

IRAQ: EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE PROGRAMME

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situation report no. 2

period covered: April - June 1996

While preparing for possible adjustments to the operation following the signing in May of the "oil for food" agreement between Iraq and the United Nations, the Federation/Iraqi Red Crescent are maintaining the distributions of food and medical supplies throughout Iraq, as scheduled in the 1996 Emergency Appeal. In the second quarter food aid reached 480,000 people in all parts of the country, rather than the targeted 350,000, thanks to a large food donation. Medical supplies scheduled for distribution in the fourth quarter are being delivered earlier so that hospitals can benefit from them before Resolution 986 takes practical effect.

The context

Some four million people in Iraq have been put at risk by food shortages and a health care system that is close to collapse. In order to alleviate the hardship, the Federation/Iraqi Red Crescent are assisting the most vulnerable in accordance with the plan outlined in the Emergency Appeal 1996. This provides for basic medical supplies and drugs to 22 hospitals and food aid to 46,000 families (350,000 people) nationwide.

Latest events

A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the UN Secretariat and the Government of Iraq on the implementation of Security Council Resolution 986 was signed on 20 May in New York. The resolution allows Iraq to sell oil and to purchase food and medical supplies with part of the proceeds. (See Federation Information Bulletin No 1 issued on 23 May). However, it is widely expected that it will take some time before the resolution produces practical results. In the meantime, the Federation/Iraqi Red Crescent intend to continue their operation until the end of 1996 as scheduled in the Emergency Appeal, while closely monitoring developments. The Federation will undertake a needs assessment in August that will take into account the possible impact of the implementation of Resolution 986.

Red Cross/Red Crescent action

Food

Phase 6 of the operation, funded by the Netherlands RC/ECHO, and supplemented with food contributed by the United Arab Emirates (UAE) took place in April, May and June, reaching 61,000 beneficiary families or 480,000 persons. Each family received a 34 Kg food package, instead of the planned 27 Kg.

Additional commodities remaining from the UAE and the Qatar donation (see below) will be used to assist 500 IDP families in the Kirkuk area and to replenish emergency stocks within the IRCS. An additional 40 MT. of flour has been distributed to 4,000 IDPs in Basrah.

To supply this phase, a total of 6,613 MT. of food commodities were delivered to 18 IRCS branches. The last month's distribution was completed in June. The implementation of phase 6, in spite of the additional caseload, went very well.

German RC funded food deliveries for Phase 7 of the operation, covering the months of July, August and September, continue as planned. Distributions will provide assistance to 350,000 persons nationwide. Supplies covering the needs for July were despatched in June. The despatch of supplies for the remaining two months will begin on 15 July.

In addition to the monthly food distributions, food aid is being planned for children hospitalised for malnutrition and their families. These families will receive a package of food for a certain period of time after the child's discharge from hospital, to prevent a relapse. Operational procedures and a detailed action plan are being formulated.

Medical aid

Phase 6 medical aid includes a new kit which contains anaesthesia drugs, blood bags and X-ray films (Extra kit), in addition to the two existing types of medical kits; i.e. Basic Disposable Kit (BDK) and Cost Effective Drug Kit (CEDK). These kits are funded by ECHO/Netherlands Red Cross for the Central and Southern Governorates and by the German Red Cross for the Northern Governorates. Fifty BDKs had been delivered to 22 hospitals by the second week of June.

Twenty-five CEDKs and 46 Extra kits arrived at Aqaba sea port on 29 May. As this was the first time the CEDKs were shipped into Jordan with refrigerated containers and transferred into refrigerated trucks for their onward travel to Iraq, greater quality control could be ensured. With minor difficulties, customs clearance was obtained in Aqaba and the consignment forwarded inland. All kits were well received in Iraq and quickly despatched to the designated beneficiary hospitals in the latter half of June.

Because of the anticipated effects of the signing of the MoU, the planned medical aid for phase 7 (Jul. - Sept.) and phase 8 (Oct. - Dec.) will now be distributed more rapidly, so that this assistance can be fully utilised before resolution 986 becomes effective. Five new medical kits have been formulated, namely Emergency Paediatric Kit (EPK), Emergency Maternity Kit (EMK), Cost Effective Drug Kit (CEDK), X-ray and Infusion Kit (XIK) and Anaesthesia Drug Kit (ADK). Purchase of these kits is being undertaken by the National Societies of Great Britain, the Netherlands and Switzerland with their own funds and the Federation Secretariat with Japanese Red Cross funds. The delivery of these kits to hospitals is scheduled to take place in September.

Additional aid•

UAE RCS donated 80 kgs. of specialised medicines valued at over 50,000 USD.

Qatar RCS donated 100 MT. of wheat flour, 50 MT. of sugar, 11 MT. of vegetable oil and 1,000 cartons of liquid milk. 50 hospitals received 20 cartons of milk each.

Bahrain RCS donated 3,080 Kg of medicines, which were transported to IRCS in June.

Polish Red Cross donated 25 Kg of medicines.

Map International donated 18 MT. of medicines and milk.

Bridges to Baghdad donated 17 MT. of dry foodstuffs, medical equipment and baby supplies.

Non-material support•

The fourth workshop on Relief, Development and Disaster Preparedness was held 4 - 6 May in Baghdad and attended by presidents and administrators from 18 branches and headquarters staff. The third day of the workshop focused on Disaster Preparedness.

Monitoring•

During this reporting period, two Relief Administrators were replaced. A replacement Relief Co-ordinator who is permanently based in Baghdad, took over in May.

Outstanding needs

Response to the Emergency Appeal 1996 is now very satisfactory. The only outstanding need is funding for the three-months food distribution in phase 8, for which ECHO has been approached by the Netherlands RC.

Contributions

Please see the attached list of contributions/pledges made in 1996. It includes substantial non ear-marked funds pledged by the National Societies of Denmark, Japan and Sweden which are essential for covering monitoring and administrative costs of the operation. In addition, such funds will help ensure a smooth transition from the current operation to new programmes which may be formulated after the needs assessment. A programme for the Italian Government contribution of ITL 1 billion will be identified in due course.

Conclusion

Although the food and medical distributions continue to alleviate the daily suffering of many Iraqis, particularly children, the signing of the MoU between the Government of Iraq and the United Nations has important implications for the future of the operation. The needs assessment mission which the Federation has scheduled for August will assess the impact of the resolution and identify possible new programmes which could be undertaken once the resolution begins to have tangible effects in Iraq.

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