

Each year, Sida conducts a humanitarian allocation exercise in which a large part of its humanitarian budget is allocated to emergencies worldwide. The allocation and subsequent disbursement of funds takes place in the beginning of the year to ensure predictability for humanitarian organizations and to allow for the best possible operational planning. Sida's humanitarian assistance is based on the four humanitarian principles, in particular **impartiality**, with its compelling urge to ensure that humanitarian action is carried out based on “**needs alone**”, giving priority to the “**most urgent cases of distress**”. Therefore, Sida's allocation methodology is grounded in several objective indicators such as; the *scale* of humanitarian needs (number of people in need), the *severity* of humanitarian needs (including food insecurity/IPC levels), the number of people targeted for the humanitarian response, the *financial coverage* of the respective humanitarian appeal, *national capacities* to respond and underlying risks, as well as distinct indicators related to *forgotten crises*. Sida also strongly supports the humanitarian coordination structures.

For 2021, the Iraq crisis is allocated an initial 80.9 MSEK. Close monitoring and analysis of the situation continue and inform possible decisions on additional funding.

## 1 Crisis overview

### 1.1 Humanitarian overview

The war against Daesh remains the main reason for the extensive humanitarian needs in Iraq. After a couple of years of slowly declining humanitarian needs, the trend has shifted. The total number of people in need remain the same, but the number of people in *acute* need has increased with approximately 25 % since the beginning of 2020 to 2.4–2.6 million people. The increase is mainly due to the direct and indirect impact of COVID-19 on already vulnerable groups. The situation deteriorated further in late 2020 as the government intensified its efforts to close all IDP camps. A large number of camps were hastily closed, forcing thousands into renewed displacement without proper shelter and serious protection needs, among other things.

The war against Daesh came to an end in 2017, leaving millions displaced and in need of protection. Since then, Iraq has endured several years of political instability and continuous security challenges. There was a trajectory toward a more stable and secure situation during the initial years. A large number of IDPs were able to return shortly after the war ended, social services improved and reconstruction started. But Iraq was pushed back into political instability and massive popular protests against the political leadership broke out in late 2019. The security

situation deteriorated, and although some IDPs were able to return, more than 1.3 million remain in displacement in or out of camps.

In 2020, COVID-19 hit Iraq and lockdowns followed. This situation was coupled with a drastic fall in oil revenues, which is the foundation of Iraq's economy and state budget. According to the World Bank, Iraq is witnessing its worst economic performance since 2003 and UNAMI has stated that poverty rates could double compared to pre-COVID-19 to 40 %.

Children have been particularly affected by COVID-19. Immunization programmes have been cancelled and school closures have affected ten million children. There is an immense lack of livelihoods and access to basic services (health, education), food and WASH and reports of dramatic increases in SGBV. Shelter, reconstruction and de-mining remain highly needed.

Northern and Western Iraq still host the largest numbers of people in need, but COVID-19 has also increased needs in Eastern and Southern Iraq, where systematic poverty rates are higher than in the rest of the country. Most humanitarian actors are active in Northern Iraq, including the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI). KRI is relatively stable but greatly affected as the region hosts a large number of IDPs and most of the Syrian refugees.

## 1.2 Affected population

The population of people in need has not changed significantly since last year, but the group of people in acute need have increased by approximately 25 % to 2.4–2.6 million people. IDPs in and out of camps and returnees are identified by the humanitarian country team as the most affected. As the government rapidly is closing camps in the end of 2020, reaching displaced people out of camp will be of increase importance. Women continue to disproportionately report lower income levels as well as increasing debts. Households with people with disabilities were found to consistently report lower incomes but also experience challenges in accessing services. Children on the other hand were found to be at risk of being exposed to protection violations such as child labour.

The Humanitarian Country Team has identified the conflict-affected population as the group with the most acute humanitarian needs, but also states that the deteriorating socio-economic vulnerabilities among the broader population is a concern that could potentially lead to increase in humanitarian need beyond the conflict-affected populations and locations.

# 2 The humanitarian response

## 2.1 National and local response

The extent of needs as well as budgetary and political crises in Iraq have severely challenged the response capacity. The closing of IDP camps displays the intention by the government to show political leadership. But poor planning and coordination of this process, and not implementing the policies of voluntary, dignified and sustainable returns, cause new problems rather than solving old ones. At the same time, there are concurrent related developments, including the government's announced deal with Kurdish Regional Government over the Sinjar

district, establishing a unified administration expected to facilitate return of 200,000 displaced people from the ethnic and religious minority group Yazidis.

The massive popular protests throughout Iraq demonstrates the general distrust in both central and local government and citizens' limited role in public decision-making processes. Elections have been announced to take place in June 2021.

The global INFORM index places Iraq as number 14 out of 191 countries with a score of 6.5, indicating a very high risk for crises that overwhelm the national response capacity.

