

HUMANITARIAN IMPLEMENTATION PLAN (HIP)¹²

Iraq

AMOUNT: € 23.040.600

The present Humanitarian Implementation Plan (HIP) was prepared on the basis of financing decision ECHO/WWD/BUD/2024/01000 (Worldwide Decision) and the related General Guidelines for Operational Priorities on Humanitarian Aid (Operational Priorities). The purpose of the HIP and its annexes³ is to serve as a communication tool from DG ECHO⁴ to its partners and assist them in the preparation of their proposals. The provisions of the Worldwide Decision and the General Conditions of the Agreement with the European Commission shall take precedence over the provisions in this document.

1. CONTEXT

Since the liberation of ISIL-controlled areas, the humanitarian crisis in Iraq has transitioned from an acute humanitarian crisis to a protracted situation while reconstruction and stabilization programs are ongoing in liberated areas.

As a result of improved security, stabilisation and reconstruction efforts in liberated areas, many IDPs have returned to their places of origin. While at the height of the crisis an estimated 6 million people were displaced, almost 5 million had returned to their places of origin by June 2023, while 1.1 million people remain internally displaced. Iraq is also hosting 295 448 refugees (mostly Syrian nationals), 10 950 asylum seekers and stateless populations (stateless population caseload numbers to be assessed by UNHCR by November 2023). Even though returnees face difficulties to re-establish their livelihoods and reintegrate into society, the Iraqi state is gradually improving conditions in return areas.

Despite notable improvements during the past few years, Iraq still faces political instability and prevailing ethnic/religious tensions, which may trigger internal conflicts and humanitarian crisis.

At the same time, the humanitarian system is gradually transitioning away from a focus on humanitarian response towards a development approach. The humanitarian coordination system (cluster-system) has been deactivated, while coordination has shifted towards the integrated office of the Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Resident Coordinator and Humanitarian Coordinator (DSRSG/RC/HC) in line with Iraq's national priorities.

On the political side, after a long period of negotiations and instability, Iraq has formed a new government under the leadership of Prime Minister al-Sudani, approved the new budget law

¹ The HIP will be uploaded in APPEL for DG ECHO partners, in CIRCABC for Member States (humanitarian aid committee) and eventually be published on DG ECHO website.

² HIP numbering in HOPE will have the same structure as the one for decisions. The last part of the code (5 digits, the 3 last ones being zeros) will start by 9 in order to distinguish HIPs from decisions. The rest will remain unchanged.

³ Technical annex and thematic policies annex

⁴ Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO)

for 2023, 2024 and 2025, and has stated that the improvement of services to its citizens is one of its core priorities.

Yet, despite the end of the conflict, stabilization and reconstruction programs and government commitments on improving services and ending displacement, there is still a residual caseload with humanitarian needs for whom a durable solution is yet to be achieved. The Worldwide Decision 2024 classifies Iraq as a forgotten crisis⁵. In the Kurdish Region of Iraq IDPs live in camps, informal settlements and urban areas. After the camp closures in Federal Iraq IDPs most often live in informal settlements with poor living conditions and limited access to public services. When it comes to finding durable solutions, a strong emphasis has been placed on return, while for the remaining caseload all three options need to be considered, including local integration or relocation.

In addition to the humanitarian situation resulting from the war against Islamic State, Iraq is also experiencing a severe climate and environmental crisis, impacting on the water availability, agriculture, livestock production and the fishing industry. The southern governorates in the delta of the Euphrates and Tigris rivers are the most severely impacted, where vulnerable communities are at risk of reduced livelihood opportunities and climate-induced displacement/migration.

	Iraq
INFORM Risk Index (0-10)⁶	
Hazard and Exposure	7.8
Vulnerability	5.8
Lack of Coping Capacity	6.5
INFORM Severity Index (0-5)⁷	3.9
Impact of the crisis	4.1
Condition of people affected	3.6
Complexity of the crisis	4.1
Number of People in Need	4.1
Human Development Index (0-1)	0.686
Total Population⁸	44.49 million

⁵ The EU's Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations department defines a "forgotten crisis" as a severe, protracted humanitarian crisis where people receive insufficient or no international aid. The Forgotten Crises Assessment is based on evidence, including a combination of the following factors: Risk and Crisis severity represented by the INFORM Risk/Severity Index, Media coverage assessed via the Europe Media Monitor, the level of humanitarian aid per capita assessed via the Financial Tracking Service (UN OCHA), Qualitative assessment by the Commission's experts located in the field and headquarters.

