As of 9 April 2020, the WHO has confirmed 1202 cases of COVID-19 in Iraq; 69 fatalities; and 425 patients who have recovered from the virus. Approximately one-quarter of the cases are in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI); the remainder are in federal Iraq. The Government of Iraq has extended curfews and movement restrictions in federal Iraq until 18 April. The Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) has extended curfews and movement restrictions until 10 April (possibly to be extended), with a total lockdown of movement between 18:00h-00:00h. The KRG imposed a two-day complete curfew (no commercial activity or movement permitted, even for United Nations staff) on 4-6 April, in response to a perceived disregard of curfew directives. Airports throughout Iraq and KRI are to remain closed until 11 April; at the time of writing, there have been no updates regarding their operating hours.

The World Health Organization (WHO) has continued its efforts to procure sufficient supplies to support testing of suspected cases of COVID-19. The global demand on supplies and markets has created a worldwide shortage of supplies. In particular, stocks of Virus Transport Medium (VTM)—a gel-like substance used to preserve nasal swab specimens while they are being transported to labs—have been low. In cooperation with Basrah University in southern Iraq, the WHO has successfully produced urgently-needed laboratory supplies to speed up testing. As of 1 April, the University manufacturing team produced more than 1620 VTM in addition to 3200 nasal swabs. These were delivered to health directorates in Iraq’s Basra, Muthana, Karbala, and Wasit governorates. Disinfectants and sterilization material, including hand sanitizer, have also been produced locally with support from the Government of Iraq. In parallel, the WHO has collaborated closely with religious authorities in Najaf and Karbala to postpone all mass religious gatherings in the country, advising instead that people observe religious rituals from the safety of their own homes.

The World Food Programme (WFP) and other partners who track commodities and markets report that prices surges are being observed. Social distancing measures such as mandatory movement restrictions are reducing the economic activity in the country, which negatively impacts the most vulnerable groups such as day laborers and low-income workers. Nearly all governorates reported price increases in food items; approximately half reported price hikes in hygiene items, while three reported increases in fuel prices. Significant price spikes were observed during the last two weeks of March.

The Iraq Information Centre (IIC)—a call centre that provides information on humanitarian assistance in Iraq to IDPs, returnees, asylum seekers, refugees, and vulnerable host community members—has established a COVID-19 dashboard to track calls they receive about challenges related to the impacts of the virus in Iraq. As of 4 April, the IIC received 585 calls regarding COVID-19, with the majority of calls coming from Nineawa, Erbil and Duhok.

As of 9 April, the Global Humanitarian Response Plan for COVID-19 had attracted $394 million in funding, out of $2.01 billion requested, or approximately 20 per cent of the total requirement.
IMPACT ON HUMANITARIAN OPERATIONS

Humanitarian actors continue to report that curfews and movement restrictions are impeding the delivery of assistance in Iraq—including programming related to COVID-19 prevention, preparedness and response—although the impact varies by governorate. OCHA has had success in some governorates in negotiating with local authorities to facilitate movements of NGO partners carrying out life-saving activities. In Sulaymaniyyah, the sub-office liaised with the Governor’s office to establish a mechanism for NGOs to apply for exemption to curfews. In Salah al-Din, OCHA’s intervention with the governorate Crisis Cell resulted in a six-hour daily window for movement of humanitarians. And in Anbar, OCHA has repeatedly engaged with the Governor’s office on the fast-track clearance of 125 staff members and consultants from 13 partner organizations to continue activities in IDP camps, informal settlements, and districts with a high number of returnees living in severe conditions. OCHA continues to engage with authorities throughout Iraq on enabling procedures for humanitarian actors.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES ON COVID-19

WHO Dynamic Dashboard for Iraq:

World Health Organization Situation Reports:

Global dashboard tracking COVID-19 cases:
- https://who.maps.arcgis.com/apps/opsdashboard/index.html#/bda7594740fd40299423467b48e9ecf6

HumanitarianResponse.info page on COVID-19 Resources in Iraq:

Link to the Global Humanitarian Response Plan for COVID-19:

Overview of funding for Global Humanitarian Response Plan for COVID-19:
- https://fts.unocha.org/appeals/952/summary

Iraq Information Centre Dashboard on calls received regarding COVID-19:

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1 Full link: https://app.powerbi.com/view?r=eyJrIjoiNjljMDhiYmItZTlhMS00MDhlLTg3MjItMDNmM2FhNzE5NmM4IiwidCI6ImY2MTBjMGI3LWU1MjUtNDIwOS1iNWIyLTY5ZTQ0ZWM4MTk5NiIsImMiOjh9

2 Full link: https://app.powerbi.com/view?r=eyJrIjoiNzRmNDc5NjAtN2QyMS00NmNlLWE4MDA4TzJ2N2FkODM5YWVjIiwidCI6IjViNGExMjM3LWU1MjUtNDIwOS1iNWIyLTY5ZTQ0ZWM4MTk5NiIsImMiOjEwfQ%3D%3D