

UNICEF HUMANITARIAN ACTION UPDATE

IRAQ

17 February 2009

Voting in Governorate Council elections takes place with hopes that successful candidates step-up efforts for Iraqi children

- Measles a growing threat to children in Najaf, Sulaymaniyah, Erbil, Missan and Dahuk
- Infrastructure strained due to violence and neglect continues to jeopardize the welfare of Iraq's children
- Poverty continues to be a key factor preventing children attending school



1. ISSUES FOR CHILDREN

The local elections of 31 January were held successfully in 14 of Iraq's 18 governorates. Millions of voters turned out in an environment free of violence, with early results indicating a likely victory for Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki's coalition in ten provinces. Such a result would represent defeat for the followers of Shiite cleric Muqtada al-Sadr, as well as for the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq, a powerful Shiite party in the present government. It is hoped the final outcome will pave the way for increasing investments into the future of Iraq's children, who have borne the brunt of the last five years of conflict and uncertainty.

Measles remains a threat to the health of Iraq's children, with the Ministry of Health (MoH) announcing an outbreak of measles infections in at least nine governorates throughout the country totalling over 6,000 cases since early 2008. The MoH noted the possibility of this number increasing in the coming weeks, requesting all parents to vaccinate their children. The MoH is developing a plan to revitalize the Expanded Program of Immunization (EPI) and raise coverage rates. The outbreak is starting to spread to five additional governorates (Najaf, Sulimaniyah, Erbil, Missan and Dahuk), placing over 800,000 children in those locations at risk.

Schools visited in Diyala, including Al Farazdaq and al Ramla primary schools in Sadiya sub district, are experiencing serious over-crowding, in one case with 600 students housed in one building. Students only have access to well water which is not suitable for drinking, and five children were reported hospitalized with illnesses related to water contamination. Kahn Beni Sa'ad Primary and Intermediate school in Ba'quba suffers from lack of access to safe drinking water for its 410 students. The building also lacks functional sanitation facilities.

In Dahuk governorate, it has been observed that latrines in schools visited in the governorate are in poor condition and are often closed due to lack of servicing. A large percentage of schools do not have access to clean drinking water. Due to these conditions, students are often obliged to leave the premises during school hours to access safe water and proper sanitation facilities.

In Tameem, more than 900 children have been reported begging on the streets in the city of Kirkuk. Around half of this number is IDP children, with the remainder being children obliged to work to support their impoverished families. Up to 100 orphans are included in this number.

Recent returnees to Failaq and Kirkuk suffer from a lack of adequate shelter and water / sanitation facilities. Primary schools in Failaq lack adequate heating and furnishing, and PHCs are insufficiently provisioned with medical supplies.

Children in Mala-Qara and Faris-Bawa villages near Makhmur, in Erbil, were reported to be suffering from water-borne disease. Capacity of local health facilities is currently inadequate to provide proper treatment.

Initial assessments in Kandinawa and Gwair (Erbil) indicate that the majority of residents in these areas are living in very poor conditions. The current drought has affected their ability to produce food and access to drinking water is insufficient.

According to a local NGO partner, four female suicides have been recorded in Sulimaniyah within the first half of January 2009, three of which were girls under the age of 13. The partner reports that there was evidence of domestic abuse in each case.

A focus group discussion held with women and girls in Rizqary in late 2008 revealed that most girls who do not continue education after age 13 cite social constraints and a lack of understanding and importance within the household about the needs of their female children to enjoy equal access to education opportunities.

In Anbar, recent assessments in remote and sparsely populated areas such as Rawa and Barwana have revealed chronic poverty and a reliance on agriculture to generate income. Recent fighting has caused some damage to basic infrastructure, but the most significant influence on basic services has been decades of neglect. The children in these harsh locations still suffer from underinvestment in basic services including inadequate drinking water systems and overcrowded schools.

Mutheaq and Sdekiyah, locations closer to Ramadi, have suffered more from chronic neglect than direct violence, but recent government interventions have improved the situation for children in terms of basic

service provision. However, gaps remain and the children of these communities still face a tenuous situation in terms of health and sanitation. There is an almost uniform absence of social services catering to the physical and psychosocial protection of children and women in these communities.

