ANNUAL REPORT 2010
IRAQ COUNTRY PROGRAM
Letter from the IRC Country Director

Dear Friends

Sectarian violence, displacement and poverty continue to make life difficult for millions of people in Iraq. The effects of conflict on infrastructure, rule of law, education, livelihoods and delivery of public services have been particularly devastating. While most Iraqis have been affected by conflict, women and children remain particularly vulnerable.

However, 2010 saw potentially transformative events take place in Iraq. The Iraqi people went to the polls to elect a new government. A new National Development Plan, setting the priorities for development in Iraq, was developed. Together with the Iraqi government, the Kurdistan Regional Government and the international community, the IRC made great advances in improving the lives of thousands of people.

The IRC assists people in their quest to rebuild their lives. IRC Iraq’s specific added value is in promoting the rule of law, women’s empowerment, quality education and the provision of emergency assistance. By building the capacity of national staff and partners, the IRC contributes to the development of the human resource base both in government and in civil society. In 2010, IRC Iraqi staff and local partners received support to develop further their skills in the technical areas above as well as in operations support.

Looking ahead, the IRC has much to accomplish. The IRC will transition its programming efforts from direct service delivery to post conflict development programming, increasing efforts to boost local service providers through partnerships. The IRC will continue to support the government of Iraq and United Nations efforts to implement the National Development Plan, particularly improving services to the most vulnerable in Iraq. The protection of women and children will be a key component of IRC’s future programs.

Although IRC field staff feel that the security situation has significantly improved in recent years, at times both national and international staff take great risks to perform their job. My heartfelt thanks go out to all IRC staff for their courage and dedicated efforts to bring about positive change for the people of Iraq.

Aidan Goldsmith
IRC Iraq Country Director
The IRC in Iraq in 2010: a snapshot

The IRC has been active in Iraq since 2008. In 2010, the IRC was operational in seven out of 18 governorates in Iraq: Baghdad, Anbar, Salahaddin, Babylon, Erbil, Duhok and Sulaymaniyah. The target population of IRC’s operations consists of vulnerable returnees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) and conflict-affected communities. Vulnerable women and children are at the forefront of IRC’s efforts in Iraq.

In 2010, the IRC’s programs spanned four sectors: Protection; Child and Youth Protection and Development; Women’s Protection and Empowerment; and Emergency Assistance.

Under its Protection program, the IRC manages protection assistance centers (PACs) which provide legal advice to IDPs and returnees to support access to entitlements. The Child and Youth Protection and Development program improves children’s access to education and quality school facilities.

Under the Women’s Protection and Empowerment sector, the IRC combats violence against women and improves the capacity of local communities to provide services to survivors. Emergency Assistance activities include building latrines and rebuilding damaged homes while providing a source of income for day laborers.

Raz ALP School for Girls, Rachel Unkovic/The IRC

2,379 individuals received legal advice
19 schools rehabilitated
over 1,300 women and girls participated in psychosocial activities
5,279 people benefited from shelter repairs

IRC Iraq FY 2010 Funding by Donor

- OFDA
- UNHCR
- AusAID
- SV
- Other
Displaced and formerly displaced individuals, uprooted by seven years of war and sectarian strife in Iraq, often lack access to social services and information on their basic rights.

Protection Assistance Centers

The IRC runs Protection Assistance Centers (PACs) in Baghdad, Anbar, Babylon, and Salahdin. The centers, run in cooperation with UNHCR, provide legal services to returnees and IDPs and operate from mobile units to ensure maximum outreach to those most in need of assistance. Teams of lawyers and social workers provide legal assistance, disseminate information about rights and entitlements and collect data on the most urgent needs of Persons of Concern.

PAC teams conduct advocacy on a range of topics including eviction, detention, salaries, and access to basic services, including electricity and water, food and kerosene distribution.

