



IDPs in the north - © WFP 2003

## ► *Humanitarian Situation*

WFP continues to monitor developments on the ground, although no major food needs are reported. Shortages of water, electricity and fuel remain a matter of concern.

The monthly Public Distribution System (PDS) food distribution for August has been completed or is near completion, countrywide.

Armed conflict in Najaf reached its most intense levels since the war in 2003. Displacement patterns in Najaf were reportedly similar to those of the Falluja crisis in April/May 2004. Populations residing in areas exposed to conflict have moved to host communities within Najaf, while smaller numbers have moved to outlying areas. Numbers have been difficult to assess due to lack of access and support being received by local institutions. Some Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) who do not have family

support or other traditional support networks have found shelter in mosques near Najaf.

Towards the end of the month an agreement was reached to end the violence in Najaf. Rescue workers have begun to evacuate a large number of people to hospitals and to remove bodies from under the rubble of buildings. As the Ministry of Trade (MoT) continues PDS distribution, emergency food assistance is not required in Najaf.

Coordination of relief activities in Najaf, and other crisis areas such as Sadr City, continued under the aegis of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI). Stakeholders, including Iraqi line ministries, NGOs and the UN, are in regular contact via teleconference.

In the south, as a result of increased insecurity, UNHCR stopped convoys of Iraqi refugees returning from Iran.

## ► *New WFP project for 2004-2005*

Between 16 and 18 August, WFP organized a workshop in Amman to discuss with Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education and Ministry of Planning and Development Cooperation officials the implementation of the forthcoming WFP project to provide assistance to primary school children and vulnerable groups. The project aims to build alternative safety net mechanisms to the PDS, to help the most vulnerable, revitalize government programmes and build institutional capacity and national awareness.

The Amman workshop discussed the modalities of the project, including sampling and monitoring methodologies, and the Letter of Understanding between WFP and the Government of Iraq (GOI). GOI identified the school feeding project as a priority to Iraq. The Ministry of Education and Ministry of Planning and Development Cooperation see this as a

strategic project and WFP intervention is to pave the way for GOI to follow in 2005 and beyond. Plans are for GOI to cover 3.5 million school children starting 2005/2006 academic year.

The project is scheduled to commence in September 2004, subject to availability of funds.

### *Support to the PDS*

As at the end of August, the total dispatches into Iraq of WFP-procured

commodities and items sourced through Oil-for-Food contracts renegotiated by WFP reached 1.51 million metric tons out of 1.6 million mt to be dispatched until the end of the operation. The bulk of the operation is expected to be concluded by September 2004.

MoT commenced its own procurement exercise in mid March for commodities expected to be available from September onwards.