Assessments in Radhwaniya, west of Baghdad, show a deeply troubling situation for children. Initial data indicates less than 40% of children under two have been immunized against measles, up to 20% of children under five are underweight, and only 3% of households have a safe and reliable source of drinking water. Analysis of assessment data is ongoing.

Villages in Tal Abta, Nineveh, are inhabited by a predominantly rural population suffering from neglect as a result of remoteness and drought. While data is still being collated, it is clear that the 11,000 children of this area face numerous challenges to their development. Clean water is scarce, with the only reliable source being tankers traveling a treatment plant 100km away. Most are forced to rely on primitive wells and open sources of water. Health facilities serving this area are extremely limited and there are no formal mechanisms for the people to access healthcare. The majority of children commence work on completion of primary school, and there are no secondary schools functioning (although one is currently being constructed). There are no protection services in the community and awareness of children's and women's rights is strongly colored by traditional values and beliefs.

There has been a stabilization in the recent IDP crisis in Mosul, with 1,325 of the 1,884 displaced families having now returned to Mosul.

In Basra, an initial assessment in an area referred to as the Old Naval Command has identified 250 families living in deplorable conditions. Most inhabit old barracks, with no sewage system, no access to safe water, and an absence of health facilities and other public services, including sanitation. Further assessments are ongoing in collaboration with UNHCR and local authorities to explore sustainable alternatives for this population.

2. UNICEF RESPONSE: ACTIVITIES, ACHIEVEMENTS AND CONSTRAINTS

In collaboration with NGO partners (IMC, Mercy Corps, Intersos and Relief International) and government counterparts, UNICEF is currently investing over US\$8 million in humanitarian interventions in 59 communities across the country. This action is in locations where families are experiencing acute vulnerability as a direct result of conflict, epidemic and/or natural disaster. The 59 targeted communities have a catchment population of over 1.4 million people. The geographical scope of this action will expand progressively as the assessment-response cycle continues. Full details of each area-based intervention are available on request.

Paradoxically, as recent security improvements have allowed greater access to Iraq's most affected and neglected communities, the extent of the impact of conflict is only now becoming visible. It is clear that pockets of severe deprivation persist, and while some of these are directly linked to the recent conflict, others are a vestige of a quarter of a century of war and hardship.

A selection of the efforts of UNICEF and its partners to reduce the vulnerability of children in the locations targeted is summarized below:

Babil

- Ongoing rehabilitation of four water treatment plants in cholera-prone areas serving 40,000 people, including 19,920 children.
- Commencing rehabilitation of three schools serving 2,970 children in the most cholera-affected district in Iraq in 2008, including hygiene awareness campaigns.
- Planning for vaccination awareness campaigns in affected areas in collaboration with the DoH.

Baghdad

- Commencing rehabilitation of 11 schools and corresponding awareness campaigns.
- Developing a protection awareness curriculum for the training of social service providers covering early marriage, child recruitment and sexual abuse.

- Coordinating with the DoE to nominate teachers to participate in protection training.
- Creating an awareness campaign coloring book covering health and nutrition, hygiene and sanitation, and education.

An increase in violence in the al-Niba'ee area of Meshahdah has delayed the implementation of one planned school rehabilitations.

Nineveh

- Construction on the Tel Usqof Primary School for Girls and the Tel Usqof PHC delivery room will begin as soon as appropriate government approval is received.
- Current activity has been limited by both a school holiday and the January 31st elections.
- Distribution of student and teacher kits and recreation kits to 10 schools with 3,892 children is to begin the second week of February.
- The IDP situation in Nineveh is being monitored through contacts with the DDM for Nineveh.

Anbar

- Water rehabilitation projects in Al Angur, Abu Jidea, al Mejeer and Dafar have been completed and delivered to the DoW
- Health awareness campaigns in al Angour, Abu Jidea and al Mejeer and DoH mobile health teams have been scheduled to launch on February 16th in collaboration with DoH.
- Hygiene awareness campaigns in targeted schools have been scheduled to launch February 19 in collaboration with DoE.
- Protection awareness campaigns will cover issues including violence against women, early marriage and women's rights.

