Mission Evaluating Iraq Humanitarian Fund

The interim findings of the Evaluation Mission of the Iraq Humanitarian Fund (IHF) have been released. Evaluators visited Iraq from 10-21 June and conducted interviews with donors, UN agencies, NGOs (local, national and international) and community member focus groups. Key findings included that the IHF had made an important contribution to ensuring a timely and effective response, and that there were improvements in strategic use of funds from 2017 onwards, although there was pressure on the fund to respond to a range of priorities. Overall, evaluators found there was broad support for increased efforts to detect and identify fraud, but noted that such efforts would have implications for IHF implementation and wider humanitarian system in Iraq. The evaluation highlighted implicit tensions in IHF support for Grand Bargain commitments around localization with accountability and risk management considerations.

At the IHF Advisory Board meeting on 20 June, members endorsed the use of the Fund’s Reserve Modality to support the continued work of the NGO Coordination Committee for Iraq (NCCI)’s Bureaucratic Liaison Unit. The Unit supports NGOs in Iraq on registration, visas, tax and importation issues, as well as governmental administrative requirements limiting NGO access and ability to work. Under a reserve allocation in January 2018 the IHF funded the establishment of the unit, and now seeks to ensure greater complementarity between NCCI’s work and OCHA’s broader access work.

Camp Closures and Consolidation

IDP camp closures and consolidations in Iraq have continued in 2019, as humanitarian partners and government authorities collaborate to enable greater delivery of services and ensure that camps meeting minimum humanitarian standards. Thirty camps were closed or consolidated in 2018; during the first six months of 2019, 11 camps were closed and five were partially consolidated, by shuttering unused and under-utilized sections or sub-camps.
Many camps remain substantially occupied, and some camps continue to receive new arrivals. For those who remain in camps, the latest IDP intention survey conducted by CCCM (data released June 2019) indicated that just five per cent of IDPs intend to return to their areas of origin within the coming 12 months.

Verification of household and population figures is occurring in tandem with the closure and consolidation plans. Humanitarian agencies have identified discrepancies in population figures for reasons including unrecorded returns and movements out of camps, as well as suspected intentional inflation of numbers in order to maximize assistance distributed.

In parallel, reports of forced relocations and returns of IDPs are increasing, particularly in Anbar, where some families in Ameriyat at Fallujah (AAF) camp have been given less than 24 hours’ notice to leave by security actors. Protection partners are concerned about threats and intimidation of IDPs, the presence of military actors in the IDP camps, severe restrictions of movement and access to services, such as food and healthcare. Humanitarian partners agree that camp consolidation and closures may be necessary to ensure minimum standards are met, but that any returns must be safe, voluntary, informed, dignified and sustainable.

**Inter-Agency Mission to Tooz**

**Discussion with local authorities on on acute reconstruction needs**

On 25 June 2019, humanitarian partners met with the mayors and councillors of Tooz Khurmato and Sulaiman Baig, Tooz District, Salah Al-Din. An area with acute humanitarian needs and to-date limited humanitarian accessibility, Tooz District officials welcomed partners and stressed the need for humanitarian activity to encourage people to return. Officials stated that the security situation was stable, but that the key reasons many people had not returned to the area related to lack of essential services and infrastructure. As a result, officials invited agencies to have a greater presence in Tooz and guaranteed no impediments to access to enable them to reach affected people and return areas.

**Joint Visit to Sulaiman Baig**

The Mayor of Sulaiman Baig escorted members of the inter-agency mission to his destroyed town, where every building has sustained partial or total damage, including all homes, health care facilities, schools, the youth centre and water treatment plant. Debris removal has successfully eliminated many hazards; however, the town remains unsafe, with UXO throughout and no demining taking place. Despite this, 8,000 people have returned to the town, which lacks water, electricity, health care services and habitable housing. Humanitarian agencies committed to increasing presence in the area and officials have guaranteed to coordinate with agencies, nominating a focal point and committing to creating an environment conducive to humanitarian operations. OCHA in cooperation with partners to conduct a monthly coordination meeting with participation of humanitarian and development actors to establish priorities.

