

# Iraq – Complex Emergency

AUGUST 28, 2020

## SITUATION AT A GLANCE



- USG announces nearly \$204 million in additional humanitarian assistance—including for food, health, shelter, and WASH activities—in mid-August.
- Total number of confirmed COVID-19 cases in Iraq reaches nearly 219,500, including more than 6,740 recorded deaths, as of August 28, according to WHO.
- Access restrictions continue to hinder life-saving programming and impede access to at least 2.2 million people in need of assistance, according to the UN.



<b>TOTAL U.S. GOVERNMENT HUMANITARIAN FUNDING</b> For the Iraq Response in FY 2020	USAID/BHA <sup>1,2</sup>	<b>\$120,644,713</b>
	State/PRM <sup>3</sup>	<b>\$162,234,914</b>
<b>Total</b>		<b>\$282,879,627<sup>4</sup></b>

*For complete funding breakdown with partners, see detailed chart on page 6*

<sup>1</sup>USAID's Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (USAID/BHA)

<sup>2</sup>Total USAID/BHA funding includes non-food humanitarian assistance from the former Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance and emergency food assistance from the former Office of Food for Peace.

<sup>3</sup>U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (State/PRM)

<sup>4</sup>This total includes approximately \$47,005,000 in supplemental funding through USAID/BHA and State/PRM for coronavirus disease (COVID-19) preparedness and response activities.

## **KEY DEVELOPMENTS**

### **Roadside IED in Ninewa Damages WFP Convoy Carrying Food Aid**

On August 26, a roadside improvised explosive device (IED) detonated near the town of Bartilla in Iraq's Ninewa Governorate, impacting a passing UN World Food Program (WFP) convoy. WFP—a USAID/BHA partner—reported that the attack injured at least one staff member and damaged the humanitarian vehicle. The incident underscores the ongoing security risks facing relief workers in Iraq, as they continue to provide assistance to the country's most vulnerable populations. The UN, international relief organizations, and the U.S. Embassy in Iraq have condemned the attack, and Government of Iraq (GoI) authorities have opened an investigation into the incident.

### **New Humanitarian Assistance Announced at U.S.-Iraq Strategic Dialogue**

The U.S. Government (USG) announced nearly \$204 million in additional humanitarian assistance for Iraq on August 19 during the U.S.–Iraq Strategic Dialogue, a bilateral meeting between USG and GoI officials. The new humanitarian assistance includes nearly \$133 million from State/PRM and more than \$71 million from USAID/BHA. The funding will support internally displaced persons (IDPs), host communities, and other vulnerable populations in Iraq, as well as Iraqi refugees in the region, through emergency food, health, protection, shelter, and water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) assistance. The USG remains the largest humanitarian donor for the Iraq response, contributing \$706 million since FY 2019.

### **COVID-19 Cases Increase; USG Partners Respond to Meet Basic Needs**

Across Federal Iraq and the Iraqi Kurdistan Region (IKR), confirmed COVID-19 cases reached record highs between August 15 and 21, with an average of 4,000 cases reported daily during the week. As of August 28, the total number of confirmed COVID-19 cases had reached more than 219,500, the UN World Health Organization (WHO) reports. Health actors identified limited public compliance with containment measures and uneven enforcement of restrictions as the primary reasons for the increase in cases. Meanwhile, USG partners report that COVID-19-related movement and operating restrictions have reduced access to employment and livelihood opportunities and limited IDPs' ability to pay rent, raising concern about IDPs spending savings or going into debt to afford shelter and other necessities. In response, the USG has provided \$47 million to support preparedness and response efforts, including conducting risk communication and community engagement activities; providing support for health services, including through training medical personnel and providing essential medicines and medical supplies; distributing hygiene kits and conducting associated hygiene promotion; and offering critical psychosocial support services. Additionally, USAID/BHA partners are distributing multipurpose cash assistance (MPCA) to enable individuals to meet their basic needs.

### **IDPs Report Rise in Protection Issues During COVID-19 Pandemic**

In June and July, the Protection Cluster—the coordinating body for humanitarian protection activities, comprising UN agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and other stakeholders—interviewed conflict-affected and displaced communities in IDP camps, informal sites, and areas of return areas across 17 governorates to assess protection concerns resulting from COVID-19. Nearly 85 percent of camp-based respondents said that protection issues had increased significantly since February. Respondents consistently identified movement restrictions as the most prevalent protection concern in both camp and out-of-camp settings, with mental health issues—including trauma, stress, and anxiety—accounting for the second-most common protection issue cited. Additionally, approximately 78 percent of in-camp respondents and 63 percent of out-of-camp respondents noted a significant rise in protection

issues affecting women and girls, such as psychological trauma, lack of specialized services, and absence of access to safe space and privacy. According to ongoing surveys by State/PRM partners, nearly 80 percent of in-camp IDPs reported an increase in gender-based violence (GBV) incidents during the pandemic.

