

OPERATIONS UPDATE



International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
Fédération Internationale des Sociétés de la Croix-Rouge et du Croissant-Rouge
Federación Internacional de Sociedades de la Cruz Roja y de la Media Luna Roja
الاتحاد الدولي لجمعيات الصليب الأحمر والهلال الأحمر

IRAQ: HUMANITARIAN EMERGENCY

16 March 2006

The Federation's mission is to improve the lives of vulnerable people by mobilizing the power of humanity. It is the world's largest humanitarian organization and its millions of volunteers are active in over 180 countries. For more information: www.ifrc.org

In Brief

Appeal No. 05EA026; Operations Update no. 1; Period covered: 10 November 2005 to 1 March 2006.

Appeal History:

- Appeal launched on 10 November 2005 for CHF 16,750,000 (USD 12,000,000 or EUR 10,000,000) to assist 60,000 families or 350,000 beneficiaries for twelve months.
- Some of the activities from the previous appeal (Iraq: Humanitarian Crisis – Post War Rehabilitation; Appeal no. 08/03) are to be completed by the end of March 2006.

Appeal coverage: 28.5 %. *Please click [here](#) to go directly to the Contributions List available on the Federation's website.*

Related Emergency or Annual Appeals:

Iraq: Humanitarian Emergency Appeal. (Appeal no.05EA026) For details, please go to the website at http://www.ifrc.org/cgi/pdf_appeals.pl?05/05EA026.pdf

Iraq and Neighbouring Countries: Humanitarian Crisis Revised Emergency Appeal. (Appeal no.08/03) For details, please go to the website at http://www.ifrc.org/cgi/pdf_appeals.pl?03/0803revised.pdf

For further information please contact:

- National Society: Mazin al Salloum, Secretary-General, phone: 00964-7901-389-742; e-mail: ircs_int_dep@yahoo.com
- Federation delegation: Gurgen Boshyan, Head of Delegation, phone: 00962-79-504-2922; fax: 00962-6569-4556; email: gurgen.boshyan@ifrc.org
- Federation regional department: Evgeni Parfenov, senior regional officer, phone: 0041-22-730-4325; fax: 0041-22-733-0395; email: evgeni.parfenov@ifrc.org

All International Federation assistance seeks to adhere to the Code of Conduct and is committed to the Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response (SPHERE Project) in delivering assistance to the most vulnerable.

For support to or for further information concerning Federation programmes or operations in this or other countries, please access the Federation website at <http://www.ifrc.org>

Background

During the reporting period, the referendum on the new draft constitution of Iraq; the general parliamentary election which took place on December 13-15; and the dialogue between the political parties for the establishment of a new unity government have been the major issues on Iraq's agenda. The country continues to remain fragile in terms of security, as in the past three months more than forty civilians have been killed almost every single day. Despite the growing optimism, there are still continuations of low intensity kidnappings, bombings and assassinations in several parts of the country.

The recent increase on market prices of gas and oil and essential commodities has further worsened the lives of the socially vulnerable people. According to a report from the Central Statistics Bureau of Iraq, the data for of January 2006 has shown that there is a 22% increase in the inflation rate, 27 % increase in fuel and transport costs, and 26.4% in foodstuffs which include the most essential and basic commodities.

In addition, there is a general increase on the number of widows, orphans and beggars in the streets of the main cities like Baghdad and unemployment has passed well over the 50 % mark,. To add to the worsening living conditions in the country, bird flu has been detected in northern Iraq with over 21 suspected cases and one confirmed death. This new development has created additional panic and has become one of the main public health concerns in the country.

In the midst of all these current socio-political and security events, the Iraqi Red Crescent has remained committed to serving the most vulnerable people in the country. In order to alleviate the suffering of the vulnerable population, the Federation regional delegation in Amman and the Iraqi Red Crescent (IRCS) have launched an emergency appeal (no.05EA026) on 10 November 2005 to assist 60,000 socially vulnerable families (350,000 people) during 2006. The international community is urged to give support to the appeal in order to realize the planned emergency response and to build the capacity of the IRCS to be able to fulfill its humanitarian mission.

Operational developments (November 2005 to February 2006)

The IRCS continued to work and remain as one of the strongest local organisations in the country, which won the confidence of the public and local authorities. Its integrity and neutrality, as well as operational capacity, have formed the basis for the trust of the United Nations (UN) and relevant government agencies. In effect, it has been chosen to monitor the national immunisation campaigns run by the collaborative efforts of the Ministry of Health (MoH), World Health Organisation (WHO) and United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).

During the reporting period, the main activity has been the procurement and distribution of the winter assistance kits for 25,000 vulnerable families. At the same time, building the capacity of the society has been an integral part of every joint activity conducted with the Iraqi Red Crescent –from relief to development.

