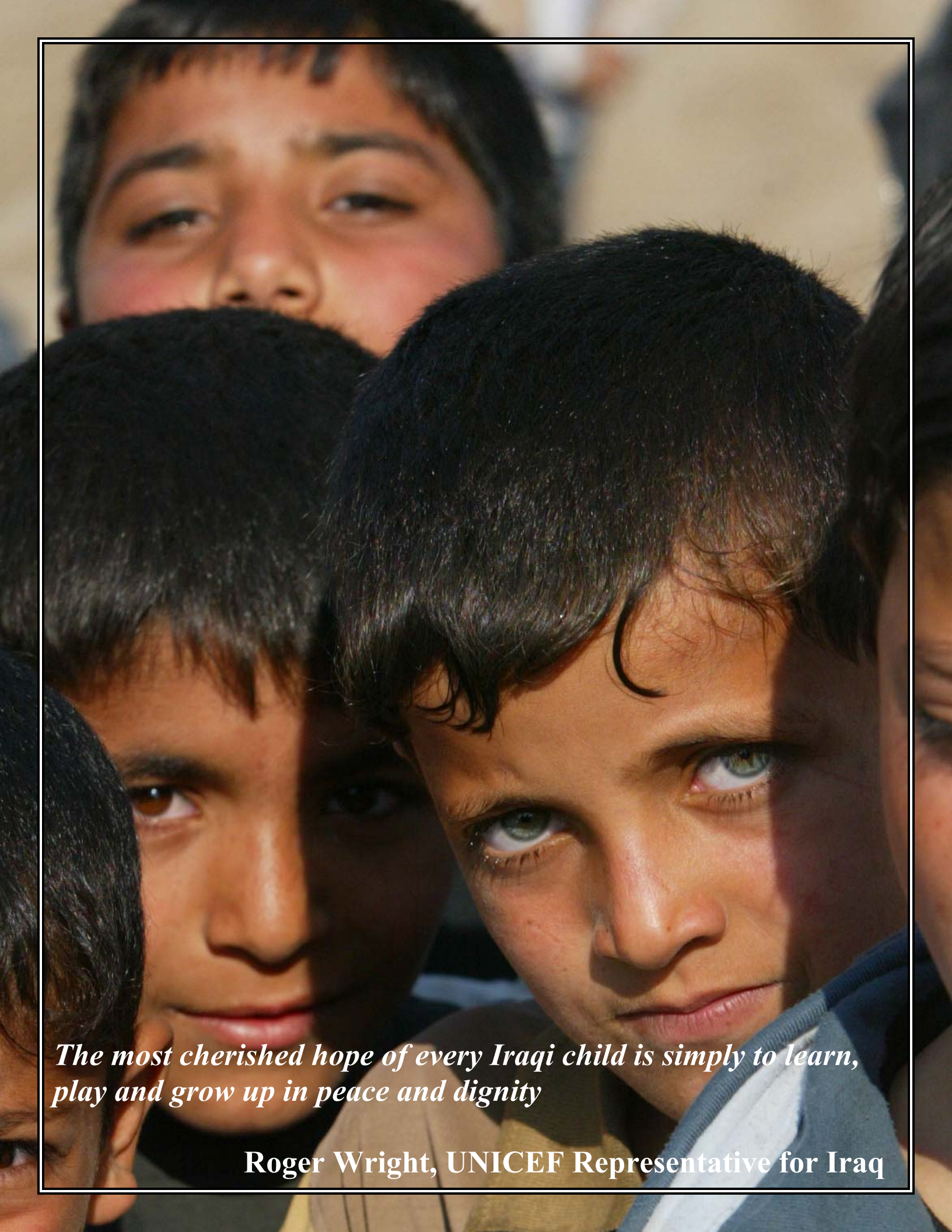


Iraq's Children 2007



A Year in Their Life

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*The most cherished hope of every Iraqi child is simply to learn,
play and grow up in peace and dignity*

Roger Wright, UNICEF Representative for Iraq



Rekindling Childhood in Iraq

In 2007, Iraqi children's lives and their family livelihoods were precarious. Conflict split children's communities and took the lives of approximately 19,500 of their friends and families (according to United Nations data for 2007). Thousands of children lost mothers and fathers to bombs and shootings. Others fell into poverty after their main family wage-earner was kidnapped or killed.

UNICEF/Arar/2007: Children in a Baghdad IDP camp

Throughout the year, many schools did not open regularly or overcrowded, local health centres were under-stocked and water supplies a growing challenge. By the end of the year, the number of Iraqis forced to flee their homes since 2006 reached 1.2 million, 50% of them children.

Child health suffered as the number of people living in camps and temporary shelters increased. Vaccination rates fell, food supplies ran short and safe water became a premium in the crippling summer heat, leading, at the end of summer, to the biggest cholera outbreak in recent memory.

Living with so much anxiety and loss took a heavy toll on children's psychological and social wellbeing. Many became anxious and conflict-weary, unable to sleep or concentrate at school. More and more turned to the streets. Chilling reports emerged from the Multi-National Forces (Iraq), NGOs and media of children recruited by armed groups forced to risk their lives in the insurgency.