### **Relief Actors Urge Implementation of New Access Letter Approval Process**

Following an August 17 meeting, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and NGO Coordination Committee for Iraq (NCCI) are urging the Gol National Operations Center (NOC) to institute a new, permanent process for access authorizations in Federal Iraq. The absence of a permanent mechanism to process access letter applications has hindered the ability of relief organizations to respond to humanitarian needs since November 2019. USG partners have been utilizing COVID-19 movement exemptions, locally negotiated access, and national staff to continue humanitarian programming; however, program implementation has slowed and access varies frequently and by location. A four-month pilot project beginning in March to assist the Gol in setting up a permanent mechanism for access authorizations ended on June 30 without a system to replace it. On July 25, the Office of the Prime Minister issued a memo to governorate authorities stating that relief actors only require a valid authorization letter from the NOC to operate in Iraq. The NOC confirmed that NGOs will no longer require additional authorizations, and noted that the national authority for processing NGO access requests may return to the Joint Coordination and Monitoring Center, the agency responsible for access letters prior to November 2019, according to the UN. The NOC is finalizing a formal guidance document outlining the steps for NGOs to request and receive access letters; OCHA and NCCI urge the NOC to finalize the document by the end of August 2020.

### **IOM Tracks High Levels of IDP Arrivals to Sinjar, Al Ba'aj**

Despite widespread COVID-19-related movement restrictions, IDPs continue to return to areas of origin. Between June 8 and August 21, nearly 15,500 people arrived to Ninewa's Al Ba'aj and Sinjar districts, according to the International Organization of Migration's (IOM) Displacement Tracking Matrix. The rate of arrival to Al Ba'aj and Sinjar declined in August after peaking with more than 700 returns in a single day in mid-July; however, more than 700 individuals returned to the districts between August 7 and 21. Returnees commonly cited improved security conditions, the clearing of mines, and rehabilitated public infrastructure as reasons for return. However, IOM reports that many individuals have returned to areas with limited access to basic services and humanitarian assistance. Nearly 80 percent of IDPs arriving to Al Ba'aj and Sinjar came from camp settings. Countrywide, the population in formal IDP camps decreased by 31 percent from August 2019 to July 2020; as of July, nearly 262,000 people remained in 43 IDP camps in Iraq, according to the Camp Coordination and Camp Management (CCCM) Cluster.

### **Iraqis Rely on Negative Coping Strategies Despite Stable Food Prices**

In early August, WFP reported an improvement in national food consumption scores in Iraq, with 430,000 fewer persons reporting insufficient food consumption compared to July. However, 5.3 million people—nearly 14 percent of the surveyed population—were found to have adopted negative coping strategies to meet basic food needs, partly in response to COVID-19 restrictions. Nearly 30 percent of households reported relying on the purchase of less expensive food, representing the most common negative coping strategy among the surveyed population. Additionally, while the price of staple food commodities—including sugar, vegetable oil, and wheat flour—remained stable across Iraq, nearly 30 percent of respondents, or approximately 1.7 million people, reported limited market access, primarily due to movement restrictions. With continued USAID/BHA support, WFP reached nearly 336,000 people with food assistance in July.

## KEY FIGURES



14

Number of partners providing essential WASH services



\$27 Million

In dedicated USG support for life-saving health care programming



\$26.6 Million

In dedicated USG support for critical protection initiatives



8

Number of USG implementing partners providing shelter and settlements services

## U.S. GOVERNMENT RESPONSE

### WASH

With USAID/BHA support to IOM and NGO partners and State/PRM support to the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and implementing partners, the USG helps to provide essential WASH services for vulnerable populations throughout Iraq, particularly people still residing in IDP camps and informal settlements. With a programmatic focus on the delivery of water, the operation and maintenance of WASH infrastructure in camps, and the rehabilitation of WASH infrastructure out of camps, USAID/BHA partners strive to provide adequate volumes of safe water and enable sanitary and hygienic living conditions that protect communities, promote dignity, and limit the spread of communicable diseases. To mitigate COVID-19 transmission risks, USG partners are conducting hygiene awareness campaigns, distributing hygiene kits, installing handwashing stations at informal settlements and camps, and rehabilitating WASH facilities in primary health care centers across eight Iraqi governorates.

### HEALTH

Working with USAID/BHA NGO partners, as well as IOM, UNHCR, and WHO, the USG aims to improve primary health care services for IDPs across conflict-affected areas of Iraq. USG partners are supporting primary health care facilities through the provision of staff training, capacity building, staff salaries, and medical supplies and equipment, both in camps and in out-of-camp settings. In addition, USG partners are responding to the COVID-19 pandemic by training medical professionals on screening, identification, triage and treatment of suspected cases; strengthening disease surveillance systems; implementing risk communication and community engagement activities; and providing critical medicines and medical equipment and supplies.

