

**ANNUAL REPORT OF  
THE HUMANITARIAN / RESIDENT COORDINATOR  
ON THE USE OF CERF GRANTS**

<b>Country</b>	<b>ARMENIA</b>
<b>Humanitarian / Resident Coordinator</b>	<b>Ms. Consuelo Vidal</b>
<b>Reporting Period</b>	<b>November 2007- February 2008</b>

**I. Executive Summary**

Since 2003, when widespread violence in Iraq started, around 1,000 ethnic Armenians applied for asylum with the Government of Armenia (GoA). According to governmental sources, the number of Iraqis seeking asylum in Armenia was increasing steadily. Following consultation with the Government of Armenia, in late 2007 the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) developed a project proposal to address the situation by facilitating the integration of asylum seekers as a durable solution.

A rapid needs assessment conducted in October 2007, jointly by UNHCR and its implementing partner, the Armenian Red Cross Society (ARCS), revealed that around 700 out of an estimated 1,000 Iraqis in Armenia were granted temporary asylum status. Many were in desperate need of humanitarian assistance. Neither the Government nor international aid agencies had the capacity to respond to the basic emergency needs of this group. Their lack of essential items, including food, fuel, winter clothing, shoes and medicines was alarming, particularly in winter, when those shortages placed their lives at risk.

In response, the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) provided emergency funding to UNHCR aimed at providing for the basic needs of these families through the winter. The majority of the Iraqi families were from Baghdad, Basra and Mosul, and had therefore never experienced winter before. CERF assistance was, undeniably, needed urgently and ultimately ensured that winterization assistance helped the refugees survive the extremely harsh winter in Armenia.

<b>Total amount of humanitarian funding required and received (per reporting year)</b>	<b>Required:</b> \$ <u>320,000</u> <b>Received:</b> \$ <u>299,787</u>								
<b>Total amount of CERF funding received by funding window</b>	<b>Rapid Response:</b> \$ <u>299,787</u> <b>Underfunded:</b> n/a  <b>Grand Total:</b> \$ <u>299,787</u>								
<b>Total amount of CERF funding for direct UN agency/IOM implementation and total amount forwarded to implementing partners</b>	<b>Total UN agencies/IOM:</b> \$ <u>125,787</u> <b>Total implementing partners:</b> \$ <u>174,000</u>								
<b>Approximate total number of beneficiaries reached with CERF funding (disaggregated by sex/age if possible)</b>	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th><b>Total</b></th> <th><b>under 5 years of age</b></th> <th><b>Female (If available)</b></th> <th><b>Male (If available)</b></th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td align="center">716</td> <td align="center">37</td> <td align="center">327</td> <td align="center">352</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	<b>Total</b>	<b>under 5 years of age</b>	<b>Female (If available)</b>	<b>Male (If available)</b>	716	37	327	352
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716	37	327	352						
<b>Geographic areas of implementation</b>	Yerevan city, Ararat and Armavir region of Armenia								

## **II. Coordination and Partnership-building**

### **(a) Decision-making process:**

As a follow up to the alarming letters personally written by the refugees, a UNHCR representative in Armenia undertook numerous visits to the Iraqi refugee families. Their humanitarian situation was worrisome, thus, the representative brought this situation to the attention of the United Nations (UN) Resident Coordinator (RC). During the coordination meeting, the representative updated the UN Country Team (UNCT) on the deteriorating situation of the Iraqis and their unmet needs. The UNHCR representative also presented his findings to the UNCT, the UNHCR demarche to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as well as to the government counterpart, the State Migration Agency. With the same purpose, urgent briefings were held with the representatives of the European Union (EU), the Organization for Security and Co-Operation in Europe (OSCE), the Council of Europe (CoE), Foreign Missions and diaspora organizations separately, as well as with the private sector.

In parallel, needs assessments served as the basis for the project proposal to provide assistance to the Iraqi families. The resulting proposal consisted of two parts: to meet the immediate emergency winter needs and to provide a longer-term solution. The first part of the proposal, namely the coverage of basic needs of this group, was designed following the identification of acute winterization needs of the Iraqi families. As this was crucial for the survival of the families and time was of an essence, the UNCT made a decision to present the proposal to the CERF for possible funding.