PACs also coordinate with other IRC projects, for instance by referring vulnerable families to IRC shelter teams for assistance in rehabilitating their homes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PAC in figures - Key achievements in 2010</th>
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<tr>
<td>• 2,668 individuals provided with legal counseling and advice</td>
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<td>• 750,810 individuals monitored through interviews with community leaders, providing critical information on the protective environment</td>
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<td>• 830 individuals seeking civil status documents represented before courts and administrative bodies</td>
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<td>• 15 cases of arbitrary detention positively resolved</td>
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<td>• 80 advocacy interventions on a range of issues including eviction, detention, access to basic services, electricity and water, food distribution and access to financial assistance</td>
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<td>• 6,590 brochures distributed with information on human rights and access to government assistance and benefits, increasing individuals’ awareness of their rights and entitlements</td>
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Spotlight on eviction

Displaced families, especially those living in public buildings and on government land, face significant challenges in accessing assistance and available services. Most public buildings are not connected to main service networks for water or electricity.

Many children in such locations have dropped out of school to work in order to meet their family’s needs. Families continue to be harassed and are faced with the constant threat of eviction.

The PAC teams advocate on behalf of these families to prevent eviction until alternative comprehensive solutions are identified.
Makhmur camp

The IRC monitors protection issues in Makhmur refugee camp, a camp for Kurdish refugees from Turkey who have resided in this location since 1998. Through UNHCR funding, the IRC provides targeted assistance to vulnerable camp residents, increases rights awareness through rights workshops, and facilitates psychosocial activities for women and youth.

Key achievements - last year IRC:

- Provided “newborn kits” to 106 vulnerable pregnant women; each kit contained a bag, a blanket, shampoo and soap
- Provided clothing to 240 orphans
- Provided sewing machines and materials for the camp sewing center, where women learn valuable income generating skills
- Provided crutches, walking sticks and wheelchairs to 55 camp residents with disabilities
- Outfitted the camp kindergartens to improve child friendly spaces and provided equipment to the primary and secondary schools to enhance learning opportunities and encourage students to remain enrolled in school

Case study

Zainab, aged 20, is an orphaned girl displaced from Baghdad-Doora in 2008. Her parents were killed during sectarian violence, leaving behind her and her four siblings. Her young brother is disabled and needs constant care for his well-being: Zainab has no stable residence or source of living. In mid-2008, Zainab applied for assistance under the Ministry of Labour and Social Services (MoLSA) which would enable her to receive payments made to orphans but she was unable to follow up on her case as the procedure is long and complicated and she is illiterate.

A PAC lawyer met Zainab through a visit to UNHCR’s Return and Integration Centers. The lawyer visited the main MoLSA directorate that issues the list of beneficiary names to the branch offices for payments and found that Zainab’s name was not in the list. The lawyer established that Zainab had renewed her Iraqi ID card after applying at MoLSA in 2008 and the new ID card had created doubts as to the authenticity of the application. Consequently, Zainab’s payments were put on hold. The PAC lawyer assisted Zainab with applying using her renewed identification documents, and after a few weeks Zainab received her first payment. In addition, the directorate offered to reimburse all payments since her application in 2008.
Years of violence and instability have taken a toll on Iraq's children and youth, losing years of safe, quality education and subsequently the opportunity for social advancement and future employment. Access to regular schooling in Iraq has been limited by displacement, insecurity, school closures, school destruction and degradation, and turnover of teaching staff, with insufficient efforts being made at community levels to improve either formal schooling or alternative education opportunities.

In response to this crisis, IRC's education programming in Baghdad and in the contested areas of Northern Iraq, works to improve children's access to quality and safe education by rehabilitating schools, providing accelerating learning classes for children who were previously out of school, training teachers and establishing Parent Teacher Associations (PTAs).

In the past year, IRC:

- Supported Accelerated Learning Program (ALP) classes attended by 433 students in Baghdad
- Provided packages of school supplies to 1,970 students and stationary to support school administration for 17 schools
- Trained 76 teachers from both Baghdad and Northern Iraq
- Supported the reactivation/establishment of 17 PTAs in schools
- Completed rehabilitation and construction work in 19 schools and constructed 3 ICT centers

Case study

Zhyian was a young girl when she lost her father and was forced to leave school to help raise her three siblings. A young mother of two at 18, Zhyian often worried how she could raise her children to be smart and strong when she herself had never finished school.