### PROTECTION

Addressing protection concerns remains a top priority for the humanitarian response in Iraq, with USG partners supporting a range of critical protection initiatives for IDPs, returnees, and host communities. With funding to IOM and UNHCR, State/PRM promotes durable solutions to the ongoing conflict in Iraq by facilitating the sustainable integration of displaced Iraqis, helping provide accurate information on security conditions and livelihood opportunities in host communities and areas of origin. In addition, USAID/BHA supports IOM and the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), as well as NGO partners, to provide protection services, including case management support, GBV prevention and response services, increased access to psychosocial support services, legal assistance for civil documentation, and mine risk education.

### SHELTER AND SETTLEMENTS

USG funding supports IOM, UNHCR, and USAID/BHA NGO partners to provide critical shelter services for displaced Iraqis, primarily in conflict-

affected areas. USG partners distribute shelter kits and other non-food relief items; provide coordination and management services at camps and informal settlements; and support the rehabilitation of conflict-damaged houses to provide safe and dignified living conditions that align with humanitarian standards.



**\$24.8 Million**

In dedicated food assistance funding provided through WFP

## **FOOD SECURITY**

Through WFP, USAID/BHA continues to deliver emergency food assistance using mobile cash transfers, providing critical assistance to the most vulnerable populations while also supporting local markets. WFP is also supporting the Gol's efforts to modernize its social safety net program to improve the delivery of food assistance, particularly for IDPs, and support the transition of emergency food assistance programming to Gol-managed safety net activities.

## CONTEXT IN BRIEF

- In January 2014, Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) forces began seizing control of parts of northern and central Iraq, generating significant population displacement as civilians fled to areas of relative safety, such as the IKR, to escape fighting.
- In August 2014, the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC)—a global humanitarian coordination entity comprising UN agencies, NGOs, and other stakeholders—activated a system-wide Level 3 (L3) response for Iraq due to the pace and volatility of the humanitarian crisis. L3 responses are activated in the most complex humanitarian emergencies, where the highest level of mobilization across the humanitarian system is required to scale up and meet needs. In late December 2017, the IASC downgraded the Iraq emergency from an L3 designation.
- On August 11, 2014, USAID deployed a Disaster Assistance Response Team (DART) to Iraq to coordinate USG efforts to address the urgent humanitarian needs of newly displaced populations throughout the country. USAID also established a Response Management Team (RMT) based in Washington, D.C., to support the DART. DART and State/PRM staff worked closely with local officials, the international community, and humanitarian actors to identify critical needs and expedite assistance to affected populations. On August 31, 2019, USAID demobilized the DART and RMT. USAID/BHA staff based in the region and in Washington, D.C., continue to coordinate with USG, UN, and other humanitarian partners to provide life-saving assistance in Iraq.
- Approximately 4.1 million people require humanitarian assistance in Iraq, according to the UN. Prolonged displacement is exhausting the resources of IDPs and host community members alike at a time when the capacity of both the GoI and KRG to respond to humanitarian needs remains challenged by budgetary constraints. Meanwhile, UN agencies, NGOs, and other relief actors face funding shortages, logistical challenges, and security constraints that complicate efforts to meet critical needs.
- On October 22, 2019, U.S. Ambassador to Iraq Matthew H. Tueller redeclared a disaster in Iraq for FY 2020 due to the ongoing complex emergency and humanitarian crisis.

### USG HUMANITARIAN FUNDING FOR THE IRAQ RESPONSE IN FY 2020<sup>1</sup>

IMPLEMENTING PARTNER	ACTIVITY	LOCATION	AMOUNT
<b>FUNDING FOR COMPLEX EMERGENCY IN IRAQ</b>			
<b>USAID/BHA</b>			
Non-Food Assistance			
Implementing Partners (IPs)	Humanitarian Coordination and Information Management (HCIM)	Countrywide	\$1,800,000
	HCIM, Health, Protection, Shelter and Settlements, WASH	Anbar, Babil, Baghdad, Basrah, Dhi Qar, Diyala, Dohuk, Erbil, Karbala, Kirkuk, Maysan, Muthanna, Najaf, Ninewa, Qadisiya, Salah al-Din, Sulaimaniya, Wasit	\$45,983,187
IOM	Health, Protection, Shelter and Settlements	Anbar, Baghdad, Diyala, Erbil, Kirkuk, Najaf, Ninewa, Salah al-Din	\$13,000,000