**Fire at Mosul Sulfur Plant**

On 26 June a fire was reported in the agricultural lands near Shura Junction area within the vicinity of Al-Mishraq Sulfur Plant near Mosul. Teams from civil defense, military and police worked to control the fire, which took three days to extinguish. Emergency teams including reinforcements from Baghdad and KRI were deployed to support the response, and ten people from were reportedly hospitalized due to breathing complications. Some residents at Qayara and Hajj Ali IDP camps were affected by smoke from the fire. Camp managers conducted a sensitization campaign on sulfur poisoning, and health partners confirmed that they had adequate stocks to manage and response required.
Rehabilitation of Mosul Dam

On 21 June, Iraqi, Italian and American officials completed a three-year, $530 million rehabilitation of the Mosul Dam. The dam -- Iraq’s largest and among the largest in the Middle East -- is located along the Tigris River some 250 miles from Baghdad. The dam is 371 feet tall and 2.1 miles long and throughout its 33-year history it has provided water supply, irrigation, flood control, and hydropower. However, it was built on a geologic foundation with layers of gypsum, a water-soluble mineral, and due to this design, requires constant maintenance so it doesn’t collapse as the foundation erodes. ISIL occupied the dam for two weeks in 2014, and although it was quickly liberated, the militants damaged equipment, looted supplies and forced a halt to grouting operations for months. Concern over the dam’s stability grew, and the multinational Mosul Dam Task Force began work in September 2016, finally completing its work in June 2019, although maintenance operations will continue in perpetuity.

In May 2019, OCHA fielded a mission to Mosul Dam to assess the emergency preparedness mechanisms for potential flooding. Dam management acknowledged that while the 2018-2019 winter had been among the wettest on record, current dam capacity is more than adequate to absorb any additional inflows. Two preparedness and safety plans are currently in place and a third contingency plan is being finalized in collaboration with the UN. Outflow measures are being closely monitored to mitigate risk to low-lying areas. The dam has sensors installed that are monitored round the clock, and are managed by both Iraqi and international partners. Over 2,000 families that reside in the villages within vicinity of Mosul Dam have now returned.

Enhanced Humanitarian Programme Cycle

The enhanced Humanitarian Programme Cycle Approach will improve the relevance and effectiveness of humanitarian response, increase the quality of needs analysis to inform decision-making and enable meaningful monitoring of needs and results.

After lengthy consultations with partners, the IASC Operational Policy and Advocacy Group (OPAG) has endorsed the enhanced Humanitarian Programme Cycle Approach which will improve the relevance and effectiveness of humanitarian response, increase the quality of needs analysis to inform decision-making and enable meaningful monitoring of needs and results. OCHA Iraq and humanitarian actors will integrate the new guidance with best practice from 2018 to strengthen the usefulness of the Humanitarian Needs Overview (HNO) and the Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP).

The Humanitarian Programme Cycle (HPC) enables the humanitarian community to deliver timely, effective and coordinated humanitarian assistance to individuals most in need. It consists of a continuous and coordinated series of actions to: (1) reach a joint understanding of most acute humanitarian needs based on evidence (see 2019 HNO); (2) jointly design a targeted plan to respond to the greatest needs and to advocate for increased funding for humanitarian priorities (see 2019 HRP, Iraq Humanitarian Fund); and (3) monitor emerging needs and overall response (Periodic Monitoring Review (PMR)).

In Iraq, implementation of the 2019 HRP is underway and planning for the 2020 HPC has commenced. The 2019 PMR is currently being conducted, with publication expected in August. Primary data collection, review and analysis is underway for the Integrated Location Assessment Round IV and the Multi-Cluster Needs Assessment Round VII. Findings will inform the 2020 HNO, planned for completion in the third quarter of 2019.
UN Security Council Visit to Iraq

From 28 to 29 June, the Security Council made its first ever visit to the Republic of Iraq, in a mission co-led by the State of Kuwait, which held the rotating presidency of the Security Council, and the United States of America. Members of the Security Council met with President Barham Salih, Prime Minister Adil Abdul-Mahdi, Foreign Minister Mohammed Ali Al-Hakim, Speaker Mohammed Al-Halbusi, Kurdistan Regional Government President Nechirvan Barzani, representatives from the Council of Representatives, UNAMI and the UN Country Team, and members of civil society and NGOs.

The Security Council welcomed progress towards full formation of the Government of Iraq, with the confirmation of Ministers of Justice, Defence and Interior, and the commitment of the Government of Iraq and the Kurdistan Regional Government to resolve outstanding issues. Members recognized the challenges facing Iraq in transitioning to a post-conflict environment, including delivery of basic services, and underscored their support for Iraq’s continued post-conflict recovery, stabilization, reconstruction and reconciliation efforts to meet the needs of all Iraqis. The Council discussed the humanitarian situation in Iraq and stressed the importance of safe, dignified and voluntary returns of internally displaced people affected by the conflict, including areas liberated from Da’esh/ISIL.

Credit: US Mission to UN
Baghdad, Iraq (28 June 2019)

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