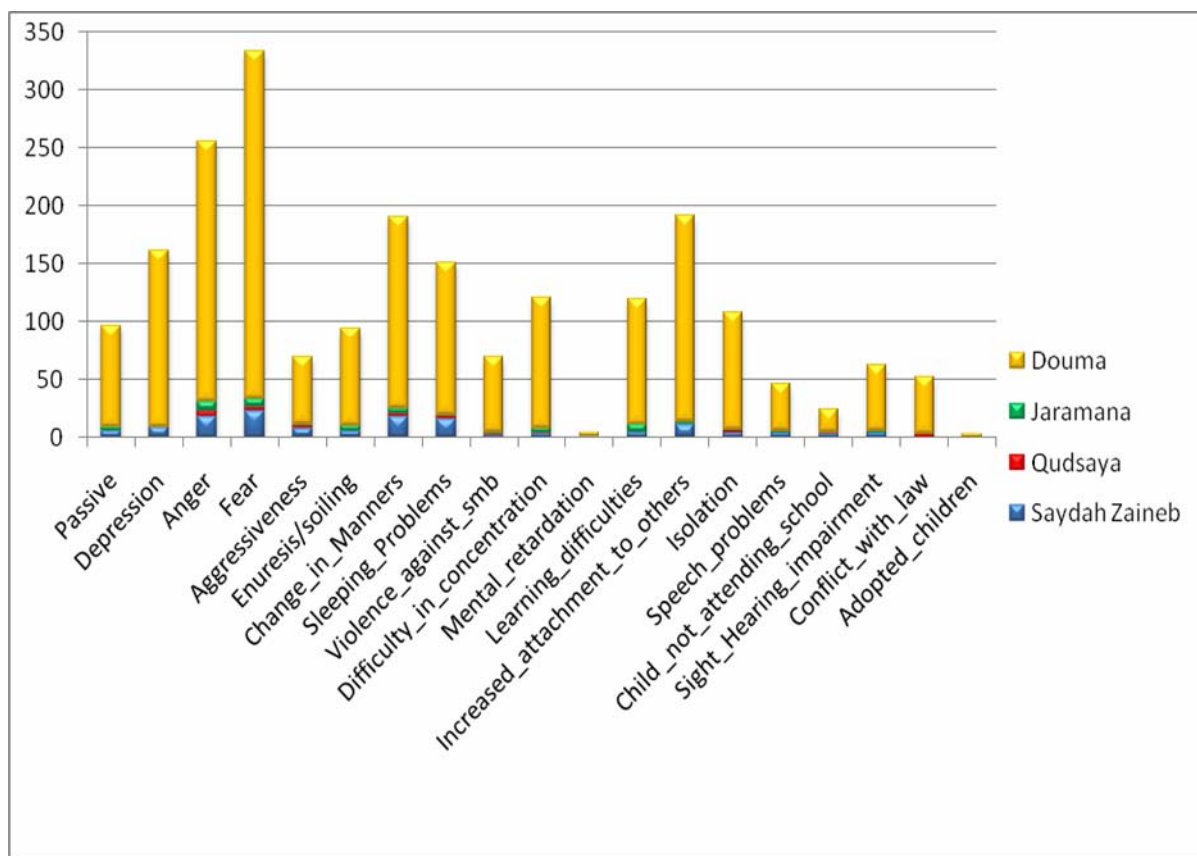
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Child Friendly Spaces: During April, a total of 934 children were hosted in the UNICEF-SARC Child Friendly Spaces (CFSs), 415 females and 519 males. The SARC/UNICEF volunteers who work in the CFSs were trained in the use of the Behavioural Checklist, a tool used for identification of the most vulnerable cases. These volunteers also participated in the first team building exercise in order to share their experiences and enhance their collaboration.

Fortified high energy biscuits will be distributed in the CFSs, beginning in June, to supplement child nutrition.

Child Protection and Emotional Well-being indicators* gathered at UNICEF-SARC Child Friendly Spaces. Indicators are drawn from the 934 children who were hosted at CFSs during April 2008.



* Only cases meeting specific criteria (need of psychological or psychiatric assessment, parental consent) will be referred to Child Protection & Psychosocial Support Units.