⁶ INFORM Risk is a global, open-source risk assessment for humanitarian crises and disasters <https://drmkc.jrc.ec.europa.eu/inform-index/INFORM-Risk>

⁷ The INFORM Severity Index is a way to objectively measure and compare the severity of humanitarian crises and disasters globally. <https://drmkc.jrc.ec.europa.eu/inform-index/INFORM-Severity>

⁸ World Bank data, 2022

2. HUMANITARIAN NEEDS

2.1. People in need of humanitarian assistance:

Iraq still hosts around 1.1 million IDP in protracted displacement, including two very specific caseloads (Yazidi IDPs and IDPs with perceived affiliation to ISIL). For the Yazidi community, continuing insecurity in Sinjar, lack of socio-economic opportunities and the trauma of their lived experience prevents them from return and reintegration. For many IDPs with perceived affiliation to ISIL, the lack of civil documentation limits their freedom of movement, access to public services and social protection, the ability to find a durable solution and enjoy their rights as Iraqi citizens.

IDPs and families that are perceived to be affiliated with ISIL often lack civil documentation. They are restricted in their freedom of movement, are at heightened risk of detention and other protection risks, face difficulties accessing government services, face difficulties to be accepted and integrated in the community of origin. People with suspected links to ISIL, including children, are detained, sometimes in informal detention facilities, with many held in lengthy pretrial detention, and with limited access to legal representation and minimum judicial guarantees.

Besides IDPs, Iraq also hosts more than 300,000 asylum-seekers and refugees, among whom more than 265,000 Syrian refugees. The Syrian refugee caseload is relatively well integrated in Iraqi Kurdistan, considering the situation in Syria, it is unlikely they will be able to return to their country of origin in the near future.

Furthermore, reduced water flow in the Euphrates and Tigris rivers due to climate change, increased usage and dam construction by upstream countries is having a significant impact on Iraq's water supply, agricultural production and fishing industry. Since 2021, there has been an increase in environmental and climate-induced displacement, especially from farming communities, with at least 83,500 people listed as climate-induced IDPs as of mid-2023.

Category of beneficiary	Iraq
Protracted IDPs following the ISIL conflict	1,100,000
Refugees and asylum-seekers	306,398
Climate-induced IDPs	83,500

2.2. Description of the most acute humanitarian needs

The international humanitarian system in Iraq has engaged in a transition towards system-building and gradually handed over responsibility for the remaining humanitarian caseload to the Government of Iraq and its line ministries/departments. Despite efforts toward stabilization, reconstruction and durable solutions, major gaps remain in the delivery of public services, especially for specific groups of the population. As a result, the protracted caseload of remaining IDPs is still in need of targeted efforts to improve their access to civil documentation, public services, social protection and full participation in society as other Iraqi citizens.

Protection and Access to Civil Documentation: Although exact figures are difficult to obtain, it is estimated that 433,000 IDPs and returnees lack at least one key civil document with an

estimated 25% of IDPs lacking one or more key civil documents. Among them, IDPs and returnees with perceived ISIL affiliation represent especially complex cases: the core issue for most of these categories is the difficulty of obtaining legal proof of birth, death, marriage, divorce or curatorship. This may be due to procedural issues (such as the need for a security clearance to obtain a curatorship) or administrative barriers (such as the inability to return to areas of origin to apply for documentation due to financial or security issues). Women and children are particularly affected, especially when the male head of household is missing. The lack of civil documents seriously restricts access to basic services and social protection, access to compensation schemes, limits freedom of movement, increases the risk of arrest and detention, and perpetuates a state of marginalization and exclusion. It thus limits the possibility of achieving a durable solution and reintegration in society for this group.

Beyond civil documentation, IDPs continue to face protection risks, including exclusion and discrimination, the risk of eviction, the risk of abuse, violence, and exploitation, and also still living with the trauma of their past ‘lived experiences’. There is a continued need for protection interventions, including protection monitoring, eviction monitoring, case management, MHPSS, and, where appropriate, cash for protection.

