This report is produced by OCHA Iraq in collaboration with humanitarian partners. It covers the period from 23 to 29 August. Due to the rapidly changing situation it is possible that the numbers and locations listed in this report may no longer be accurate. The next report will be issued on or around 5 September.

Highlights

- Over 1.8 million people are estimated to be displaced, countrywide.
- Providing adequate shelter for IDPs remains a key concern and a priority need throughout the country, as IDPs continue to be in the open, occupy unfinished buildings, schools, mosques and churches.
- Some 52 cargo flights have arrived in Erbil in the past weeks, delivering an estimated 5,400 metric tonnes of humanitarian supplies.
- Increased morbidity of communicable diseases related to limited access to water and sanitation.

Situation Overview

The fluid and dynamic nature of the conflict makes it difficult to monitor and track mass and multiple displacements across the country, which often occur in a short timeframes. This week the United Nations updated its IDP planning figure for Iraq to 1.8 million across the country. Of this 1.8 million, the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) and the UN estimate that 850,000 IDPs have arrived to the region this year, the vast majority in the last 11 weeks. The KRG, with support of humanitarian partners, continues provide assistance to the IDPs, but the needs are enormous. The UN and international partners are scaling up efforts as quickly as possible. However, the fact that IDPs are scattered across an extensive number of locations creates considerable challenges for an effective response.

In the last week, renewed fighting in the central governorates has triggered further displacement. Over 10,000 families are reported to have arrived in Khanaqin (Diyala), fleeing ongoing conflict throughout the governorate. Air strikes near Tikrit (Salah Al-Din) have also caused additional displacement within the governorate. Hundreds of families are reported to be moving to the south of the country, especially to Basrah.

+ For more information, see “background on the crisis” at the end of the report
Fighting and air strikes near the town of Amerli (Salah al-Din) have intensified. Some 35 villages surrounding Amerli are under total control of Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). Reports about the number of people still trapped as the town which has been under siege by ISIL for 82 days (as of 28 August) varies enormously, and it is currently estimated that 10-14,000 civilians may be in need of immediate support. The Government of Iraq has conducted an estimated 25 helicopter landings into Amerli to provide food as well as weapons and to extract a limited number of people, mostly children and the elderly. There are indications that water and medical care availability are major issues.

Adequate shelter remains a key concern and a priority need throughout the country, as IDPs continue to occupy unfinished buildings, schools, mosques and churches, or are living in the open. As of 27 August, four camps are open (one in Erbil, three in Dahuk), sheltering nearly 20,000 people. In Diyala, four camp sites have been identified but will only have the capacity to host approximately 30 per cent of the IDP population in the governorate. Alternative shelter options are urgently being considered. Over 2,000 schools are still occupied by IDPs throughout the country and it is expected that the beginning of school year will be delayed as additional shelter options have yet to be identified.

In an effort to support the KRG, shelter cluster partners held a workshop this week to ensure a more accurate and coordinated planning for the emergency phase as well as set the bases for a transitional shelter response. The one-day event saw the participation of representatives from the Ministry of Construction and Housing, the Ministry of Planning, the Erbil Refugee Council (ERC), and the Development and Modification Centre (DMC). The shelter cluster and KRG are prioritizing families living in schools (est 140,000) and others in mosques, abandoned buildings, other type of shelters including informal settlements and planned camps for shelter and ‘ancillary services’ interventions, which will need to be concluded before the onset of the winter. Some 26 sites for camps have been identified in the three northern governorates, with a total absorption capacity of approximately 240,000 individuals. The current resources available are insufficient to complete these camps, and some of the pledges made are yet to become firm commitments. Alternative solutions, including use of the private sector, civil protection mechanisms, and possibly even military engineering units are being contemplated as options to immediately enhance response capacity.

Humanitarian Response

Some 52 cargo flights have arrived in Erbil in the past weeks, delivering an estimated 5,400 metric tonnes of humanitarian supplies donated by 10 member states or procured by 7 international organizations/UN agencies.

Water, Sanitation and Hygiene

Needs:

- The Dahuk Government Emergency Cell has identified four priority areas: Zakho, Khanke, Shariya, Dahuk City and Batel. Scale-up in services has been requested for the IDP camps of Khanke, Bajet Kandala while preparing for additional camps in Shariya and elsewhere in the governorate. This will require additional funding and increase in capacities in all partners.
- Authorities in Kerbala governorate have made a formal request for partners to provide drinking water and water quality monitoring. Key hygiene related issues were reported, particularly for women and girls who fled from Telefar (Ninewa) and other conflict areas and who are in urgent need of menstrual hygiene education as well as provision of sanitary napkins.