Despite so much turmoil, there were still rays of hope,

Children in the northern Kurdistan Region continued to recover from the poverty and repression of the 1990s. Education and healthcare services in this region were expanded and improved, and the regional government set out a new vision for curriculum reform.

Even in the more insecure central and southern parts of Iraq, families defied the odds to protect children. House-to-house immunization drives, supported by UNICEF and the World Health Organization (WHO), succeeded in immunizing more than 4 million children against polio and more than 3 million against measles, mumps and rubella (reaching over 90% of their goal). Millions of children returned to school in November, despite insecurity and falling enrollment rates. UNICEF had been working over the summer holiday months to rebuild and restore their schools, provide critical learning materials and add extra classrooms for displaced children. And in response to the cholera epidemic, UNICEF was part of a team responding by providing hygiene support and safe water to thousands of affected families in Kirkuk, Suleimaniyah, Erbil, Basra and Baghdad.

UNICEF provided assistance worth over \$40 million to help Iraq's children and their families survive last year. But unless more resources become available soon, we risk cutting many children off from a vital lifeline. The future of Iraq depends how well we meet children's most urgent needs today.

In 2008, we must seize the opportunity to create a real impact for vulnerable Iraqi children and their families. UNICEF will continue to invest in the extraordinary power of children to revive communities and even nations. While their country remains in crisis, we must do all we can to protect their fundamental rights.

Roger Wright, UNICEF Representative for Iraq

State of Iraq's Children 2007



- ✦ At least 2 million Iraqi children lacked adequate nutrition (according to the WFP assessment of food insecurity in 2006) and faced a range of other threats including interrupted education, lack of immunization services and diarrhoea diseases.
- ✦ Only 28% of Iraq's 17 year olds sat their final exams in summer, and only 40% of those sitting exams achieved a passing grade in South and Central Iraq. Early estimates from the Ministry of Education show that net primary enrolment rates may have fallen from 86% in 2004 to 46% in 2006 (although the estimated 2 million refugees and the lack of a current census may have contributed to this decline). However, millions were able to return to school in November, despite the many challenges.
- ✦ Many of the 220,000 school-aged internally displaced children had their education interrupted, adding to the estimated 760,000 children out of primary school in 2006.
- ✦ One quarter of children in remote and hard-to-reach areas had immunization coverage lower than the 80% recommended for disease control (28 out of 117 districts according to Iraq's Ministry of Health).
- ✦ Only 40% of children nationwide had reliable access to safe drinking water, and only 20% outside Baghdad had a working sewerage service.
- ✦ An estimated 600,000 children had been displaced since 2006, the vast majority unable to return home. By the end of the year, approximately 75,000 children and their families were living in temporary shelters. A few families did begin to return: 50,000 refugees and 10,000 IDPs were registered between September and December 2007, according to the Iraq Ministry of Displacement and Migration (MoDM) and International Organization for Migration (IOM).
- ✦ Hundreds of children lost their lives to violence and thousands fell into poverty after their main family wage-earner was kidnapped or killed. A drop in violent incidents was reported by the UN from July 2007, particularly around Baghdad.
- ✦ Approximately 1,350 children were detained by military and police authorities, many for alleged security violations (this includes a small number of detentions that may have occurred in 2006 or previously).

Iraqi Children's Lives

Survival at stake



UNICEF/Arar/2007: A child is vaccinated during a UNICEF-supported campaign against Measles, Mumps and Rubella in

Protecting Iraqi children's survival and development became tougher in 2007. With violence and displacement still at high levels in the first half of the year, many families were not traveling to health centres. Specialist doctors and other key health staff continued to seek refuge outside Iraq. Insecurity in and around Baghdad delayed the supply of medicines and vaccines to governorates, causing local shortages.

Ahmed Yehya, a medical warehouse manager in the governorate of Anbar, says "We ran out of children's medicines, intravenous fluids, antibiotics and anesthetics. We had to tell sick people to go outside the province, or leave the country."

We don't know if families will welcome us or make trouble for us. We have heard that vaccinators have been kidnapped or even shot in other provinces.

Fatima, Health Worker in Missan

Health outreach services for children were also seriously affected by insecurity. Ministry of Health data shows falling immunization rates: only 44 out of 117 districts had immunization coverage above 80% in 2007, compared to 56 districts in 2006. By spring, at least one million Iraqi children had no immunity against measles. Iraq's Ministry of Health launched a mass immunization campaign with the support of UNICEF and WHO, sending vaccinators house-to-house to immunize children between one and five years of age.

The campaign was a success, reaching nearly 3.4 million children (over 90% of its goal). But tragically, three health staff in Diyala were attacked and killed while driving vaccines to a nearby health centre. Their colleagues were able to retrieve the vaccines and deliver it to vaccinators. Thanks to efforts such as this, Iraq reported just 156 cases of measles in the first 10 months of 2007 compared to over 9,000 cases in 2004.

The risks of infectious disease were highlighted when a cholera outbreak hit Iraq at end of summer, quickly becoming the largest in Iraq's recent history with over 4,500 people affected. UNICEF, WHO and other organizations rushed medical supplies, Oral Rehydration Salts (ORS), tankered water and hygiene supplies to the most stricken governorates in northern Iraq and Baghdad.

