

## Monthly Highlights

December 2009

- ⇒ Following the bombings that took place in Baghdad in December 2009, NFIs were distributed to 855 families in Al Mansour, Dora and Al Qahera districts. Similar NFI distributions to affected families took place following the Baghdad blasts in August and October 2009, thus bringing the total number of beneficiaries of emergency interventions to 1,645 families.
- ⇒ As part of UNHCR's national NGO empowerment (NNGO) scheme, collaborative work in the north began with 15 national NGOs in Mosul and Kirkuk as well as 12 national NGOs in Basrah and Thi Qar. The scheme aims to broaden UNHCR's partner base and increase NNGO capacity through funding, monitoring, project preparation and implementation. UNHCR supports the NNGOs' projects in displaced, returnee and host communities in the water, environment, education and training sectors.
- ⇒ UNHCR's scheme to support emergency response capacity took a step forward in Kirkuk this month with the launching of the Governorate Emergency Cell (GEC) and conducting its first planning workshop in December.
- ⇒ UNHCR completed in December 2009 the verification of the Iranian Arabs (Ahwazi) refugees in southern Iraq which is the first step towards identifying durable solutions for this group.
- ⇒ Sixteen Days of Activism was strongly supported in northern Iraq. The initiative calls for the elimination of all forms of violence and discrimination against women and girls by raising awareness about gender-based violence as a human right and public health issue. The campaign launched by UNHCR Erbil was carried forward to UNHCR PAC partners, PAO Harikar and CDO which in turn conducted 12 seminars against violence in Erbil, Dahuk and Sulaymaniyah.
- ⇒ During the second half of December, UNHCR started the second complementary cleaning project for IDPs' complexes in Chikook. The first cleaning project took place in April 2009.
- ⇒ On 11 December, Qatari Sheikha Hessa Al Thani visited Al Waleed Refugee Camp in western Iraq. The Sheikha was warmly received by the Governor of Anbar, the Head of Sahwat Al Anbar, Sheikh Ahmed Abu Risha, UNHCR and its partner, the International Islamic Relief. After a welcoming reception, the Sheikha visited the camp's facilities, the cultural center where a handicraft exposition by refugees was underway, the camp school and the health center. The Sheikha met with a group of women representing the three refugee communities living there; Palestinians, Iranian Kurds and Iranian Arabs (Ahwazis). The refugees expressed their appreciation of the assistance and efforts exerted by UNHCR and its implementing partner and expressed concern lest they be forgotten in the desert and hope that there will be a plan for a durable solution for them.
- ⇒ UNHCR Iraq downsized its staff in support offices outside Iraq; in Kuwait staff was reduced from 8 to 2 and management of the program in southern Iraq is fully delegated to the Field Office in Basrah. Three staff were also reduced in the Amman Office. Total number of staff for UNHCR Iraq as at 1 January 2010 is 137, almost 80% are inside Iraq.