National NGOs have played an important role in reaching people in need in areas where access was more restricted for international organisations during the armed conflict. There is a growing consciousness about the need for a more localized humanitarian response as the emergency situation turns more into a phase of stabilization and recovery. Around 80 national and local organisations are active in the humanitarian response which is aligned with the HRP. The Iraqi Red Crescent Society (IRCS) is operating with a nationwide network of branch offices with both staff and volunteers, with support from ICRC and national Red Cross/Red Crescent societies.

In 2003, The NGO Coordination Committee for Iraq (NCCI) was founded as a member-led organisation with the mission to coordinate principled, collective NGO action in Iraq. NCCI now has about 180 NGO members (national and international). Unfortunately, NCCI is currently suspended by Iraqi authorities.

Resilience and coping capacities of IDPs and host communities are increasingly exhausted after years of massive displacement. Many IDPs suffering secondary displacement have depleted their savings, sold off their assets and taken on debts. The increasing vulnerability enhances risks of negative coping mechanisms such as early and forced marriage for girls, child labour and selling of assets. Resources in host communities dwindle and, in some locations, bring tensions between host communities and displaced families.

## 2.2 International response

The HRP is based on an extensive multi-cluster needs analysis. The priorities for 2021 are focused on ascertaining basic needs (food security, livelihoods), access to essential services (education, health, WASH) and support to vulnerable groups to establish life in safety and dignity (protection, shelter). Cash will be an important modality. Primary target group are IDPs in conflict-affected areas. The total number of people in need is 4.2 million and the targeted group of people in acute need is 2.4–2.6 million people.

There has been a willingness to establish strong links to development actors as Iraq is moving into a post-crisis situation. At the same time, efforts have been made to distinguish the humanitarian support from initiatives for durable solutions and reconstruction, to make sure humanitarian funding primarily is directed to meet the current acute needs.

The Humanitarian Response Plan is fairly well funded compared to many others (70.6 % in early November 2020). The largest donor, by far, is the USA which has contributed with over

50 % of the funds. Canada, Germany, the European Commission and Japan are the others in top 5, with 5–7 % each of the total funding.

There are two parts of the Humanitarian Country Team meetings – one with implementing organisations only, and one where donors (including Sweden) are present. The purpose of this is to allow implementing partners to focus on operational issues in the HCT, and to have a more strategic dialogue with donors (HCT+).

OCHA's Humanitarian Response Dashboard in November 2020 lists a total of 160 humanitarian partners responding to the Iraq crisis of which 70 were international NGOs and 6 UN agencies.

### 2.3 Challenges and risks for the humanitarian response

Iraq is a high-risk context. The political situation is highly volatile and there are multitude of conflict hotspots that cause security challenges for the humanitarian response. The fragmented security structures, with multiple regular and irregular armed actors in the field, also form an obstacle to humanitarian operations and the safety of the humanitarian workers involved. The political unrest and leadership vacuum has also hindered necessary processes to move forward, like the need to address problems for humanitarian organisations to gain access authorisation. Organisations are often hindered in their operations by political obstacles and sensitivities, as well as bureaucratic and administrative requirements, physical restrictions at check-points and absence of arrangements to facilitate the passage of emergency relief supplies during active hostilities. Access constraints have been one of the main concerns for humanitarian actors during 2020. Mines, improvised explosive devices, cluster munitions and other unexploded ordinance also inhibit the movement of equipment, goods and personnel. There are also high corruption risks. Iraq ranks 162 out of 180 countries on Transparency International's ranking. Funds might be misused and there are reputational risks if organisations are perceived to be influenced by political interests.

## 3 Sida's humanitarian allocation

### 3.1 The role of Sida's humanitarian support

Sida's support in Iraq has always been well aligned with the HRP. Sida has prioritised life-saving support in conflict affected areas and vulnerable IDPs and refugees. Psycho-social support, shelter, water rehabilitation, support to family unification, health care, physical rehabilitation, education and support to livelihoods, have all been features of the support. This has resulted in better access to clean water, health services, education and livelihoods, improved overall living and health conditions, and resulted in more dignified lives. The response shifted in its priorities as the conflict with Daesh ended. and partners have been quite adaptive and managed to shift their priorities to new types of needs.

Sida has supported a rather wide range of partners, including UN agencies and NGOs. A large number of local and national partners have been involved in the response as implementing partners and as partners within the Iraq Humanitarian Fund

In addition to the contributions below, Sida supports InterAction to strengthen ways of working to reach protection outcomes in Iraq, and staff from the Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency (MSB) participate in selected operations in Iraq.