Malnutrition was also a growing concern in 2007. A 2006 UNICEF-supported survey showed that 21% of Iraq's children were malnourished, 8% underweight and 4% wasted. Conditions have certainly worsened since. Food insecurity has grown as a result of insecurity. The Public Distribution System (PDS), which provided critical food items to families prior to the 2003 war, was only delivering at 60% efficiency in 2007, according to WFP.

Women are among the worst affected by poor nutrition. Iraq's maternal mortality ratio was still unacceptably high, at 84 deaths per 100,000 (WHO, Iraq Family Health Survey 2007), with anaemia a leading cause of maternal deaths. Insecurity kept many pregnant women from seeking essential ante-natal services or receiving emergency obstetric care.

“There are not enough doctors and once the queue at the Health Centre was so long that I missed my appointment said Nadtha, a young expectant mother in Basra.” To improve life for mothers like Nadtha, UNICEF and WHO launched a programme to train Iraq’s doctors and nurses to provide better care to mothers and newborns. UNICEF also supported a government programme to fortify wheat with iron, reducing the risk of anaemia.



UNICEF/Arar/2007: A public awareness campaign for cholera in one of Iraq’s IDP camps.

As the year ends, enormous efforts are still underway in Iraq to safeguard children’s health and support beleaguered doctors and nurses. Mobile health teams are visiting IDP camps to check on children’s condition and treat the sick. Vaccinators are still trekking into remote areas to deliver vital immunizations. Iraqis, with the support of UNICEF, WHO and other organizations, appear to have contained the cholera outbreak. But much more support will be needed to ensure that Iraq’s children can survive and thrive in the year ahead.

Health: action for Iraq 2007

- ✦ **Delivered \$1.4 million of emergency medical supplies and other critical health care to IDPs, cholera victims and casualties of conflict in Sinjar, working with the Ministry of Health, WHO, other UN Agencies and NGOs;**
- ✦ **Transported medical supplies to communities under siege: safely delivered 66 truckloads (US\$ 3 million) of critical drugs and supplies to Anbar and, with WHO, helped to negotiate release and transport of 10 million doses of polio vaccine from the security-blockaded national warehouse in Baghdad;**
- ✦ **Helped to immunize 4.4 million children against polio and 3.5 million against measles through house-to-house campaigns, in partnership with WHO and with support from the European Commission;**
- ✦ **Began rebuilding nine Primary Health Care Centres serving 260,000 of the poorest Iraqis (40,000 children under five), with the support of Japan;**
- ✦ **Prevented and treated malnutrition in women and children through fortification of staple foods with micronutrients and provision of therapeutic milk in the 36 districts with the highest malnutrition rates, in partnership with WFP.**



Total investment: \$8 million



Searching for Safe Water



UNICEF/Arar/2007: Children in Baghdad drink from a public tap

A growing number of Iraqi families in 2007 became dependent on outside help to access safe water. Lack of safe water and hygiene is now perhaps the biggest threat to the lives of Iraqi children, increasing the risk of illness and death from waterborne disease.

Iraq's large water and sanitation network was further undermined by chronic under-investment, frequent power shortages, lack of qualified personnel, illegal water tapping and acts of sabotage. The Ministry of Municipalities and Public Works (MMPW) has reported that 600 municipal workers were killed attempting to repair these networks since 2005.

Violence from military or non-state armed groups also damaged water infrastructure, particularly in Baghdad, Salah-Al Din, Anbar, Diyala, Kirkuk, Mosul and Sinjar (the site of a bombing which destroyed four villages and killed at least 430 people in August).

Sanitation was another persistent problem throughout 2007. Less than 20% of people outside Baghdad are connected to working sewerage systems. Where such systems do exist, they experience frequent breakdowns. Without sufficient electricity, sewage pumping stations and sewage treatment plants can only operate intermittently. Less than 17% of Iraq's sewage is treated – the rest often floods communities and discharges as raw waste-water into Iraq's rivers.

The rise in the numbers of Iraq's internally displaced in 2007 stressed water facilities in host communities nationwide. At least 22% of displaced families were living in camps and temporary shelters without a safe water source (according to the International Organization for Migration, IOM). By July, diarrhoea rates around IDP areas in the southern governorate of Najaf were twice the seasonal averages. Long queues at water distribution centres were frequently reported.

I used to drink water from a well. The water was salty and I used to suffer from stomach pain. Then I started drinking the water arriving in the tankers to my community which tasted good and I did not suffer from stomach ache any more. Ahmed, 13, Baghdad

International and local relief organizations distributed hygiene and water purification supplies to those they were able to reach. UNICEF had been tankering water to families living without safe supplies in Baghdad and surrounding governorates since 2003. However, in March 2007, funds for this activity ran out. UNICEF appealed urgently for additional support – and eventually was able to restart this vital service in April.

By the time summer ended, worse news was on the horizon. On 14 August, a man suffering from acute watery diarrhoea in the northern Iraqi city of Kirkuk was confirmed to have cholera. Despite emergency control measures the disease spread like wildfire in Erbil, Suleimaniyah and Kirkuk, and has quickly become Iraq's biggest outbreak in recent memory.