Disaster Management

The two decades of war (1980s & 1990s), international sanctions imposed for over thirteen years on Iraq (up until 2003) and the recent war with the allied forces destroyed the country's economy, administrative and social infrastructure. The rehabilitation of national industry requires billions of dollars investments and many years of hard work. Lack of progress in the reconstruction and the rehabilitation of the country's vital economic systems and political institutions have affected the Iraqi citizens from having access to the basic social and public services.

In addition, the ongoing insecurity including suicide/car bombing, arbitrary killing, robbery, kidnapping, etc. has worsened the extremely fragile situation. The combined effects of these events have left dozens of thousands of Iraqi families without jobs and/or uneasiness to run private business. The growing number of Iraqis that are unable to support themselves is over 7 million people. According to the recent United Nations Development Programme/World Food Programme reports, more Iraqis are unfortunately becoming dependent on relief handouts or survival rations from the government and/or support from the international agencies.

1. Disaster Response

Overall goal: To address vulnerability of the deprived groups of the population severely affected by political instability, economic decline and collapse of the social security structures.

Objective: To ensure that 50,000 families, identified according to clearly established criteria as the most vulnerable across the country, are assisted through the distribution of the winter kits containing the most essential relief goods.

Winter assistance to 25,000 vulnerable families (January 2006):

This year's winter has become difficult to most vulnerable families and particularly to single parent families, elderly, widows, disabled and/or displaced people. The problems have been growing after the recent increase in the prices of fuel and heating oil, which is immediately reflected on the prices of other essential commodities.

Iraq is a country with a very hot summer and a very cold winter climate. The night temperature in the recent two months has been dropping to the freezing point in many parts of the country. Supply of electricity is limited to 2-3 hours a day. Combination of these factors, with high rate of unemployment, socio-economic collapse and insecurity, has left thousands of poor families on their own in the face of the harsh winter weather of 2006.

Activities: The IRCS has designed an "emergency winter kit" to help these vulnerable families with non-food relief items. It contains the most essential relief items which help the families to cope with the hardships of winter months without heating fuel, electricity and other essential public services. The following essential items are included in the kit for distribution to the 25,000 target beneficiaries:

List and quantities of non-food relief items locally procured for distribution

Items	Quantity	Distribution
Blankets	100,000	4 units per family
Stoves/oil	25,000	1 unit per family
Lamps/oil	25,000	1 unit per family
Jerry cans for water	25,000	1 unit per family
Jerry cans for fuel	25,000	1 unit per family
Kitchen sets	25,000	1 unit per family
Heaters	25,000	1 unit per family

Distribution plan: Progress of the assistance that targeted 25,000 vulnerable families in the 18 governorates is shown in the table below (as per 27 January 2006):

Governorate	Target beneficiary	Delivery of relief items	Distribution to Beneficiaries	Remark
Baghdad	5,000	Full delivery	Completed	Capital
Diyala	1,500	Full delivery	Completed	Branch
Kirkuk	1,500	Full delivery	Completed	Branch
Wasit	750	Full delivery	Completed	Branch
Saladhin	1,250	Full delivery	Completed	Branch
Najaf	1,500	Full delivery	Completed	Branch
Ebril	1,250	Full delivery	Completed	Branch
Sulaimaniya	1,250	Full delivery	Completed	Branch
Dahok	750	Full delivery	Completed	Branch
Nenva	1,500	Full delivery	Completed	Branch
Anbar	1,500	Full delivery	Completed	Branch
Kerbala	1,500	Full delivery	Completed	Branch
Babil	750	Full delivery	Completed	Branch
Muthana	750	Full delivery	Completed	Branch
Thi Qar	750	Full delivery	Completed	Branch
Diwaniya	750	Full delivery	Completed	Branch
Misan	1,250	Full delivery	Completed	Branch
Basra	1,500	Full delivery	Completed	Branch

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By the end of February (2006), 100 % of the targeted beneficiaries have received their share. Some of the delays have been directly related to security difficulties in some of the troubled areas and/or governorates.

Selection Criteria: The selection criteria have been established by the IRCS, in cooperation with the relevant ministries which are responsible for social welfare programs, and the branches, in cooperation with local authorities, have been directly responsible for the selection of beneficiaries in the respective governorates.

Beneficiaries have been selected according to the following selection criteria:

- family without supporter, or income or shelter (more than 5 persons).
- family without supporter, or income or shelter (less than 5 persons)
- family without supporter, or shelter but has an income (more than 5 persons)
- family without supporter, or shelter but has an income (less than 5 persons)
- family without supporter but has an income and shelter (more than 5 persons)
- family without supporter but has an income and shelter (less than 5 persons)
- Family with supporter without income or shelter (more than 5 persons).
- Family with supporter without income or shelter (less than 5 persons).