Muthanna, Najaf, Thiqar, Qadissiya, Basra

- Rehabilitation / construction of four schools in Al-Shaham primary school in Muthanna.
- Rehabilitation of Al- Anfuan Primary School in Basrah has commenced.
- Commencement of basic health awareness campaigns in Qadissiya and support for a new drugstore in a Muthanna hospital.
- Ongoing implementation of the extension of the water network to Al Ata village and rehabilitation of compact water units in Qadissiya and Najaf, in conjunction with hygiene awareness campaigns
- Ongoing protection training for over 100 women and various community groups in numerous locations, focusing on Child Rights and GBV, as well as the development of an awareness campaign against violence in schools in collaboration with the local DoE.
- Distribution of relief items to 250 families living in the Old Naval Command, in Basrah, in cooperation and coordination with MoDM and other actors including UNHCR.
- Distribution of teaching and learning materials to Al-Bashaer Primary School, Qadissiya.
- Distribution of hygiene materials to 570 vulnerable families in Qadissiya in areas targeted for sustainable water interventions.

Erbil, Sulimaniyah, Dohuk

- Ongoing rehabilitation of four primary schools and two local water networks.
- Community-based training initiated in multiple locations covering themes including GBV, child labour, and health and nutrition.
- Hygiene awareness and support to DoH vaccination campaigns in Makhmur and Qarach are nearing completion.
- Five hygiene awareness campaigns throughout Dohuk and in Pshdar sub-district of Sulaymaniyah are commencing.

Wassit

- Teaching and learning materials have been distributed to primary schools in Al-Bashaer and Jassan communities in cooperation with the DoE.
- In coordination with four national NGOs, awareness campaigns focusing on protection issues were launched, with training provided for participating NGOs

Kerbala

- With support from UNICEF and partner, three vulnerable communities were targeted by the DoH for a mop-up vaccination campaign against measles (Aon in Al-Husseinyah sub district, Al-Askary and Al-taka communities in Al-Hur sub district). The targeted number of children to be vaccinated in this campaign is 12,100 children, to be completed by early February.
- Implementation of a health awareness campaign for 50 women commenced in two locations (Al-Askary and Al-Taka). Sessions were held by doctors nominated by the DoH, with each scheduled to continue for six days.

3. FUNDING REQUIREMENTS AND RECEIPTS

As outlined in the Iraq CAP and HAR 2009¹, UNICEF Iraq requires \$29.46 million to respond to immediate humanitarian needs in Iraq. These funding requirements only reflect the needs for Iraq while the HAR and CAP 2009 also cover the needs of Iraqi refugees in neighbouring countries. By 31 January 2009, UNICEF Iraq had received \$3,081,901, equivalent to 10.46% of the total required amount.* However, a substantial amount of CAP funding committed in Q4 2008 has been able to be rephased to 2009, ensuring the capacity of UNICEF Iraq to continue planned humanitarian action without interruption.

Table 1: Funds Received Against CAP/HAR 2009 as of 31 January 2009**

UNICEF Iraq Humanitarian Funding Received by Sector (CAP / HAR 2009)				
Sector	Requirements	Received	Shortfall	% Shortfall
Health and Nutrition	\$8,138,000	\$851,341	\$7,286,659	89.54%
WASH	\$10,680,000	\$1,117,268	\$9,562,732	89.54%
Education	\$5,008,000	\$523,902	\$4,484,098	89.54%
Protection	\$5,634,000	\$589,390	\$5,044,610	89.54%
TOTAL ***	\$29,460,000	\$3,081,901	\$26,378,099	89.54%

* An amount of \$9,701 was received in early January 2009 and was erroneously included in 2008 receipts in the previous Iraq HAU. Funding of \$3,072,200 was received from DFID in December 2008 against CAP 2009. This amount has been included in the table above as it was intended for programming exclusively in 2009.

** Funds received against this appeal will be used to respond to both the immediate and medium-term needs of children and women as outlined above. If UNICEF should receive funds in excess of the medium-term funding requirements for this emergency, UNICEF will use those funds to support other, under-funded emergencies. The duration of the appeals in the HAR is from 1st of January 2009 to 31st of December 2009.

**** The total includes a maximum recovery rate of 7%. The actual recovery rate on contributions will be calculated in accordance with UNICEF's Executive Board Decision 2006/7 dated 9 June 2006.

Further information on UNICEF Iraq's humanitarian programme can be obtained from:

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