

HIGHLIGHTS

- Iraq responds to the COVID-19 pandemic
- Global Humanitarian Response Plan launched
- Humanitarian access during COVID-19 curfews
- Mission to Anbar
- Flooding in Mosul



Local NGO Vera tasks Women's Community Centre in Diyala to sew masks [Photo Credit: Vera]

COVID-19 IN IRAQ

During March 2020, Iraqi authorities and humanitarian partners worked together to minimize the impact of COVID-19 across the country. Confirmed cases in March increased from 13 at the beginning of the month to 695 (with 50 fatalities) at month's end. On 2 March, the World Health Organization (WHO) briefed the Humanitarian Country Team on the novel coronavirus, outlining Iraq's preparedness and identifying gaps that would need to be addressed. The Humanitarian Operational Cell, chaired by the Humanitarian Coordinator, continued to meet weekly during March to coordinate United Nations' prevention and response initiatives, share information about funding and manage duty of care issues for staff.

During the reporting period, the Government of Iraq (GOI) and the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) expanded nationwide closures and imposed strict movement curfews to try and halt further spread of the virus. Domestic travel was curtailed by road and air, and on 17 March, all airports in Iraq suspended operations for incoming and outgoing flights for a one-week period which has been continuously extended. Prior to the airports closing, there were evolving prohibitions in both Baghdad and Erbil on the entry of citizens of certain nationalities, or with recent travel history in certain countries in Europe and Asia. For all other travelers, there was a mandatory 14-day quarantine on arrival. Most businesses and government offices remained closed, as did places of worship, schools and universities.

Preventative measures—as mandated by governmental and WHO guidelines—were put in place at IDP camps throughout Iraq, including temperature screening at camp entrances, a ban on large gatherings of people, and the distribution of "key messages" on the means to prevent the further spread of COVID-19 and general hygiene measures in English, Arabic and Kurdish.

Humanitarian clusters in Iraq developed initial consolidated guidance for COVID-19 preparedness and response planning for camps in Iraq, led by the CCCM Cluster with inputs from Health, WASH, Protection, Child-Protection, GBV, Shelter/NFI and the Communication with Communities/Accountability to Affected Populations actors, which will be updated regularly and has been distributed to all partners.



GLOBAL HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE PLAN FOR COVID-19

On 25-March, the United Nations launched a \$2 billion coordinated global humanitarian response plan (GHRP) to fight COVID-19 in some of the world's most vulnerable countries. The plan brings together requirements from the World Health Organization (WHO), Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), International Organization for Migration (IOM), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), UN-Habitat, UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and World Food Programme (WFP). Iraq was among the priority countries featured in the appeal.

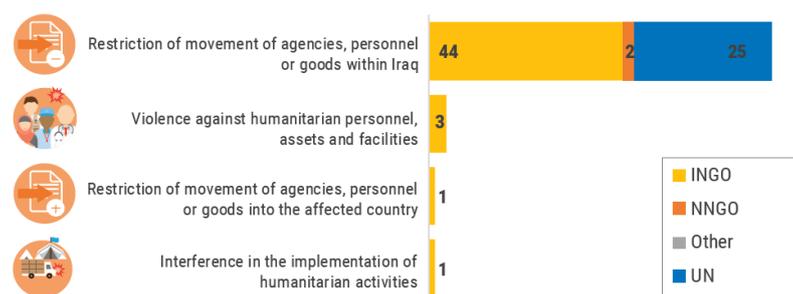
HUMANITARIAN ACCESS DURING COVID-19

During March 2020, the Government of Iraq, Kurdistan Regional Government and governorate authorities imposed significant movement restrictions throughout the country. Although these measures were necessary to slow the spread of COVID-19 in a country that has an under-resourced health system, they nevertheless had a serious impact on the delivery of humanitarian assistance to Iraq's vulnerable populations, by limiting the movement of goods, aid workers and beneficiaries.

Under an already constrained access environment which has seen NGOs face serious bureaucratic challenges in obtaining access authorization since November 2019, COVID-19 curfews and movement restrictions have further impeded the delivery of assistance in Iraq, including programming related to COVID-19 prevention, preparedness and response. While many of the curfews nominally provided exemptions for humanitarian work, this rarely resulted in humanitarian partners being able to move unimpeded within or across governorate borders.