UNICEF	Protection	Anbar, Baghdad, Dohuk, Erbil, Kirkuk, Ninewa, Salah al-Din, Sulaimaniya	\$6,000,000
OCHA	HCIM	Countrywide	\$1,300,000
UN Office for Project Services (UNOPS)	HCIM	Countrywide	\$1,180,000
	Program Support		\$334,022
<b>TOTAL NON-FOOD ASSISTANCE FUNDING</b>			<b>\$69,597,209</b>
Food Assistance			
WFP	Cash-Based Transfers for Food	Countrywide	\$18,547,504
<b>TOTAL FOOD ASSISTANCE FUNDING</b>			<b>\$18,547,504</b>
<b>TOTAL USAID/BHA FUNDING</b>			<b>\$88,144,713</b>
<b>STATE/PRM</b>			
IPs	Emergency Response, Health, Livelihoods, Protection, WASH	Countrywide	\$15,900,000
International Labor Organization	Livelihoods	Turkey	\$429,914
IOM	Durable Solutions, Displacement Tracking Matrix, Livelihoods	Countrywide	\$34,000,000
UNHCR	CCCM, Non-Food Items, Protection, Shelter and Settlements	Countrywide	\$75,100,000
UNHCR	Multi-Sector Assistance, Refugee Response	Jordan, Lebanon, Syria	\$20,800,000
UNICEF	Education	Countrywide	\$1,500,000
<b>TOTAL STATE/PRM FUNDING</b>			<b>\$147,729,914</b>
<b>TOTAL USG FUNDING FOR COMPLEX EMERGENCY IN IRAQ IN FY 2020</b>			<b>\$235,874,627</b>

<b>FUNDING IN IRAQ FOR COVID-19 OUTBREAK PREPAREDNESS &amp; RESPONSE<sup>2</sup></b>			
<b>USAID/BHA</b>			
Non-Food Assistance			
IPs	Health, MPCA, Protection, WASH	Anbar, Baghdad, Diyala, Erbil, Kirkuk, Ninewa, Salah al-Din, Sulaimaniya	\$18,650,000
IOM	Health, Protection, WASH	Anbar, Baghdad, Dohuk, Erbil, Ninewa, Salah al-Din	\$7,600,000
<b>TOTAL NON-FOOD ASSISTANCE FUNDING</b>			<b>\$26,250,000</b>
Food Assistance			
WFP	Emergency Food Assistance	Countrywide	\$6,250,000
<b>TOTAL FOOD ASSISTANCE FUNDING</b>			<b>\$6,250,000</b>
<b>TOTAL USAID/BHA FUNDING</b>			<b>\$32,500,000</b>
<b>STATE/PRM</b>			
IPs	Health, MPCA, Protection, WASH	Countrywide	\$5,605,000
UNHCR	CCCM, Health, MPCA, Protection, Refugee Response, WASH	Countrywide	\$8,900,000

<b>TOTAL STATE/PRM FUNDING</b>	<b>\$14,505,000</b>
<b>TOTAL USG FUNDING FOR COVID-19 OUTBREAK PREPAREDNESS &amp; RESPONSE IN IRAQ IN FY 2020</b>	<b>\$47,005,000</b>
<b>TOTAL USAID/BHA FUNDING FOR THE IRAQ RESPONSE IN FY 2020</b>	<b>\$120,644,713</b>
<b>TOTAL STATE/PRM FUNDING FOR THE IRAQ RESPONSE IN FY 2020</b>	<b>\$162,234,914</b>
<b>TOTAL USG HUMANITARIAN FUNDING FOR THE IRAQ RESPONSE IN FY 2020</b>	<b>\$282,879,627</b>

<sup>1</sup> Year of funding indicates the date of commitment or obligation, not appropriation, of funds. Funding figures reflect publicly announced funding as of August 28, 2020.

<sup>2</sup> Figures represent supplemental International Disaster Assistance (IDA) and Migration and Refugee Assistance (MRA) funding committed for COVID-19 preparedness and response activities as of August 28, 2020.

## PUBLIC DONATION INFORMATION

- The most effective way people can assist relief efforts is by making cash contributions to humanitarian organizations that are conducting relief operations. A list of humanitarian organizations that are accepting cash donations for disaster responses around the world can be found at [interaction.org](https://www.interaction.org).
- USAID encourages cash donations because they allow aid professionals to procure the exact items needed (often in the affected region); reduce the burden on scarce resources (such as transportation routes, staff time, and warehouse space); can be transferred very quickly and without transportation costs; support the economy of the disaster-stricken region; and ensure culturally, dietarily, and environmentally appropriate assistance.
- More information can be found at:
  - USAID Center for International Disaster Information: [cidi.org](https://www.cidi.org)
  - Information on relief activities of the humanitarian community can be found at [reliefweb.int](https://www.reliefweb.int).

USAID/BHA bulletins appear on the USAID website at [usaid.gov/humanitarian-assistance/where-we-work](https://www.usaid.gov/humanitarian-assistance/where-we-work)