Response:

- Over 67 trucks every day provide an estimated 50,000-60,000 people with water in Dahuk. Approximately 237 latrines have been installed in camps and informal settlements serving 9,480 people.
- In Erbil, water tanks serve an estimated 10,000 people in eight locations in Ainkawa and Baharka camps.
- In Khanaqin, 75 latrines have been installed in Aliyawa and Old Bahar Taza camp serving an estimated 3,000 people.

Gaps & Constraints:

- Large populations in Zahko and Dahuk cities in Dahuk governorate seeking shelter collective centers, schools and informal settlements are critically in need of access to hygienic sanitation facilities. Identification
of locations, needs assessments and response are difficult mainly due to the large number of locations and shifting populations.
- Road security restriction and long delays in obtaining clearances affect the efficiency of a rapid response.

Food Security

Needs:
- Over 1.528 million people are estimated to be in need of food assistance.
- Host communities continue to experience food shortages, price increases and a decline in livelihoods.

Response:
- Food assistance is currently delivered through communal kitchens, immediate response rations and food parcels to around 1.2 million people throughout the country.
- In Dahuk and Erbil governorates, since 3 August, 210,000 people have been assisted by hot meals, around 21,000 immediate response rations have been distributed, and around 23,000 households have been assisted through food parcels.
- Feasibility of new modalities of intervention is being verified such as vouchers, cash assistance and market support activities.

Gaps & Constraints:
- Despite humanitarian access improving in some areas, inaccessibility to conflict areas continues to hinder food assistance to many populations in need.

Shelter and Non-Food items

Needs:
- According to IOM's recent Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM), shelter and non-food items are ranked second by IDPs as a priority need.
- IDPs have settled in the following types of location: with host communities (32%), in rented houses or hotels (27%), in schools or religious buildings (12%), in abandoned buildings (11%) and in camps (4%).
- The most-at-risk groups include ethnic minorities with little or no established links with host communities, IDPs living in abandoned buildings or in the open and those living in overcrowded conditions

Response:
- As of August 28, a total of 26 sites were identified in Dahuk, Suleymaniyah and Erbil (Kurdistan Region).
- A total of 1,330 tents and 5,410 plastic sheets were distributed in the Kurdistan Region providing shelter capacity for about 40,000 people.
- 54,270 individuals benefitted from core relief item kits (mattresses, jerry cans, blankets) in northern Iraq.

Gaps & Constraints:
- The approaching winter season in the North of the country is of particular concern. The shelter cluster is working on putting in place a winterization strategy to be prepared to face harsh winter conditions.

Health

Needs:
- The harsh living conditions among IDPs, are starting to result in increased morbidity of communicable diseases related to limited access to water and sanitation. For example, a primary healthcare clinic in Sharia town (Dahuk) has seen an increase in cases by 50%, from around 80 consultations to 120 cases per day, with 40% of patients complaining of diarrhea and vomiting.
- Clashes in conflict areas are causing hundreds of injuries and patients are sent to various underserved or damaged hospitals such as in Khanaquin (Diyala).

Response:
Health services have reopened in previously evacuated camps such as Garmawa camp (Ninewa) and in new IDP camps. A number of in-kind medical donations including essential medicines for 60,000 people for two months, and surgical and dressing materials, were received and additional shipments are on their way. New health partners have arrived in the Kurdistan Region and are exploring possible support to primary healthcare clinics and hospitals.

Gaps & Constraints:

- The health system is heavily disrupted in Telkaif and Makhmour (Ninewa), where only three out of 21 health facilities are functional.

Protection

Needs:

- Shelter remains a major problem throughout the country. IDPs live in unsuitable habitations while others are renting with no source of income. As a consequence, cash assistance needs remain high.
- Significant numbers of IDPs require legal assistance related to documentation and registration with the government for services and assistance.
- Availability and provision of medical services is improving in Dahuk, although the cost of medication, especially for those with chronic illnesses, is a major limitation for IDPs without financial resources. General needs for psychosocial services continue to be reported, especially in Dahuk.

Response:

- Through ongoing protection monitoring since February, assessments have been conducted for 204,927 individuals (35,350 families), with 6,397 cases approved for cash assistance, legal assistance provided to 10,763 cases, and referrals made for 3,666 persons with specific needs.
- In Dahuk, more than 2,000 extremely vulnerable IDPs have been assessed to establish whether they meet vulnerability criteria for cash assistance. Distribution is expected to commence soon.
- Mass information messaging for the IDP community on asylum and resettlement is under development.

Gaps & Constraints:

- Displacement has created major challenges for IDPs as well as the authorities in relation to issuance/renewal of civil status documentation, which is now constrained by logistics and lack of resources with bureaucratic hurdles further exacerbated.
- Protection monitors are receiving increasing numbers of enquiries on whether IDPs are able to claim asylum or be assisted to resettle to another country. Information dissemination to the community on these issues is a need, as expectations in this regard remain high among IDPs. Psychosocial partners are concerned that messaging on asylum and resettlement needs to be done sensitively to ensure it does not have a negative impact.

Education

Needs:

- Children including preschool age children, girls, and other excluded children, require access to quality education opportunities.
- Psychosocial and health services for children and teachers need to be integrated in all educational activities.

Response:

- A number of interrelated activities are ongoing to provide learning environments for children.
- Discussions around the opening of schools, the deployment of teachers (including salaries and incentives) and the inclusion of schools in camp designs are ongoing to support preparation for the beginning of the school year.
- About 408 students in Baharka camp (Erbil) and another 130 in Shaqlawa (Erbil) are participating in learning activities. Another 119 children in Erbil City and 63 children in Dauk are participating in catch-up classes. Two mobile child friendly spaces where educational and child protection activities are integrated, are operating in Dahuk governorate. On average, 70 children in Dahuk and 34 children in Zahko are participating every day.
Gaps & Constraints:

- There is no exact number of displaced children available, as disaggregated data by age and sex has not been collected by authorities to date.

Logistics

Needs:

- Humanitarian partners are facing difficulties with timely and efficient clearance of incoming cargo flights from European donor countries. Lack of logistics capacity, documentation, and unexpected flights are causing confusion among partners.
- Distribution in Dahuk among partners is reportedly ongoing and as such additional supplies are needed for urgent release in the area.

Response:

- The Logistics Cluster continues to provide assistance to organizations receiving incoming cargo and donations from European governments at Erbil International airport. Since 14 August, the Cluster has facilitated the customs clearance, transport and warehousing of 14 flights for humanitarian organizations with limited or no logistics capacity. The amount of cargo consists of 220 metric tonnes of food and non-food items from three European donor countries.
- Guidelines for handling of unsolicited bilateral donations have been distributed to Logistics Cluster partners and OCHA to assist with information and to guide donors. Information can be accessed online.
- The Logistics Cluster interagency warehouse in Dahuk has released over 8,000 hygiene kits to Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Cluster partners for distribution. Requests for storage are ongoing.

Gaps & Constraints:

- The Logistics Cluster interagency warehouse in Dahuk has released over 8,000 hygiene kits to Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Cluster partners for distribution. Requests for storage are ongoing.
- Partners have requested additional support from the Logistics Cluster for clearance, transport, and warehousing in Erbil for incoming cargo flights, therefore support is ongoing.

General Coordination

The inter-cluster coordination group met on Thursday, 28 August and discussed the planning for the revised Humanitarian Needs Overview (HNO) and the Strategic Response Plan (SRP). Cluster Coordinators, under the leadership of Cluster Leads, are in the process of revising the HNO. The coordination meeting schedule can be found at http://iraq.humanitarianresponse.info.

Background on the crisis

Since the fall of Mosul on 9 June, armed opposition groups (AOGs), including Batthists, tribal militias and members of the former regime/military, along with the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), have taken control of large swathes of Iraq’s provinces of Ninewa, Salah Al-Din and Diyala. The cities of Mosul, Tikrit, Tal Afar, Beiji, Quayyara, Sinjar, Suleiman Bek, Rashad, Hawiga, Riyad, Falluja and Saglawiyah, are currently under AOG control. Since January much of Anbar has been under ISIL control. This has led to massive internal displacement. Iraq is now contending with one of the largest internally displaced populations in the world; over 1.8 million have been displaced since January this year.

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