### **(b) Coordination amongst the humanitarian country team:**

The UNCT supported the proposal by UNHCR to implement the emergency winterization assistance for Iraqi refugees. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) provided full support to the planned activities for winterization. The State Migration Agency, primarily involved in the protection of Iraqi refugees, supported the emergency assistance project, as well. State Migration Agency worked closely with UNHCR and its implementing partners for effective delivery of the assistance. The refugee representatives were also part of the decision-making process from the very initial stage. The project design was based on participatory assessment and the needs were prioritized in close co-ordination with all involved parties. Prior to submission, the final contents of the project were discussed and agreed with the counterparts, including refugee representatives, UNHCR, implementing partners, the Government of Armenia, and UN agencies.

### **(c) Partnerships:**

In order to implement the project and provide support and assistance to the vulnerable Iraqi persons of concern, UNHCR continued to work closely with its implementing partners Mission Armenia (MA) and ARCS. The core mandate of the national non-governmental organization (NGO) Mission Armenia is to assist the most vulnerable in the society, with special focus on elderly and people with disabilities. Mission Armenia has developed a successful track record as one of the few sustainable NGOs who are currently implementing projects funded by various donors. UNHCR has been engaged in capacity building of Mission Armenia to enhance their operational, managerial, technical and institutional capacity through guidance, training, regular consultations and networking. Within the frame of the sub-agreement signed under CERF funding, UNHCR in close cooperation with Mission Armenia delivered basic social and medical care to the persons of concern. During the reporting period, Iraqi refugees received basic food commodities, heating expenses were covered and winter clothing and shoes were distributed. Mission Armenia further developed a well functioning system to compensate vulnerable families for the heating expenses for vulnerable families. UNHCR, together with Mission Armenia, issued coupons, which were presented to the designated shops for procurement of clothing and shoes by Iraqis. Food items were procured, parcelled and distributed by Mission Armenia. In Yerevan the distribution was organized from the storage of Mission Armenia and in the regions the food parcels were delivered from door-to-door.

### **(d) Prioritization process:**

Following the reports from UNHCR implementing partners dealing with this group, UNHCR conducted intensive field visits to Iraqi families. Analyzing the operational environment, including the government

plans for assistance and reports from the field, as well as discussions with the Iraqis themselves, it was agreed that the most important areas to be covered were food, health and heating. Although shelter needs were crucial, it was also agreed that addressing temporary shelter needs could be put on the hold until next spring when various alternatives could be considered and more favourable climate conditions for construction.

### **III. Implementation and Results**

#### **Rapid Response projects**

The funds provided by the CERF were timely and aimed at the survival of the Iraqi families (ethnic Armenians) through the winter. The majority of the Iraqi families were from Baghdad, Basra and Mosul who had never experienced winter before. The participatory assessment indicated that Iraqi refugees lacked essential items, including food, fuel, medicine and warm clothing. The situation was of a life-threatening nature. The provision of the winterization assistance proved to be a crucial measure for Iraqi refugees and helped them survive the extremely harsh winter in Armenia. CERF assistance, undeniably, was time-critical and ensured life-saving measures for this group. Whilst their life-saving needs were taken care of, UNHCR secured additional funds in 2008 for their local integration.

#### **Project background and overview**

Since the end of 2004, Armenia registered a steadily growing number of asylum seekers and refugees from Iraq, almost all of Armenian ethnicity. As of the end of December 2007, statistics indicated 21 refugees, 806 temporary asylum holders, and 69 asylum seekers. Based on the number of Iraqis presently living in Armenia and the number of Iraqis uprooted in the wider region, there were indicators that the figure would increase in the near future.

Most of the Iraqi refugees fled because of the generalized violence in Iraq associated with persecution on the basis of their ethnicity and religion. Various reports indicated that about 20,000 Iraqis of Armenian ethnicity had been living in Iraq, mainly in Baghdad, Basra and Mosul. UNHCR statistics indicated that 1,177 Armenian Iraqi had registered as refugees with UNHCR in neighbouring countries of Iraq, mainly Syria, Jordan and Lebanon. Iraqi refugees in Armenia expressed their concerns about the fact that refugees in the Middle East (mainly Syria) did not enjoy sufficient protection in terms of security. Access to education and health was also a concern.

Following field visits, it was determined that most of the Iraqis were living in Yerevan city. A small fraction of Iraqis were settled down in rural areas, mainly in Ararat and Armavir provinces. Since arrival, this group had never received any assistance, neither from the government, nor from any international or national organization. Field observations once more confirmed that Iraqis living in rural areas were considered to be most vulnerable.

Since no temporary shelter had been provided to this group by the Government of Armenia, Iraqi refugees were renting apartments and paying high rents, not being able to negotiate due to lack of knowledge of the local market and spoken Armenian language. Hence, many families were compelled to change their apartments several times in search for more economical options, which added to their stress and hardship. This group had particular difficulties in securing access to local education and health facilities.