Each branch has designed coupons to facilitate distribution and to avoid duplications or miss use of aid. Distribution did not take place unless the family representative submitted a copy of the food ration card and a copy of the local residency card which contained data on all family members.

Procurement Process: Procurement of all items required for the emergency kits took place in Iraq and was done in accordance with the Federation's standard procedures. It was organised and monitored by the joint procurement committee consisting of the Federation Delegation staff in Baghdad and the IRCS representatives. 12 local companies submitted their offers with all necessary documentation. Results of tender were submitted to the Federation Secretariat for final approval.

Program Monitoring: The monitoring of the winter assistance for 25,000 families in Iraq has had two main aspects: performance of the suppliers, when the Federation staff monitors the delivery of the items to the branches, and distribution to the beneficiaries with the special attention to their compliance to the defined criteria of vulnerability.

The Federation monitoring visits were accomplished during the first phase of distribution, which covered 50% of the target beneficiary families. The second round (currently in process) of monitoring visits should cover 80% of beneficiaries. Since some of the potentially dangerous regions in Iraq (for instance Anbar Governorate) are impossible to reach without high personal security risks, it was arranged with the Iraqi RCS Disaster Management Unit that the volunteers of the concerned governorates do the monitoring and the Federation would get the written and visual information from them.

Challenges & problems: The security situation in some governorates (like Anbar) has not improved and it is still not possible for the Federation's field officers to be physically present at all distribution sites. Monitoring visits of the Federation's field officers in January 2006 were particularly difficult because of the road blocks and other travel restrictions necessitated by the election campaign and important religious manifestations (the celebrations of Al-Ghadeer Day, the new Hijri Year and the Holy month of Muharram). These events have restrained the entrance to some of the southern governorates and entrance even to some of them was completely denied (like Najaf and Kerbala).

2. Disaster Preparedness

Objective: Enhance the disaster management capacity and technical skills of the staff and volunteers; develop response plan and mechanisms for emergency information, communication and resource mobilisation.

Activities: The following activities were undertaken during the reporting period:

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2.1 Sphere "Training of Trainers" workshop: The workshop has been organised between 23 and 28 January 2006 for 28 staff members of the Iraqi RCS headquarters and branches, and several members of the Federation's Iraqi delegation and the Jordanian Red Crescent. As a follow up of the Sphere training, an action plan was planned to be finalised in April 2006, with activities aimed at the dissemination of the Sphere standards in the branches in 2006 and beyond.

2.2 Rapid Damage Assessment (RDA): RDA program training has already been completed in 6 governorates in Iraq. The teams in the respective branches are responsible for carrying out needs assessment in events of local disasters. As a result, the respective branches/regions have developed the capacity to assess and provide better response plans and services. The work that has so far been accomplished will be evaluated under the supervision of the Federation's Disaster Management Department, in order to produce a final report.

2.3 Vulnerability and Capacity Assessment – Report compilation and preparation for field level implementation: The draft assessment report from the at-risk communities in the three branch areas (Al-Rasheed, Al-Maamel and Al-Huseiniya) has been compiled. It has been agreed to come up with concrete recommendation to extend program implementation (of the VCA) in 5 more governorates.

2.4 Revision to Action Plan 2006:

During the Sphere training, the IRCS and the Federation delegation decided to refine the action plans and the log-frames of the disaster management training programmes planned for 2006. The new action plan and priorities will include additional training and emphasis on Rapid Damage Assessment (RDA) in three governorates and Vulnerability and Capacity Assessment (VCA) training in 5 governorates; will provide training in logistics/procurement; warehouse automation; camp management; water and sanitation; emergency communication and use of equipment. In addition, main activities will also include the provision of equipment and furniture to the branch offices to facilitate implementation of the disaster preparedness activities at branch levels.

3. Rehabilitation and Reconstruction

The ongoing activities of this section are funded from the previous appeal, which will all be completed by the end of March 2006 (For details, please see the operation update no.18 on the 08/03 appeal).

4. Health and Care

Substantially increased needs in the community based health care, and improved IRCS health service provision have been defined amongst the national society's major priorities. The scope of these activities include a substantial expansion of the Community Based First Aid training, continuation of the involvement in health education on common diseases, in immunisation campaigns, HIV/AIDS and psychosocial support programmes (PSP).

Programme Goal: Reduction of endemic health problems of vulnerable populations in the 18 governorates through the development of community organizations, and the active participation of trained IRCS volunteers in the health intervention, promotion and psychosocial support activities.