"It was a frightening and dangerous situation" said one of UNICEF's emergency facilitators working on the ground in Suleimaniyah. "At first more than 200 cases were coming in each day, and hospitals were so overwhelmed they couldn't even test them all."

UNICEF and WHO sent medical supplies and ORS to hospitals treating the sick. ORS costs just a few cents a pack and is critical to stop a severely dehydrated person dying from diarrhoea. UNICEF also started to distribute hygiene kits and water purification tablets to families at risk, and supported a public awareness drive to help contain the outbreak. The disease spread to Baghdad, but appears to now be under control nationwide.



UNICEF/Arar/2007: UNICEF water tankering operations are the only source of safe water for many families.

The search for safe water in Iraq is unlikely to end soon. National systems need a major overhaul and significant additional investment over the years to come.

Efforts by UNICEF and other partners in resurrecting the water and sanitation sector continue to be underfunded, as Iraq’s government is urged to invest more of its own significant national resources in this critical service. Iraq’s MMPW is working to improve its performance, and was the only Iraqi social service ministry to spend their budget entirely in 2007. But without support to bridge gaps in capacity, families will continue to suffer needlessly.

“Iraq is blessed with the great Tigris and Euphrates rivers,” says Vinod Alkari, UNICEF’s Chief of Water and Sanitation for Iraq. “If these resources are properly managed and Iraq’s networks are rebuilt, no Iraqi child should have to suffer from water shortages. But in the meantime Iraq’s families must find a way to survive – and they need our help to do it.”

Water & Sanitation: action for Iraq 2007

- ✦ **Delivered 470 million litres of safe drinking water to over 200,000 people in Baghdad, Sinjar and Diyala, including schools and hospitals;**
- ✦ **Provided emergency water/hygiene relief to over 500,000 IDPs and victims of violence in Sinjar, Najaf, Baghdad, Suleimaniya, Salah-Al Din, Diyala and others;**
- ✦ **Helped the government to prevent cholera by distributing, 2.9 million water purification tablets and 12,000 family water kits providing support for water testing and sending tankers with safe drinking water to risk-prone areas including to 18,000 additional people per day in Baghdad;**
- ✦ **Restored local water networks for 550,000 people, with work ongoing on projects reaching 1 million more in Wassit, Kirkuk, Basra and Kerbala;**
- ✦ **Developed a solid waste management plan for Basra in partnership with UNHABITAT;**
- ✦ **Provided training and equipment to improve the capacity of Iraq’s Ministry of Municipalities and Public Works (MMPW).**



Total investment: \$10 million

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Battling to Learn



UNICEF/Arar/2007: A child enrolled in a UNICEF-supported Accelerated Learning Programme in Wassit

In 2007, children's education was seriously damaged by Iraq's ongoing conflict, despite extraordinary commitment by local officials and families to keep schools functioning. Estimates from the Ministry of Education indicate that net primary enrolment rates may have halved from 2004 levels from 86% to 46% (although lack of accurate population data may affect these numbers).

Many schools did not open as normal in October 2006, particularly in Baghdad and the surrounding governorates due to violence and the exodus of teaching staff. Pupils were also kept at home by frightened parents or else prevented from attending by security measures such as checkpoints.

An unacceptable number of Iraqi schools, teachers and pupils were targeted or caught in the crossfire of local conflict – particularly in southern and central Iraq. Girls trying to learn suffered most severely in many parts of the country. Girls make up an estimated 63% of children not in school, with more being kept from the classroom every day because of insecurity and rising social conservatism in many areas.

"I love my school," said 11-year-old Tamara, a Baghdad primary school pupil. "But this year we could not always come to class because of the explosions in my area. My mother was afraid for me, so I missed many lessons."

Even those children who braved all obstacles to reach school still found learning a challenge. Learning spaces and teachers came under serious stress from violence and displacement. Children reported power cuts, leaving many to study by hurricane lamp. Classrooms were frequently unbearably hot in the absence of air conditioning. Children living with constant anxiety and loss found it hard to concentrate in over-crowded classrooms. And with so many teachers fleeing the country, too few were left to give adequate time and attention to students.

UNICEF stepped up its support to Iraq's schools – working with UHABITAT to add classrooms and washrooms to schools across 15 governorates of Iraq, providing recreation kits for children and boosting training and support to teachers. In spring 2007, essential learning materials, including books, bags, pencils and pens, were distributed for all of Iraq's 4.7 million primary schoolchildren – with the support of the European Commission.

But rebuilding schools could not ease all children's difficulties and did little to support attendance in the most violent areas. An Accelerated Learning Programme for those not enrolled or unable to attend regular school in 12 governorates lifted the pressure on a few young people, but the majority continued to struggle.

Our children had to study in conditions that are totally unfit for learning. There was no water and little electricity. And we couldn't maintain a regular teaching schedule because so many students and teachers were leaving.

**Mrs. Noor, a Baghdad
Headmistress**

Displacement raised additional barriers to learning. Iraq's rates of internal displacement peaked in April and May 2007, with almost 200,000 school-age children displaced, rising to 220,000 by year-end. Lack of proper documentation prevented re-enrollment in many areas, adding to high drop-out rates of up to 5% for primary levels. Arabic teachers were also dispatched to the Kurdistan Region to help tens of thousands of displaced Arabic-speaking children struggling in Kurdish language classrooms.



