

# ***IRAQ: EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE PROGRAMME***

25 April 1997

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*situation report no. 1*

*period covered: January - March 1997*

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*Although the first food imports under the UN /Iraqi government "food for oil" deal have arrived in Iraq, it will be some time before there is any real effect on the health and nutritional status of the population. The Federation/Iraqi Red Crescent Society are therefore going ahead with their nutrition programme for 50,000 malnourished children and maintaining, as planned, food distributions and deliveries of medical supplies to hospitals .*

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## ***The context***

While UN sanctions against Iraq remain firmly in place, essential foodstuffs are beginning to arrive in the country, under the long-awaited implementation of Security Council Resolution 986. Since distributions are only just beginning, it will be some time before any improvement is seen in the nutritional status of the population, of which a large section is currently at risk. The Federation/Iraqi Red Crescent are continuing to assist the most vulnerable in Iraq in accordance with the plan outlined in the Emergency Appeal 1997. The plan's main feature is the provision of supplementary food to 50,000 malnourished children throughout the year. It also foresees the provision of basic medical supplies and drugs to 22 hospitals and food aid to 46,000 families until such needs are met by the Iraqi government's "986 programme".

## ***Latest events***

Although Iraq began exporting oil under Security Council Resolution 986, the "Oil for Food" deal, in December 1996, months went by before food supplies started arriving in the country. The delay was due to the time taken to approve commercial purchasing contracts. The Government of Iraq started distribution of wheat flour in the centre and south on 2 April. By 15 April, according to the WFP, 200,000 metric tons of food commodities had been delivered to Iraq, representing just under 10 per cent of the total amount needed under the Government's "Distribution Plan". This allocates USD 804.6 million for the procurement of sufficient food to provide 2,030 Kcal per person per day to the entire population of Iraq.

Although more than 30 contracts for medical supplies and equipment were recently approved by the UN Sanctions Committee, it is expected there will be a long wait before these essential drugs

and equipment arrive in Iraq. Under the Government Plan, USD 210 million have been allocated for medical supplies and equipment.

No significant change in the food commodities market prices nor the exchange rate between the Iraqi Dinar and US Dollar was seen in Iraq during this period.

## ***Red Cross/Red Crescent action***

### **Nutrition programme•**

A supplementary food aid programme for malnourished children -- which will be the main Federation/IRCS relief activity in 1997 -- started on 15 February. Initially, until the operation is firmly established, beneficiaries will be limited to 23,000 children under the age of five who have been referred by hospitals or primary health care centres. The food is being distributed each month to the children's families by the 18 IRCS governorate branches throughout the country. A total of 196 MT of wheat and soya blend (WSB), 98 MT of dry skimmed milk (DSM) enriched by vitamins A and D, 49 MT of sugar and 70 MT of oil was delivered to the branches for the first distribution.

The nutrition programme will supplement the government's "986" programme by providing protein and other nutritional elements not included in that programme. A nutritionist, posted in Baghdad since last December, is overseeing the Federation programme.

Health education is an essential part of the nutrition programme. A leaflet has been produced for the mothers of the malnourished children giving information on the causes of malnutrition and advice on child feeding.

Ration cards, referral notices and beneficiary lists have been printed and distributed to the branches and hospitals. Information meetings on the programme were held for all Iraqi Red Crescent branch personnel. Regular branch/ monitoring visits are being made by all Federation delegates.

### **Food•**

Phase 8 of the food aid programme that is being continued from previous years was carried out successfully (in three distributions) in November 1996 and January/February 1997. It was funded partly by ECHO through the National Societies of the Iraqi Consortium for South and Central Iraq and partly by Swiss Red Cross and Federation Secretariat funds for the North. The number of beneficiaries reached was 46,000 families or 343,000 persons.

In March and April, due to a shortage of funds, the number of beneficiaries had to be reduced to 23,000 families -- those with children in the nutrition programme. This two months' food aid was funded by the Netherlands Government.

The Netherlands Red Cross signed a XEU 3 million ECHO contract in March on behalf of the Iraqi Consortium. This ECHO funding, plus additional German Government funds for a three-month supply of rice, will cover the operation at its scheduled level of 46,000 families during the period May - July.

### **Medical aid•**

No distributions of medical kits were scheduled for this reporting period. The next distributions will take place in June.

### **Additional aid•**

The Red Crescent of United Arab Emirates donated 200 MT of dates to the IRCS through the Federation. The Qatar Red Crescent donated 50 MT of wheat flour and 50 MT of sugar.

Following a large movement of internally displaced persons in northern Iraq, the Federation provided IRCS branches in the area with 2,500 kerosene heaters, 3,500 blankets and 10,000 sleeping mats with funds made available by the Swedish Red Cross.

#### **Media Coverage●**

In March the Head of the Regional Delegation in Amman and the President of the Iraqi Red Crescent Society gave a joint press conference in Baghdad on the operation and the latest developments. Widespread media coverage was obtained.

#### **Training●**

A warehouse workshop was conducted for all IRCS branch warehouse managers. A significant improvement was made in monthly reporting procedure, bringing uniformity to the branch warehousing system. A manual for warehousing has also been developed.

## ***Contributions***

Please see attached list (Annex 1).

## ***Conclusion***

Although UN Security Council Resolution 986 is now being implemented, we remind donors of the conclusions of the Federation's needs assessment mission last October: that it will take some time before the expected benefits of food and medical imports reach the population and that until this happens hardship and ill-health are likely to increase. These findings make it imperative to maintain the operation at its scheduled level and, until firm evidence is available of improved conditions, within its scheduled time-frame.

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