Some families received modest assistance from relatives in Iraq, but even that was vanishing due to the deteriorating economic situation in Iraq. Many of them were running out of money and finding it increasingly difficult to get by.

The systematic needs assessments jointly conducted by UNHCR and its implementing partners - Mission Armenia (MA) and the ARCS - revealed that all Iraqi refugees/asylum seekers living in Yerevan and surrounding towns were in dire need of humanitarian assistance for winterization, with almost no resources and income. Without assistance, their situation would have worsened and become life-threatening in view of the harsh winter in Armenia, especially in the absence of heating and winter clothing.

## **Objective of the project**

The primary objective of the emergency winterization project was to support Iraqi refugees and asylum seekers survive the harsh Armenian winter by providing winter clothing, shoes, basic food items, medical assistance and coverage of heating expenses.

## **Implementation arrangements**

UNHCR provided support to the vulnerable Iraqi refugees in cooperation with its implementing partners, Mission Armenia and ARCS. To implement the project, UNHCR concluded an agreement with Mission Armenia, the NGO responsible for the implementation of the prioritized activities, whereas ARCS remained as an operational partner for this project. The decision was based on the understanding that the core mandate of Mission Armenia was to assist the most vulnerable in the society, with the focus on elderly and people with disabilities. Mission Armenia had a successful track record and emerged as one of the few sustainable local non-governmental organizations that were currently implementing projects funded by various donors. The project was implemented during the period of November 2007 – February 2008

The project implementation was divided into five components:

1. Beneficiary verification
2. Distribution of clothes and shoes
3. Distribution of food
4. Coverage of heating expenses
5. Medical care

## **Beneficiary verification**

UNHCR conducted several meetings with Mission Armenia and the ARCS in order to develop the beneficiary list. The beneficiary selection criteria were further developed in close cooperation with government counterparts and representatives of Iraqi refugees who were elected in a community meeting with the participation of around 80 Iraqis.

At the request of the Iraqi representatives, persons holding residency permits (not registered with the State Migration Agency) were to be considered for receiving assistance at a later stage, after the completion of the assistance programme for temporary asylum holders.

## **Provision of winter clothing and shoes**

In one of the joint meetings between UNHCR, refugee representatives and implementing partners, the modality for the provision of the winter clothing and shoes was developed and finalized. Coupons for winter shoes and clothing were issued to Iraqi refugees. In order to simplify and speed up the distribution, one shop was chosen for clothing and one for shoes. To further involve refugees in the decision making process, the refugee representatives initiated and assessed the possible shops to be targeted for the provision of this assistance. In consultation with refugee representatives, the following criteria were considered for the final selection of the shops: i) diversity of items; ii) price; iii) location (easily accessible).

After the shops were selected, the beneficiaries were grouped and invited to the shops according to an agreed schedule in order to prevent overcrowding. Beneficiaries were provided coupons worth around \$100 for shopping. Relevant UNHCR and implementing partner staff were involved in the process. Purchased items were packed and transported to the places of residence of the refugees living in rural areas.

## **Food assistance**

Mission Armenia was responsible for the procurement and distribution of food items. The selection of food items were agreed with refugees based on their priority needs, expressed through refugee representatives. The food was packed in Mission Armenia warehouses and packages were ready to be delivered. In Yerevan the representatives of the families would come to Mission Armenia's office to

receive their food packages. In rural areas, the packages were transported to the villages and distributed in the provinces.

Each package consisted of 1.5 litres of oil, 21 kg of rice, 21 kg of sugar, three cans of tomato paste, 15 kg of flour, 15 kg of beans, three cans of condensed milk, 15 kg of lentil, fifteen packages of tea. In addition, three more cans of condensed milk were added for families with small children.

### **Coverage of heating expenses**

It was essential to provide this assistance as the winter of 2007-2008 in Armenia was exceptionally cold. The beneficiaries for this assistance were the same families who were targeted for winter clothing and food. As the families were living in rented houses, it was imperative to assure that they would be able to stay in the same places of residence for the winter months. After the final verification of the beneficiary families, heating account numbers were cross-checked. As estimated, the average heating required per family would cost around \$50. Mission Armenia finalized the lists of electricity and gas charges for heating per family. The lists with accompanied letters were sent to Armenian electric and gas companies and the sum was debited against the accounts for each family. This mechanism proved to be effective in the past when similar assistance was provided to other vulnerable groups of the society. Under this scheme, each family had a credit of \$150, enough credit for three months.