Basic needs: Lack of civil documentation often results in exclusion from available public services and social protection schemes. Not having access to public services and social protection means many such families, often female-headed with a missing husband, struggle to meet their basic needs. Families not able to meet their basic needs then need to resort to negative coping mechanisms, often leading to exposure to protection threats and violations (child labor, sexual exploitation, violence etc.). While protection actors work on securing civil documentation and supporting IDPs to register for relevant social protection mechanisms, there is a need to ensure the most vulnerable households can meet their basic needs through temporary humanitarian MPCA.

Education in Emergencies: Despite the willingness from the Government of Iraq to allow undocumented children to attend school, lack of civil documentation -specifically birth certificate and civil ID- continues to represent one of the main barriers for displaced children to access formal education. Particularly in camps and informal settlements where access to formal education is already challenging, there is a continued need for non-formal education with pathways into formal education, including psychosocial support and life skills training, while protection actors support IDPs to obtain the necessary civil documentation.

Disaster Preparedness: Southern Iraq is facing more and more severe water scarcity, increased water salinity, and environmental and agricultural hazards (drought, crop failure, death of livestock and fish). Rural communities are at heightened risk of loss of livelihoods and displacement. Communities dependent on agriculture, livestock and fishing are in need of disaster risk reduction and disaster preparedness, including climate adaptation to enhance their resilience, support in response to environmental disasters to sustain livelihoods, access to basic services and measures to reduce the risk of displacement.

DG ECHO views preparedness as being critically important for the quality and timeliness of response operations, as well as being a way of improving anticipation, thus complementing humanitarian assistance in saving lives, reducing suffering, and pre-empting or decreasing humanitarian needs.

DG ECHO recognises that disaster preparedness applies to all forms of risk, ranging from natural hazards and epidemics to human-induced threats such as conflict and violence.

Understanding and anticipating such risks is essential to define the needs that they might generate and to design and implement effective preparedness actions and response operations. All humanitarian action therefore needs to be informed by risk assessment and analysis, which should consistently complement a needs-based approach.

HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE AND COORDINATION

2.3. National / local response and involvement

In October 2020, the Government of Iraq (GoI) introduced “The White Paper for Economic Reform” outlining the government’s goals. The document establishes the policy framework for the country’s economic recovery. The years 2021 and 2022 have shown more favourable socioeconomic conditions, mainly linked to a gradual increase in oil prices. In 2022, the GoI adopted the Emergency Food Security and Development Law allocating USD 1.1 billion to social security, health, education, war compensation and support to IDPs, and USD 4 billion to the Public Distribution System, food security, agriculture, water, and grain imports. While this law represents a tangible step towards the inclusion of the most vulnerable groups into national welfare schemes, its implementation will have to be carefully followed to assess IDPs’ inclusion.

The GoI, the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) and local authorities have engaged into the transition phase. Notably, the Minister of Labour and Social Affairs established a committee to provide civil documentation to all children living in IDP camps, orphanages, and out-of-camp areas. The Ministry of Education has launched the National Strategy on Early Childhood Development, which will have special provisions to ensure the development of vulnerable children, including IDP children. In the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI), the Ministry of the Interior requested that the Directorate of Water and the Directorate of Municipalities and Tourism start planning to assume responsibility for the provision of WASH services in the camps in KRI. Authorities in Duhok (KRI) agreed to allow IDPs in camps to undertake shelter upgrades to improve their living conditions with the construction of semi-permanent structures.

In June 2023, the Parliament approved the new budget law for 2023-2024-2025. The Government of Iraq has stated as its main priorities improving public services to its citizens. As part of the transition from humanitarian aid, the transfer of service delivery to relevant government departments has progressed during 2022 and 2023. There have been positive indications in relation to services in camps (as well as shelter upgrades), removing documentation restrictions to access schools, improvements in the documentation process and commitments to enable IDPs access to social safety nets. These are potentially transformative changes that can improve the capacity of the GoI to respond to ongoing and future shocks. However, it remains to be seen whether indeed further improvements to public services can be realized in the near future and to what extent public services will be able to sustain the support to the IDP population in the context of a transition, while humanitarian actors have started to disengage.