Multidisciplinary Child Protection & Psychosocial Support Units: Three Multidisciplinary Units are up and running in SARC clinics in Mezzeh, Sayeda Zeinab, and Jaramana. 18 cases, identified at the Child Friendly Spaces, were referred to these units for assessment during the last week in April. The cases were diagnosed as follows: one conduct disorder, two learning disabilities, four post traumatic stress disorders, and two speech problems. The rest of the cases were classified as non-pathological with symptoms such as aggression and fear. Diagnosed cases are offered additional support from various sources.

Interagency Collaboration

UNICEF is participating in the ongoing drafting process of a Joint UN Strategic Framework, a document that will be finalized for use in June 2008.

UNICEF plays an active role in multiple ongoing coordination mechanisms including: UN Interagency Working Group on Iraqi Refugees, UNHCR Information Sharing Coordination Meeting (with donors and INGOs), Education Coordination Meeting (UNICEF holds secretariat), Health Coordination Meeting, PSS & Mental Health Coordination Meeting, Child Protection Coordination Meeting and other thematic groups including: SGBV, UNHCR Registration Center, Al Tanf Camp, and Community Center Development.

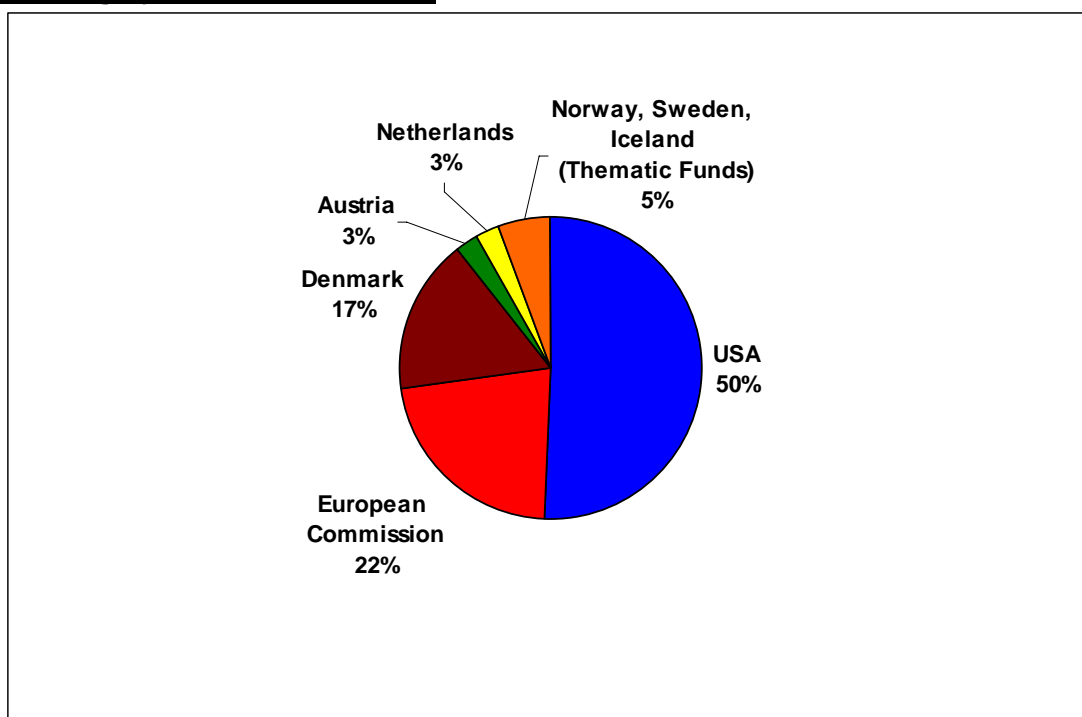
OPERATIONS

Funding Status

Appeal	Required Funds (US\$)	Received (US\$)	Requirements (US\$)
Joint Health Appeal	7,383,000	3,931,765	3,451,235
Joint Education Appeal	19,260,000	14,378,959	4,881,041
Urgent Needs Appeal	2,500,000	93,460	2,406,540
Total:	29,143,000	18,404,184	10,738,816

*Also received and spent \$2.5 million in UNICEF Emergency Programme Funds (EPF) during 2007.

Funding by Donor Contribution



For further information please contact:

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For UNICEF's response in 2007, please refer to:

The UNICEF Humanitarian Action Report at www.unicef.org/har08