



Basra – The ICRC trains technicians who work at water treatment plants

Ameer Abbas/ ICRC

OPERATIONAL UPDATE

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IRAQ: THE CHALLENGE OF PROVIDING CLEAN WATER AND REBUILDING INFRASTRUCTURE

With the impact of Iraq's long years of war and insecurity still marring the future, older challenges, such as water scarcity and weak infrastructure, are also undermining prospects for development and stability. The ICRC is striving to improve the situation in the areas hardest hit.

"I'm so happy to see the Red Cross in this area again," said a policeman on duty at a checkpoint in Missan governorate, when he saw the ICRC vehicle approaching. ICRC staff were on their way to work on a water pumping station. The policeman was reminded of the work carried out by the ICRC on the water supply system in his home village in 1998. At the time, Iraq was under international sanctions and people lacked even the most basic amenities of life.

"Access to clean water is not the only problem faced by Iraqis today, though it is one of the major ones. There are areas in Iraq where entire water systems are in need of repair," said Alexandre Farine, the ICRC delegate in charge of water and habitat activities in the country. "We are focusing on the areas that have been hardest hit, where such problems have posed the greatest challenge for the population. People's daily lives are affected by the scarcity of clean water, which in turn causes health and hygiene problems."

The ICRC carries out the partial or complete renovation of infrastructure in areas where no alternative support is available and the needs are

acute. It also provides Iraqi technical staff with training so that they can maintain the facilities over the long term.

Between March and May, the ICRC completed the work to improve the sewage system of Tasfirat Basra and began installing a sunshade in Karrada detention facility in Baghdad to improve the premises used for family visits.

In Ninawa governorate, the ICRC built a new medicine warehouse together with the Iraqi Department of Health for Al-Jamhuri Teaching Hospital in Mosul city. In addition, it is renovating water-boosting stations in Zahraa and Tal-Ausqaf providing drinking water for over 100,000 people.

In Diyala, nearly 12,000 inhabitants of the Sarajiq area have clean drinking water again, thanks to a compact water purification unit installed by the ICRC in May. The organization is also renovating and repairing the medical facilities in two primary health-care centres.

The ICRC is also renovating the clinic of Chamchamal Prison in Sulaimaniya governorate.

In coordination with the Directorate of Health in Babil governorate, the ICRC is going to support the construction of a new primary health-care centre in Al-Talea area of Al-Hashimiya district. This new facility will replace the existing structure, which cannot provide enough medical services to meet the needs of the population of over 32,000 in the area. The ICRC will also provide on-site training for the centre's maintenance personnel.



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VISITING DETAINEES

Between March and May, ICRC delegates visited people held by the Iraqi authorities and various branches of the Kurdistan regional government (KRG) in 38 places of detention in nine governorates. They monitored the conditions in which detainees were being held and the treatment they were receiving, and shared their observations and recommendations with the detaining authorities in confidence.

The ICRC helps restore and maintain ties between people held in

detention facilities and their families. From March to May, nearly 300 Red Cross messages were exchanged between them, in Iraq and abroad.

Officials from the Iraqi Ministry of Health and from the Iraqi Correctional Service attended a regional conference on health-care services in places of detention organized by the ICRC from 27 to 29 March in Amman with the participation of representatives from 11 Middle Eastern and North African countries.

BRINGING AID TO PEOPLE FACING HARDSHIP



Sulaimaniya – Internally displaced people receive assistance from the ICRC

In a number of places in Iraq, people continue to struggle to meet their families' basic needs. Between March and May, the ICRC:

- supported the upgrade of more than 100 km of irrigation schemes in Rabea and Qaratapa, in Ninawa and Diyala governorates respectively, which will help increase agricultural production and income for more than 1,500 families;
- enrolled 437 needy community members in cash-for-work activities in connection with the irrigation works, enabling those taking part to temporarily increase their household income;
- awarded 183 grants to disabled people and to women heading households in Kirkuk, Diyala, Ninawa, Sulaimaniya, Basra, Missan and Erbil, enabling them to start small businesses and regain economic self-sufficiency;
- distributed essential hygiene and household items to over 17,300 displaced people in Salah Al-Din, Anbar, Sulaimaniya, Kirkuk, Dohuk and Mosul; 527 of the beneficiaries also received basic food items for one month for their families;
- provided aid for 1,092 women heading households in Baghdad and Anbar governorates, and helped them register with the State welfare allowance system.

ASSISTING HEALTH-CARE FACILITIES



Makhmour – Laboratory personnel at work in an ICRC-supported primary health-care centre

Years of conflict and other violence have left hundreds of thousands of people in Iraq with a physical disability. Together with the Iraqi authorities, the ICRC helps them regain their place in the community.