UNICEF/Iraq 2007: Few recreational facilities are available to schoolchildren in Iraq, and schools are often under-equipped.

So much disruption and ongoing violence affected exam results. One exam centre in Diwaniya was hit by a shower of bullets during an examination session, injuring schoolgirls and killing a mother who was waiting for her daughter outside.

Not surprisingly, results were poor, particularly for Southern and Central Iraq. According to figures released by Iraq's Ministry of Education, only 28% of all 17 year-old Iraqis sat their final exams to graduate high school this summer. And in 2006, only 40% of those that sat their exams received a passing grade in

Southern and Central Iraq, compared to the national results of 60%.

After a summer of uncertainty, Iraq's new school year started in November. Even if lower enrolment rates are confirmed, millions of Iraqi children returned to the classroom. Many are not living in their own homes any more. They are missing friends, neighbours and even family.

And yet their desire to learn is undimmed. Despite every challenge, Iraq's children have a chance to win their battle to learn - as long as we continue to support them.

The erosion of learning in Iraq threatens its recovery. Few things are more critical than education to lift Iraq into a future of prosperity and hope..

**Mette Nordstrand,
UNICEF Chief of
Education for Iraq**

Education: action for Iraq 2007

- ✦ **Rebuilt 48 schools affected by violence/displacement, with work ongoing in 42 more, adding classrooms, toilets for girls and recreation areas to improve learning for over 80,000 pupils and 9,300 teachers – in partnership with UNHABITAT;**
- ✦ **Distributed school books, pens, schoolbags, crayons and other basic learning materials to Iraq's 4.7 million primary school children thanks to support from the European Commission;**
- ✦ **Enrolled 22,000 young people not in school into an Accelerated Learning Programme in 12 governorates;**
- ✦ **Distributed Early Childhood Learning kits for 82,500 children nationwide;**
- ✦ **Provided emergency education kits for 10,000 children affected by insecurity and is providing education supplies for 100,000 vulnerable children in total;**
- ✦ **Worked with the Ministry of Education to develop a home-learning programme for children cut off from school by violence.**



Total investment: \$22 million



In Need of Protection



UNICEF/Arar/2007: Violence and displacement has reduced many children to poverty and increased the risk of abuse.

2007 condemned a growing number of Iraqi children to a more lonely life. Many struggled with fear and loss, as well as very real threats to their safety. While little hard statistics are available on abuses against children, far too many were stripped of their protective environment of family support, fundamental legal protections and access to school and health care.

An unacceptably large number of children and women fell victim to military operations, insurgency, criminal and random violence during the year. Mass casualty attacks affecting hundreds of people became more frequent. The UN estimates 19,500 violent civilian deaths in 2007. Other estimates are higher (up to 24,000 according to Iraq Body

Count), but still fall below 2006 figures. The majority of casualties were men; however hundreds of women and children are certainly among the dead. Many thousands more became widows and orphans after losing their main family wage-earner to violence, exposing them to poverty.

High levels of displacement in the first months of 2007 created additional threats to children. Some were separated from their families in the move. Others felt unable to fit in after arriving in their new areas, particularly if their families had to struggle to find work and enroll them in school. "I felt unsettled when we moved from Baghdad," said 17 year-old Shelan, whose family fled to the relative safety of Suleimaniyah early in the year. "There were new friends, new school, new neighbourhood and new society. I am often very isolated and I feel like I am a stranger in many ways."

Instability also took a growing toll on children's behaviour. A report by the WHO in March 2007 said that 30% of Iraqi children were showing classic signs of anxiety and distress: including bedwetting, poor concentration and violence.

Economic hardship affected millions in 2007, with unemployment rates at over 15% in many governorates and food prices rising. Many parents were forced to ask children to work to earn money. Local NGOs reported a rise in the number of children visibly working on the street. Reports also emerged that some children were being recruited to work for non-state armed groups.

Of the thousands of Iraqi children in need of special care, a few found support through a Child Re-integration Programme in Baghdad, developed by UNICEF and local partners. In 2007, these centres enabled 154 children to be restored to family care. But too many children are still living without help – or hope – on Iraq's dangerous streets.

As the number of children without caregivers increased, capacity to support them in communities and institutions dwindled. In August 2007, several children were discovered being kept in appalling conditions in Baghdad's Dar El-Hanan home for severely disabled patients. The images laid bare the risks facing Iraqi children living without a family's protection. UNICEF and other organizations pushed for a nationwide assessment of Iraq's orphanages, which will be conducted through an international NGO in 2008.

My father lost his job and my mother could not care for us. We were too poor to eat or stay in school. So we had to leave home and this is how we ended up in an institution.

Afrah, 13, Baghdad



UNICEF/Arar/2007: Reports indicate that more Iraqi children are involved in dangerous forms of labour.

Arrest and detention rates for children also increased over the summer, as a result of increased security measures in Iraq's central governorates. By year end, the Multi-National Forces-Iraq announced that over 950 children aged between 10 and 17 years old were being detained in their facilities for alleged security violations, in addition to at least 400 in Iraqi facilities. Ensuring these most vulnerable children receive treatment in line with international human rights law and standards for juvenile justice is a major UNICEF priority for 2008.