2.4. International Humanitarian Response

In line with the transition context and the efforts to move towards durable solutions, including the introduction of the Durable Solutions Framework establishing an area-based coordination mechanism (ABCs) and the launching of the United Nations Sustainable Development

Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF), there has been no HNO/HRP since 2023 and the full-fledged humanitarian cluster system has been discontinued as of December 2022. Recognizing the need to maintain a specific focus on protection issues, including humanitarian issues, a Protection Platform was created and activated in October 2022, co-led by UNHCR and OHCHR, with the main goal to coordinate high-level advocacy and provide guidance to protection partners, especially under the UNSDCF. Humanitarian organizations and donors will continue engaging within the working groups set up in the framework of the new UNSDCF architecture. Overall strategic direction and operationalisation of integrated responses towards durable solutions are done through the Durable Solutions Task Force (DSTF), the Returns Working Group (RWG) and the Durable Solutions Technical Working Group (DSTWG).

As the international humanitarian system has been reconfigured, donors to Iraq are gradually disengaging from humanitarian funding. In this context of transition DG ECHO remains one of the very few donors still engaged in funding humanitarian actions for the caseload of 1.1 million IDPs.

2.5. Operational constraints in terms of:

- 1) access/humanitarian space:

Despite unstable security, the international and national staff of humanitarian agencies have been able to move and maintain operational presence without major constraints. In 2023, partners implement their activities and conduct monitoring with full capacities, although some issues related to movement authorization and working visas issuance re-emerge from time to time. However, some locations remain inaccessible, both for returns by IDPs and the humanitarian community.

- 2) partners (presence, capacity), including absorption capacity on the ground

While the security situation and access have remained stable, the changing donor landscape has meant a reduction in humanitarian funding, and therefore a reduction in humanitarian programming. At the same time, while development donors largely focus on systems-building, there has not been a tangible increase in development funding that would allow increased implementation of development projects for vulnerable communities.

3. HUMANITARIAN – DEVELOPMENT – PEACE NEXUS

Efforts to transition from emergency assistance to stabilization and development are ongoing and have increased. The UN reenergized its Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) with the GoI and the Durable Solutions agenda has become the main action plan for the transition and stabilization phase. UN Development funding institutions, donors and UN agencies support the Ministry of Planning and the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (MoLSA) to gradually absorb the humanitarian needs-based assistance into the Iraqi social welfare system. Since 2020, development actors, including DG INTPA, have engaged in operational durable solutions frameworks and acted for a gradual transfer of responsibility from humanitarian actors to government and development actors. Close cooperation between DG ECHO and DG INTPA has led to a good alignment between DG INTPA programming priorities and DG ECHO's strategy. As a result, the 2021-2027 Multiannual Indicative Programme (MIP) for Iraq identified concrete areas for nexus operationalization with a focus on internally displaced populations. In particular, social protection, education and urban

development, with a strong displacement angle, are the priority areas of intervention identified for the nexus. The reform of national education and social protection systems will create opportunities for the (re-) integration of vulnerable groups such as Iraqi returnees and IDPs.

DG ECHO, DG INTPA, DG NEAR and the EEAS consult regularly to ensure joint positions and messaging towards the GoI, the UN and other international partners (such as on forced displacement and IDP camp closures), as well as close coordination with EU Member States and likeminded donors.

While the implementation of this transitional strategy progresses, there are still important humanitarian needs to be addressed, particularly among the most vulnerable groups that are not yet receiving Government-led social assistance, such as the Public Distribution System (PDS) food support or health and education. For this purpose, tailor-made conflict sensitive transitional programmes focusing on protection with a time-bound additional multipurpose cash assistance could be an opportunity to accelerate the integration of some of the most vulnerable IDPs into the Government-led programmes, coupled with joint evidence based and human rights informed advocacy efforts. A pre-condition to operationalise this component of the nexus is a close coordination between humanitarian, development and peace stakeholders.

The actions supported under Disaster Preparedness on climate adaptation and local water management will have to be linked to the longer-term DRR and water management efforts supported under development cooperation as they are by nature a more long-term undertaking. As such, they require cooperation between humanitarian and development actors and are therefore optimal as a way for implementing the nexus approach.

A joint crisis context analysis is an essential step of a nexus approach, allowing risks and vulnerabilities to be identified, and humanitarian and development actors to define entry points/areas for collaboration, complementary action and mutually reinforcing initiatives. Joint post-crisis needs assessments can also help to facilitate dialogue and promote the systematic integration of preparedness, risk and vulnerability concerns into both humanitarian and development interventions.

