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The Food Aid Organization of the United Nations

## WFP News Release

26 May 2009

### WFP EXPANDS IRAQ OPERATION TO COVER VULNERABLE GROUPS, SCHOOL FEEDING

**BAGHDAD** – The United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) today announced it is expanding its food assistance programme in Iraq to reach more food-insecure people and to begin providing free school lunches to children.

“This marks a significant transition in WFP’s efforts to reach the most vulnerable people in Iraq,” said WFP Iraq Country Director Edward Kallon. “Until now, our attention has been focused on the large numbers of people who have moved around the country to escape civil strife, and have lost access to food rations normally provided by the government through the Public Distribution System (PDS).”

“Now we are moving to address the needs of all the most vulnerable people in the country with problems of access to sufficient food.”

The new approach is in line with WFP’s global strategy of applying durable solutions to the problem of hunger worldwide, and in the longer term aims to provide programmes such as local procurement and cash and voucher operations, under which people are given the means to purchase or exchange vouchers for food from local markets.

The current Iraq operation, which began in January 2008 to supply some 750,000 internally displaced people (IDPs) with emergency food rations – as well as 362,000 displaced Iraqis in Syria – will now be extended to the end of 2009, and will provide food assistance to a further 577,000 people in Iraq. These will include pregnant and nursing women, malnourished children, orphans, disabled people, female-headed households and small-scale farmers in 41 food-insecure districts in 14 governorates.

Under the new school-feeding programme, WFP will pilot the provision of free school meals to some 170,000 primary schoolchildren in eight extremely food-insecure districts in Diala, Ninewa, Sulaymaniya and Wassit Governorates. At the same time, WFP is revising the numbers of assisted IDPs downwards to 396,000, to reflect the reduced numbers of people not registered with the PDS.

These operations, which were planned in cooperation with the Iraqi Government, follow recommendations in last year’s Comprehensive Food Security and Vulnerability Analysis, conducted by WFP and the Iraqi Central Office of Statistics, which found that an estimated

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930,000 people were currently food insecure in Iraq, with a further 6.4 million at risk of becoming food insecure in the event of the failure of the PDS.

Kallon said the expansion of the existing operation in Iraq would pave the way for a new two-year relief and recovery operation to start next year, the details of which are currently being worked out by WFP and the Iraqi Government.

To meet the costs of its expanded operations, WFP is appealing to donors for an additional US\$42.7 million, of which it has so far received US\$16 million. Since the current WFP emergency operation in Iraq started, major donors have included Iraq (US\$40 million), the United States of America (US\$29.1 million), the UN Central Emergency Response Fund (US\$6.2 million), the United Kingdom (US\$4.1 million), Japan (US\$3 million) and Australia (US\$1.9 million).

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WFP is the world's largest humanitarian agency and the UN's frontline agency for hunger solutions. In 2009, WFP aims to feed around 100 million people in 77 countries.

WFP now provides RSS feeds to help journalists keep up with the latest press releases, videos and photos as they are published on WFP.org. For more details see: <http://www.wfp.org/english/?n=999>.

*WFP now has a dedicated ISDN line in Italy for quality two-way interviews with WFP officials.*

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