### **Medical care**

Taking into consideration the deteriorating health conditions of Iraqis in Armenia, Mission Armenia developed a viable referral mechanism with Armenia Republican hospital in Yerevan, which would receive the beneficiaries and provide the required medical assistance and treatment to refugees and temporary asylum holders. After in-depth study of medical facilities and centres providing health care and treatment, a contract with Armenia Republican hospital in Yerevan was signed. Within the framework of this contract, the hospital received the referred medical cases. This proved to be a good mechanism for addressing refugee health problems, particularly during the winter months, when children and elderly are more vulnerable. UNHCR is planning to replicate this mechanism in future projects.

#### **(a) Monitoring and evaluation**

The implementation of the emergency assistance project was monitored in a systematic manner by project staff. Regular field visits were instrumental in monitoring the distribution of assistance.

#### **(b) Initiatives that complemented CERF-funded projects**

UNHCR continues to work with the Government and partners to monitor the arrival of new asylum seekers and secure the provision of humanitarian assistance for the most vulnerable groups. In parallel, UNHCR has developed a project proposal aimed at a longer-term solution for Iraqis. A supplementary project aimed at addressing humanitarian and integration needs of this group will be funded by UNHCR in 2008 in order to ensure a smooth transition from emergency response to local integration. The project includes the provision of temporary shelter for some fifty families, income generating activities, education, health-care and direct humanitarian assistance for new arrivals. Data collected throughout the implementation of the CERF project will be used to address the integration needs of Iraqi refugees in Armenia.

## **IV. Lessons learned**

During the implementation of the project, the existing refugee committee was not fully representing the needs of all Iraqi refugees. Building on that experience, a new refugee committee was established with equal representation for women, elected by refugees. This committee is expected to identify and provide feedback on problems, priorities and needs as well as to participate in planning assistance in the future.

The refugee situation in Armenia and lessons learned from this project prompted UNHCR to update its contingency planning as Armenia is located in a politically volatile geographic area. It therefore started activities related to strengthening border monitoring to closely monitor refugee movement across the borders, particularly with Iran which was used by Iraqi refugees. This contingency planning is being developed together with other agencies.

## V. Results

Sector/ Cluster	CERF projects per sector	Amount disbursed (USD)	Number of beneficiaries	Implementing Partners	Expected Results/Outcomes	Actual results and improvement for the target beneficiaries
<b>Food</b>	<b>2007/08ARM/ 410 Emergency Winterization Assistance</b>	47,000	716 Iraqi refugees	Mission Armenia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Basic food assistance received by 175 families / 700 persons to meet nutrition needs during the reporting period</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The agreed food items were procured by Mission Armenia for distribution. Beneficiaries provided with basic food items for three months</li> </ul>
<b>Domestic needs / Household support</b>	<b>2007/08ARM/ 410 Emergency Winterization Assistance</b>	132,000	716 Iraqi refugees	Mission Armenia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Winter clothing and shoes provided to Iraqi refugees</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Procurement of winter clothing and shoes approved to be life-saving for beneficiaries who had never experienced such cold climate before</li> </ul>
<b>Community services</b>	<b>2007/08/ARM/ 410 Emergency Winterization Assistance</b>	83,000	175 families	Mission Armenia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The heating expenses of the beneficiary group covered during the reporting period (three months)</li> <li>Health assistance provided</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Life-saving assistance provided to target group through coverage of heating expenses for three months</li> <li>Contract signed with a local hospital for provision of emergency medical assistance to Iraqis</li> </ul>
<b>Agency Operational Support</b>	<b>2007/08ARM/ 410 Emergency Winterization Assistance</b>	38,000		Direct	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Experienced consultant for proper project co-ordination and management hired</li> <li>Technical capacity of the implementing partners improved</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The hired consultant coordinated the project implementation and closely monitored the delivery of assistance.</li> <li>One vehicle procured to increase the technical capacity of the implementing partner</li> </ul>

## VI. CERF IN ACTION: Success stories

As a result of ongoing conflict in Iraq, hundreds of thousands of families were uprooted. Around 1,000 persons, ethnic Armenians living in Iraq, arrived in Armenia.

Out of this number, 700 applied and were granted with Temporary Asylum Status. Most of the Iraqi Armenian refugees settled in Yerevan and in the villages of Ararat province. People fled from their homes leaving behind everything they and their grandparents had earned; leaving everything and coming with nothing, bringing only scant means to survive. The approaching harsh winter caused even more problems for these refugees: not being used to such climate conditions in Armenia, these families faced serious issues with regard to heating, food, and winter clothing.