The rise of extremism has added extra burdens for women and girls. Many women living in the highly conservative central provinces of Anbar and Diyala feared to step outside, even in full Islamic dress. Reports from Basra now suggest that women are also being targeted there. Basra police reported in December that 113 women were been killed in such attacks during the year.

Women interviewed after displacement also reported sexual violence and forced "temporary marriages". Honor-killings were also consistently reported, particularly in the Kurdistan Region – including more than 300 cases of burned women last year according to the KRG. These cases are mostly presented as suicide attempts or accidents, which hampers data collection.

As 2008 starts, children and women are as vulnerable as ever – if not more so. It is not clear how many children in Iraq's institutions are in poor living conditions and are susceptible to abuse and exploitation. And despite security improvements in some areas, many women still live in fear with few lifelines for support. Iraq is a State Party to the Convention of the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women –which obligates the State to protect the rights of children and women under any and all circumstances. Turning these rights into a reality will be a major challenge for 2008 – and essential to Iraq's ultimate recover

Child Protection: action for Iraq 2007

- ✦ Reunited 154 street children in Baghdad with families and communities through a UNICEF-supported Child-Reintegration initiative, in partnership with an international NGO and the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs;
- ✦ Held a multi-stakeholder consultation to set out a prevention and support strategy for Iraq's detained children and children at risk of detention, to ensure juvenile justice in line with international standards;
- ✦ Supported an assessment of Iraq's child institutions, including orphanages;
- ✦ Conducted Mine Risk Education activities for 310,000 people in mined areas across Iraq, with an international NGO;
- ✦ Negotiated the release of 50 street children arrested in Erbil;
- ✦ Helped to develop Iraq's first Social Work degree programme;
- ✦ Provided emergency recreation supplies for 2,000 IDP children and children in institutions in Baghdad, Sinjar and other areas.



Total investment: \$2 million

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UNICEF/Arar/2007: Children of Sinjar wait in tents for aid after the destruction of their homes in a deadly bombing.

Over the course of 2007, the number of Iraqis internally displaced since the 22 February 2006 bombing of the Al-Askari Shrine in Samarra grew from 700,000 in January to over 1.2 million. Most were driven out by violence and intimidation. Half of the displaced were children.

As waves of displaced families descended upon already impoverished villages and towns, local people struggled to cope. Schools, hospitals and other public services buckled under the strain of thousands of new arrivals – all needing shelter, food, water, medicines, jobs and a place in the classroom for their children.

Hundreds of thousands of Iraqis were also displaced into neighbouring countries, mainly Syria and Jordan, generating several appeals for funds from relief

organizations. It is estimated that 2 million Iraqis have left Iraq in total since 2003 - many of them doctors, teachers and engineers widening Iraq's existing gap in social service provision for children.

According to IOM, 59% of internally displaced families were able to rent homes in their new area. But nearly a quarter (22%) resorted to camps and temporary shelters. Including approximately 70,000 children displaced with their families during the year. Many of the displaced were unable to access basic services and food rations. IOM reports that only 22% regularly accessed PDS rations and an average 14% lacked access to basic healthcare nationwide, rising to around 50% in Diyala and Kirkuk.

Camps, once almost unknown in Iraq, became more visible. In May, a major "tent city" sprang up on the outskirts of Baghdad. About 6,000 people fleeing fighting in Diyala had left their homes at night, many without a single possession. They arrived in need of shelter, food and basic life essentials. Many lived in the open or in tents provided by the Iraqi Red Crescent Organization, and received hygiene and medical supplies from UNICEF.

Further south in Najaf governorate, the number of people living in camps outside the city swelled to 50,000 by mid-summer. Heat and crowded living conditions were contributing factors to an increase in diarrhoea rates and Iraq's first cholera cases of the year, which emerged in Najaf in May and June. UNICEF helped the government send mobile health teams into the area to check on children, distributed water, hygiene and medical supplies.

Other southern cities, including Basra, found the pressure on schools and hospitals too much to manage, at one point declining to accept new arrivals. Elsewhere, in the Kurdistan Region, 167,000 displaced ethnic Arabs needed shelter and assistance to enroll their children into Arabic-language classrooms. The Kurdistan Regional Government did all it could to provide additional education services– and Iraq's Ministry of Education dispatched extra teachers to the North.

Usually families know our faces and we are familiar to them when we come to visit their homes. But there are a lot of displaced people living in our area these days.

Sometimes we find new families who don't know us and they can be angry and suspicious of us.

**Samira, Health Worker,
Basra**

No child should be left to bear the brunt of Iraq's conflict, or receive help only because of where they live or if they happen to be displaced. All of Iraq's vulnerable children need and deserve our support.

Luciano Calestini, UNICEF Emergency Specialist for Iraq

Displacement narrowed humanitarian space, hampering access to and delivery of essential services. Communities with mixed ethnic and religious profiles became increasingly factionalized and inaccessible to outsiders. Baghdad saw the greatest deterioration, accounting for more internal displacement than any other governorate (30% according to UN and government at December 2007) as well as the most dramatic sectarian shifts.