## 3.2 Allocation Priorities 2021

The priorities indicated in the discussion for the HRP 2021 are highly relevant in the current setting. However, the consequences of the ongoing IDP camp closures will also have to be taken into account as new needs will arise. Sida believes that humanitarian programming in Iraq should be guided by a strong protection perspective. An ambition to reduce protection risks should be embedded in our support to livelihoods (including cash support), shelter, health and SGBV prevention and services. We also believe that there is a need to support education efforts, since such a large proportion of children have lost schooling opportunities, and continue the support to psycho-social services. This is in line with the three prioritised areas in the HRP.

Sida aims to reach people with the most acute needs. The most acute needs are found in Northern Iraq, KRI and Anbar. Some of these areas are not considered hard to reach, but hosts a large number of people. In some areas, few humanitarian actors are present. Sida has taken into account if our strategic partners are present in these areas in the allocation.

## 3.3 Partners

**Action Against Hunger** will support improved access to WASH services, livelihoods and provide psycho-social support. Their livelihoods component will contribute to reducing conflict in the communities. AAH's integrated food security/livelihoods and WASH programme seeks to mitigate the economic impacts of COVID-19 and the conflict whilst also addressing the long-term need of the provision of stable livelihoods in the face of the significant water stress within Iraq. AAH emphasizes the gender-sensitive and conflict sensitive approach in their programme. AAH has a coordination office in Erbil and established bases in Dohuk, Baghdad and Mosul, a sub-base in Sinjar and a sub-base in Basra. The ambition is to reach 3,300 people with livelihood interventions; 26,000 with WASH interventions; and 8,000 with protection interventions.

**Dan Church Aid (DCA), through ACT Church of Sweden<sup>1</sup>** is in a good position to work with girls and boys who will participate in guided psychosocial support (PSS) activities that provide a safe and creative space where they can be supported to deal with distress and anxiety resulting from the prolonged exposure to conflict. Community centres will also provide remedial classes to the targeted children and youth in order to minimize the impact the closure

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<sup>1</sup> ACT-Church of Sweden is being phased out as a strategic partner to Sida's humanitarian unit, hence the allocation to ACT-Church of Sweden is part of a separate allocation process.

of schools due to COVID-19. DCA will work in Domiz 1 Refugee Camp (Duhok) and Daratu (Erbil). Their objective is to reach 2,000 girls and boys with catch up classes; 10,000 crisis affected people with protection awareness activities; 1,000 children and adolescents in PSS activities and 900 families (4,500 individuals) in camps will benefit from distribution of Personal Protective Equipment such as masks and hand sanitizer.

**International Committee of the Red Cross, ICRC** is a key player in the humanitarian response in Iraq. ICRC has an important role to engage relevant parties in dialogue on the protection due to civilians, monitors detainees' treatment and living conditions, offers family links services and works to ascertain the fate of missing persons. It provides violence-affected IDPs, returnees and residents with emergency aid, and/or support to help them restore their livelihoods, supports physical rehabilitation, primary health care and hospital services, and repairs water, health and prison infrastructure. It seeks to promote compliance with IHL among weapon bearers. ICRC also has an important role in the health-related needs due to COVID-19. With its country-wide presence it has the ability to reach a large number of crisis affected women, men, girls and boys. ICRC is present in many locations in Iraq and has a wide target group of displaced people, refugees and civilians in places affected by fighting.

**Norwegian Refugee Council, NRC** has a clear strategy to increase access to quality education, access to legal identity, sustainable livelihood opportunities and provide access to housing and basic services. These areas are well in line with identified needs. NRC has a good reach in areas with high levels of severe needs, including in hard to reach areas. Regional and cross border operations are planned within the Syria crisis response. NRC has an important role for improved humanitarian coordination in Iraq. Sida supports NRC's country programme without earmarking. The main areas of operation are Dohuk, Kirkuk, Ninewa, Basra and Anbar governorates and they target displacement-affected women, men, girls and boys in urban and rural areas (including IDPs in and out of camps, returnees, Syrian refugees and host communities).

**OCHA – Iraq Humanitarian Fund** funds a large number of national and international organisations (105 in October 2020) with a strong reach to highly prioritised areas all over Iraq. The priority has been out of camp and other underserved locations utilizing as much as possible local NGO capacity. The IHF through this allocation continually pursues the consortium approach aimed at enhancing the participation and response capacity of national partners. The activities are fully aligned with the HRP and the partners have traditionally shown a good ability to operate in hard to reach areas. The projects funded through IHF are scattered around the country, with an emphasis on Northern Iraq. Several projects in and around Baghdad are also included. In 2020, 1.7 million people have been reached by IHF funded projects.

**Save the Children** focuses on child protection, psycho-social support and mental health, livelihoods and health interventions. Target groups are IDPs and recent returnees. Save the Children also includes capacity strengthening for the Department of Labour and Social Affairs and other local actors in child protection in their activities. 40 % of the funds are forwarded to local partners. Save the Children has reported good results in the previous period and their response is important to reduce protection risks for vulnerable girls and boys and their parents. The programmes will be implemented in Ninewa (Mosul), Diyala (Mugidadia) and Dohuk

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(Sakho) and target IDPs and returnees. 4,500 are children. 2,280 caregivers will be reached with protection services and cash grants and approximately 10,000 with communications activities.