The impact varies by governorate. Movement and transportation between governorates, and between federal Iraq and the Kurdistan Region, were prohibited by local and regional authorities. OCHA has been able to negotiate curfew exemptions for humanitarian partners within many governorates to freely move cargo and staff as operationally necessary. However, the prohibition on inter-governorate movement, including for the movement of medical supplies such as PPE and ambulances, significantly impedes humanitarian response, as many organizations are based out of Erbil or Baghdad, and have their logistics hubs in these cities.

Access constraints by partner types



Destroyed Building Kilo 7 settlement, Ramadi, Anbar
[Photo Credit: H. Stauffer/OCHA]

MISSION TO KILO 7 AND KILO 18

On 4 March, an inter-cluster field mission was undertaken to the informal IDP settlements of Kilo 7 and Kilo 18 in Al-Ramadi District, Anbar Governorate. The Anbar ICCG decided to visit the sites, to follow up on service gaps and better understand the circumstances of the residents. The visits included a general tour at both sites, and Focus Group Discussions.

Kilo 7 is mostly comprised of IDPs who have been secondarily displaced after failed returns from camps. The residents say they cannot return to their areas of origin, largely because of inadequate housing. Many of the residents are believed to be blocked from returning by their communities due to perceived affiliations with ISIL, social stigmatization and tribal tensions.

While some services gaps in the Kilo 7 could immediately be addressed, including improvements to the sewage system, other needs that were identified required additional follow-up. The site sustained a great deal of destruction during the armed conflict against ISIL, and hazardous living conditions are evident. Protection was also a primary concern: a lack of opportunities to generate income leads to negative coping mechanisms, including drug trade and abuse, child labour, prostitution and early marriage. This especially true for female-headed households and those with chronically ill or disabled heads of households.

Most households in Kilo 18 are returnees whose houses are destroyed and who cannot afford rent because of unemployment. While the housing situation is adequate—residents live in UN-Habitat provided caravans—there is a total absence of basic services at the site and limited access to services due to geographical distance and high transportation costs. The Kilo 18 settlement is not a classic IDP setting and the identified needs are more focused on durable solutions (employment, reconstruction of houses).

FLOODING IN MOSUL

Heavy rains in Mosul, Ninewa Governorate in mid-March resulted in flooding and the collapse of roads, valleys and part of the Al-Omairi Bridge. The flooding led to the malfunctioning of Mosul's sewage network, raising concerns around public health. The floods affected several neighborhoods which became completely submerged, with some people trapped inside their homes until rescue crews could reach them. The heavy rain also caused high turbidity in the water being pumped from the Tigris River, causing water shortages in Mosul.

Preliminary assessments showed that some limited displacement occurred as people left to stay in safer neighborhoods. Humanitarian partners including the International Organization for Migration organized a distribution of non-food item (NFI) kits to affected families. The kits include blankets, kitchen sets, jerry cans, hygiene kits and plastic sheets. Informational material about managing the spread of the Coronavirus was included with each NFI kit.



NGO ZOA helping with clean-up in Mosul after heavy rains. [Credit: ZOA]

The heavy rains also affected IDPs in Jad'ah camp south of Mosul. Certain sectors of the camp flooded, requiring the affected IDP families to relocate to other areas within the camp. The flooding also led to the drainage canals becoming blocked. Access difficulties for humanitarian organizations affected by the COVID-19 curfews caused delays in relief items into the camp.

ONGOING POLITICAL UNCERTAINTY

Entering their sixth month, political demonstrations continued in Baghdad and southern governorates, albeit in markedly smaller numbers due to concerns about COVID-19 and fines issued for breaking curfew orders. Protesters continued to demand a resolution to the political crisis and appointment of a Prime Minister they consider acceptable three months after the December 2019 resignation of Adil Abdul-Mahdi, who remained acting in a caretaker role pending selection of a successor.

In early February, businessman Mohammed Tawfiq Allawi was named as Prime Minister-designate, but he failed to gain parliamentary approval in the role. On 16 March, MP Adnan al-Zurfi was appointed as Prime Minister-designate and was working to gain consensus among Iraq's different political factions in order to be able to form a government.

With each passing month of political uncertainty, humanitarian actors in Iraq are disadvantaged by not being able to form relationships with established government counterparts who can help address key needs like access authorizations.

IRAN – U.S. TENSIONS

On 13 March, rockets fell on Taji Airbase, which hosts Coalition troops and Iraqi Security Forces (ISF). The impact reportedly caused three Coalition fatalities and 15 casualties including three ISF members. The United States attributed it to Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF, Shia militia forces who are recognized as part of Iraq's security architecture, but alleged to be somewhat influenced by Iran), although no responsibility was initially claimed. Also on 13 March, the US conducted airstrikes against a PMF weapons storage locations in Babil Governorate, and a suspected PMF location in Karbala Governorate, which resulted in some fatalities and casualties among both the PMF and ISF co-located at the base.

On 14 March, armed actors later assessed to be PMF conducted a day-time indirect fire attack, again launching 15 rockets towards Taji Camp, causing casualties among both Coalition forces and the ISF. On 17 March, two rocket attacks took place in Baghdad Governorate near the International Zone, resulting in no casualties, although the "sense and warn" alarm sounded on the United Nations compound.

The frequency of attacks and retaliations comes at a key point of strategic changes for both the United States and Iran, and their relationship with Iraq. Observers are concerned that an escalation in hostilities could lead to increased humanitarian needs in a country only two years removed from its last armed conflict. In the operational context of COVID-19, expanding the humanitarian response could be challenging.

2020 Humanitarian Funding Overview



US\$453.6M
HRP UNMET REQUIREMENTS
as of 04 April 2020

US\$146.1M
TOTAL FUNDING RECEIVED
as of 04 April 2020



The total funding received represents the overall funding linked to the requirements of the response plans/appeals; the HRP funding is a subset of overall funding to the affected country.

US\$519.8M
FUNDING REQUIREMENTS

US\$63.7M¹
FUNDING RECEIVED

87.8%
FUNDING GAP

US\$63.7M
FUNDING THROUGH 2020 HRP

US\$82.5M
FUNDING OUTSIDE 2020 HRP

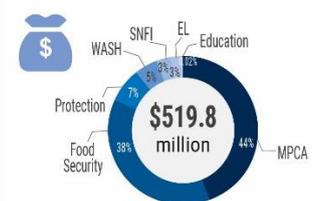
BY CLUSTER (US\$)

Cluster	Funding received \$	Covered within HRP	Requirements \$
		Received (blue) Gap (yellow)	
CCCM	0M	Gap	23.96M
CP	0M	Gap	38.88M
Education	4.3M	Received, Gap	28.37M
EL	0M	Gap	15.67M
FSC	4.0M	Received, Gap	65.26M
GBV	0.2M	Gap	29.51M
Health	4.4M	Received, Gap	60.31M
Protection	2.4M	Received, Gap	82.75M
Shelter/NFI	0M	Gap	43.18M
WASH	3.2M	Received, Gap	43.76M
CCS	0.9M	Gap	15.0M
MPCA	3.5M	Received, Gap	73.16M
Not specified	38.1M	Received	
Multiple clusters	2.4M	Received	

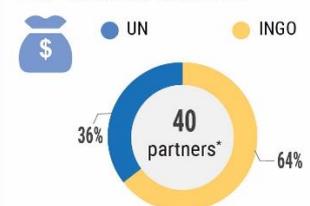
BY STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES (SO)



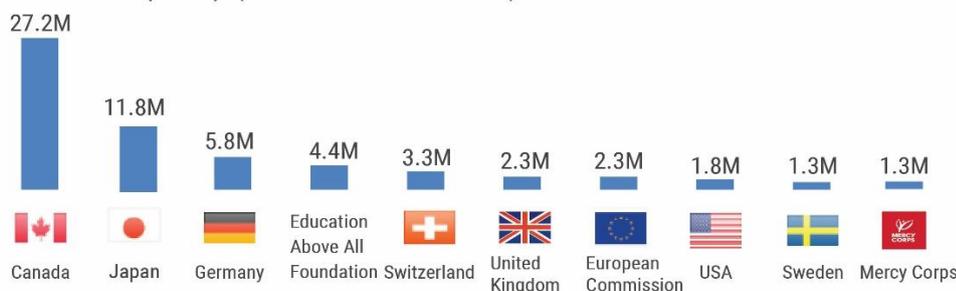
BREAKDOWN OF CASH FUNDING REQUESTS BY CLUSTER



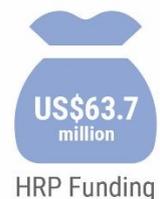
HRP FUNDING RECEIVED



BY DONOR (US\$) (TOP TEN DONORS)



*Partners reported on FTS. Numbers are rounded up



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