Zhyian heard about a school called Talafer ALP School for Girls. “ALP” stands for “Accelerated Learning Program” and refers to courses specially designed to assist school drop-outs in re-entering the education system. Not everybody in Zhyian's family supported her desire to return to school but her husband told her, "go to the school if you want. Maybe you will be a doctor one day."

Zhyian is now in the 3rd level of Talafer ALP School for Girls. She is a twenty year old mother of two, she is a wife, and she is a student. Some days her oldest son will accompany her to the school library. Zhyian enjoys reading different books and then telling her children about all she has learned.

Zhyian says that she will continue with school until she can become a teacher. She is grateful for all the assistance her classmates and her teachers give her on a day-to-day basis. She wants to be a teacher so that she, in turn, can help young girls turn their lives around, like Talafer ALP School has helped her.
Focus on training

IRC’s education programing in 2010 included the following workshops:

- **Active Teaching Methods for Teachers** - Delivered to 76 teachers in Baghdad and Kurdistan, the workshop focused on active teaching methods for accelerated learning and remedial classes and on boosting teachers’ psychosocial skills to help children overcome psychological barriers to learning.

- **ICT Skills for Teachers** – IRC has established ICT centers in three schools in the contested areas. This workshop, organized by IRC in coordination with the Kurdistan Regional Government Ministry of Education (MOE) and facilitated by IRC staff and Ministry IT specialists, trained 20 teachers in basic ICT skills, including use of Windows, MS Office and the internet.

- **PTA Training** – The IRC held a workshop in Erbil in August. A number of specialists participated including UN organizations, international organizations, civil society organizations, representatives from the MOE in Baghdad and Erbil, school principals and parents. Participants reviewed and modified the PTA charter and instructions to ensure that they met the needs of both individuals and society and to activate the role of the PTA and improve the environment in Iraqi schools.

**Girls’ Right to Learn**

Many of the female ALP students enrolled in ninth grade are adults or already married. While they will complete ninth grade, most are not willing to continue their education in another school with formal secondary students due to the age differences and cultural resistance.

The IRC is advocating with the Ministry of Education either to start secondary classes in the same ALP school or to transfer the girls to the nearest art institute so that they can continue their education.

**Student awards ceremony**

The achievements of student from 12 schools in Baghdad and the contested areas were recognized at an awards ceremony attended by parents, teachers and Ministry of Education officials. The 27 hard-working students were participants in IRC’s education program which allows children who have been out of school to return to the formal education system. Many of the children in the program are forced to work to support their families while attending school.

The students were delighted to have their achievements recognized. Fatima, a graduate of the program, mentioned that she likes reading science books. “I am glad that I have completed the course and will go to regular school now. My aim is to become a doctor and help my country,” she said.
Women’s Health Program

Services to women and children, particularly in rural areas, are poor and illiteracy rates and levels of violence against women in the Kurdistan Region are high.

The IRC improves the lives of women and girls. The Women’s Health Program promotes access to essential, quality services for survivors of violence and works to change cultural attitudes towards violence against women by engaging gatekeepers such as religious leaders and key community mediators.

On the national level, the IRC offers technical support to strengthen national laws and policies that address violence against women.

IRC local partners participate in global campaign

The 16 Days of Activism for No Violence against Women is a global campaign that lasts each year from November 25th to December 10th.

The IRC’s local partners Al-Mesalla and ASUDA took part by holding community dialogues and seminars in Northern Iraq. 1,070 people participated, including Government officials, high school students and health care providers.

Behavior change communication materials were distributed to government departments, local NGOs, high schools, police stations, women’s unions and women’s shelters in the Kurdistan Region.

IRC promotes women’s access to justice

In 2010, the Kurdish Regional Government sought the technical expertise of the IRC to build the capacity of the Directorate for Following up on Violence against Women (DFVAW) and law enforcement officers.

In order to facilitate women’s access to justice, the IRC worked closely with DFVAW to produce a detailed directive outlining the roles and responsibilities of officials.

The IRC also trained 20 government officials and 69 police officers on concepts of violence against women, law enforcement responsibilities, collecting evidence, interviewing techniques and safety measures for survivors and the officers responding to the cases.

The directive will be disseminated to key stakeholders and IRC will continue to monitor, and train staff at police stations.

In the past year, local partners ensured that:

- Over 1,222 women and girls participated in psychosocial activities
- Over 116 survivors of violence who were referred to them received services
Other highlights:

- The IRC, together with doctors and government, identified the health services available for survivors of violence and assessed the gaps in these services.
- A Memorandum of Understanding to consolidate long term coordination on shelter issues was signed between the IRC and Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs.
- The IRC started coordinating activities with other NGOs and the UN on gender-based violence issues in the Kurdistan Region.

In dialogue with the communities:

- The IRC held 28 community dialogues in six target areas to discuss prevention of violence against women and how to respond to the needs of survivors.
- The IRC held six focus group discussions with 25 community leaders in north Iraq to further explore how community leaders do family mediations at the community level.

Trainings targeted:

- **State officials and health professionals** in order to improve services for survivors of violence.
- **Participants from local NGOs, the DFVAW and Kurdistan women’s unions** to inform them about behavior change and to build their skills in community mobilization.
- **Service providers and first responders** on types, and consequences, of sexual violence, information required by a survivor of sexual violence, referral mechanisms and emergency measures.
- **Partners who deal with psychosocial activities** received refresher courses to ensure that areas covered in the initial trainings were understood.
- **Lawyers** who deal with procedural code issues relating to women’s rights.
- **Trainers from partner organizations** who in turn will train community leaders to adopt more survivor-centered mediation approaches.
In 2010, the IRC was funded by OFDA to implement the: “Emergency Shelter and NFI Support for Vulnerable Persons in Central Iraq” project. This project provided shelter assistance to returnees, internally displaced persons, and vulnerable host-community households in Baghdad, Anbar, and Babylon. Due to effects of the war and sectarian violence, many homes have been damaged and looted.

To help people rebuild their lives, the IRC made critical repairs that included repairs to electricity, water, and sanitation systems as well as more structural rehabilitation of roofs, windows, and walls.

Community leaders helped to identify the most vulnerable families, many of whom were female headed households or households headed by elderly persons or persons with disabilities and had no source of income.

Cash for Work

Through this project, the IRC also provided income generation opportunities for the local community in the target areas by providing Cash for Work assistance to day laborers who performed the essential repairs to the homes.

Case study

Um Ahmed is a 51-year-old widow living with her youngest son, 16-year-old Ahmed, in a much-damaged house in Abu Ghraib. Ahmed’s elder brother left the house four years ago and now is missing.

Um Ahmed and her son survive on charity provided periodically by their neighbors. Their community nominated their house to the IRC shelter team as one most in need of rehabilitation.

The IRC Shelter team visited her house to assess the damages and discovered that, indeed, Um Ahmed’s home was in urgent need for repair, especially the ceiling and roof which leak during every rainfall.

The IRC shelter team offered to help Um Ahmed and Ahmed and made the repairs necessary for making Um Ahmed’s home a better place for her and her son to live.
Water and Sanitation

Gaps in provision of basic services in IDP camps and nearby abandoned buildings create environmental health issues.

Working closely with the municipality and local councils and traditional leaders to ensure that activities are in line with local water and sanitation efforts, the IRC improved the living conditions in the Al-Rahlat and Al-Hasan camps in Baghdad.

The IRC removed garbage and other debris in public areas and ensured that families lived in safer housing and had better access to clean water and functioning latrines.

In the past year:

Through the IRC’s emergency assistance programs:

- 780 homes were rehabilitated, providing safer shelter for 5279 individuals; approximately 30% of the homes are inhabited by female-headed households
- 1,656 people benefited from income from CFW activities
- Over 1300 non-food-items (essential relief supplies) were distributed
- 108 latrines were built
The International Rescue Committee (IRC) responds to the world’s worst humanitarian crises and helps people to survive and rebuild their lives. Founded in 1933 at the request of Albert Einstein, the IRC offers lifesaving care and life-changing assistance to refugees forced to flee from war or disaster. At work today in over 40 countries, we restore safety, dignity and hope to millions who are uprooted and struggling to endure. The IRC leads the way from harm to home.

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