**Swedish Red Cross** has worked together with the Iraqi Red Crescent Society (IRCS), for the past years, to enable access to adequate WASH services, promoted protection, gender equality and inclusion, worked with community engagement initiatives and strengthened response and institutional capacities of the Iraqi Red Crescent Society (IRCS). IRCS is an important national and local actor in emergency response and humanitarian programming. With a wide network of 7,530 volunteers and 2,195 staff across the country, IRCS branches are often first-responders during emergencies, especially in hard-to-reach areas. The projects will be implemented in Ninewa, Kirkuk, Diyala, Salah Al-Din and will target populations at highest risk, with focus on IDPs and returnees. Estimated 90,000 people (45,000 female, 45,000 male).

**UNHCR's** focus will remain on protection and gradual transition from humanitarian assistance to development programming, including by strengthening access to national services and formal employment opportunities, inclusion in national systems and identifying comprehensive protection and solutions strategies for people of concern. Additional assistance, such as increased cash assistance and support for livelihoods, will be provided to mitigate the medium- and long-term socioeconomic impact of COVID-19. UNHCR also works with national and local authorities to strengthen their capacities. UNHCR has a key role in the response given their lead in the Protection Cluster and co-lead in the CCCM and Shelter clusters. They also have a key role for the large number of Syrian refugees in the country. UNHCR is present throughout Northern and Central Iraq.

Sida's humanitarian allocation to the Iraq crisis in 2021		
Recommended partner for Sida support	Sector/focus of work and response modalities	Proposed amount
Action Against Hunger	Non-earmarked support to country program covering livelihoods, health, WASH, psycho-social support, protection, GBV, cash	8 800 000
ACT Church of Sweden (DCA)	Psycho-social support, education, health.	5 900 000
NRC	Non-earmarked support to country program covering education, ICLA, shelter and settlements, cash/livelihoods and advocacy.	10 000 000
ICRC	Non-earmarked multi-sector support (WASH, Health, family links and more).	15 000 000
OCHA - IHF	Nationwide support to national and international organisations for projects in line with the HRP.	7 000 000
Save the Children	Child protection, food security, livelihoods, health, cash.	15 000 000
Swedish Red Cross	Repair and rehabilitation of water infrastructure and WASH services. Support to IRCS's work on addressing protection risks and needs.	7 200 000
UNHCR	Non-earmarked multi-sector support (shelter, CCCM, NFI, protection, cash and more).	12 000 000
		<b>TOTAL: 80 900 000</b>

### 3.4 Strategic humanitarian funding and longer-term assistance

Funding from Sida's bilateral strategy for development cooperation with Iraq in many cases support interventions in the same geographical areas as the humanitarian support. One of the strategy objectives is focused on resilience and contributions to UNMAS and DDG/DRC for mine action, peace and security, promotion of resilience for returnees and communities in Ninewa, and the Funding Facility for Stabilization (UNDP) have strong connections to the humanitarian support. The support to the Swedish Contingency Agency (MSB) aims to strengthen local contingency agencies in both Kurdistan and other parts of Iraq. The collaboration with MercyCorps on livelihoods and social cohesion and UNFPA on GBV work both in and out of camps also remain key. Oxfam, who until 2020 received humanitarian funding, is now a partner within the development portfolio, creating links between humanitarian and development interventions. There is also funding allocated from the global Strategy for Sustainable Peace for several partners active in Iraq. Additionally, the Folke Bernadotte Academy supports young peace actors in Iraq. As such, the humanitarian and development interventions complement each other well. Stakeholders in Iraq do however raise the need for improved collaboration between development and humanitarian actors.

Several humanitarian partners are looking into durable solutions, including e.g. UN agencies, NRC, Save the Children and Oxfam. This could serve as an entry point for joint discussions on transition from humanitarian to development funding (also through local NGOs) as the acute humanitarian situation is likely to transition to development and reconciliation efforts.

Many partners, both humanitarian and development actors, are active in the discussions on nexus issues in Iraq. Most actors have a willingness to bridge humanitarian with development and peace interventions. With strengthened presence of Sida staff at the Embassy of Sweden in Baghdad, there is room for improved collaboration and dialogue on nexus-related issues.

## 4 References

The main sources of information for this analysis are:

Humanitarian Response Plan

Humanitarian Needs Overview

Dialogue with and reporting from partners

Humanitarian Country Team documentation

INFORM

OCHA briefing documents

International Crisis Group

Sida's Multi-Dimensional Poverty Analysis