The UN aimed to help local authorities to provide displaced children, and the children in communities hosting them, with equal access to nutrition, schooling, health care, water and sanitation and others. Special efforts were made to ensure that national immunization and nutrition drives reached displaced children, even those in highly insecure areas.

Despite a slowing of displacement rates in late 2007, the majority of families are still unable or unwilling to return. Those that do may also face risks. Nearly 50,000 refugees returned to Iraq from Syria between September and December 2007, according to the Iraq Red Crescent Organization. Most had reached the end of their finances or visas in neighbouring countries, although better security in Baghdad had also contributed to their decision. In addition, almost 10,000 IDP families registered in December as returnees to Baghdad (IOM). Many found their properties occupied and were at risk of secondary displacement.

Many of the changes caused by displacement in 2006 and 2007 will be permanent. Children who missed a year of schooling after being displaced, who were forced to live in suffocating tents and drink unsafe water, who lost their friends, will never be able to reclaim this year of their childhood. More will suffer like this every day unless we act decisively to meet their immediate needs.

Displacement: action for Iraq 2007

- ✦ **Provided emergency water and sanitation relief for over 500,000 people in crisis, including the displaced and communities hosting them nationwide;**
- ✦ **Transported mobile health teams from the Ministry of Health to IDP camps in Wasit, Najaf, Baghdad and elsewhere.**
- ✦ **Built and began construction of 80 additional classrooms in partnership with UNHABITAT to ease the burden on schools overcrowded by displaced students in 10 governorates including Basra, Najaf, Missan, Muthanna, Kirkuk and Dohuk;**
- ✦ **Provided recreation materials for 2,000 displaced children primarily in Sinjar, Baghdad and Najaf;**
- ✦ **Provided emergency education kits for 10,000 children affected by insecurity in schools nationwide and is providing education supplies for 100,000 vulnerable children in total.**

UNICEF's support for emergency relief in 2007 was carried out in partnership with UN Agencies and the Iraq Red Crescent Organization.



Iraq Timeline 2007

January

The UN assesses that up to 34,000 people had been violently killed in Iraq in 2006, and over 700,000 displaced. Many professionals are still fleeing, including doctors, teachers and engineers – leaving major gaps for children.

Mortar explosions in a Baghdad girls' school leave at least five schoolgirls dead and over 20 injured. UNICEF condemns the attack.

February

Children returning to school after the half-term break are missing adequate learning materials. UNICEF organizes a distribution of basics, including books, bags, pens and crayons – enough for Iraq's 4.7 million primary school children.

March

UNICEF water tankering operation halts in Baghdad for the first time since 2003, after running out of funds. This critical activity served over 100,000 people (including displaced families), six hospitals and several schools.

A report by the World Health Organization suggests that 30% of Iraqi children are showing classic signs of distress, including anxiety, poor concentration, nightmares and bedwetting.

April

Falling vaccination rates mean that 1 million children are now not protected against measles – a serious outbreak risk. UNICEF and WHO support a house-to-house immunization drive to bring the measles, mumps and rubella vaccine to 3.6 million children between one and five years of age.

The first cholera cases of the year are reported in Najaf, all in children under 12. The number of displaced people living in temporary shelters is swelling, putting children at risk.

A bomb blast in Sadriya market in Baghdad kills up to 170 people.

May

Concerns run high as summer temperatures begin to rise. Diarrhoea rates in Najaf governorate are already twice seasonal averages. Diarrhoea is one of two primary killers of young children in Iraq.

Violence in Diyala sends more than 6,000 people fleeing to camps on the outskirts of Baghdad. UNICEF and the Iraqi Red Crescent Organization organize distribution of essential supplies, including hygiene kits. UNICEF also transports health workers into the area to monitor children.

To respond to the growing humanitarian crisis in Iraq, UNICEF issues an "Immediate Needs Document" outlining \$34 million urgently required for relief work inside Iraq. Less than \$2 million is received in response by year-end.

June

The plight of children in Iraq's institutions is thrown into stark relief by the discovery of children kept in appalling conditions in Baghdad's Dar El-Hanan home for the severely disabled. UNICEF estimates that tens of thousands of Iraqi children could have lost a parent within the last year, making them very vulnerable to institutionalization.

Water shortages and possible outbreaks of diarrhoeal diseases are now a major concern, as summer heat sets in. UNICEF estimates that only 1 in 3 children have access to a reliable source of safe water. UNICEF steps up its work to rehabilitate local networks, but funding shortages hold back efforts.

July

The number of displaced people in Iraq tops 1 million. A displaced child in Al-Manathera camp, Najaf, dies from a heat-related illness. At least 50,000 displaced people are now living in Najaf, many in mud huts and camps.

School examinations begin, and many children struggle to reach exam centres in southern and central Iraq. A mother waiting for her daughter outside an exam centre in Diwaniya is killed after being caught in the crossfire between unknown groups. Several schoolgirl sitting exams are also injured.

On 8 July, the northern Sunni province of Salah Al-Din suffers the second most devastating single car bomb explosion since the 2003 war, reportedly killing over 150 people. Fears remain high that violence is moving northwards.