5. ENVISAGED DG ECHO RESPONSE STRATEGY AND EXPECTED RESULTS OF HUMANITARIAN AID INTERVENTIONS

5.1. Envisaged DG ECHO response

5.1.1 Priorities

The DG ECHO HIP 2024 will continue focusing on protection, especially access to civil documentation for complex cases, with complementary basic needs assistance (MPCA), support to regain access to public services and social protection, and education in emergencies for remaining IDPs due to the ISIL conflict. This approach, coupled with strategic and coordinated advocacy efforts, has the potential to enhance the integration of some of the most vulnerable groups of the population into the Government-led programs ultimately contributing

to more inclusive durable solutions. ECHO funding in Iraq addresses the needs of Syrian refugees and is an integral part of the EU pledge to respond to the humanitarian crisis in Syria made in the cycle of the Brussels Pledging Conferences.

In addition, DG ECHO will also support disaster risk reduction for IDPs and/or communities at risk of displacement due to environmental disasters and climate change.

Protection: The protection response will focus on the provision of legal assistance, including accompaniment, to complex cases with the aim to increase access to key civil documentation; DG ECHO will also support collective and evidence-based advocacy efforts to address the major bottlenecks in the process of obtaining civil documentation.

ECHO will also support the monitoring of the overall protection situation, and the provision of assistance to survivors of protection violations and people in detention.

Basic needs: For vulnerable IDPs being assisted with civil documentation DG ECHO will also provide monthly MPCA on a temporary basis until they obtain civil documentation, regain access to government services and get registered for social protection mechanisms. The MPCA program will only fill the gap during the process until beneficiaries are able to claim their rights equal to other Iraqi citizens.

Education in Emergencies: DG ECHO will continue prioritizing education in emergencies for children affected by displacement. Where the authorities are unwilling or unable to provide education services, EiE can include provision of non-formal education, with consideration of pathways to formal education. EiE will focus on children in camps and informal settlements who would otherwise not have access to formal education, either because of missing civil documentation or limited access to formal education facilities. DG ECHO will also continue to support formal education services in camps and IDP locations if demonstrated that formal education would not be functional without continued humanitarian support.

According to DG ECHO Disaster Preparedness in education can be framed through three pillars: 1) Safe School Environment; 2) School Safety and Disaster Management; 3) DRR in Teaching and Learning. Together these pillars help to ensure schools are physically safe for students and personnel, plans are established for education continuity in the face of disaster, and the safety and resilience of communities is enhanced.

Disaster Preparedness: As rural communities depending on agriculture, livestock and fishing are increasingly exposed to environmental disasters and climate-induced displacement, DG ECHO will consider support to enhance their resilience. DG ECHO may consider monitoring of climate-induced displacement, improve local water management and access to water, including with nature-based solutions, support climate adaptation, and support disaster preparedness to reduce the risk of urban migration.

DG ECHO promotes targeted preparedness actions as a specific way of strengthening preparedness for response and early action; ‘targeted preparedness’ actions are based on a comprehensive risk assessment. Targeted preparedness refers to actions taken in advance of a hazardous and/or threatening event and aimed at improving the effectiveness of the response to it. DG ECHO will help strengthen the ability of national and local preparedness systems to respond to crisis earlier and better.

Mainstreaming protection principles across all preparedness actions remain critical to anticipate, mitigate and respond to identified protection risks, and promote the safety and dignity of girls, boys and women and men of all ages.

5.1.2 Programmatic Partnerships

Where a specific sector or type of intervention would benefit from a multi-annual strategy through a programmatic partnership please mention it here. Refer to HIPTA section 3.e for technical and administrative details.

5.1.3. Multi-Year Funding

Where a specific sector or type of intervention would benefit from a multi-year funding please mention it here. Refer to HIPTA sections 3.g and 4.d for technical and administrative details.

5.2. Other DG ECHO interventions

The Emergency Toolbox HIP may be drawn upon for the prevention of, and response to, outbreaks of Epidemics. Under the Emergency Toolbox HIP, the Small-Scale Response, Acute Large Emergency Response Tool (ALERT) and Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) instruments may also provide funding options.

Activities under this HIP might be complemented by the activation of the European Humanitarian Response Capacity (EHRC). The EHRC is a DG ECHO led global initiative, aiming at supporting humanitarian partners for the delivery of humanitarian assistance with a gap-filling approach. Under the EHRC the Commission has at its disposal several tools that can be activated in case of sudden onset disasters, e.g., a series of Common Logistics Services (including air operations, warehousing services, last-mile ground transportation, etc.), a stockpile of emergency items, and deployment of humanitarian expertise.