4.1 CBFA and HIV/AIDS

Objective: The IRCS has an increased capacity in planning, organizing and implementing regular First Aid and Health Promotion (HIV/Aids) courses as a prerequisite to increased participation of its volunteers in the national health intervention programmes.

Activities: The CBFA action plan for 2006 is being revised, and the branch level activities shall be reactivated (provided that security situations improve) by mid-April 2006, with clear strategic direction to the future of the programme.

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4.2 Immunization campaign

Objective: The IRCS has an increased capacity in planning, organizing and mobilizing volunteer participation in National Immunization Campaigns (NICs), in close collaboration with the Ministry of Health and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).

Activities: The mass immunisation campaigns or activities usually take place in spring and autumn, so no major events have been conducted during this reporting period.

4.3 Psychological Support

Objective: The IRCS is engaged in providing psychological support to children, widows, elderly and deprived families. The IRCS psychosocial support facilities in Basra, Suleymania governorates and in Baghdad are fully operational.

Activities: The volunteers have collected stories from the youth and community members in regard to traditional coping mechanisms. Few of the pertinent and timely stories will be selected and printed in 2006 for distribution to youth and community members.

Preparation of action plans: An action plan has been developed in two pilot Branches - Basra and Baghdad- and preparation for project implementation has just started in January 2006.

5. Organisational Development

To improve its overall performance, the IRCS recognized the need to work on some basic organisational development (OD) issues, and in the last year has addressed the following: strengthening the Society's legal base, rationalization of management and operational structures, increased human and financial resources, branch development, and recruitment and retention of youth and volunteers to ensure effective service delivery.

Programme Goal: The IRCS has provided effective and efficient services to vulnerable groups on the basis of its clear legal identity, in full compliance with the fundamental Red Cross and Red Crescent Principles and its own Constitution, and through a well-developed organizational and management infrastructure.

5.1 Financial systems development

Objective: The IRCS has enhanced its organizational and operational capacity at all levels.

Activities: Automation of unified accounting system has started in the IRCS headquarters. A local company has been hired by the IRCS, which has started installation of a computerized accounting system with the following features:

- Multi language and multi currency applications.
- Ability to work in a network system - capable of linking to the international network, hence facilitating transfer of documents between the headquarters and the branches.
- Use credit card system to cash employees' salaries.

During the reporting period, computers (hardware setting) are reformatted and reinstalled and the software of the financial system & the settings are reinstalled. In addition, the accounting department has started a training course for its employees with the help of the company that developed the program and installed the computers. The system has been fully put into practice in the headquarters since 18 January 2006.

5.2. Youth and volunteer development:

Objective: The IRCS has developed and implemented an effective youth & volunteer management system.

The IRCS has more than 2500 volunteers who have been regularly involved in various services and programs. Special attention has been given to strengthening its organisational structure, human resources, system and procedures.

Activities:

The main activities during this reporting period included:

- a) The IRCS local branch in Baghdad has opened an Internet café in early February that has terminals for 25 people.
- b) In addition, the procurement of office furniture and computers has been completed for 12 out of 18 Youth offices in the regional Branches.
- c) The needs assessment of the lonely elderly houses in Baghdad has been completed as part of the youth plan of action for 2006. The Baghdad branch youth volunteers are in process of developing a detailed plan of action for delivery of services to lonely elderly, which will be implemented starting from April 2006.

6. Federation Management and Cooperation

During the reporting period (November 2005 to March 2006), the Federation delegation continued to operate from the premises of the Regional Delegation in Amman/Jordan. Local level (Iraq) coordination has been carried out by the IRCS with support from the delegation's Baghdad office.

The International Federation delegation, the Iraqi Red Crescent and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) signed a Memorandum of understanding (MoU) in the middle of November 2005. The MoU mainly relates to the Management and Coordination of the Movement's response activities in Iraq in 2006. The agreement includes a mechanism which provides for the regular monthly meetings. The purpose of such meetings is to review the progress of program implementation. It is one of the mechanisms agreed upon to coordinate the Movement's tasks and roles in Iraq. It provides operational information, including priorities and an overview of the humanitarian needs; reviews security issues; brief information on Partner National Societies (bilateral or multilateral) initiatives in Iraq; and strengthens efforts of the Movement's actions in Iraq.

The Federation delegation in Amman is also a member of the Iraqi Emergency Working Group (EWG), a consortium of international agencies and non-governmental organisation (NGOs) directly or indirectly operating in Iraq. It is facilitated by the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) and is a forum for exchange of current operational information, situational analysis on developments in Iraq; and coordinates pledges or support/assistance needed to the affected populations in the war torn country.

The Federation's request for signing a status agreement with the government of Iraq is still pending with the Iraqi Foreign Ministry. All relevant documents have been submitted to the Ministry.

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