August

A devastating series of bomb blasts in the northern district of Sinjar destroys several villages and kills more than 500 people (at least 1/3rd of them children). UNICEF rushes aid to the scene, including medical supplies and hygiene kits. UNICEF also begins tankering water to families made homeless.

A cholera outbreak is reported in Kirkuk and Suleimaniyah. Ten people die and a further 2,000 people, most of them adults, suffer from severe diarrhoea. Local hospitals report an overload of patients. UNICEF works with WHO on the ground to support doctors, provide ORS and run a public information drive.

UNICEF and WHO help local Baghdad health workers to negotiate access to Iraq's national vaccine storage warehouse, which has been blocked as part of increased military security in the area. UNICEF is able to collect and transport 10 million doses of polio vaccine to Iraq's governorates.

September

Cholera worsens in the north and spreads south. 25 deaths are confirmed – only two in children under five.

A house-to-house polio campaign is launched in Iraq, supported by UNICEF and WHO. The campaigns reach more than 90% of children under five, including in temporary camps and conflict zones.

October

The Multi-National Forces in Iraq reveal that 950 children aged between 10 and 17 are being detained for alleged security violations. More are being held in Iraqi prisons, many without access to due process. UNICEF holds discussions with all parties to find a way to bring these children out of institutions and back into the care of a family.

Reports increase that children are being recruited into sectarian militia groups

Tensions between Turkey and Iraq increase over border activities by the Kurdish Workers Party (PKK). Villages inside the Iraqi border are shelled by the Turkish airforce, and the UN prepares to assist displaced families.

November

Millions of Iraqi children head back to school, braving the odds. Exam results for 2007 indicated that only 28% of all 17 year-olds sat their final exams – highlighting a serious deterioration in both access to and quality of learning.

The cholera outbreak hits Baghdad, and cases begin to spiral. UNICEF continues to provide oral rehydration salts and other critical supplies, and begins to tanker water to stricken parts of the city. Two children die from dehydration at the notorious Dar El-Hanan home.

December

IOM estimates that 22% of Iraq's displaced live in temporary shelters.

Some children and their families start to return to Iraq from neighbouring countries, possibly due to a drop in violence but also due to administrative and financial difficulties. But few are sure what the future will hold.

Iraq 2008

More Impact for Children and Families



UNICEF/Arar/2007. Children at school in southern Iraq.

In 2008, Iraqi children and their families need more help than ever. Whether living in an area disrupted by violence, waiting for aid in a makeshift tent or returning anxiously to an abandoned home, they depend on support from the international community.

Reports of improving security in Baghdad give some cause for cautious optimism. But better security will uncover more unmet needs currently hidden from view. It will also increase opportunities to meet those needs – and help fulfill our obligation to the innocent victims of Iraq’s conflict.

Despite the challenges of 2007, a great deal of assistance did reach vulnerable

Iraqis and made a difference in their lives. The work of the UN, international and local NGOs proves that much can be done, if only the will is there.

The UN Security Council Resolution 1770 calls on the international community to do more to help Iraq achieve both its political goals and to meet the basic needs of its people. In 2008, UNICEF will strengthen and expand its work to deliver lifesaving assistance inside Iraq as part of our commitment to building an Iraq fit for children.

UNICEF is promoting a more concerted emergency approach, IMPACT: Iraq. This will strengthen coordination with the UN Country Team, Government and NGOs to deliver a complete package of services and supplies wherever children and their families are vulnerable, operating via a network of local teams, more responsive to needs assessment and rapid delivery.

Iraq’s basic services and its vulnerable families are as critical to the country’s future as any political and security concerns. Where children’s lives can be protected and revived, community recovery often swiftly follows. Iraq’s children should be central to all policy and funding decisions because they are, without question, the foundation for Iraq’s recovery. In 2008 and beyond, we owe them our very best efforts and support.

IMPACT IRAQ
IMMEDIATE ACTION FOR VULNERABLE CHILDREN & FAMILIES



Key Actions for Iraq's Children in 2008

- 1. PRIORITIZE THE IMMEDIATE NEEDS OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES INSIDE IRAQ**, focusing on vulnerability rather than identification as an IDP, refugee or returnee. Assistance must be balanced equitably between refugees and those inside the country. Iraq's government must also mobilize more of its significant national resources for essential social services. Education is a particularly critical area for attention and investment in 2008.
- 2. PROTECT HUMANITARIAN ACCESS TO IRAQI CHILDREN AND THEIR FAMILIES** whether in conflict zones, behind security barriers or in detention centres. Assistance reaching Iraqi communities is best delivered by neutral organizations for better protection of humanitarian space and to rebuild trust in the international community.
- 3. CONTINUE TO SUPPORT IRAQ'S RECOVERY AND DEVELOPMENT GOALS.** Iraq's hard-won achievements towards the Millennium Development Goals, implementation of the International Compact with Iraq, and its efforts to strengthen its own governance, need nurturing towards the day when Iraq can assume full responsibility for meeting all the needs of its citizens.



**United Nations Children's Fund
UNICEF Iraq (Support Centre in Amman)**

**P.O. Box 1551
Amman 11821 – Jordan
www.unicef.org**

**Telephone: +962 6 551 5921
Fax: +962 6 551 3745
chajaj@unicef.org**