The ICRC supports 12 physical rehabilitation centres in Iraq where free services are provided along with aftercare.

From March to May, the ICRC:

- treated 8,398 patients, 4,266 of whom were amputees;

- manufactured 4,840 devices and fitted patients with them so they could walk again;
- distributed 227 crutches and 40 wheelchairs to needy patients;
- provided training in wheelchair adaptation and assembling and in management of ankle-foot orthosis services in three centres;
- provided on-site support for nine primary health-care centres in areas including Ninawa, Kirkuk Diyala, Babil, Baghdad and Diwaniya, serving approximately 260,000 people.

For the past 12 years, the ICRC has also been providing patients at Al-Rashad Psychiatric Hospital in Baghdad with occupational therapy support and supplies.

CLARIFYING THE FATE OF MISSING PEOPLE

In March, the ICRC participated in a field exploratory mission in Thi Qar governorate, headed by the Iraqi Ministry of Human Rights, to search for the remains of Kuwaiti nationals reportedly buried in Iraq following the Gulf War of 1990-91. However, despite all efforts made, no human remains were found.

After two joint exhumation missions with the participation of Iranian and Iraqi authorities in Al Fao peninsula, in southern Iraq, the remains of 33 Iraqi soldiers and of 103 Iranian soldiers killed during the Iran-Iraq War were repatriated between the respective countries under the auspices of the ICRC.

CLEARING UNEXPLODED MUNITIONS

Iraq is littered with more than 25 million mines, unexploded ordnance and other explosive remnants of war, in particular along the borders with Iran and Turkey. These devices put at risk the safety and livelihoods of more than 1.6 million Iraqis. Since launching its weapon clearance activities in July 2010, the ICRC has removed nearly 3,500 pieces of unexploded ordnance from 48 danger areas in 30

communities inhabited by more than 29,000 people.

Between March and May, ICRC mine clearance specialists removed 825 pieces of unexploded ordnance and inspected 302,000 square metres of potentially contaminated land in three communities where more than 4,600 civilians have been directly exposed to danger.

COOPERATING WITH THE IRAQI RED CRESCENT SOCIETY



Najaf – Staff and volunteers of the Iraqi Red Crescent are trained in first-aid by the ICRC

The ICRC and the Iraqi Red Crescent Society work together to provide humanitarian aid for people in need.

From March to May, the ICRC:

- organized two workshops on International Humanitarian Law (IHL) for managers and staff of the Iraqi Red Crescent Society, and another workshop for 30 Iraqi Red Crescent dissemination officers from across Iraq.

The Iraqi Red Crescent:

- held 116 mine risk education sessions in 14 governorates to alert over 13,000 people to the risk of unexploded ordnance in the country;
- held a train-the-trainers course in first aid attended by 20 Iraqi Red Crescent participants from six branches (Dohuk, Erbil, Sulaimaniya, Salah Al-Din, Diyala and Wasit) together with the ICRC.

PROMOTING INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN LAW

Reminding parties to a conflict of their obligation to protect civilians is a fundamental part of the ICRC's work. The organization also promotes International Humanitarian Law (IHL) through presentations and training for military and police forces, prison staff, and university students and teachers.

In April, the ICRC held a meeting with 30 tribal leaders in Thi Qar province and explained its role and activities in Iraq; a similar meeting was held with religious figures in Ramadi.

Between March and May, the ICRC:

- held an information session on its activities and basic principles of IHL for 55 Iraqi army instructors;

- held four information sessions on its activities and basic principles of IHL attended by 105 members of Kurdish police, Assayesh and Peshmerga troops in Kirkuk and Erbil;
- organized a train-the-trainers workshop in IHL for 17 Peshmerga troops in Erbil;
- held two information sessions for 11 battalion and unit commanders and 21 female officers of the Iraqi Ministry of Defence;
- organized seven introductions to the ICRC and IHL for law and political science students in five universities, including a private law college in Babil;
- gave presentations on the links between IHL and Islamic law at two universities, in Baghdad and Ramadi.

MISSION

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) is an impartial, neutral and independent organization whose exclusively humanitarian mission is to protect the lives and dignity of victims of armed conflict and other situations of violence and to provide them with assistance. The ICRC also endeavours to prevent suffering by promoting and strengthening humanitarian law and universal humanitarian principles. Established in 1863, the ICRC is at the origin of the Geneva Conventions and the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement. It directs and coordinates the international activities conducted by the Movement in armed conflicts and other situations of violence.



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THE INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE RED CROSS (ICRC) HAS BEEN WORKING IN IRAQ CONTINUOUSLY SINCE 1980 RESPONDING TO THE CONSEQUENCES OF ARMED CONFLICTS AND VIOLENCE

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