A meeting with refugee representatives to plan distribution modalities

Considering that most of the families arrived in Armenia during 2007 and had never experienced winter in Armenia, Central Emergency Response Fund 'Emergency Winterization Assistance' indeed, served as a time-critical and life-saving hand for them. The assistance included coverage of heating expenses for three winter months; provision of food, winter clothing and shoes as well as basic medicines. Around 700 persons benefited from the winterization programme. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) implemented it jointly with non-governmental organization partners Mission Armenia and Armenian Red Cross Society (ARCS). It is notable that refugees themselves participated in the development of the implementation mechanism. With the joint efforts of UNHCR and refugees, a refugee committee was established which identified the shops where the winter clothing and shoes were chosen from by refugees. They expressed gratitude for the assistance they received and mentioned many times how they could survive through the harsh winter months purely thanks to funding which provided timely and invaluable humanitarian assistance to their families.



Food distribution in Darakert village, Ararat Marz

"UNHCR and non-governmental organization staff were very attentive to us, so patient, though I know how hard it should have been for them. When you are alone and people keep coming with their different requests...." says Hrantuhi Robon Vardan. Her family, of five moved to Armenia in spring 2007 and settled in Darakert village of Ararat marz. "None of my family members works. My husband, a good welder, faces health problems, so he doesn't work. The kids attend school, and it is so difficult to meet all the needs. This assistance was so timely and very helpful".



Vulnerable Iraqis. This mother and daughter have serious health problems and live alone with no means to survive

Most Iraqi refugees paid high rents for their apartments from their meager savings from Iraq, which was dissolving in view of the declining dollar. Central Emergency Response Fund assistance was vital to cover winter expenses. Each family member was granted the possibility to buy clothing as well as shoes. Special attention was paid to food packages. Refugee women participated in identifying priorities of food items. The food package included 1.5 litre of oil, 21 kg of rice, three cans of tomato paste, 15 kg of flour, 15 kg of beans, three cans of condensed milk,

15 kg of lentil, 21 kg of sugar, 15 packages of tea. Three additional cans of condensed milk were added for the families with infants and little children.

“We are not buying bread, we are making it ourselves,” says Ms. Hrantuhi from Darakert village. When UNHCR staff last visited the family, they were preparing for Easter and made tasty “krechi” (traditional sweet biscuits). Mr. Anushavan added, “We do not have any source of income, you can see how we live and what difference this assistance, in terms of food, gas and clothing, made to our lives, thanks to Central Emergency Response Fund”.

## A PHOTO GALLERY



Vulnerable Iraqi family in rented house.  
The youngest member of the family has serious health problems



Food distribution in Daranak village, Ararat Marz



Food distribution in Zvartnots village,  
Ararat Marz



Youngster in the backyard of his family's house





Elderly Iraqi refugees living in rented apartment with families of three sons and an unmarried daughter (total fifteen members)



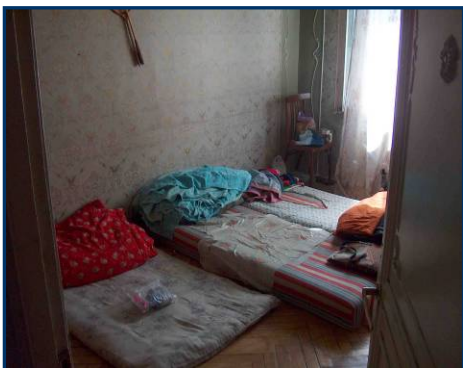
Iraqi refugees choosing clothes for winter



Iraqi woman residing inside a former bathroom rented for 20,000 Armenian drams



Vulnerable Iraqi family living in rented house in Darakert village



Apartment in Yerevan rented by an Iraqi family with five members



Iraqi refugee girl trying on a sweater

**CERF 2007 - PROJECT DETAIL ARMENIA  
(01-03 TO 15-08-2008)**

CERF Project	Agency	Sector	Window*	Approved Amount USD	Disbursement Date
07-HCR-029	UNHCR	Shelter and non-food items	RR	299,787	13.11.2007
<b>Total</b>				<b>299,787</b>	

## LIST OF ACRONYMS

**ARCS** - Armenian Red Cross Society

**CERF** - Central Emergency Response Fund

**CoE** - Council of Europe

**DMT** - Disaster management team

**EU** - European Union

**MA** - Mission Armenia

**MFA** - The Ministry of Foreign Affairs

**OSCE** - Organization for Security and Co-Operation in Europe

**RR** - Rapid Response

**RC** - Resident Coordinator

**UNCT** - United Nations Country Team

**UNDP** - United Nations Development Programme

**UNHCR** - United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees