

December 2010

DISPLACED IRAQIS

Integrated International Strategy Needed to Reintegrate Iraq's Internally Displaced and Returning Refugees



G A O

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Why GAO Did This Study

The estimated number of Iraqis who have been internally displaced since February 2006 is about 1.6 million, and numerous Iraqis are in neighboring countries. Tens of thousands of Iraqi families have returned home and the number is slowly increasing. GAO examined (1) conditions in Iraq that pose a challenge to the reintegration of displaced Iraqis, (2) actions the international community is taking to address these conditions and reintegration, and (3) the extent to which the international community has an effective reintegration strategy. GAO analyzed reports and data, met with officials from the U.S. and Iraqi governments and international and nongovernmental organizations, and did fieldwork in Geneva and Baghdad.

What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that (1) the Secretary of State (State) and U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) Administrator assist Iraq in developing an effective integrated international strategy for reintegrating displaced Iraqis; (2) State and USAID make publicly available an unclassified version of the current U.S. strategy; (3) State encourage UNHCR to share primary data collected and take advantage of the IAU efforts; and (4) State and USAID work with UNHCR and others to inventory and assess the operations of the various assistance centers to determine and achieve an optimal framework. The Department of State and USAID concurred with our recommendations.

View [GAO-11-124](#) or key components. For more information, contact Joseph A. Christoff at (202) 512-8979 or christoffj@gao.gov.

DISPLACED IRAQIS

Integrated International Strategy Needed to Reintegrate Iraq's Internally Displaced and Returning Refugees

What GAO Found

Several issues impede the return and reintegration of displaced Iraqis. Although the overall security situation in Iraq has improved since 2006, the actual and perceived threat across governorates and neighborhoods continues to impede Iraqi returns and reintegration. Problems in securing property restitution or compensation and shelter have made it difficult to return and reintegrate. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) reported that 43 percent of the internally displaced that it surveyed did not have access to their homes, primarily because their property was occupied or destroyed. IOM also reported that one-third of the heads of returnee families it assessed were unemployed. Iraq continues to lack adequate access to essential services—that is, food, water, sanitation, electricity, health services, and education. Moreover, insufficient government capacity and commitment cross over each of the problem areas and serve as a deterrent to returns and reintegration.

The international community has taken action to address the impediments that displaced Iraqis face, but the extent to which these efforts will result in reintegration of displaced Iraqis is uncertain. International and nongovernmental organizations, supported by U.S. and other donor funding, have initiated projects. However, the extent to which these projects specifically target and affect reintegration is not consistently measured. The Iraqi government has initiated efforts to encourage returns and reintegration. However, progress in this area has been limited due to insufficient commitment and capacity, according to international and U.S. officials.

Iraq, the United States, and other members of the international community do not have an integrated international strategy for the reintegration of displaced Iraqis. The international community lacks integrated plans because Iraqi Ministry of Displacement and Migration planning efforts stalled due to limitations of authority, capacity, and broader Iraqi government support, according to U.S. and international officials; the United Nation's (UN) strategy and plans have not specifically focused on reintegration; and an unclassified version of the current U.S. government strategy has not been made publicly available. This situation has hindered efforts to efficiently assess the needs of internally displaced Iraqis and returnees. Moreover, the international community has not yet reached an agreement on goals and expected outcomes for reintegration. Also, the UN has not integrated data on returnee needs from the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) into its new Inter-Agency Information and Analysis Unit (IAU), which was established to provide a central point for collecting and assessing data, and UNHCR is not taking advantage of IAU resources and coordination efforts. Furthermore, it is difficult for stakeholders to effectively delineate roles and responsibilities and establish coordination and oversight mechanisms. One area with significant potential for inefficiencies is in the establishment and operation of numerous assistance centers and mobile units across Iraq by various entities to assist returnees, the internally displaced, and other vulnerable Iraqis.

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Abbreviations

DOD	Department of Defense
IAU	Inter-Agency Information and Analysis Unit
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IDP	internally displaced person
IMC	International Medical Corps
IOM	International Organization for Migration
ME/IR	Middle East Bureau/Office of Iraq Reconstruction
MODM	Iraqi Ministry of Displacement and Migration
NGO	nongovernmental organization
NSC	National Security Council
OCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
OFDA	Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance
PRM	Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration
UN	United Nations
UN-HABITAT	United Nations Human Settlements Programme
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USIP	United States Institute of Peace
WFP	World Food Program
WHO	World Health Organization

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Congressional Committees

The estimated number of Iraqis who have been internally displaced since February 2006¹ is about 1.6 million, according to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM).² In addition, governments in the region report that about 1.5 to 1.7 million Iraqi refugees are in their countries, although the actual number is unknown.³ According to IOM, tens of thousands of Iraqi families have returned and the number of returnees is slowly increasing; however, UNHCR officials question the sustainability of these returns. On February 27, 2009, President Obama stated that it is in the United States' strategic interest—and a moral responsibility—to help displaced Iraqis. According to the President, the U.S. government “will work with the Iraqi government over time to resettle refugees and displaced Iraqis within Iraq—because there are few more powerful indicators of lasting peace than displaced citizens returning home.”⁴

GAO assessed U.S. and international efforts to reintegrate internally displaced Iraqis and returning Iraqi refugees. The United Nations (UN) defines reintegration as the achievement of sustainable returns. In this report, we address (1) the conditions in Iraq that pose a challenge to the reintegration of displaced Iraqis; (2) the actions that the United States, Iraq, and other members of the international community have taken to address these conditions and reintegration; and (3) the extent to which the United States, Iraq, and other members of the international community have an effective strategy for reintegrating displaced Iraqis. This report builds on our prior work assessing U.S. and international efforts to protect

¹According to IOM, the bombing of the Al-Askari Mosque in Samarra in February 2006 triggered sectarian violence that significantly increased the number of displaced Iraqis.

²Data are from the Iraqi Ministry of Displacement and Migration for the 15 central and southern governorates and from the Kurdistan Regional Government for the 3 northern governorates.

³According to UNHCR, at the beginning of 2009 about 310,413 Iraqi refugees were actively registered with UNHCR in Egypt, Iran, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, Turkey, and the Gulf Cooperation Council countries.

⁴*Remarks of President Barack Obama—Responsibly Ending the War in Iraq* (Camp Lejeune, N.C.: Feb. 27, 2009).

and assist Iraqi refugees in neighboring countries.⁵ Because of broad congressional interest in the U.S. engagement in Iraq, we have completed this report under the Comptroller General's authority to conduct evaluations on his own initiative.

To address these objectives, we interviewed officials and reviewed reports and data from the U.S. government, the Iraqi government, UNHCR and other UN agencies, IOM, nongovernmental organizations (NGO), and research institutes. To identify conditions that pose a challenge to reintegrating displaced Iraqis, we reviewed research papers and assessments; strategies and policy papers; program implementation, monitoring, and progress reports; and related documents. We assessed challenges by considering factors such as their significance and the degree to which they could be generalized, and then grouped them by category. To identify the actions that the United States, Iraq, and the international community have taken to address these conditions and reintegration, we reviewed policy, strategy, planning, and funding documents; UN appeals; monitoring and progress reports; and related documents. To determine the extent to which the United States, Iraq, and the international community have an effective strategy to address the reintegration of displaced Iraqis, we reviewed policy, strategy, and planning documents from the U.S. and Iraqi governments, the UN, UNHCR, and IOM. We interviewed U.S. agency, Iraqi government, international organization, NGO, and research institution officials and reviewed their documents to determine known issues and problems. For each objective, we documented evidence from multiple sources and validated it with knowledgeable U.S., UN, IOM, and NGO officials to ensure accuracy. Appendix I contains a more detailed description of our scope and methodology.

We conducted this performance audit from March 2009 to December 2010 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives.

⁵GAO, *Iraqi Refugee Assistance: Improvements Needed in Measuring Progress, Assessing Needs, Tracking Funds, and Developing an International Strategic Plan*, GAO-09-120 (Washington, D.C.: Apr. 21, 2009).

Results in Brief

Several issues impede the return and reintegration of displaced Iraqis. First, although the overall security situation in Iraq has improved since 2006, the actual and perceived threat across governorates and neighborhoods continues to impede Iraqi returns and reintegration. The Department of Defense (DOD) reported that from December 2009 to February 2010, approximately 73 percent of the enemy attacks occurred in 4 of the 18 governorates in Iraq—Baghdad, Diyala, Ninewa, and Salah al-Din. The first three of these four governorates account for 89 percent of the displacement occurring after the February 2006 Samarra Al-Askari mosque bombing, according to the UN. Second, problems in securing property restitution or compensation and shelter have made it difficult for Iraqis to return to their places of origin and reintegrate or integrate elsewhere in Iraq. According to a 2009 IOM report, 43 percent of IDPs surveyed did not have access to their homes, primarily because their property was occupied or destroyed. The property resolution process is reportedly complicated, cumbersome, and has yet to be proven effective, and the problem is further exacerbated by the reported lack of adequate shelter. The UN Human Settlements Programme (UN-HABITAT) reported in July 2009 that Iraq had a housing shortage of at least 1.5 million units and demand was increasing. Third, without employment or other income-generating opportunities, displaced Iraqis may decide against returning to their former communities or have difficulty reintegrating. IOM reported in November 2009 that one-third of the heads of the returnee families it assessed were unemployed and employment opportunities for internally displaced persons (IDP) were also limited. Fourth, the lack of adequate essential services—primarily, food and nonfood items; water, sanitation, and electricity; health services; and education—further acts as a barrier to returns and reintegration. Fifth, insufficient government capacity and commitment cross over each of the problem areas and serve as deterrents to returns and reintegration.

International and nongovernmental organizations and the U.S. and Iraqi governments have taken action to address the impediments that displaced Iraqis face, but the extent to which these efforts will result in reintegration of displaced Iraqis is uncertain. First, international and nongovernmental organizations, supported by U.S. and other donor funding, have initiated many projects to address impediments to returns, including projects focusing on protection, property and shelter, income, essential services, and government support. However, the extent to which these projects specifically target and impact reintegration is not consistently measured or reported in the aggregate against international goals for reintegration. These projects target a mix of vulnerable populations in Iraq, including IDPs, returning refugees, non-Iraqi refugees, other conflict victims, and the

communities that host them. Second, the U.S. government implements its objectives regarding displaced Iraqis by conducting diplomatic efforts and providing assistance through its implementing partners in conjunction with broader humanitarian and development assistance efforts. The U.S. goals and outcomes for these efforts were classified or considered sensitive information and were not made publicly available. Accordingly, we did not provide an unclassified assessment of the extent to which U.S. assistance was achieving its intended goals. Third, the Iraqi government has initiated steps to encourage returns and reintegration; however, progress has been limited due to insufficient commitment and capacity at various levels of the government, according to international organization and U.S. officials. For example, although the Ministry of Displacement and Migration (MODM), a relatively new ministry, issued a National Policy on Displacement, it has lacked the authority and capacity to lead ministerial efforts, according to officials. Furthermore, the international and nongovernmental organizations stated that, bureaucratic challenges, based on the lack of political commitment and capacity, have prevented many returnees from recovering their property and receiving stipends allowed under a government decree and orders issued in 2008 and 2009.

Iraq, the United States, and other members of the international community do not have an integrated international strategy for the reintegration of displaced Iraqis. The international community lacks integrated plans because Iraqi MODM planning efforts stalled due to limitations of authority, capacity, and broader Iraqi government support, according to the international community; the UN's strategy and plans have not specifically focused on reintegration; and the U.S. government has not made an unclassified version of its current strategy publicly available. An effective strategy would be integrated and provide Iraq and its implementing partners with a tool to shape policies and programs. International community officials agree that to be effective, the strategy should be Iraqi-led. Without an integrated strategy, clearly defined and agreed-upon strategic goals and intended outcomes for reintegration have not been specifically developed. For example, the international community has not yet reached agreement on when the displacement it is addressing began or when the displaced are considered reintegrated. In addition, this situation has hindered efforts to efficiently and effectively assess the needs of Iraqi IDPs and returnees. While UN agencies, affiliated organizations, and their implementing partners have collected and assessed data for their specialized work in Iraq, data gaps remain. For example, according to international organizations, no inventory and analysis have been conducted of financial assistance programs available to IDPs and returnees to determine gaps, overlap, or impact. Furthermore,

the UN has not fully integrated data from UNHCR into its new Inter-Agency Information Analysis Unit (IAU), which was established to provide a central point for collecting and assessing data. UNHCR is not sharing the “raw” or primary data it collects on IDPs, returnees, and vulnerable populations and is not taking advantage of IAU resources and coordination. Finally, without an Iraqi-led integrated strategy, it is difficult for stakeholders to effectively delineate roles and responsibilities and establish coordination and oversight mechanisms. The MODM Minister stated that his ministry’s initial role was limited to that of a coordinating body, leaving no single entity charged with implementing the necessary tasks. At UN Country Team meetings and UN Assistance Mission for Iraq activities, officials stated that while some information is shared, organizations “protect their turf,” and opportunities to build on the efforts of others are lost. One area with significant potential for overlap is the establishment of numerous assistance centers and mobile units across Iraq to register or assist returnees, IDPs, and vulnerable Iraqis. UNHCR, IOM, International Medical Corps (IMC), and U.S. government officials expressed concern about the need for multiple centers, possible inefficiencies, and the extent to which the MODM will be capable of assuming responsibilities for centers in the future.

In this report, we make several recommendations. First, we recommend that the Secretary of State and United States Agency for International Development (USAID) Administrator work with the appropriate international organizations to assist the Iraqi government in developing an effective integrated international strategy that addresses impediments to returns and prepares for and facilitates the return and reintegration of displaced Iraqis. Second, we recommend that the Secretary of State and USAID Administrator make publicly available an unclassified version of the current U.S. strategy and their implementing plans for assisting and reintegrating displaced Iraqis, including their goals, performance measures, and progress assessments. Third, to ensure that the U.S. and Iraqi governments, other donors, international organizations, and implementing partners have the best data available regarding the numbers and needs of IDPs, returnees, and other vulnerable Iraqis, we recommend that the Secretary of State encourage UNHCR to share its raw (primary) data and methodology with the IAU and to take advantage of IAU expertise and coordinated efforts. Fourth, to ensure the effective and efficient use of resources by its implementing partners, we recommend that the Secretary of State and USAID Administrator work with UNHCR and its other implementing partners to take inventory of and assess the purposes, organization, operations, and results of the various assistance, return, and registration centers and mobile units in Iraq to determine the

optimal framework for assisting IDPs, returnees, and other vulnerable Iraqis.

In written comments on a draft of this report, the Department of State (State) and USAID agreed with our recommendations. State and USAID's written comments and our evaluation of those comments are discussed later in this report. In addition, DOD commented that it agreed with the report and supports State and USAID in the execution of their mission to assist and reintegrate displaced Iraqis. State and DOD provided technical comments, which were incorporated where appropriate.

Background

Iraq has had a long history of displacement due to wars and the policies of the Saddam Hussein regime. That regime instituted "Arabization" policies to force out many non-Arabs from Kirkuk and the surrounding areas and replace them with Arab citizens to strengthen the regime's political control over the areas' oil fields and fertile lands.⁶ Displacement occurred during the Iran-Iraq war in the 1980's; the campaign against the Kurds, which intensified after the war in 1988; the draining of the marshes in southern Iraq during the war and again after the first Gulf War in 1991; and the 2003 fall of the Saddam Hussein regime. UNHCR reported in December 2009 that an estimated 2.76 million individuals were displaced in Iraq, 1.2 million of which had been displaced prior to 2006.⁷ The latest wave of large-scale displacement occurred after the February 2006 bombing of the Al-Askari Mosque in Samarra, which triggered a rise in sectarian violence. According to State and UN reports, insurgents, death squads, militias, and terrorists increased their attacks against civilians in 2006.⁸ According to UNHCR and IOM, there was a sharp increase in the numbers of Iraqis abandoning their homes for other locations in Iraq and abroad as a result of the sectarian intimidation and violence that erupted during this period. IOM reported that the majority of the Iraqi displacement occurred in 2006 and 2007. According to IOM, as of September 2008, about 90 percent of the

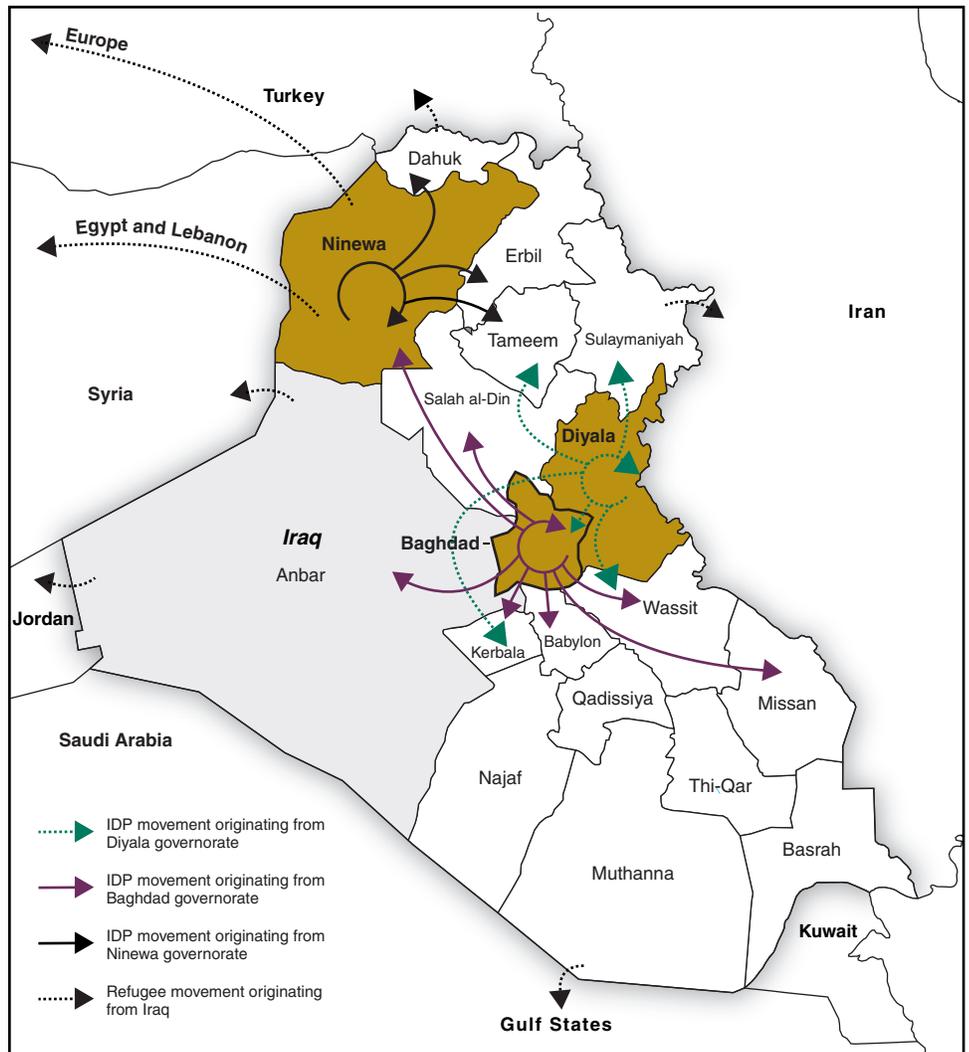
⁶Deborah Isser and Peter Van der Auweraert, United States Institute of Peace Special Report, *Land, Property, and the Challenge of Return for Iraq's Displaced* (Washington, D.C.: April 2009).

⁷United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, *UNHCR Iraq Operation; Monthly Statistical Update on Return-December 2009*.

⁸GAO, *Securing, Stabilizing, and Rebuilding Iraq Progress Report: Some Gains Made, Updated Strategy Needed*, [GAO-08-837](#) (Washington, D.C.: June 23, 2008).

post-2006 IDPs in Iraq originated from Baghdad, Diyala, and Ninewa governorates (see fig. 1).

Figure 1: Key Movements of Displaced Iraqis, from 2006 to September 2008



Sources: GAO analysis of maps from UNHCR and OCHA; IOM (data); Map Resources (map).

According to IOM, 4 years after the Al-Askari bombing, displaced families are returning and new displacement is rare; however, the number of those displaced who had returned (returnees) remains well below the estimated number of those who remain displaced. As of the end of 2009, UNHCR estimated that of those who were displaced before and after the Al-Askari

bombing, 745,630 IDPs and 433,696 refugees had returned.⁹ IOM reported in February 2010, that of those who were displaced after the 2006 Al-Askari bombing, IOM returnee field monitors had identified an estimated 374,166 returnees.¹⁰ Additionally, the numbers of returnees varies by governorate, with Baghdad experiencing the largest share of IDP and refugee returns, according to UNHCR. The majority of those who initially returned were IDPs rather than refugees, which is a pattern that has been seen in other displacement situations worldwide, according to IOM and UNHCR officials. IOM reported in February 2010, that its assessments of an estimated 1.3 million IDPs identified by its field monitors, showed that 49 percent of all post-Al-Askari bombing IDPs want to return to their places of origin, 29 percent want to remain and integrate into their current places of displacement, 19 percent want to resettle to a third location, and 3 percent are waiting to make a decision.¹¹

According to UNHCR officials, displaced Iraqis tend to be educated and come from urban, middle-class backgrounds, which is in sharp contrast to displaced communities in other nations. UNHCR also reported that the displaced Iraqi population comprises Sunnis, Shias, Christians, and other groups that were forced to relocate to areas where they constitute the dominant groups.¹² According to IOM, 58 percent of the 1.3 million IDPs that they had assessed reported to be Shia Muslim and 33 percent reported to be Sunni Muslim, as of February 2010 (see fig. 2); however, religious affiliations and ethnicity varied by governorates.¹³ According to UNHCR, 21 percent of the Iraqi refugees that were actively registered in neighboring countries at the end of 2008 identified themselves as Shia

⁹No data were available on how many returnees had been successfully reintegrated or had been displaced again.

¹⁰The number of returnees identified includes those from which the IOM field monitors were able to reach and collect data as of the reporting date. It does not include displacement in Dahuk, Erbil, and Sulaymaniyah.

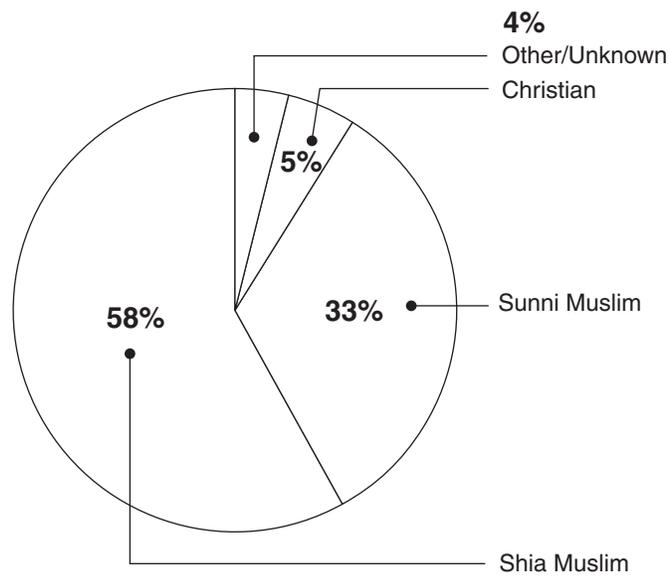
¹¹International Organization for Migration, *IOM Emergency Needs Assessments Four Years of Post-Samarra Displacement in Iraq* (February 2010).

¹²Jeff Crisp, Jane Janz, Jose Riera, and Shahira Samy, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees Policy Development and Evaluation Service, *Surviving in the City: A Review of UNHCR's Operation for Iraqi Refugees in Urban areas of Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria* (Geneva, Switzerland: July 2009).

¹³IOM data cannot be used to make inferences on the larger IDP and returnee populations in Iraq and only describe the information of those families interviewed by IOM that had been displaced post-February 2006.

Muslims, and 56 percent identified themselves as Sunni Muslims (see fig. 3).¹⁴

Figure 2: Religious Affiliation of IOM-Assessed IDPs in Iraq, as of February 2010

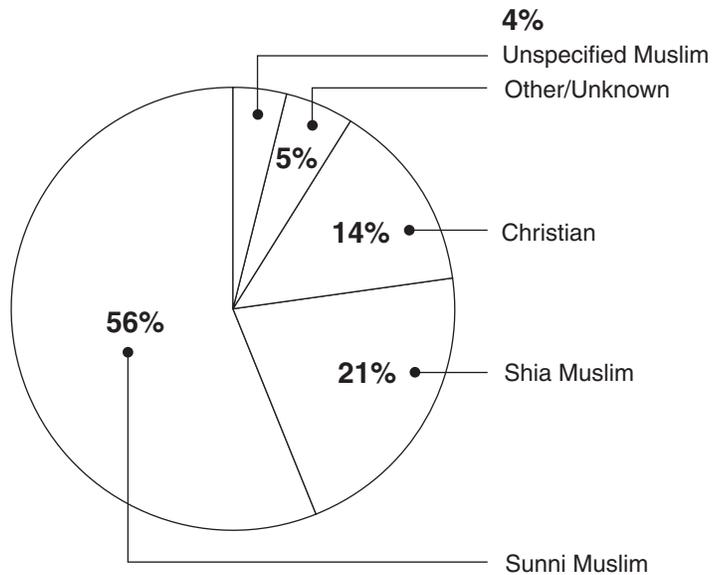


Source: GAO analysis of IOM data.

Note: The total number of IDPs assessed was about 1.3 million individuals (221,983 families).

¹⁴Figures were derived from UNHCR's review of the registration data of active caseloads at the end of 2008. In a previous review, GAO reported that registration numbers may not be a true proxy of the number of Iraqi refugees because an unknown number of refugees do not register or seek assistance. For more information, see [GAO-09-120](#).

Figure 3: Religious Affiliation of Iraqi Refugees Registered by UNHCR, at the End of 2008



Source: GAO analysis of UNHCR data.

Note: The total number of Iraqi refugees actively registered with UNHCR at the end of 2008 was 311,000. Countries of registration included the Syrian Arab Republic, the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, Lebanon, the Arab Republic of Egypt, Turkey, and the Islamic Republic of Iran.

The UN's *Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement* defines an internally displaced person as one who has been forced or obliged to leave his or her home as a result of armed conflict, generalized violence, violation of human rights, or disaster, but has not crossed an international border. A refugee, as defined by the 1951 UN Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 protocol, is a person who "owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality, and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country."¹⁵ According UNHCR's *Handbook for Repatriation and Reintegration Activities*, reintegration is a process that should result in the disappearance of differences in legal rights and duties between returnees and their compatriots and the equal access of returnees to services, productive assets, and opportunities. UNHCR's *Handbook* also states that such a process assumes that refugees

¹⁵1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, July 28, 1951, 189 U.N.T.S. 137, and the 1967 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees, Jan. 31, 1967, 606 U.N.T.S. 267.

return to societies that are more or less stable, and, when this is not the case, returnees and communities in areas of return should benefit equally from improved access to productive assets and social services. According to UNHCR, voluntary repatriation and reintegration is the preferred durable solution for refugees.¹⁶

Iraqi and U.S. government entities, international organizations, and NGOs play significant roles in addressing Iraqi displacement in Iraq and the region. For information on the key responsible entities and their respective roles, see appendix II.

Inadequate Security, Property Resolution and Shelter, Income-Generating Opportunities, Essential Services, and Governance Pose Challenges to Reintegrating Displaced Iraqis

Problems in securing a safe environment, property and shelter, income, essential services, and government capacity and commitment may impede large numbers of returns and the reintegration of displaced Iraqis, according to U.S. government, UNHCR, and IOM officials. UNHCR considers that the basic conditions necessary to encourage and sustain large-scale returns to Iraq have not been established. UNHCR had predicted large-scale returns for 2009 after security conditions had improved in the latter half of 2007 and in 2008, but they did not materialize, according to U.S. government, UNHCR, and IOM officials. UN, IOM, and U.S. government officials agree that the decision to return and the ability to reintegrate involve a complex set of factors that may vary by location and individual circumstance. Moreover, according to the UN, IOM, and NGOs, many of these factors also negatively affect vulnerable Iraqis in the communities that host IDPs and Iraqis who did not have the means to flee the conflict or the ensuing economic hardships.

Uncertain Security Conditions May Impede Iraqi Returns and Reintegration

Although the overall security situation in Iraq has improved since 2006, the actual and perceived threat across governorates and neighborhoods continues to impede Iraqi returns and reintegration, according to U.S. government, UNHCR, and IOM officials. According to the UN, voluntary return is the preferred solution, but Iraqis should not be encouraged to return until the security situation allows for large-scale return and sufficient monitoring of returns. According to DOD, overall violence in Iraq, after peaking in 2007, remains at its lowest level in 5 years. However, the level and nature of violence has varied by governorate. DOD reported

¹⁶If voluntary repatriation is not feasible, then other durable solutions may include integration in the host country or resettlement in a third-party country.

that from December 2009 to February 2010, about 73 percent of the attacks occurred in 4 out of the 18 governorates—Baghdad, Diyala, Ninewa, and Salah al-Din.¹⁷ The first three of these governorates account for 89 percent of the displacement occurring after the February 2006 Samarra Al-Askari Mosque bombing, according to the UN. In contrast, the Kurdistan Region, with its relatively homogenous population and the presence of the Kurdish security forces, remained relatively safe and stable, according to DOD.

Many displaced Iraqis may be afraid of returning because of the fear of violent reprisals from militants and members of opposing sects, according to USAID and UNHCR officials. IOM reported in 2008 that returnees were threatened, shot at, or killed after returning home.¹⁸ An MODM official reported that one of the initial families that had returned to a Baghdad neighborhood was killed as a warning to others not to return. UNHCR and IOM officials stated that some displaced Iraqis, particularly those from targeted minority groups, have no plans to return out of fear of persecution. According to the UN, although a decrease in violence in Iraq has been observed, grave and systematic human rights violations persist and remain largely unreported. The UN also reported that violence against professionals, women, and members of minority communities occur often and are rarely punished.¹⁹

Moreover, many displaced Iraqis and returnees have had difficulties in accessing services, including those provided by humanitarian organizations, because of obstacles such as curfews, checkpoints, and areas affected by intense fighting, according to UNHCR, IOM, other UN agencies, and NGOs. In addition, according to UNHCR, the precarious security situation is requiring UNHCR to increase investments in the security of staff and may continue to limit UNHCR's mobility inside Iraq (see fig. 4). The UN, UNHCR, IOM, and International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) cautioned that while access may be improving overall, the

¹⁷Department of Defense, *Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq: March 2010 Report to Congress in Accordance with the Department of Defense Supplemental Appropriations Act 2008 (Section 9204, Public Law 110-252)* (Washington, D.C.: Apr. 29, 2010).

¹⁸International Organization for Migration, *IOM Monitoring and Needs Assessments: Assessment of Iraqi Return, March 2008*.

¹⁹United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, *Iraq 2010 Humanitarian Action Plan* (Geneva, Switzerland and New York, N.Y.: Dec. 24, 2009).

security situation could deteriorate again, which could limit their access to the population.

Figure 4: U.S. Soldier Standing Guard while U.S. Government Officials Meet with U.N. Representatives and Iraqi Government Officials at the Kindi IDP Resettlement Center Near Baghdad



Source: U.S. Navy, Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Edwin L. Wriston (photographer).

Lack of Property Restitution or Compensation and Shelter May Impede Iraqi Returns and Reintegration

Problems in securing property restitution or compensation²⁰ and shelter have made it difficult for displaced Iraqis to return and reintegrate or integrate elsewhere in Iraq, according to UNHCR and IOM officials. According to a 2009 United States Institute of Peace (USIP) report,²¹ the lack of policies addressing displacement-related property issues is a major obstacle to returns and may prolong instability, hinder reconciliation, and nurture grievances along ethnic or sectarian lines. In November 2009, IOM reported that about one-third of surveyed returnees found their homes in bad condition.²² In February 2009, IOM reported that 43 percent of the post-2006 Samarra bombing IDPs surveyed did not have access to their homes, primarily because the property was occupied or destroyed (see fig. 5); and that 38 percent did not know the status of their property, often because they could not safely access it.²³ According to the 2009 USIP report and IOM, hundreds of thousands of displaced families are estimated to have homes that are occupied or used by strangers, such as militants, squatters, other displaced Iraqis, or, in rare cases, Iraqi Army or other government officials, sometimes resulting in multiple scenarios of competing claims. Many displaced Iraqis have also lost personal property, business stock, usage rights for farm land, and farming equipment, according to the report. Moreover, a number of returnees with leases to apartments have had difficulties in reclaiming their accommodations

²⁰According to the *Handbook on Housing and Property Restitution for Refugees and Displaced Persons: Implementing the "Pinheiro Principles"*, all displaced persons, including refugees, have the right to have restored to them any housing, land, or property taken arbitrarily or unlawfully, or if restitution is not possible, to be compensated instead. See the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization, Norwegian Refugee Council, United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, UN-HABITAT, and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, *Handbook on Housing and Property Restitution for Refugees and Displaced Persons; Implementing the 'Pinheiro Principles'* (New York, N.Y.: March 2007).

²¹See Deborah Isser and Peter Van der Auweraert, United States Institute of Peace Special Report, *Land, Property, and the Challenge of Return for Iraq's Displaced* (Washington, D.C.: April 2009). The 2009 USIP report states that it was based on the extensive efforts of both USIP and IOM to assist the Iraqi government in the design of displacement-related land and property policies, including a July 2008 conference in Amman sponsored by USIP and the World Bank and a November 2008 conference in Baghdad sponsored by USIP, IOM, and UNHCR.

²²International Organization for Migration, *Assessment of Return to Iraq* (Nov. 3, 2009). This survey was based on a sample of 4,061 returnee families identified by IOM and is not generalizable to all returnee families.

²³International Organization for Migration, *IOM Emergency Needs Assessments, February 22, 2009: Three Years of Post-Samarra Displacement in Iraq*.

because, in some cases, landlords took advantage of their tenants' absence to re-lease the properties at higher rents, according to the 2009 USIP report.

Figure 5: Iraqi Homes Destroyed



Source: Copyright © Integrated Regional Information Networks, Afif Sarhan (photographer).

Further complicating property restitution and compensation are the Iraqi government's policies that distinguish between Iraqis who were displaced before and after the U.S.-led invasion in March 2003. The implementation of these policies has yet to be proven effective for either group. For pre-March 2003 cases, the Commission for the Resolution of Real Property

Disputes was established in 2006 to address property issues resulting from the Ba'athist regime's policies of forced displacement, according to the 2009 USIP report.²⁴ According to the report, the commission's "quasijudicial" system is not well adapted to the nature and number of cases and thus is cumbersome and prone to delays. As of January 2009, the commission had decided about 67,000 cases of the approximately 150,000 cases filed since March 2004. However, due to appeals and re-reviews, only about 30,000 decisions were deemed final and enforceable and compensation was paid only in about 1,000 cases. Moreover, USIP reported that data are not available regarding the number of claimants—with decisions in their favor—able to reoccupy their houses or land. An Iraqi government official stated that many IDPs typically require more assistance than what the government provides to replace lost properties and rebuild or repair damaged homes.

For post-March 2003 cases, the Iraqi government initially deemed that property violations were the fault of terrorists and criminals and thus were a law enforcement problem that could be resolved in the courts, if needed. According to the 2009 USIP report, the existing legal framework may have been inadequate to fairly resolve complex displacement cases and to effectively handle the potentially large caseload. In 2008, according to the U.S. government and IOM, the Iraqi government recognized the need to further address property issues and thus initiated changes to its policies and efforts.

The property restitution and compensation problem is further exacerbated by the reported lack of adequate shelter. UN-HABITAT reported in July 2009 that Iraq had a housing shortage of at least 1.5 million units,²⁵ and demand was increasing.²⁶ According to UN-HABITAT, just over 70 percent

²⁴The Commission for the Resolution of Real Property Disputes, established by the Iraqi Transitional National Assembly, replaced the Coalition Provisional Authority's Iraq Property Claims Commission established in 2004, according to USIP. The commission's mandate is limited to claims that resulted from the confiscation, expropriation, forced sale, or other actions by Saddam Hussein's regime from July 17, 1968, to April 9, 2003. The commission does not consider claims for loss of personal property, such as a car, or damage and destruction of property in cases where it was not taken.

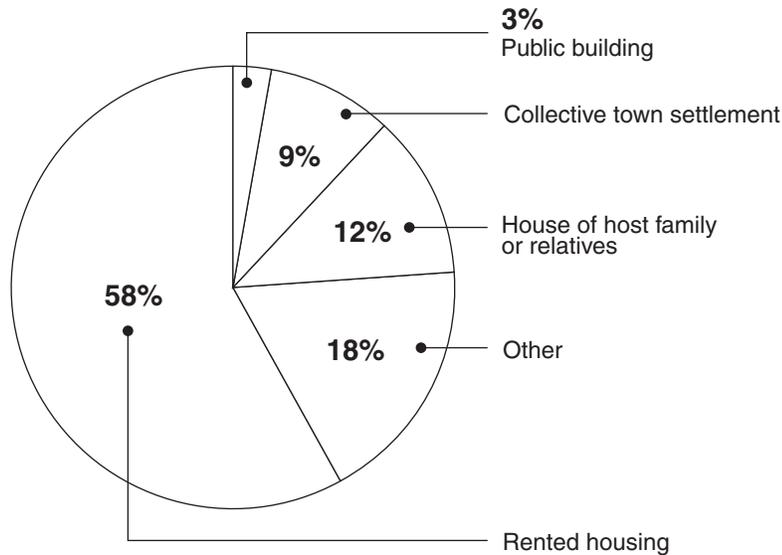
²⁵UN-HABITAT, *Iraq: Country Program Document 2009-2011* (Nairobi, Kenya: July 27, 2009).

²⁶According to UN-HABITAT, overcrowding will increase as Iraq's population—estimated at 29.7 million in July 2010, according to the *CIA World Fact Book*—continues to expand to an estimated 50 million by 2030. Also, see UN-HABITAT, *Fact Sheet: Housing and Shelter in Iraq-World Habitat Day* (Oct. 5, 2009).

of Iraqis lived in urban areas, and more than 10 percent of the houses in these areas had more than 10 occupants and more than 35 percent had 3 or more people per room. According to IOM, displaced families continue to have difficulty in finding adequate housing in their places of displacement, even several years after leaving home. IOM reported that IDPs' shelter arrangements include renting, moving in with friends and relatives, occupying empty public buildings, establishing collective settlements, and other arrangements (see fig. 6).²⁷ However, these arrangements may not be sustainable because they pose costs to both the displaced and their host communities. For example, IOM reported that the majority of internally displaced Iraqis are living in rental accommodations, but, as time passes, rent prices increase and their ability to pay decreases. Friends and relatives, already struggling to provide for themselves, are additionally burdened by housing the displaced, according to UN-HABITAT. Moreover, IDPs living in settlements or public buildings may often be at risk from eviction by local authorities or private owners. Less than 1 percent of displaced Iraqis live in tent camps.

²⁷IOM data cannot be used to make inferences on the larger IDP and returnee populations in Iraq and only describe the information of those interviewed by IOM. USAID and State consider IOM's data sufficiently reliable for their use, though they also acknowledge that the data have limitations. We determined that these data are sufficiently reliable to generally describe conditions that impede integration for those surveyed.

Figure 6: Housing Arrangements of IOM-Assessed IDPs in Iraq, as of February 2010



Source: GAO analysis of IOM data.

Note: The total number of IDPs assessed was about 1.3 million individuals (221,983 families).

Lack of Income Opportunities May Impede Iraqi Returns and Reintegration

According to USAID and international organization officials, without employment or other income-generating opportunities, displaced Iraqis may not return to their former communities or may have difficulty in reintegrating. In November 2009, IOM reported that 34 percent of the heads of returning households that it had surveyed stated that they could not find employment, even though they were able to work.²⁸ IOM also found that employment rates were higher in certain governorates, such as Baghdad. Employment for IDPs has also been scarce and varied across the governorates, according to USAID. According to IOM, 31.7 percent of the IDP families assessed had at least one employed family member as of December 2009. In general, employment in Iraq is scarce, according to USAID and UNHCR officials. The UN reported in January 2009 that the unemployment rate was 18 percent.²⁹ In addition, the UN and IOM

²⁸International Organization for Migration, *Assessment of Return to Iraq* (Nov. 3, 2009). This survey was based on a sample of 4,061 returnee families identified by IOM and is not generalizable to all returnee families.

²⁹United Nations Inter-Agency Information and Analysis Unit, *Iraq Labor Force Analysis 2003-2008* (January 2009).

estimate that over 50 percent of the active population is unemployed or underemployed, and that over 55 percent may face difficulties in covering basic living costs. Underemployment and poverty pose a significant risk to the reconciliation and stability of the country, according to the UN.

Moreover, IOM officials said that regaining former employment is difficult for displaced Iraqis. According to an international organization, the largest employer in Iraq is the government, but, according to IOM, returnees have difficulty in regaining prior government employment, either due to discrimination or corruption. In March 2010, State reported allegations of employment discrimination by several ministries based on religious, ethnic, and political affiliations.³⁰ The agricultural sector is the second-largest contributor to the economy, according to the UN. IOM reported the need to provide returnees and IDPs in rural areas who want to farm with the necessary means, such as land, seeds, fertilizers, tools, poultry, and cattle. In addition, according to IOM officials, many skilled professionals became displaced, and the longer they are displaced, the greater the likelihood that their skills will become outdated. Furthermore, MODM reported that Iraq lacks procedures to recognize professional certificates and diplomas acquired abroad. Officials from the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and UNHCR are concerned that Iraqi refugees from professional or middle-class backgrounds may be reluctant to return for low-skilled and low-paying jobs, which could potentially affect government capacity and economic growth in Iraq.

Inadequate Access to Essential Services May Impede Iraqi Returns and Reintegration

Food and Nonfood Items

The lack of access to food and nonfood items is a deterrent to returns and reintegration, according to UNHCR officials. The top three priority needs identified by returnee families assessed by IOM were food (over 60 percent), fuel (over 40 percent), and other nonfood items (over

³⁰Department of State Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, *2009 Human Rights Report: Iraq* (March 2010).

Water, Sanitation, and
Electricity

40 percent), according to a November 2009 IOM report.³¹ According to the UN, most Iraqis, including IDPs and returnees, receive monthly food rations from the Public Distribution System.³² According to a UN report, although the Public Distribution System largely shields Iraqis from rising global food costs, local prices have climbed higher than global prices.³³ According to IOM, IDP families have also reported having no or partial access to the Public Distribution System.³⁴ The World Food Program (WFP) reported in 2008 that distribution across the country had been uneven due to the conflict. Many IDP families have had difficulties in obtaining the proper documents to register for the Public Distribution System in their new locations, which is required to obtain rations, according to UNHCR officials. According to USAID officials, the re-registration of Public Distribution System cards was improving as of January 2010. Additionally, the rise in fuel prices and the difficulties of obtaining fuel have placed considerable burden on many Iraqis, including IDPs and returnees, according to IOM and the ICRC. IOM further reported that the returnee families it assessed listed fuel as one of the highest priority needs.

The UN reported in December 2008, that about 40 percent of Iraqis continued to suffer from poor water quality and sanitation services due to dysfunctional systems, network breakdowns, aging infrastructure, and frequent power supply interruptions (see fig. 7).³⁵ According to IOM, access to potable water is a major concern of IDPs, returnees, and Iraqis in general.³⁶ Although approximately more than 80 percent of IOM-assessed returnees in 2009 had access to municipal water networks, the water may

³¹International Organization for Migration, *Assessment of Return to Iraq* (Nov. 3, 2009). This survey was based on a sample of 4,061 returnee families identified by IOM and is not generalizable to all returnee families.

³²The Public Distribution System, managed by the Iraqi Ministry of Trade, makes available a monthly “food basket” that may consist of items such as wheat; flour; rice; sugar; tea; vegetable oil; pulses; milk; infant formula; and nonfood items, such as soap and detergent.

³³Inter-Agency Information and Analysis Unit, *Iraq Food Prices Analysis* (Aug. 31, 2009).

³⁴International Organization for Migration, *IOM Emergency Needs Assessments, February 22, 2009: Three Years of Post-Samarra Displacement in Iraq*.

³⁵United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, *Iraq and the Region, 2009 Consolidated Appeal*, (New York and Geneva, November 2008).

³⁶International Organization for Migration, *Assessment of Return to Iraq* (Nov. 3, 2009). This survey was based on a sample of 4,061 returnee families identified by IOM and is not generalizable to all returnee families.

not have been potable, according to IOM. A 2007 survey of Iraqi households also found that although 81.3 percent of individuals lived in dwellings connected to public water networks only 12.5 percent of these individuals had reported that their supply of water was constant.³⁷

Figure 7: Stagnant Water Near a Residential Area and Poor Quality Tap Water in an Iraqi School



Sources: USAID, Thomas Hartwell (photographer) (left); Copyright ©, Integrated Regional Information Networks (right).

According to the UN, sewage is also a common sight in many neighborhoods, and solid waste management at the family level is a serious problem (see fig. 8). For example, IOM reported in May 2009 that because of blocked sanitation networks, several houses in Baghdad had been damaged by water and left structurally compromised or had collapsed. ICRC reported that a number of water treatment plants in Iraq had either shut down or reduced their operating capacity as a result of the electricity supply issue.³⁸

³⁷Central Organization for Statistics and Information Technology of Iraq, the Kurdistan Region Statistics Organization, and the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development/The World Bank, *Iraq Household Socio-Economic Survey-2007: Tabulation Report* (2008).

³⁸International Committee of the Red Cross, *Iraq: No Let-Up In the Humanitarian Crisis* (March 2008).

Figure 8: Garbage on a Baghdad Street



Source: USAID, Thomas Hartwell (photographer).

According to DOD, the electricity supply for many Iraqis is still intermittent and unpredictable, although the gap between demand and supply has narrowed. UN-HABITAT reported in October 2009 that Iraqis experienced, on average, 16 hours of power interruption per day.

Health Care

Displaced and vulnerable Iraqis may also find challenges in obtaining access to health care. In November 2009, IOM reported that more than

one-third of assessed families reported having no access to health care, but that this figure was higher for certain governorates (e.g., just over one-half of the assessed families in Baghdad).³⁹ Lack of access is most often due to the distance to the nearest health care center or lack of equipment and staff. ICRC reported that of the 34,000 doctors registered in 1990, at least 20,000 have left the country, and 2,200 doctors and nurses have been killed since 2003. In addition, ICRC reported that hospitals and other health facilities often lack drugs and other essential items. In 2009, OCHA reported that mental health issues were also a concern, because many Iraqis had been affected by conflict and displacement.⁴⁰ In addition, IDPs may not have the money to secure transportation to public health facilities or purchase medication and services that are not available through the public system. Furthermore, according to the World Health Organization (WHO) and Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre officials, discrimination based on sectarian grounds and fear of traveling to health facilities could also limit access to health care.

According to WHO officials, there is little data on the health needs of displaced Iraqis. Although Iraq's public health system does generate up-to-date information, WHO officials said that they have had to rely on surveys conducted in 2006/2007 for much of their information. These officials also said that without sufficient health data, decision makers will not have the information to identify vulnerable populations, such as displaced Iraqis, and develop strategies to meet Iraq's health needs.

Education

According to IOM, just under 10 percent of the returnee families with school-age children in Iraq reported having no access to education; however, this figure varies greatly across the country. For example, almost two-thirds of returnee families reported having no access to schooling in the Babylon governorate. According to USAID, schools have been damaged and looted (see fig. 9). According to OCHA, military interventions, during March and April, 2008, in Baghdad caused the closing of 22 schools, 11 of which sustained major damages.⁴¹ During this period,

³⁹International Organization for Migration, *Assessment of Return to Iraq* (Nov. 3, 2009). This survey was based on a sample of 4,061 returnee families identified by IOM and is not generalizable to all returnee families.

⁴⁰United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, *Iraq 2010 Humanitarian Action Plan* (Geneva, Switzerland and New York, N.Y.: Dec. 24, 2009).

⁴¹United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, *Iraq and the Region, 2009 Consolidated Appeal*, (New York and Geneva, November, 2008).

curfews were imposed and attendance dropped to 30 percent. In addition, IOM reported in April 2009 that many Christian IDPs from Mosul were unable to enroll in school because they lacked documentation. Furthermore, according to the UN Children’s Fund (UNICEF), a number of Iraqi schools are overcrowded and lack proper sanitation facilities, which would make it difficult for these facilities to absorb returning displaced children. Also, UNICEF reported in January 2009 that a number of students who were returning to their homes after being displaced may not have registered with the government to receive standard school supplies.⁴²

Figure 9: Iraqi Schools Damaged by Looting and Conflict



Source: USAID, Thomas Hartwell (photographer).

Insufficient Iraqi Government Capacity and Commitment May Impede Iraqi Returns and Reintegration

IOM and UNHCR officials said that shortfalls in the Iraqi government’s capacity and commitment have limited the potential for reintegrating displaced Iraqis. According to U.S. and international assessments and officials, years of neglect, a highly centralized decision-making system under the former regime, and looting in 2003 decimated Iraq’s government ministries (see fig. 10). In March 2009, GAO reported that Iraqi ministries had significant shortages of personnel who could formulate budgets, procure goods and services, and perform other ministry tasks.⁴³ GAO also

⁴²UNICEF, *Humanitarian Action Update: Iraq* (Jan. 19, 2009).

⁴³GAO, *Iraq and Afghanistan: Security, Economic, and Governance Challenges to Stability Should Be Addressed in U.S. Strategies*, [GAO-09-476T](#) (Washington, D.C.: Mar. 25, 2009).

reported that violence and sectarian strife; the exodus of skilled labor from Iraq; and the weakness in Iraqi procurement, budgeting, and accounting procedures limited the Iraqi government's ability to spend its capital project budget.⁴⁴

Figure 10: Looted Iraqi Government Office



Source: USAID, Debbi Morello (photographer).

According to U.S. and UNHCR officials, although there has been some progress, the Iraqi government appears to be noncommittal in addressing displacement issues. For example, the Iraqi Prime Minister has appointed a senior official to coordinate IDP and refugee issues, but the Iraqi government does not appear ready to direct significant resources to assist refugees. DOD also reported in 2009 that given other priorities, engaging Syria and Jordan on the return of a largely Sunni refugee population

⁴⁴For more information, see GAO, *Iraq Reconstruction: Better Data Needed to Assess Iraq's Budget Execution*, [GAO-08-153](#) (Washington, D.C.: Jan.15, 2008).

remained a low priority for the Iraqi government.⁴⁵ Furthermore, U.S. and international organization officials said that the Iraqi government has not given MODM the authority and capacity to direct or coordinate government efforts to address displacement issues. In addition, IOM officials stated that many of the Sunni Iraqi refugees will not return until they see true national reconciliation in Iraq because they do not trust the current Iraqi government to protect them.

**International
Community Is
Addressing
Impediments That
Iraqis Face; However,
the Extent to Which
These Efforts Result
in Reintegration Is
Not Measured, and
Officials Reported
Insufficient Iraqi
Government
Commitment and
Capacity**

Although international and nongovernmental organizations and U.S. and Iraqi governments have taken action to address the impediments that Iraqi IDPs and refugees face to return and reintegration, the extent to which these efforts will result in reintegration (i.e., sustainable returns) is unknown. The extent to which these projects specifically target and impact reintegration is not consistently measured or reported in the aggregate against international goals for reintegration. U.S. goals and outcomes for these efforts were classified or considered sensitive and thus an unclassified assessment and reporting of progress made toward U.S. goals could not be made. Moreover, the Iraqi government has made limited progress due to the lack of uniform government support and capacity, according to international community officials. A March 2010 report stated that the rates of return of IDPs and refugees had not increased in the last year.⁴⁶

⁴⁵Department of Defense, *Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq: June 2009 Report to Congress in Accordance with the Department of Defense Supplemental Appropriations Act 2008 (Section 9204, Public Law 110-252)* (Washington, D.C.: July 23, 2009).

⁴⁶Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, Norwegian Refugee Council, *Iraq: Little New Displacement but around 2.8 Million Iraqis Remain Internally Displaced* (Geneva, Switzerland: Mar. 4, 2010).

International and Nongovernmental Organizations Have Initiated Projects Addressing Conditions That Impede Returns and Reintegration, but the Effect on Reintegration Is Not Consistently Measured

International and nongovernmental organizations, supported by U.S. and other donor funding, have initiated many projects to address impediments to returns and reintegration of displaced Iraqis. However, according to international organization and U.S. government officials, the extent to which these projects specifically target and impact reintegration is not consistently measured or reported in the aggregate against measurable goals and objectives for reintegration. According to the UN, international efforts focus on all vulnerable Iraqis. Thus, these projects target a mix of vulnerable populations in Iraq, including IDPs, returning refugees, non-Iraqi refugees, other conflict victims, and the communities that host them (see table 1). According to international and U.S. government officials, host communities are often equally vulnerable and including them reduces the likelihood of resentment toward providing assistance to IDPs and returning refugees.

Table 1: Sample of Programs and Projects Implemented by the International Community to Address Impediments to Reintegration and Assist Vulnerable Iraqis

Reintegration challenge	International community actor and program implemented
Security and protection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UNHCR: Established 15 Protection and Assistance Centers and 40 associated mobile teams that provide services to displaced, returning, and vulnerable Iraqis in all governorates, including identification of protection needs, legal advice and assistance, court representation, and referrals for services. • UNHCR: Established 12 Return Integration Community Centers in Baghdad and several other governorates to provide outreach, information, and service referrals to displaced and returning Iraqis. These centers also coordinate with local communities and authorities to relay information about the needs of displaced and returning Iraqis. • IMC and UNHCR: Support the operations of the MODM Returnee Assistance Centers. These centers provide returnees with legal advice and assistance in replacing missing official documents and accessing government services and benefits. • UNICEF: Developing a protection awareness curriculum in Baghdad for the training of social service providers on early marriage, child recruitment, and sexual abuse.
Property compensation and shelter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IMC and UNHCR: Support the operations of the MODM Returnee Assistance Centers, where returnees can obtain legal advice on property cases involving compensation, occupation, and evacuation, as well as the eviction of squatters from occupied properties. • UNHCR: Rehabilitated and reconstructed 8,501 shelters in 2009 that benefited 56,238 people, 62 percent of whom were returning IDPs. • UN-HABITAT: Supplied shelter to 800 IDP and returnee families to integrate them with their host communities for a “contextually appropriate duration.”
Income generation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IOM: Provided vocational training for 733 people and agricultural training for 2,328. • IOM: Provided 4,494 in-kind grants ranging in value from \$400 to \$2,000 (such as fishing equipment, carpentry and welding tools, and food sales materials, among other materials) to vulnerable Iraqis to support the formation and expansion of small businesses. Provided 254 returnees with in-kind grants for the same under a pilot program with MODM. • ICRC: Established income-generating projects in the Baghdad and Najaf governorates to help female-headed households.

Reintegration challenge	International community actor and program implemented
Essential services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WFP: Provided food assistance for about 750,000 internally displaced Iraqis and about 577,000 other vulnerable Iraqis. • ICRC: Rehabilitated infrastructure to improve access to safe drinking water and sanitation, upgraded water facilities and developed water-supply systems that benefited displaced Iraqis living within host communities, and provided water trucking services and developed or rehabilitated water supply systems for IDPs living in settlements. • UNICEF and NGO partners: Rehabilitated water and sanitation networks, and implemented hygiene awareness campaigns in schools. • WHO: Supported the Ministry of Health in developing plans to upgrade the national health information system and train Iraqi health care professionals. • UNICEF and WHO: Supported the Ministry of Health's widespread emergency campaign to vaccinate more than 800,000 children in northern governorates to prevent the spread of measles. • NGOs: Set up programs to improve Iraqi children's psychosocial skills in the classroom and at home, including the training of education supervisors and teachers in vulnerable districts. • UNICEF: Assisted with the rehabilitation of 105 schools and distributed teaching and learning materials to schools.
Capacity development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IOM: Implemented programs to strengthen MODM's daily operations with staff training and development of an organizational structure. IOM worked with Iraqi professionals who have migrated abroad to return to Iraq for short-term assignments to contribute expertise for reconstruction and development efforts.

Source: GAO summary based on information from the U.S. government, international organizations, and NGOs.

Through its 2009 Consolidated Appeal for Iraq and the Region, the UN coordinated most international organization efforts and funding to meet humanitarian needs in Iraq and for Iraqi refugees and the communities that host them in neighboring countries. In June 2009, the UN revised its consolidated appeal by increasing the amount requested from \$547.3 million to \$650.4 million.⁴⁷ According to OCHA, the U.S. government contributed about 71 percent of new contributions to the 2009 appeal and funded at least 56 percent of all reported 2009 assistance to Iraq and the region.⁴⁸

The UN did not issue a consolidated appeal for Iraq and the region for 2010. Instead, UN assistance requests are primarily found in three documents:

⁴⁷United Nations, *Iraq and the Region, Mid-Year Review, 2009 Consolidated Appeal* (June 2009).

⁴⁸Donors also provide bilateral funding to fill perceived gaps in the UN appeals and to organizations that do not participate in the UN appeals, such as the ICRC, which is a key partner in Iraq.

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- The *Iraq 2010 Humanitarian Action Plan*, developed by 9 UN agencies, IOM, and 12 NGOs operating in the country, focuses on overall humanitarian assistance for Iraq, including efforts that also target IDPs and returnees, and requests about \$193.6 million.
 - The *UNHCR Global Appeal 2010-2011* for Iraq focuses on IDPs, returning refugees, other refugees and stateless people inside Iraq and requests about \$264.3 million for 2010, of which about \$31.1 million is targeted for reintegration projects that include returnees and host communities.
 - The *Regional Response Plan for Iraqi Refugees* focuses on Iraqi refugees and the host communities in 12 neighboring and other countries and requests about \$364.2 million.

U.S. Government Implements Its Objectives by Conducting Diplomatic Efforts and Providing Assistance through Its Implementing Partners

In a February 2009 speech, President Obama stated that diplomacy and assistance were required to help displaced Iraqis. This speech established a policy that National Security Council (NSC), State, USAID, and DOD officials follow in finding durable solutions for displaced Iraqis, including reintegrating voluntary returns within and to Iraq. While the following information provides examples of U.S. diplomatic efforts and assistance, we note that overall U.S. goals, objectives, and outcomes for U.S. efforts were classified or considered sensitive information during our review.⁴⁹ Accordingly, the information in this section is descriptive and can provide no assessment of the extent to which U.S. assistance is achieving its intended goals. Subsequent to concluding our field work and our exit meetings with U.S. agencies and the NSC, the NSC provided GAO with an unclassified summary, that had not been made public, of a classified May 2009 U.S. government strategy regarding support for returning Iraqi refugees and IDPs. The stated U.S. goal was to create conditions inside key areas of Iraq that will allow the maximum number of voluntary returns to be sustainable. Objectives were provided for fiscal years 2009-2011. However, the NSC also noted that the summary prepared for GAO in July 2010 was based on a “historical document”, should be viewed in that context, and that it had not been updated to reflect the current situation.

⁴⁹In our previous review on Iraqi refugee assistance, State provided its U.S. goals for use in our unclassified report, and we found that improvements were needed in measuring progress. See [GAO-09-120](#).

Diplomatic Efforts

In August 2009, the White House announced that the NSC's Senior Director for Multilateral Affairs and Human Rights would serve as its coordinator on Iraqi refugees and IDPs. In November 2009, the Senior Director and the Assistant Secretary of State for Population, Refugees, and Migration met with the Iraqi government's refugees and IDP coordinator and the head of the Iraqi Prime Minister's Implementation and Follow-up Committee on National Reconciliation to discuss the challenges related to the return and reintegration of displaced Iraqis. The officials subsequently issued a joint statement that described steps agreed upon by both the U.S. and Iraqi governments to assist Iraq's displaced population and support national unity. One of the agreed-upon steps was to promote cooperation with other nations to broaden international support efforts and thereby make returns more sustainable. In August 2009, the White House also assigned a senior Foreign Service Officer to take up the post of Senior Coordinator for Iraqi Refugees and Displaced Persons at the U.S. embassy.⁵⁰ The Senior Coordinator is responsible for coordinating the U.S. government's work in Iraq on refugees and IDPs and representing the United States on Iraqi displacement issues with the Iraqi government, the international community, and NGOs.

Humanitarian and Development Assistance

To provide humanitarian and developmental assistance, the U.S. government primarily contributes funds to UN appeals and provides bilateral assistance through its implementing partners. U.S. funding does not solely target returnees; it supports programs that include assistance for both returnees and other vulnerable populations. As of September 30, 2009, State and USAID had obligated about \$1.9 billion and expended about \$1.5 billion in fiscal years 2003 through 2009 for all Iraq-related humanitarian assistance in Iraq and the region. This total included funds to assist Iraqi refugees and the communities that host them in neighboring countries (see app. III for funding and intended beneficiaries). Table 2 provides State's Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration's (PRM) implementing partners, activities, country locations, and funding obligated for fiscal year 2009. Of these activities, about \$45 million of the \$303.4 million obligated in fiscal year 2009 was allocated to IOM and UNHCR for projects under State's new "returns program" in Iraq. These two programs are targeted to benefit returnees and other vulnerable Iraqis.

⁵⁰The Senior Coordinator Post was first filled in July 2008.

Table 2: State/PRM-Funded Programs for Humanitarian Assistance to Iraqi Refugees, Returnees, IDPs, and Vulnerable Persons, Fiscal Year 2009

Implementing partner	Activity	Location	Funding obligated
UNHCR	Emergency Relief Supplies; Education; Food Assistance; Health; Protection; Shelter; Cash Assistance for Extremely Vulnerable Individuals	Iraq, Jordan, Syria, and other neighboring countries	\$198,000,000
UNICEF	Education; Health; Water and Sanitation	Jordan, Syria, and other neighboring countries	15,000,000
IOM	Socio-economic Reintegration for Returnees; Psychosocial, Legal, Health, and Livelihoods Support for IDP and Returnee Female-headed Households; Anti-trafficking Programs	Iraq, Syria, Jordan and other neighboring countries	12,700,000
NGOs	Health; Education; Emergency Relief Supplies	Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, Egypt, and Armenia ^a	41,384,670
Other International Organizations	Protection; Health; Water and Sanitation; Emergency Relief Supplies; Livelihoods Support	Iraq, Jordan, and Syria	36,319,631
Total			\$303,404,301

Source: GAO analysis based on data and information from State.

^aState provided \$400,000 to Save the Children in fiscal year 2009 to support Iraqi and other refugees in Armenia.

USAID’s Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA) funds and oversees a wide range of humanitarian assistance activities that are implemented by a number of NGO and UN partners who provide programs for IDPs and other vulnerable Iraqis. Table 3 provides USAID/OFDA’s implementing partners, activities, locations, and funding obligated for fiscal year 2009. Of the about \$83.4 million obligated, \$60 million was for programs intended to provide direct assistance to returning families; support to communities with significant numbers of current or anticipated returnees; and general assistance to vulnerable populations, regardless of displacement status. According to USAID/OFDA, since Iraq is transitioning from an emergency to a development phase, OFDA plans to conclude its work in Iraq in 2011.

Table 3: USAID/OFDA-Funded Programs for Humanitarian Assistance to Iraqi IDPs, Returnees, and Vulnerable Persons, Fiscal Year 2009

Implementing partner	Activity	Location in Iraq	Funding obligated
Agency for Technical Cooperation and Development	Agriculture and Food Security; Economic Recovery and Market Systems; Emergency Relief Supplies; Protection; Shelter and Settlements; Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene	Muthanna, Dhi Qar, Erbil, Wasit	\$2,547,653
CHF International	Shelter and Settlements	Anbar	3,868,135
IMC	Economic Recovery and Market Systems; Health; Humanitarian Coordination and Information Management; Protection; Shelter and Settlements; Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene	Anbar, Babil, Baghdad, Basrah, Diyala, Karbala, Najaf, Ninawa, Qadisiyah, Wasit	18,075,687
International Rescue Committee	Emergency Relief Supplies; Protection; Shelter and Settlements	Anbar, Baghdad, Erbil, Kirkuk, Ninawa, Sulaymaniyah	4,975,648
International Relief and Development	Agriculture and Food Security; Emergency Relief Supplies; Economic Recovery and Market Systems; Health; Protection; Shelter and Settlements; Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene	Anbar, Baghdad, Kirkuk, Ninawa	9,441,496
IOM	Economic Recovery and Market Systems; Emergency Relief Supplies; Humanitarian Coordination and Information Management; Protection; Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene	Anbar, Baghdad, Basrah, Dahuk, Diyala, Erbil, Kirkuk, Muthanna, Ninawa, Qadisiyah, Sulaymaniyah, Wasit; Countrywide	10,430,249
Mercy Corps	Economic Recovery and Market Systems; Emergency Relief Supplies; Humanitarian Studies, Analysis, or Applications; Protection; Shelter and Settlements; Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene	Baghdad, Diyala, Kirkuk, Salah ad Din, Sulaymaniyah; Countrywide	14,500,000
Save the Children/U.S.	Protection	Basrah, Dhi Qar, Maysan, Muthanna	3,000,000
UNICEF	Protection; Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene	Countrywide	8,000,000
WFP	Economic Recovery and Market Systems; Logistics; Emergency Relief Supplies; Humanitarian Coordination and Information Management	Countrywide	8,000,000
	Administrative Support		556,202
Total			\$83,395,070

Source: GAO analysis based on data and information from USAID.

In addition, USAID's Middle East Bureau/Office of Iraq Reconstruction (ME/IR) and USAID/Iraq at the U.S. embassy in Baghdad continue to support programs focusing on development assistance. Although not directly tied to current reintegration efforts, development assistance could improve conditions in Iraq that could increase the number of returns and foster reintegration, according to U.S. and international organization officials. As of September 30, 2009, USAID had obligated about \$6.4 billion and expended about \$5.6 billion in fiscal years 2003 through 2009 for development assistance projects in Iraq (see app. IV for funding by source and funding by implementing partner). For example, USAID's Community Stabilization Program, completed in October 2009, offered employment activities, vocational training, small grants, and small infrastructure projects in communities affected by insurgent violence. USAID's development assistance also supported programs focusing on building capacity for all levels of the government and other organizations. For example, in July 2006, USAID implemented the National Capacity Development Program, known in Arabic as Tatweer. The aim of this program is to increase the effectiveness of ministries by reforming internal operational systems and instituting best practices and international standards. The program is expected to end in January 2011. Tatweer works with 10 ministries, including MODM, and 7 executive offices. For MODM, Tatweer is providing assistance on capacity-building activities, including improvements to the information technology infrastructure and the management of relief supplies, according to USAID.

Finally, DOD provides assistance in Iraq through its Commander's Emergency Response Program. This program enables local commanders to respond to urgent humanitarian relief and reconstruction requirements within their areas of responsibility by carrying out programs that immediately assist the local population.⁵¹ According to DOD officials, although the program is not targeted to returns and reintegration, in some cases, relief and reconstruction are carried out in areas heavily populated by IDPs. DOD had obligated about \$3.6 billion in fiscal years 2004 through 2009 for projects under the program in Iraq, including water and sanitation, health care, and other projects, according to DOD officials.

⁵¹GAO has previously assessed the use of the Commander's Emergency Response Program in Iraq. See *Military Operations: Actions Needed to Better Guide Project Selection for Commander's Emergency Response Program and Improve Oversight in Iraq*, [GAO-08-736R](#) (Washington, D.C.: June 23, 2008).

Iraqi Government Has Initiated Steps to Encourage Returns and Reintegration; However, Officials Report That Progress Has Been Limited Due to Insufficient Commitment and Capacity

The Iraqi government's efforts to encourage returns and reintegration have been limited by insufficient political commitment and capacity within the government, according to international organization and U.S. government officials. The Iraqi government has developed policies and taken initial steps to assist IDPs and encourage voluntary returns and reintegration. MODM issued a National Policy on Displacement and the government issued a decree and orders that allow for financial stipends and assistance in safely recovering property. However, the international community has reported that MODM was not able to implement its policy, and that bureaucratic challenges, based on lack of capacity⁵² and political commitment at various levels of the Iraqi government, have prevented many returnees from recovering their property and receiving stipends. In June 2009, DOD reported that "serious efforts" to facilitate the return of refugees by the Iraqi government have been "all but non-existent."⁵³

MODM, a relatively new ministry, has lacked the authority and capacity to lead ministerial efforts regarding returns and reintegration, according to international organization and U.S. government officials. In July 2008, MODM issued a National Policy on Displacement, which recognized displacement as a key challenge facing the government of Iraq and the international community. The policy set a goal to find durable solutions for displaced Iraqis, established objectives, stressed the rights of displaced persons, described the basic needs of Iraqi IDPs, and recommended activities to address the needs. However, the policy was not fully implemented because MODM lacked the authority and capacity to coordinate efforts within the Iraqi government, according to international organization and U.S. government officials. According to officials, the more established ministries—such as Defense, Interior, Health, Education, and others—continued to work independently of MODM. Furthermore, MODM did not have uniform support at all levels of the government for the policy or for efforts to facilitate the return of refugees of all sects, according to international organization, NGO, and U.S. government officials. Moreover, MODM received a relatively small budget in 2008 because its role was originally viewed as primarily a coordinating rather

⁵²According to the United Nations Development Programme, capacity includes processes by which individuals, organizations, institutions, and societies have the abilities (individually and collectively) to perform functions, solve problems, and set and achieve objectives.

⁵³Department of Defense, *Measuring Security and Stability in Iraq, June 2009 Report to Congress in Accordance with the Department of Defense Supplemental Appropriations Act 2008, (Section 9204, Public Law 110-252)* (July 23, 2009).

than an implementing role, according to U.S. government and international organization officials. For 2009, the total Iraqi budget decreased, including that of MODM. According to the MODM Minister and U.S. government and international organization officials, the budgeted amount for 2009 was insufficient (see table 4), particularly since MODM began implementing programs and delivering services. However, according to officials, other ministries may be independently assisting IDPs and returnees through their own budgets and efforts. For example, the Ministry of Housing is planning to build shelters, according to officials. For 2010, the MODM budget was slightly higher than the amount that it expended in 2008 and more than triple the amount of its 2009 budget.

Table 4: Iraqi Ministry of Displacement and Migration (MODM) and Total Iraqi Government Budget and Expenditures, 2008 to 2010

Dollars in millions

Account	2008 budget	2008 expenditures	2009 budget	2009 expenditures (January-November)	2010 budget
Operating	\$227.6	\$183.4	\$49.0	\$58.3	\$181.4
Compensation	-	-	4.9	4.4	7.1
Goods and Services	-	-	3.3	1.7	3.4
Social benefits	-	-	40.7	52.2	170.9
Investment	2.5	1.9	6.7	0.5	13.7
Total MODM	\$230.1	\$185.2	\$55.7	\$58.8	\$195.2
Total government of Iraq	\$72,181.4	\$56,064.3	\$58,615.1	\$36,882.7	\$72,332.0

Source: GAO analysis based on Iraqi Ministry of Finance data provided by the U.S. Department of the Treasury.

Note: The 2008 Iraqi supplemental budget did not disaggregate operating budget accounts.

The Iraqi government issued a decree and orders to facilitate certain returns and reintegration for some displaced Iraqis, primarily in Baghdad and Diyala (see table 5); however, progress has been limited.

Table 5: Summary of the Key Iraqi Government Decree and Orders to Facilitate Certain Returns and Reintegration of Displaced Iraqis, 2008-2009

Decree/order/date	Summary actions
Council of Ministers Decree 262 July 17, 2008	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continues to grant 150,000 Iraqi dinars (about \$126) per month, for 3 consecutive months to each IDP family (about 120,000 families) that was displaced as of January 1, 2008. • Grants a total of 1 million Iraqi dinars (about \$838) per family for returning IDPs, Iraqi refugees who have stayed in host countries for 8 to 12 months, and returnees from the Kurdish Region (about 35,000 families), provided that they are no longer recorded as displaced. • Grants rental assistance of 300,000 Iraqi dinars (about \$252) per month for 6 months to displaced families squatting in Baghdad houses to return these houses to returning displaced families.
Cabinet Order 101/S August 3, 2008	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Activates prior Order 83/S that provides that anyone displacing someone from their home will be punished according to Iraq's Anti-terrorism Law, and provides that anyone who occupies a house belonging to a displaced person will be considered as a participant in the displacement and be held responsible for the property and its contents, which should be left to the legal owner. • Provides 1 month, as of August 1, 2008, for squatters occupying homes of displaced Iraqis to leave them with all their contents to their legal owners. • Orders MODM branches to establish centers to receive, register, and take the necessary information from displaced persons who should show legal proof of their ownership and legal residence. • Orders MODM, Ministry of Justice, Reconciliation Committee, Baghdad governorate, and Baghdad Operation Command to undertake their responsibilities and nominate representatives in MODM branches, discussed above, each one according to its jurisdiction. • Orders Baghdad Operation Command to issue the necessary instructions to facilitate implementation of this order; and Governorate Operations Commands to undertake the same mechanism to facilitate return of IDPs to their original places in each governorate.
Cabinet Order 54/S July 16, 2009	<p>Establishes committee in Diyala governorate, under the chairmanship of the Head of the Implementation and Follow-up Committee for National Reconciliation, that is responsible for the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Activating Cabinet Order 101/S of 2008 concerning the return of displaced persons in the Diyala governorate. • Following up on the implementation of the projects of Basha'ir Al-Khair Commission for Diyala Reconstruction. • Following up on the compensation grant for damaged houses in the Diyala governorate. • Following up on the issue of water shortages in the governorate and improving the agricultural situation there. • Coordinating between the ministries concerned, the service departments, and the security committee regarding security, services, and displacement. • Coordinating with international organizations willing to provide services to the Diyala governorate within the legal framework.

Source: GAO summary based on U.S. government translations of Iraqi government documents.

International organizations and NGOs have identified problems regarding this decree and these orders and their implementation. According to USIP, Decree 262 and Order 101 cover only a limited segment of the displaced

population, require extensive documentation that returnees may have lost due to displacement, do not clarify the roles of the various agencies involved in the process, and do not dedicate resources for administration and oversight. USIP reported that by the end of 2008, about 10,000 returnee families had registered to receive the grant under Decree 262, but only a small number had received it. In January 2009, the volume of new cases dropped significantly, which according to UNHCR, IOM, and NGOs, may have been due to the low rate of payments. According to international organization and U.S. government officials, the amount of the stipends under these orders is insufficient to cover expenses and serve as an incentive for returns. In addition, IMC officials said the Iraqi government has not been proactive in providing squatters with the 6 months of rental assistance due under Decree 262. Moreover, according to OCHA and IMC, MODM issued a Ministerial Order on February 12, 2009 that precluded further registration of IDPs for benefits and refocused efforts on monitoring returnees. According to OCHA, the order sought to prevent double registrations and forgery; however, it may restrict legitimate IDPs' access to benefits. OCHA further noted that the Ministerial Order may restrict unregistered IDPs' ability to register as returnees and receive benefits under Decree 262 and Order 101, since they have to be registered as IDPs first to re-register as returnees.

According to U.S. government officials, a key indicator for Iraqi government progress will be how the Iraqi government, at the central, governorate, and local levels, moves forward with its funding for and implementation of Order 54 regarding returns and reintegration in Diyala. The Iraqi government has made Diyala the focus of an initiative, led by the Follow-up Committee for National Reconciliation, to create conditions for large-scale IDP and refugee returns. According to State, the Iraqi government has pledged 37 billion dinar (about \$30 million) for use by the Diyala Governor to reconstruct destroyed homes and pledged to provide 6-month contract jobs for up to 10,000 returnee families and 10,000 nonreturnee families. DOD reported in April 2010, that the Iraqi Security Forces continue to make progress in improving security in Diyala by eliminating insurgent support and thereby setting the conditions for economic recovery and return of displaced Iraqis. However, the perception of disproportionate targeting of Sunnis has strained sectarian

relations, allowing Shi'a extremists and criminal elements much greater freedom of movement.⁵⁴

Iraq, the United States, and Other Members of the International Community Lack an Integrated International Strategy for Reintegrating Displaced Iraqis

Iraq, the United States, and other members of the international community lack an integrated strategy for the reintegration of displaced Iraqis. An effective strategy would be integrated and provide Iraq and its implementing partners with a tool to shape policies and programs so that stakeholders can achieve the desired results in an accountable and effective manner.⁵⁵ International community stakeholders agree that to be effective, the strategy should be Iraqi-led with the assistance of the international community. The lack of an integrated strategy for reintegration resulted in a lack of agreed-upon strategic goals and outcomes, has hindered efforts to efficiently and effectively assess the needs of Iraqi IDPs and returnees, and has hindered stakeholder coordination and efficiency of service delivery.

Iraq, the United States, and the UN Lack Integrated Plans for Reintegrating Displaced Iraqis

Iraq, the United States, and other members of the international community lack an integrated plan for reintegrating displaced Iraqis because Iraqi MODM planning efforts stalled due to limitations of authority, capacity, and broader Iraqi government support; the UN's strategy and plans have primarily focused on assistance to the most vulnerable Iraqis and have not specifically focused on reintegration; and the current U.S. government strategy has not been made publicly available. An effective strategy would be integrated and provide Iraq and its implementing partners with a tool to shape policies and programs so that stakeholders can achieve the desired results in an accountable, efficient, and effective manner.

⁵⁴Department of Defense, *Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq: March 2010 Report to Congress in Accordance with the Department of Defense Supplemental Appropriations Act 2008 (Section 9204, Public Law 110-252)* (Washington, D.C.: Apr. 29, 2010).

⁵⁵For criteria for an effective strategy, see GAO, *Combating Terrorism: Evaluation of Selected Characteristics in National Strategies Related to Terrorism*, [GAO-04-408T](#) (Washington, D.C.: Feb. 3, 2004); *Defense Management: Comprehensive Strategy and Annual Reporting Are Needed to Measure Progress and Costs of DOD's Global Posture Restructuring*, [GAO-06-852](#) (Washington, D.C.: Sept. 13, 2006); *Rebuilding Iraq: More comprehensive National Strategy Needed to Help Achieve U.S. Goals*, [GAO-06-788](#) (Washington, D.C.: July 11, 2006); and *Iraq and Afghanistan: Security, Economic, and Governance Challenges to Rebuilding Efforts Should Be Addressed in U.S. Strategies*, [GAO-09-476T](#) (Washington, D.C.: Mar. 25, 2009).

Iraqi MODM Planning Efforts Stalled Due to Lack of Authority, Capacity, and Iraqi Government Support

According to international organization, U.S. government, and NGO officials, MODM does not have the authority, capacity, or Iraqi government support to implement its displacement policy and develop an effective strategy. In July 2008, MODM issued the National Policy on Displacement. This policy offers a general description of the problem, identifies basic goals, defines terms, stresses the rights of displaced persons, describes the basic needs of Iraqi IDPs, and recommends activities to mitigate some of the problems identified. The policy also calls for setting up a comprehensive, effective, and realistic workplan; providing adequate protection and assistance to displaced persons; specifying coordination structures among all state institutions; and allocating funds and developing financial procedures for the implementation of the policy. However, international organization, U.S. government, and NGO officials noted that MODM efforts have stalled because the ministry has had little authority or ability to coordinate efforts within the Iraqi government to implement the policy and develop an effective strategy. International and nongovernmental organization officials have expressed concern about the lack of unified Iraqi support for the policy and development of a strategy. UNHCR, IOM, and other actors will continue to build on the National Policy on Displacement as well as relevant legal authorities that we have described previously, according to the UN. According to State officials, the extent to which the Iraqi government implements Order 54, which focuses a range of efforts in Diyala and essentially makes Diyala a test case, may determine the future development of a viable strategy.

UN Strategy and Plans Have Primarily Focused on Assistance to the Most Vulnerable Iraqis and Have Not Specifically Focused on Reintegration

Overall UN strategic efforts in Iraq have targeted humanitarian assistance to the most vulnerable Iraqis, which may or may not include IDPs and returnees, but are not specifically focused on reintegration. The *United Nations 2008-2010 Iraq Assistance Strategy*⁵⁶ focuses on needs and planned assistance by sector,⁵⁷ and although it occasionally mentions the impact of IDPs on sectors and includes a few broadly stated outputs regarding IDPs, it does not address reintegration. As part of its strategic approach, the UN issued its consolidated 2009 funding appeal for assistance efforts in Iraq and neighboring and other countries hosting

⁵⁶United Nations, *United Nations 2008-2010 Iraq Assistance Strategy* (May 2008).

⁵⁷Sectors include education, water and sanitation, health and nutrition, housing and shelter, food security, protection, governance, and economic reform and diversification.

Current U.S. Government
Strategy Is Not Publicly
Available

refugees.⁵⁸ The UN noted in its midyear review that, although IDPs were returning, large numbers of returns had not yet materialized and should not be encouraged. Thus, the UN continued to address the needs of vulnerable groups within the entire population and not to limit efforts to IDPs and returnees. In the UN's 2010 appeal, the UN interspersed some new efforts intended to facilitate returns and reintegration while also assisting other vulnerable Iraqis. However, after making progress in consolidating its 2009 appeal, the UN divided its 2010 appeal into three planning documents, further fragmenting its initial planning efforts to address returns and reintegration. Additionally, although the initial planning efforts may include outputs, such as that at least 35 mobile teams and 14 Protection and Assistance Centers provide legal aid and monitor the needs of people of concern, they do not define reintegration (i.e., what is a sustainable return) or include specific indicators or outcomes for reintegration, as would be expected in an effective strategic plan.

According to NSC, State, and USAID officials, the U.S. strategy regarding the reintegration of Iraqis is delineated in three classified or sensitive documents that have not been made available in a public document. Also, an unclassified version of the current U.S. strategy has not been developed and made public. Administration officials stated that the classified and sensitive documents were not drafted with the aim of creating a publicly announced strategy to persuade Iraqis to return home; rather, they are planning documents describing how to use U.S. assistance to ensure that Iraqis who choose to return to Iraq have support systems in place. In the absence of a publicly available strategy, administration officials stated that the United States will focus on the three efforts announced by the U.S. President in February 2009. The President stated that the administration would provide more assistance and take steps to generate international support for countries hosting refugees, cooperate with others to resettle refugees facing great personal risk, and work with the Iraqi government over time to resettle refugees and displaced Iraqis within Iraq.⁵⁹

⁵⁸The 2009 Consolidated Appeal for Iraq and the Region was composed of two pillars: Pillar I was coordinated by the UN's Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and reflected needs within Iraq, and Pillar II was coordinated by UNHCR and addressed protection and assistance for Iraqi refugees in the region.

⁵⁹*Remarks of President Barack Obama—Responsibly Ending the War in Iraq* (Camp Lejeune, North Carolina: Feb. 27, 2009).

Subsequent to concluding our field work and our exit meetings with U.S. agencies and the NSC, in July 2010 NSC provided GAO with an unclassified summary of a classified May 2009 U.S. government strategy regarding support for returning Iraqi refugees and IDPs. While the summary was made available to GAO, it had not been made public. The NSC summary included a fiscal year 2010 objective to assist the Iraqi government, in coordination with international organizations and other donors, in developing a comprehensive strategy to support the reintegration of displaced Iraqis. The strategy was to include active participation of the Iraqi government line ministries. However, such a strategy was not developed. The NSC noted that the summary prepared for GAO was based on a “historical document,” should be viewed in that context, and that it had not been updated to reflect the current situation.

Iraq, the United States, and Other International Community Stakeholders Have Not Yet Reached Agreement on Defined Goals and Outcomes, Including Defining the Target Population and Reintegration

Clearly defined and agreed-upon strategic goals and intended outcomes for reintegration have not been specifically developed. Strategic goals explain what results are expected and when they are expected. A direct alignment between strategic goals and strategies for achieving those goals is important for assessing an ability to achieve those goals. In the case of reintegrating displaced Iraqis, key parameters have not yet been agreed upon, which makes it difficult to establish measurable goals.

For example, the international community has no agreed-upon determination of when the displacement it is addressing in Iraq began or when the displaced are considered reintegrated. MODM’s National Policy on Displacement includes a focus on an estimated 1.2 million Iraqis who were displaced over the 40 years before the fall of Saddam Hussein’s regime in 2003 and on an estimated more than 1.6 million who were internally displaced after; while the Iraqi government’s 2008 and 2009 orders and decree focus assistance to a limited segment of the displaced population. The U.S. government and some international organization programs are more focused on displacement since 2003, particularly the large displacement occurring after the February 2006 Samarra bombing.

Similarly complex is agreeing upon when the displaced are considered reintegrated and international assistance is no longer required for reintegration. Reintegration is defined as “sustainable returns,” but a clear and uniform definition of “sustainable” in the context of Iraq has not been agreed to by the international community. MODM’s National Policy on Displacement defines durable solutions as based on three elements—long-term security, restitution of or compensation for lost property, and an environment that sustains life under normal economic and social

conditions. Under the policy, the displaced may return to their home or place of habitual residence; integrate locally into the social, economic, cultural, and political fabric of the community where they initially found temporary refuge; or resettle in a new community. However, restitution of or compensation for lost property may occur long after the displaced return, integrate, or resettle, and there is little agreement on what constitutes normal economic and social conditions for Iraq. According to U.S. government officials, they plan to address the lack of clarity and agreement over definitions and parameters as they develop their plans to assist the Iraqi government in reintegration efforts.

Lack of an Integrated Strategy Has Hindered Efforts to Efficiently and Effectively Assess the Needs of Iraqi IDPs and Returnees

The lack of an integrated strategy has hindered efforts to efficiently and effectively assess the needs of Iraqi IDPs and returnees. A strategy for reintegration must include information on the needs of displaced Iraqis and be updated on the basis of the assistance provided and remaining needs. While various UN agencies, affiliated organizations, and their implementing partners have collected and assessed data for their specialized work in Iraq, gaps remain. In addition, the UN has not integrated data from UNHCR into its new Inter-Agency Information Analysis Unit, which was established to provide a central point for collecting and assessing needs-based data, according to a senior IAU official.

Over time, the UN and its partners have individually attempted to identify and estimate the numbers of vulnerable Iraqis, internally displaced, returnees, and Iraqi and non-Iraqi refugees; survey returnees and IDPs on their reasons for leaving, immediate needs, and priority needs for return; document protection, property, livelihood, and governance issues; and determine the status of essential services across the country. However, international organization, NGO, and U.S. government officials stated that it was often difficult to identify the best data available because data from different sources did not always agree, some of the data were incomplete or outdated, or the methodology used to obtain and assess the reliability of some data was not clear. According to UNHCR, OCHA should have been coordinating the data collection and assessments from the beginning, but they did not initially have a presence in Iraq. As a result, each organization collected and assessed its own data, according to UNHCR. According to some officials, the Iraqi population has been over surveyed as a result of these separate assessments. According to international and nongovernmental organizations, gaps in information and data remain. For example:

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- In 2009, UNHCR predicted that over 400,000 refugees would return to Iraq in 2009. The returns did not materialize and no further fact-based assessments and predictions on the rate of return have been made to facilitate planning efforts, according to UNHCR and U.S. government officials.
 - According to international organizations, no inventory and analysis has been conducted of the various financial assistance programs available to IDPs and returnees to determine gaps, overlap, or impact. As a result, there is no assurance that resources are allocated in a rational and fair manner. Some international organizations provide returnees and vulnerable populations with cash, cash for work, and in-kind grants for business development. USIP reported that in addition to grants provided by the central government, ministries, provincial governments, and municipalities provide other forms of financial assistance and other specific funds for houses damaged in particular military operations, and that there are a variety of victims and martyrs commissions that provide other sorts of compensation.
 - Despite efforts to improve outreach and surveys of vulnerable populations, some areas have not been accessible to international organizations and NGOs due to security concerns and lack of trained national staff. To begin to address this problem, in 2009, OCHA planned to inventory and train national NGOs through three workshops and subsequently carried out training inside Iraq for 74 Iraqi NGOs on humanitarian principles, rapid needs assessments, and results based management. By 2011, UNHCR plans to increase its presence in Iraq by relocating staff from Jordan and Kuwait; increasing its network of national NGOs across Iraq; and working through international NGO partners to provide support, oversight, and a review of the capacity of national NGOs to access areas, identify vulnerable populations, and provide assistance, particularly should security deteriorate.

To address data gaps and overlap, in February 2008, the UN established the IAU in Amman, Jordan, under the direction of OCHA and the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq. According to a senior IAU official, the primary purpose of the IAU is to be a “one-stop shop” for collecting and providing data on Iraq and to ensure that the best data are available.⁶⁰ The

⁶⁰According to the IAU, its key audience includes the Iraqi government, civil society, private sector, donors, the UN, NGOs, implementing partners, media, and research institutions.

IAU is intended to bring together analysts from UN agencies and NGOs to facilitate and enhance data collection, sharing, analysis, and joint assessments; provide timely and accurate information on the situation and needs in the different areas of Iraq; and increase coordination to reduce project duplication and maximize the targeting of vulnerable communities.⁶¹ According to the senior IAU official, in the spring of 2010, the UN Country Team established a new steering committee composed of agency heads that met for the first time to set priorities and develop a work plan for the IAU. As of July 2010, the IAU has staff in Jordan and Iraq, including new governate-based Information Management Offices.⁶² According to the senior IAU official, the IAU now receives data and assessments from most organizations conducting work in Iraq, have analysts from most of the major contributors as part of their team,⁶³ and help plan for and coordinate future surveys. Through an agreement between the UN and the U.S. government, the IAU will also begin to analyze declassified U.S. databases and share information.

However, according to the senior IAU official, although UNHCR is a participating agency of the IAU, is a member of the UN Country Team, and shares its reports with the IAU, UNHCR is not fully participating in the IAU. UNHCR is not sharing the raw or primary data it collects on IDPs, returnees, and vulnerable populations; its methodology and data limitations; and an analyst to work with the IAU team and is not taking advantage of IAU resources and coordination. The IAU official stated that as a result, UNHCR issues are not on the agenda, and other agencies are unaware of the composition and quality of UNHCR data. The official added that UNHCR is not taking advantage of IAU staff expertise and lessons learned on how to implement surveys using NGOs and how to scrub and assess raw data. For example, UNHCR conducted a survey of

⁶¹IAU participating agencies and NGOs include the UN Assistance Mission for Iraq, OCHA, UN Development Programme, UNICEF, UN Population Fund, Food and Agriculture Organization, WHO, UN-HABITAT, UNHCR, WFP, International Labour Organization, IOM, Mercy Corps, International Medical Corps, and Information Management and Mine Action Programs.

⁶²According to an IAU official, although OCHA is phasing out its presence in Iraq, the IAU will continue under the direction and funding of the Deputy Special Representative of the UN Secretary General for Humanitarian Coordination, United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq.

⁶³The terms of reference for the IAU stated that participating agencies and partners are committed to allocate a significant proportion of their analyst's time for the first 6 months and that activities would involve a combination of group and individual work.

returnees but has not shared its questionnaire and raw data with the IAU. Moreover, UNHCR is not involved in planning future surveys, such as a major activity of the IAU this year, which is to work with the Iraqi government and civil society to develop a socioeconomic monitoring system for Iraq within the Central Organization for Statistics and Information Technology and the Kurdistan Regional Statistic Office, according to the IAU official.

According to UNHCR and IAU officials, UNHCR had initially assigned an analyst to the IAU, but has not refilled the position since the staff member left it in 2009. According to the IAU official, UNHCR informed the IAU that it had abolished the position because it did not have a qualified staff member to detail to the IAU. UNHCR officials stated that they found little added value from having a staff person detailed to the IAU.

Lack of an Integrated Strategy Has Hindered Stakeholder Coordination and Efficiency

Without an integrated strategy, it is difficult for stakeholders to effectively delineate roles and responsibilities and establish coordination and oversight mechanisms for effective and efficient implementation. The MODM Minister stated that his ministry's initial role was limited to that of a coordinating body, leaving no single entity charged with implementing the necessary tasks. The Minister added that although the Ministries of Health, Education, Interior, and Defense are essential to addressing impediments to returns, they do not have programs specifically focusing on IDPs.

Roles and efforts among international organizations may overlap, particularly since organizations plan their work independently of each other and work bilaterally with local leaders, the Iraqi government, and donor country agencies. According to international and NGO officials, decreasing international donor community contributions to these organizations has caused them to compete for funding and trained national staff. At UN Country Team meetings and UN Assistance Mission for Iraq activities, officials at one agency stated that while some information is shared, organizations "protect their turf," and opportunities to build on the efforts of others are lost. According to IOM and UNHCR, although organizations try to avoid conflicts by focusing their efforts in different sectors—such as UNHCR focusing its projects on shelter and property issues, IOM focusing on livelihood projects, and WFP focusing on delivery of food—efforts may overlap. For example, WFP is expanding its focus in Iraq to include livelihood projects. According to IMC, coordinating committees are prolific in Iraq but they are not always effective. For example, according to IMC, IMC and USAID/OFDA were

working on shelter rehabilitation in one area, only to find out from field staff that UNHCR was doing similar work. According to IMC officials, they have been involved in the UN sector outcome teams, but the meetings were generally held in Amman without an Iraqi government presence, thereby limiting effective coordination.

One area with significant potential for overlap is the establishment of numerous assistance centers and mobile units across Iraq to register or assist returnees, IDPs, and vulnerable Iraqis. International and U.S. government officials expressed concerns about the need for multiple centers, possible inefficiencies, and extent to which the MODM will be capable of assuming responsibilities for centers in the future. Although each center initially had its own purpose, some of the activities at these centers now overlap, and all require oversight and administrative support, according to international organization officials. A number of these centers are funded by State and USAID and managed or supported by MODM, UNHCR, IMC, and IOM. A sample of these centers includes the following:

- *MODM Return and Assistance Centers:* According to UNHCR, as of July 2010, MODM had established three main Return and Assistance Centers—two in Baghdad (Karkh and Resafa) and one in Diyala—to register and assist displaced Iraqis who want to return to their original homes. In addition, each of the 14 MODM branches outside of Baghdad and Diyala has a Registration Department where the same functions are performed. The centers register new arrivals, streamline returnee access to assistance, offer returning Iraqis legal aid and advice, assist in resolving property disputes, help replace lost documents, and help with access to MODM and government benefits. IMC supports the Karkh and Diyala centers with funding from USAID and strategic guidance from UNHCR. According to an IMC official, IMC is essentially comanaging the centers at MODM’s request because MODM lacks trained staff. IMC also supports some of the MODM Registration Departments. UNHCR, with State’s PRM funding, supports operations of the Resafa center, including its mobile teams, and supports two of the Karkh center mobile teams. According to UNHCR, although it is not ideal to have a medical NGO co-operating the centers, IMC was one of the few UNHCR partners and international NGOs positioned in Iraq when the centers were established.
- *UNHCR Protection and Assistance Centers:* As of March 2010, UNHCR had established and continued to operate 15 Protection and Assistance Centers and 40 associated mobile teams that provide services to displaced, returning, and vulnerable Iraqis and others in all 18 governorates in Iraq.

As of May 2010, the centers included a total of 125 staff, including lawyers, social workers, monitors, and public information and database officers. The centers conduct protection monitoring assessments to identify needs, gather information, and identify opportune interventions regarding basic human rights and physical security; provide legal assistance addressing a broad spectrum of needs, including legal counseling and interventions and access to services, documentation, and compensation; provide assistance and referrals to services and other stakeholders, such as authorities, NGOs, UNHCR, or other Protection and Assistance Centers; and provide briefings and information sessions to raise awareness of protection needs.

- *UNHCR Return Integration Community Centers:* In mid-2009, UNHCR established and began operating 12 Return Integration Community Centers to expand its capacity to reach out to return communities. The centers coordinate with and relay information to local communities; conduct needs assessments; and address the social, assistance, and information needs of displaced and returning IDPs and refugees. Six of the centers are based in Baghdad and the others are based in Anbar, Basrah, Diyala, Kirkuk, Missan, and Ninewa. UNHCR plans to increase the number of these centers to at least 16 in 2010. As of May 2010, these centers included a total of 159 staff.
- *IOM Community Outreach and Women Centers:* IOM and its partners are establishing four Women Centers with funding from State. The centers will provide legal aid, psychosocial support, health counseling, and livelihood support to the most vulnerable IDP and returnee female-headed households in Baghdad, Diyala, and Missan.

After our fieldwork discussions with UNHCR and U.S. government officials, UNHCR informed us in June 2010 that it was taking action to address the multiple assistance centers and potential for duplication and lost efficiencies. First, UNHCR informed us that it had agreed to merge all Protection and Assistance Centers and Return Integration Community Centers in 2011 to reduce administrative costs. Second, UNHCR, in discussions with the U.S. Embassy, suggested that all MODM Return and Assistance Center activities be placed under one management umbrella. According to UNHCR, doing so would enable them to have a more harmonized approach that would avoid potential confusion and duplication. UNHCR also stated that this approach will provide it with the opportunity to harmonize staff payments and incentives.

Conclusions

It is in the U.S. government's interest to work with Iraq and international community stakeholders to develop an integrated international strategy for reintegrating displaced Iraqis that transitions efforts and costs over time to the Iraqi government. First, Iraq is a sovereign nation that should lead efforts to address impediments to the return and reintegration of all displaced Iraqis. Second, in MODM's National Policy on Displacement, the Iraqi government states that it cannot address this issue without the help of the international community. Third, in fiscal year 2009, the United States funded more than one-half of the humanitarian assistance provided to Iraq, and the lack of an international strategy may result in lost efficiencies and wasted funds. One possible example of this may be the administration of many assistance centers and mobile units across Iraq. Furthermore, President Obama stated in his February 2009 speech on responsibly ending the war in Iraq that the United States will pursue a transition to Iraq and that the United States has a moral responsibility to help displaced Iraqis. We recognize that strategies themselves are not end points, but starting points, and that implementation is the key. However, an integrated strategy—along with transparent goals and shared, accurate data on the conditions and effectiveness of projects—is useful in suggesting ways to enhance the value of plans, filling in gaps, speeding implementation, guiding resource allocations, and providing oversight opportunities.

Recommendations for Executive Action

To enhance the ability of the Iraqi and U.S. governments, international organizations, and NGOs to effectively plan and integrate their efforts to assist and reintegrate displaced Iraqis, we recommend that the Secretary of State and the USAID Administrator work with the appropriate international organizations to assist the Iraqi government in developing an international strategy that addresses impediments to return and prepares for and facilitates the return and reintegration of displaced Iraqis.

To ensure that the U.S. goals and plans are fully integrated with those of Iraq and other international community stakeholders and that progress toward meeting those goals is transparent, we recommend that the Secretary of State and USAID Administrator make public an unclassified version of the current U.S. strategy and their implementing plans for assisting and reintegrating displaced Iraqis, including their goals, performance measures, and progress assessments.

To ensure that the U.S. and Iraqi governments, other donors, international organizations, and implementing partners have the best data available regarding the numbers and needs of IDPs, returnees, and other vulnerable

Iraqis, in the most efficient manner, we recommend that the Secretary of State encourage UNHCR to share its raw data and methodology with the IAU and take advantage of IAU expertise and coordinated efforts.

To ensure the effective and efficient use of resources by its implementing partners, we recommend that the Secretary of State and USAID Administrator work with UNHCR and its other implementing partners to take inventory of and assess the purposes, organization, operations, and results of the various assistance, return, and registration centers and mobile units in Iraq to determine and achieve an optimal framework for assisting IDPs, returnees, and other vulnerable Iraqis.

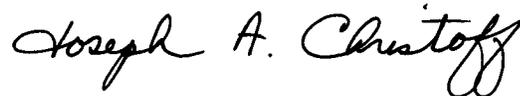
Agency Comments and Our Evaluation

We provided a draft of this report to the Departments of State and Defense and USAID. State and USAID provided written comments, which are reprinted in appendixes V and VI. DOD provided oral comments which are summarized below. State and DOD also provided technical comments, which we incorporated where appropriate.

In commenting on a draft of this report, State and USAID agreed with our recommendations regarding the need to assist the Iraqi government in developing an international strategy for reintegrating displaced Iraqis and to make public an unclassified version of the current U.S. strategy and their implementing plans. State and USAID also agreed with our recommendation regarding the need to work with UNHCR and other implementing partners to take inventory of and assess the various assistance, return, and registration centers and mobile units to determine and achieve an optimal framework. USAID and State noted that efforts to address this recommendation have begun. According to State, UNHCR has begun to consolidate services and plan the merger of centers. State also agreed with our recommendation regarding the need to encourage UNHCR to share its raw data and methodology with the IAU and take advantage of IAU expertise and coordinated efforts. In addition, DOD commented that it agreed with the report and supports State and USAID in the execution of their mission to assist and reintegrate displaced Iraqis.

We will send copies of this report to interested congressional committees, the Secretary of State, the Administrator of USAID, and the Secretary of Defense. In addition, this report will be available at no charge on GAO's Web site at <http://www.gao.gov>.

If you or your staff have any questions about this report, please contact me at (202) 512-8979 or christoffj@gao.gov. Contact points for our Offices of Congressional Relations and Public Affairs may be found on the last page of this report. GAO staff who made key contributions to this report are listed in appendix VII.



Joseph A. Christoff
Director, International Affairs and Trade

List of Congressional Committees

The Honorable Carl Levin
Chairman
The Honorable John McCain
Ranking Member
Committee on Armed Services
United States Senate

The Honorable John F. Kerry
Chairman
The Honorable Richard G. Lugar
Ranking Member
Committee on Foreign Relations
United States Senate

The Honorable Joseph I. Lieberman
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The Honorable Susan M. Collins
Ranking Member
Committee on Homeland Security
and Governmental Affairs
United States Senate

The Honorable Patrick Leahy
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The Honorable Judd Gregg
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Subcommittee on the Department of State,
Foreign Operations, and Related Programs
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate

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Committee on Foreign Affairs
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The Honorable Darrel Issa
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House of Representatives

The Honorable John F. Tierney
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Ranking Member
Subcommittee on National Security and
Foreign Affairs
Committee on Oversight and Government Reform
House of Representatives

The Honorable Nita M. Lowey
Chairwoman

The Honorable Kay Granger
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations
and Related Programs
Committee on Appropriations
House of Representatives

Appendix I: Objectives, Scope, and Methodology

To examine efforts to reintegrate displaced Iraqis, we reviewed (1) the conditions in Iraq that pose a challenge to their reintegration; (2) the actions that the United States, Iraq, and other members of the international community have taken to address these conditions and reintegration; and (3) the extent to which the United States, Iraq, and other members of the international community have an effective strategy for reintegrating displaced Iraqis. When reintegration challenges and efforts were intertwined with efforts to assist internally displaced and vulnerable Iraqis, we included both in our scope. We conducted fieldwork in Washington, D.C.; New York City (United Nations (UN) agencies); Geneva, Switzerland (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), International Organization for Migration (IOM), and other international organization headquarters); and Iraq. We also conducted telephone interviews with UN officials in Amman, Jordan, that were responsible for work in Iraq.

- Within the U.S. government, we reviewed documents and interviewed officials of the National Security Council's (NSC) Office of Multilateral Affairs and Human Rights; Department of State's (State) Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM) and Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs; Department of Defense's Office of the Secretary of Defense and Joint Staff; the U.S. Agency for International Development's (USAID) Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA) and Middle East/Iraq Reconstruction Office; the Central Intelligence Agency; the U.S. missions in New York and Geneva; the U.S. embassy and USAID mission in Baghdad, Iraq; and the Multi-National Force-Iraq representative to the U.S. Embassy's IDP Working Group.
- Within the Iraq government, we interviewed the Iraqi Minister of Displacement and Migration and reviewed Iraqi government and ministerial documents, including publicly available reported numbers of IDPs and returnees. We toured the facilities and interviewed Iraqi and nongovernmental organization (NGO) officials at the Karkh Return and Assistance Center in Baghdad, Iraq.
- We interviewed officials and reviewed documents from international organizations, including the UNHCR, IOM, UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, International Committee of the Red Cross, UN Department of Political Affairs, UN Development Programme, World Health Organization, World Food Program, and UN Children's Fund (UNICEF). We also reviewed documents from the UN Human Settlements Programme (UN-HABITAT).

- With the assistance of Interaction in the United States and the International Council of Voluntary Agencies in Geneva, Switzerland, we held discussion groups with international NGOs that had, have, or plan to have a presence in Iraq to discuss challenges to reintegration, actions taken and planned, and gaps remaining to be addressed.
- We interviewed and reviewed studies and papers from research institutes and advocacy groups, such as the Brookings Institute's Brookings-Bern Project on Internal Displacement, the Norwegian Refugee Council's Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, Refugees International, Human Rights First, and the U.S. Institute of Peace.

To identify conditions that pose a challenge to reintegrating displaced Iraqis, we reviewed research papers and assessments; strategies and policy papers; program implementation, monitoring, and progress reports; and related documents and interviewed officials from the U.S. and Iraqi governments, international organizations, NGOs, and research institutes. We filtered challenges by considering factors, such as their significance and the degree to which they could be generalized, and then grouped them by category. We documented evidence from multiple sources and validated it with knowledgeable U.S., UN, IOM, and NGO officials to ensure accuracy. In addition, we also considered data compiled by IOM through the assessments and surveys that it has conducted of Iraqi IDPs and returnees since 2006. To determine the reliability of IOM data on conditions in Iraq, we interviewed officials from IOM, USAID, PRM, the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad, and the Brookings Institution and reviewed IOM's data collection methodology and reports. The 2009 assessments of internally displaced persons (IDP) covered more than 80 percent of the estimated total of about 270,000 IDP families; however, it cannot be generalized to the population of all IDPs. The 2009 survey of identified returnee families was based on a sample of 4,061 of the 58,110 returnee families. The survey cannot be generalized to all returnee families because it relied on a mixture of random and judgmental sampling methods and had a low response rate. These two data sources cannot be directly compared because of their different populations, data collection methods, and sample sizes. We determined that in conjunction with testimonial and documentary evidence, the IOM data are sufficiently reliable to describe the conditions that impede reintegration for those surveyed, but that the data cannot be used to make inferences to the larger IDP and returnee populations in Iraq.

To identify the actions that the United States, Iraq, and the international community have taken to address these conditions, we reviewed policy,

strategy, planning, and funding documents; UN funding appeals; monitoring and progress reports; and related documents and interviewed officials from the U.S. and Iraqi governments, international organizations, NGOs, and research institutes. We reviewed U.S. agency-reported amounts obligated, and expended for fiscal years 2003 through 2009, as of September 30, 2009, for humanitarian assistance¹ and development assistance. State provided us with funding data from its Abacus database and Global Financial Management System. USAID provided data from its Phoenix database. We checked data provided against the source database printouts and discussed data reliability with agency officials. To verify our summarization of the funding and associated data, we sent out draft tables to agency contributors, resolved discrepancies, and made supported changes. We found the funding data from State and USAID to be sufficiently reliable for the purposes of this report. The Army Budget Office provided the amounts obligated for fiscal years 2003 through 2009, as of September 30, 2009, for the Commander's Emergency Response Program from the Iraq Reconstruction Management System. Based on prior work and data reliability assessments, we found the Army's funding data to be sufficiently reliable for the purposes of this report.

To determine the extent to which the United States, Iraq, and other members of the international community have an effective strategy² to address the reintegration of displaced Iraqis, we reviewed policy, strategy, and planning documents from the U.S. and Iraqi governments, the UN, and IOM. We interviewed U.S. agency, Iraqi government, international organization, NGO, and research institution officials and reviewed their documents to determine issues and problems resulting from the lack of a strategy. We documented evidence from multiple sources and validated it with knowledgeable U.S., UN, IOM, and NGO officials to ensure accuracy.

¹For U.S. Appropriation Funds Apportioned to Iraq-Related Humanitarian Assistance, as of September 30, 2008, see GAO, *Iraqi Refugee Assistance: Improvements Needed in Measuring Progress, Assessing Needs, Tracking Funds, and Developing an International Strategic Plan*, [GAO-09-120](#) (Washington, D.C.: Apr. 21, 2009).

²GAO, *Combating Terrorism: Evaluation of Selected Characteristics in National Strategies Related to Terrorism*, [GAO-04-408T](#) (Washington, D.C.: Feb. 3, 2004); *Defense Management: Comprehensive Strategy and Annual Reporting Are Needed to Measure Progress and Costs of DOD's Global Posture Restructuring*, [GAO-06-852](#) (Washington, D.C.: Sept. 13, 2006); *Rebuilding Iraq: More comprehensive National Strategy Needed to Help Achieve U.S. Goals*, [GAO-06-788](#) (Washington, D.C.: July 11, 2006); and *Iraq and Afghanistan: Security, Economic, and Governance Challenges to Rebuilding Efforts Should Be Addressed in U.S. Strategies*, [GAO-09-476T](#) (Washington, D.C.: Mar. 25, 2009).

We conducted this performance audit from March 2009 to December 2010 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives.

Appendix II: Roles and Responsibilities of Key U.S. and Iraqi Government and International Community Entities Addressing Iraqi Displacement

Key entity	Roles and responsibilities
U.S. government	
National Security Council (NSC)	The NSC's Senior Director for Multilateral Affairs and Human Rights serves as the coordinator for U.S. government efforts addressing assistance, repatriation and reintegration, and resettlement for displaced Iraqis. This position was first filled in August 2009.
Senior Coordinator for Iraqi Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons	The Senior Coordinator, a senior Foreign Service officer stationed at the U.S. embassy in Baghdad, is responsible for coordinating U.S. government efforts in Iraq that address Iraqi displacement. The Senior Coordinator is also responsible for representing the United States in its dealings with the Iraqi government, the international community, and nongovernmental organizations (NGO) on displacement issues. This position was established by Public Law 110-181 § 1245 (2008) and first filled in July 2008.
Department of State's (State) Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM)	PRM is responsible for coordinating protection, humanitarian assistance, and resettlement for refugees and conflict victims; is the lead U.S. agency interface with international organizations and NGOs on refugee issues; funds implementing international organization and NGO partners, such as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), for assistance to refugees and internally displaced persons (IDP); and formulates U.S. foreign policy on population issues and international migration. To protect and assist Iraqi refugees and returnees, PRM works with the NSC, United States Agency for International Development (USAID), regional bureaus, and U.S. missions to provide guidance to its international organization and NGO implementing partners and to engage with donor countries and countries hosting Iraqi refugees.
Department of State's Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs	The Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs advises on and develops policy for the assistance and reintegration of displaced Iraqis. The bureau participates in the NSC's interagency planning committees.
U.S. Agency for International Development's Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA)	OFDA funds and oversees a wide range of humanitarian assistance activities that are implemented by a number of NGO and United Nations (UN) partners who provide humanitarian assistance programs for IDPs and other vulnerable Iraqis. OFDA coordinates these relief efforts with other USAID offices, State, and governmental and nongovernmental organizations and agencies in Iraq.
U.S. Agency for International Development's Middle East Bureau/Office of Iraq Reconstruction (ME/IR)	ME/IR funds and oversees implementing partners—primarily, private contractors, NGOs, and international organizations—that implement programs focusing on economic development and capacity building at all levels of the Iraqi government. The USAID Iraq Mission, located in Baghdad, works closely with coalition forces and other U.S. government agencies; international institutions, such as the UN and World Bank; Iraq's national, provincial, and local governments; and a network of partners that include NGOs, local community groups, and Iraqi citizens to implement USAID's development programs.
Department of Defense (DOD)/Multi-National Force-Iraq (MNF-I)/U.S. Forces-Iraq	MNF-I worked to improve security conditions and maintain stability for all Iraqis and provided security for U.S. and UN officials that enabled them to safely assist Iraqis. U.S. Forces-Iraq (replacing MNF-I on Jan. 1, 2010) negotiates with tribal leaders, trains Iraqi Security Forces (ISF), and assists Provincial Reconstruction Teams as they build essential services for the Iraqi people, including IDPs. DOD personnel have provided support, such as information sharing, to USAID, State, and international organizations to address displacement. DOD participates in the National Security Council's interagency planning committees.
Iraqi government	
Coordinator for Iraqi Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons	A political advisor to the Prime Minister of Iraq was appointed by the Prime Minister to also serve as the Iraqi government's coordinator for Iraqi refugee and IDP issues in September 2009.
Ministry of Displacement and Migration (MODM) ^a	MODM was established as a coordinating body within the Iraqi government ministries on displacement issues. As of 2008, MODM was empowered to provide additional grants and establish centers to receive and register displaced and returning Iraqis.

**Appendix II: Roles and Responsibilities of Key
U.S. and Iraqi Government and International
Community Entities Addressing Iraqi
Displacement**

Key entity	Roles and responsibilities
The Implementation and Follow-Up Committee for National Reconciliation	The Implementation and Follow-up Committee plays a lead role in promoting reconciliation between Sunnis (in particular, those that were associated with the Saddam regime) and Iraq's Shiite majority and chairs efforts for reconciliation and reintegration in Diyala.
Iraqi Security Forces	The Iraqi Security Forces, in addition to providing general security, are also responsible for enforcing laws and government orders designed to assist displaced Iraqis, such as evicting squatters from homes owned by displaced Iraqis.
International community^b	
UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)	UNHCR has a global mandate to lead and coordinate international action for the protection of refugees and stateless people and to find lasting solutions to their plight. UNHCR coordinates efforts with the Iraqi government and works to reintegrate displaced Iraqis. UNHCR chairs the UN Country Team addressing protection and co-chairs the team addressing shelter in Iraq. UNHCR provides protection, shelter, and emergency assistance to IDPs, refugees, and returnees.
UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)	OCHA, on behalf of the UN Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq, mobilizes and coordinates humanitarian action in Iraq. OCHA is responsible for information management and analysis, advocacy and public information, resource mobilization and management, disaster preparedness and response, and protection. OCHA works in partnership with UN agencies, international organizations, and NGOs. The consolidated appeal process for Iraq was led by OCHA. Through the Inter-Agency Information and Analysis Unit (IAU), OCHA collates and analyzes data on the humanitarian situation to create and disseminate information products, such as maps, charts and graphs, reports and assessments, and contact information, and maintains the OCHA and IAU Web sites to share these products.
The International Organization for Migration (IOM)	IOM is an intergovernmental organization that works on migration issues worldwide. IOM, in partnership with other international organizations and the Iraqi government, conducts a wide range of activities in Iraq, such as building capacity in certain Iraqi ministries, monitoring and providing emergency assistance to IDPs and other vulnerable groups, and assisting efforts to redress property rights. IOM is also a member of the UN Country Team.
International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)	ICRC is an international organization that works to ensure humanitarian protection and assistance to victims of war and other situations of violence worldwide. ICRC has a permanent mandate founded under international law to take impartial action for persons affected by conflict. ICRC provides relief assistance to IDPs and other vulnerable groups inside Iraq. It also has assessed the detention and treatment conditions of detainees, provided medical supplies to hospitals, and rehabilitated existing water and sanitation infrastructure, among other things.
Nongovernmental organizations	International and national NGOs conduct significant efforts in Iraq for the benefit of IDPs, returnees, and all vulnerable Iraqis.

Sources: National Security Council, Departments of State and Defense, U.S. Agency for International Development, Iraqi government, United Nations organizations, International Organization for Migration, and the International Committee of the Red Cross.

^aA number of Iraqi government ministries are relevant to MODM's efforts, such as the Ministries of Finance, Planning and Development Cooperation, Trade, Health, Education, Interior, and Defense, among others.

^bThe UN Country Team, which includes UNHCR, OCHA, and IOM, works to coordinate UN efforts and to provide assistance in myriad areas in Iraq that may directly or indirectly address Iraqi displacement. Other UN Country Team members include the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia; Food and Agriculture Organization; International Labour Organization; Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights; UN Development Programme; UN Environment Programme; UN Education, Science and Cultural Organization; UN Population Fund; UN Centre for Human Settlements; UN Children's Fund; UN Industrial Development Organization; UN Fund for Advancement of Women; UN Office for Project Services; the World Food Program; and the World Health Organization. IOM and the World Bank are affiliated bodies of the UN Country Team, not UN organizations.

Appendix III: U.S. Funds Obligated and Expended for Iraq-Related Humanitarian Assistance Projects, and Intended Beneficiaries, Fiscal Years 2003-2009, as of September 30, 2009

Dollars in millions

Source of funds	Agency/Office	Funding		Intended program beneficiaries
		Total obligations	Expended balance	
2003 Iraq Relief and Reconstruction Fund (IRRF 1)/P.L. 108-11; 2004 Iraq Relief and Reconstruction Fund (IRRF 2)/P.L. 108-106	State/Population, Refugees, and Migration Bureau (PRM)	\$159.9	\$159.2	In Iraq: Internally displaced persons (IDP) and vulnerable populations ^a In region: Iraqi and other refugees and host country populations ^b
	USAID/Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA)	128.4	126.7	In Iraq: IDPs and vulnerable populations In region: None
Food for Peace/P.L. 480 Title II; 108-7, P.L. 108-447, P.L. 110-5, P.L. 110-161	USAID/Office of Food for Peace	218.2	218.2	In Iraq: IDPs In region: Iraqi refugees and host country populations
Food for Peace/P.L. 108-7 ^c	USAID/Office of Food for Peace	191.1	191.1	In Iraq: Iraqi population In region: None
International Disaster and Famine Assistance & International Disaster Assistance/P.L. 108-7, P.L. 107-115, P.L. 108-447, P.L. 109-102, P.L. 110-28, P.L. 110-161, P.L. 110-252, P.L. 111-32	USAID/OFDA	209.2	126.6	In Iraq: IDPs and vulnerable populations In region: None
Migration and Refugee Assistance/P.L. 108-7, P.L. 109-102, P.L. 110-5, P.L. 110-161, P.L. 110-28, P.L. 110-252, P.L. 111-32, P.L. 111-8	State/PRM	591.8	421.5	In Iraq: IDPs and vulnerable populations In region: Iraqi and other refugees and host country populations
Emergency Refugee and Migration Assistance ^d /Presidential Determination (P.D.) 2003-17, P.D. 2003-13, P.D. 2001-22, P.D. 2007-31	State/PRM	50.9	50.5	In Iraq: IDPs and vulnerable populations In region: Iraqi and other refugees and host country populations
2003 Economic Support Fund/P.L. 108-7	USAID/OFDA	11.6	11.6	In Iraq: IDPs and vulnerable populations In region: None
2006 Economic Support Fund/P.L. 109-234	State/PRM	50.0	46.5	In Iraq: None In region: Iraqi and other refugees and host country populations in Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, and Egypt

Appendix III: U.S. Funds Obligated and Expended for Iraq-Related Humanitarian Assistance Projects, and Intended Beneficiaries, Fiscal Years 2003-2009, as of September 30, 2009

Source of funds	Agency/Office	Funding		Intended program beneficiaries
		Total obligations	Expended balance	
2007 Supplemental for Economic Support Fund/P.L. 110-28	USAID/Office of Middle Eastern Affairs	10.3	7.3	In Iraq: None In region: Government of Jordan to meet the needs of Iraqi refugees and host country population
2008 Supplemental for Economic Support Fund/P.L. 110-252	State/PRM	45.0	39.2	In Iraq: None In region: Iraqi refugees in Jordan and host country population
	USAID/Office of Middle Eastern Affairs	155.0	116.5	In Iraq: None In region: Government of Jordan to meet the needs of Iraqi refugees and host country population
Development Assistance/P.L. 108-7	USAID/OFDA	26.5	26.3	In Iraq: IDPs and vulnerable populations In region: None
Child Survival and Health/P.L. 108-7	USAID/OFDA	5.7	5.7	In Iraq: IDPs In region: None
Total		\$1,853.6	\$1,546.9	

Source: GAO analysis based on funding data and information from the Department of State and USAID.

^aVulnerable populations in Iraq may include other Iraqis at risk; Iraqis who have returned from other countries; refugees in Iraq from other countries, such as Palestinians; and other conflict victims.

^bU.S. refugee programs benefit the host country population because countries hosting Iraqi refugees in the region do not allow donors to provide assistance solely to Iraqi refugees. In some cases, a portion of the funds was contributed to international organizations that may have spent the funds in one or a number of the countries hosting Iraqis in the region. Host countries receiving assistance include Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, Egypt, Turkey, and Iran.

^cAccording to USAID, in 2003, USAID's Food for Peace Program received \$191.1 million, which was reallocated from funds originally appropriated in P.L. 108-7 to Development Assistance, Economic Support Fund, Child Survival and Health, and International Disaster and Famine Assistance accounts.

^dThe U.S. Emergency Refugee and Migration Assistance fund is drawn upon by the President to meet unexpected urgent refugee and migration needs whenever the President determines that it is in the U.S. national interest to do so. Funds are appropriated annually to this fund and remain available until expended.

Appendix IV: U.S. Development Assistance Funding, Partners, and Activities in Iraq, Fiscal Years 2003-2009

In fiscal years 2003 through 2009, the U.S. government, through USAID's Middle East Bureau's Office of Iraq Reconstruction (ME/IR), obligated about \$6.4 billion and expended about \$5.6 billion for development assistance projects in Iraq (see table 6). The USAID Iraq Mission, located in Baghdad, worked with USAID's partners to implement these projects (see table 7). The intended beneficiaries of these activities included local Iraqi NGOs, local and regional government entities, provincial directorates, local courts, universities, local media outlets, the Independent Higher Electoral Commission, community action groups, victims of coalition operations, and ministries at the national and provincial levels.

Table 6: U.S. Development Assistance Funds Obligated and Expended in Iraq, by Source of Funds, for Fiscal Years 2003 through 2009, as of September 30, 2009

Dollars in millions

Source of funds ^a	Funding	
	Total obligations	Expended balance
2003 Child Survival-Iraq Relief and Reconstruction Fund (P.L. 108-11)	\$31.06	\$31.06
2003 Development Assistance-Iraq Relief and Reconstruction Fund (P.L. 108-11)	13.19	13.19
2003 Economic Support-Iraq Relief and Reconstruction Fund (P.L. 108-11)	44.99	40.00
2003 International Disaster Assistance-Iraq Relief and Reconstruction Fund (P.L. 108-11)	38.14	37.95
2003 Iraq Relief and Reconstruction Fund (P.L. 108-11)	1,489.12	1,489.12
2004 Iraq Relief and Reconstruction Fund (P.L. 108-106)	2,473.33	2,412.73
2006 Supplemental for Economic Support Fund (P.L. 109-234)	429.34	424.82
2007 Democracy Fund (P.L. 110-28)	60.00	19.06
2007 Continuing Resolution for Economic Support Fund (P.L. 110-5)	99.65	98.02
2007 Supplemental for Economic Support Fund (P.L. 110-28)	1,002.56	926.44
2008 Economic Support Fund (P.L. 110-61)	12.96	4.96
2008 Supplemental for Economic Support Fund (P.L. 110-252)	371.00	136.23
2009 Supplemental for Economic Support Fund (P.L. 111-32)	212.10	0.00
2009 Bridge Supplemental for Economic Support Fund (P.L. 110-252)	102.33	1.19
Gifts and donations ^b	0.01	0.01
Total	\$6,379.78	\$5,634.78

Source: GAO analysis based on data and information from USAID.

^aAccording to USAID officials, USAID had 2 years to obligate the appropriations for the Democracy and Economic Support funds, but had 5 years to expend them so not all obligated funds had been expended by September 30, 2009.

^bGifts and donations were from private citizens supporting USAID's efforts in Iraq.

**Appendix IV: U.S. Development Assistance
Funding, Partners, and Activities in Iraq,
Fiscal Years 2003-2009**

Table 7: USAID/Iraq Development Assistance for Implementing Partners' Activities, as Obligated for Fiscal Years 2003 through 2009, as of September 30, 2009

Dollars in millions

Implementing partner	Activity	Obligated
Abt Associates, Inc.	Implemented a program to support Iraqi-led initiatives to ensure the rapid provisioning of health services in Iraq, while strengthening the country's overall health system.	\$23.03
AECOM International Development, Inc.	Worked with Iraq's Council of Representatives to organize training and build capacity to better oversee government operations, legislate, and represent their constituents.	31.20
Agricultural Cooperative Development International/ Volunteers in Overseas Cooperative Assistance	Worked with community groups to identify, prioritize, and address local needs through projects under the Community Action Program.	99.28
Air Force Contract Augmentation Program	Provided goods and services in support of preparedness and worldwide rehabilitative operations in Iraq.	79.30
America's Development Foundation	Supported the development of civil society and the media in Iraq.	57.10
Bearing Point, Inc.	Assisted the Iraqi government with the aim of creating an economic environment that encourages investment and fuels a market-based economy.	302.88
Bechtel Corporation	Supported the rehabilitation of Iraq's infrastructure, such as power, water and waste treatment plants, telecommunications, roads, bridges, airports, and seaports.	2,189.50
Cardno Emerging Markets Group, Ltd.	Worked to build the capacity of the Ministry of Health to design, implement, and evaluate effective behavior change and communication programs.	5.00
Consortium for Elections and Political Process Strengthening	Provided support to increase the capacity of the Independent High Electoral Commission.	216.89
Cooperative Housing Foundation International	Worked with community groups to identify, prioritize, and address local needs through projects through the Community Action Program.	262.69
Creative Associates International, Inc.	Provided technical assistance to facilitate school enrollment and student retention, and assisted in providing capacity building to the Ministry of Education.	108.09
Development Alternatives, Inc.	Through the Iraq Rapid Assistance Program, Development Alternatives provided grants, via the provincial reconstruction teams, to support activities in economic, social development, and civil society efforts to mitigate conflict. Development Alternatives also assisted the marshland dwellers, in restoration of the marshlands, and to expand agriculture productivity.	278.31
Futures Group International	Provided field-level programming policy development and implementation in health issues.	0.03
International Business and Technical Consultants	Provided monitoring and evaluation services to assess the impact and effectiveness of the USAID/Iraq's Community Stabilization Program as a nonlethal tool for counterinsurgency.	1.93
International Relief and Development	Through the Community Action Program, worked with community groups to identify, prioritize, and address local needs through projects. Through the Community Stabilization Program, worked to achieve economic and social stability in urban communities through programs that focus on training and employment.	782.24

**Appendix IV: U.S. Development Assistance
Funding, Partners, and Activities in Iraq,
Fiscal Years 2003-2009**

Implementing partner	Activity	Obligated
International Resources Group Lt.	Implemented emergency relief and short-term rehabilitation response efforts in support of the Near East Regional Program.	25.79
Kroll Associates, Inc.	Provided services as a private security subcontractor.	8.68
Logenix International, L.L.C.	Warehoused and stored Primary Health Care Kits, and coordinated with the Ministry of Health central and governorate-level offices to facilitate delivery to centers.	0.11
Louis Berger International, Inc.	Provided training, technical assistance, and loan capital through microfinance institutions to promote economic and job growth; promoted the development of agricultural businesses and markets; conducted a comprehensive assessment of the Basrah Children's Hospital Project; and rehabilitated, opened, and operated vocational training and employment services.	391.37
Macro International, Inc.	Provided support to the Ministries of Health and Planning to plan and implement national demographic and health survey.	0.69
Management Systems International, Inc.	Through USAID's National Capacity Development program, worked to build the capacity of key Iraqi ministries to develop public administration and management skills and provided monitoring and evaluation services to assess program performance.	344.35
Mercy Corps	Worked with community groups to identify, prioritize, and address local needs through projects through the Community Action Program.	93.38
Other	Provided administrative assistance for the Community Stabilization Program.	0.12
QED Group, L.L.C.	Provided performance evaluation and reporting services as well as short-term support for USAID's programmatic objectives in Iraq.	14.23
Relief International	Provided support for a program entitled the Iraqi Community-based Conflict Mitigation Program.	16.44
Research Triangle Institute	Promoted diverse and representative citizen participation in provincial, municipal, and local councils; built capacity of provincial councils for governance; and assisted the Ministry of Health in training of primary health care center staff.	811.52
Save the Children	Worked with community groups to identify, prioritize, and address local needs through projects under the Community Action Program.	43.09
SkyLink Air and Logistic Support, Inc.	Provided USAID with a capability to improve airport management and operations; trained local Iraqi staff in management; and provided technical assistance, supplies, food, and materials for reconstruction.	26.82
Stevedoring Services of America	Provided seaport assessments and management expertise to ensure that materials and supplies flow efficiently and safely through seaports in Iraq.	14.32
The Partnership for Child Healthcare	Provided support to maternal and child health to increase coverage and/or quality of maternal and child health care.	2.00
UN Children's Fund	Provided basic health, water supply, and sanitation services for Iraq.	56.27
UN Development Program	Received Iraq Trust fund contribution.	5.00
UN Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization	Provided support to basic education in Iraq through the printing and distribution of math and science textbooks.	9.78
University Partners	Provided support for higher education development in the following areas: infrastructure (University of Hawaii); teacher training (University of Oklahoma); economic growth (DePaul University), culture (University of New York, Stony Brook), and public health (Jackson State University).	20.42

**Appendix IV: U.S. Development Assistance
Funding, Partners, and Activities in Iraq,
Fiscal Years 2003-2009**

Implementing partner	Activity	Obligated
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers	Provided architecture and engineering technical services for USAID's Iraq reconstruction contract.	24.68
U.S. Department of the Treasury	Provided personnel support.	0.30
Voice of America	Conducted small media-based outreach to Iraq's oral communicators.	1.00
Volunteers for Economic Growth Alliance	Supported the expansion of a private, competitive, and efficient private sector in Iraq.	12.09
World Bank	Received Iraq Trust Fund contribution.	5.00
World Health Organization	Provided support for the provision of basic health services, emergency immunization campaign for measles, and other disease-control efforts.	14.80
Yankee Group	Provided telecommunications planning.	0.06
Total		\$6,379.78

Source: GAO analysis based on data and information from USAID.

Appendix V: Comments from the Department of State



United States Department of State

Chief Financial Officer

Washington, D.C. 20520

NOV 10 2010

Ms. Jacquelyn Williams-Bridgers
Managing Director
International Affairs and Trade
Government Accountability Office
441 G Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20548-0001

Dear Ms. Williams-Bridgers:

We appreciate the opportunity to review your draft report, "DISPLACED IRAQIS: Integrated International Strategy Needed to Reintegrate Iraq's Internally displaced and Returning Refugees," GAO Job Code 320654.

The enclosed Department of State comments are provided for incorporation with this letter as an appendix to the final report.

If you have any questions concerning this response, please contact Elizabeth Hopkins, Director, Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration at (202) 453-9271.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "James L. Millette".

James L. Millette

cc: GAO – Joseph Christoff
PRM – Eric Schwartz
State/OIG – Evelyn Klemstine

Department of State Comments on Draft GAO Report

**DISPLACED IRAQIS: Integrated International Strategy Needed to
Reintegrate Iraq's Internally Displaced and Returning Refugees**
(GAO-11-124, GAO Code 320654)

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the draft report. The Department of State appreciates that the GAO report acknowledges the challenges to sustainable return and reintegration of displaced Iraqis. As the report describes, the United States Government (USG) and other international actors are actively engaged in supporting voluntary, sustainable return and reintegration of displaced Iraqis, but many factors remain beyond our control. We also note that just as security conditions impact return decisions, they also constrain USG staff and partners' mobility inside Iraq, which compounds the challenges to program implementation and monitoring. Finally, as detailed below, we emphasize that the U.S. Government does not proactively encourage returns at this time, but aims to support voluntary, sustainable returns and reintegration for those who choose it.

The Department of State agrees with the GAO's recommendation that the Secretary of State and USAID Administrator work with the appropriate international organizations to assist the Iraqi government in developing an international strategy that addresses impediments to return and prepares for and facilitates the return and reintegration of displaced Iraqis. We note that it is the Iraqi government that must lead the implementation of such a strategy; the USG role will continue to be one of advocacy and support. In Washington and Baghdad, we seek a stronger partnership with Iraqi officials and international organizations, and consistently urge increased Iraqi planning and execution on displacement issues. Senior U.S. officials routinely raise displacement with Iraqi officials during visits to Iraq and in high-level U.S.-based meetings. We work in close coordination with the United Nations Mission in Iraq (UNAMI) to include the needs of the displaced in development and humanitarian programming.

The United States and the international community encourage and support viable Iraqi government initiatives. As noted in the report, Prime Minister Order 54 put the Prime Minister's Implementation and Follow-Up Committee for National Reconciliation (IFCNR) in charge of coordinating national and international efforts to promote refugee and IDP returns in Diyala governorate and authorized significant spending to benefit displaced Diyalans. The United States, other donors, and international organizations work closely with IFCNR, and coordinate programming to provide integrated support in Diyala. We are also working closely

with Iraqi government officials to find durable solutions for displaced Iraqis, including a potential land allocation system.

It is important to emphasize that preparing for, and facilitating the voluntary return and reintegration of displaced Iraqis is different than promotion of returns. The UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) determines when to promote voluntary repatriation, and currently judges security conditions in central Iraq not stable enough to actively promote facilitated repatriation. The USG goal is not for Iraqis to return before they are ready; rather, the goal is to create conditions that will allow for sustainable returns. As noted in the GAO report, documents on a reintegration strategy were not developed to create a publicly announced effort to persuade Iraqis to return home; they were planning tools describing how to best target our assistance to ensure Iraqis who choose to return to Iraq have necessary support systems in place. Finally, we note that internally displaced Iraqis are increasingly indicating that they would prefer to integrate locally in their sites of displacement. Making local integration a viable option will be an important component of our updated strategy, referenced below.

The State Department concurs with the GAO's recommendation to make public an unclassified version of the U.S. Strategy and Implementation Plan. An updated, unclassified USG Support for Returning Iraqi Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) Strategy Document is in the final stages of development and will be made publicly available. Unlike the 2009 planning document described in further detail below, this Strategy Document is designed as an overview of key USG objectives over the next three years and indicators we will use to measure progress. As noted throughout the GAO report, many external variables affect return and reintegration decisions, including security conditions, political dynamics, the state of the Iraqi economy, availability of housing, access to basic services and infrastructure, and the psychology of the displaced. While the Strategy creates a coherent U.S. approach and useful guideposts as we move forward, we expect that Strategy implementation and design will evolve as does the situation in Iraq.

The 2009 USG Support for Returning Iraqi Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) Strategy Document was drafted as part of an internal USG planning process to ensure the USG had a coordinated and complementary response in supporting returning Iraqi refugees and IDPs. Unlike press releases or other general information that we post on our website, we do not routinely share internal planning documents with the public. In this case, the Strategy Document contained sensitive information, including internal deliberations and comments on

our bilateral relationship with the Government of Iraq, which if shared publicly could be harmful to U.S. interests, and potentially harm the interests of displaced Iraqis. For that reason, select sections of the document were not approved for release. However, as noted in the GAO Report, there is an unclassified summary of the Strategy Document which the National Security Council provided to GAO in July. The core concepts of the Strategy Document were freely shared with our partners, including other donors, IOs, NGOs and the GOI in many discussions focused on USG policy, programs, and plans vis-à-vis Iraqi refugees, IDPs, and potential returns.

The Department of State concurs with the GAO's recommendation to encourage UNHCR to share its raw data and methodology with the Inter-Agency Information and Analysis Unit (IAU) and take advantage of IAU expertise and coordinated efforts. The Department of State encourages coordination among all its partners. We will continue to encourage UNHCR to work with the IAU to coordinate information and data in a manner that maximizes efficiency and effectiveness in delivery of humanitarian assistance and support for returns and reintegration.

The State Department concurs with the GAO's recommendation to work with UNHCR and its implementing partners to assess assistance, return and registration centers and mobile units to determine and achieve an optimal framework. We have already begun this process. UNHCR has consolidated the services of its Protection Assistance Centers (PACs) and Return, Integration and Community Centers (RICCs) in Ninewa, Kirkuk, Diyala and Missan, creating a single point of service in each of these governorates. In Anbar and Salaheddin, existing PACs and RICCs are slated for merger in early 2011. PACs and RICCs in Thi-Qar and Basra should be consolidated by spring 2011. UNHCR plans to maintain both PACs and RICCs with complementary services in Baghdad because the demand for services there is so high. The two Returns Assistance Centers in Baghdad and one in Diyala will be maintained. UNHCR will support NGOs to provide legal services at the RICCs and RACs, manage return processes at the RACs, and manage operations at the RICCs.

Appendix VI: Comments from the U.S. Agency for International Development



Joseph A. Christoff
Director, International Affairs and Trade
U.S. Government Accountability Office
Washington, DC 20548

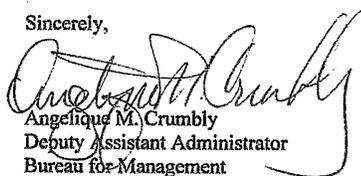
Dear Mr. Christoff,

I am pleased to provide U.S. Agency for International Development's (USAID) formal response to the GAO draft report entitled *Displaced Iraqis: Integrated International Strategy Needed to Reintegrate Iraq's Internally Displaced and Returning Refugees (GAO-11-124)*.

The enclosed USAID comments are provided for incorporation with this letter as an appendix to the final report.

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the GAO draft report and for the courtesies extended by your staff in the conduct of this audit review.

Sincerely,



Angelique M. Crumbly
Deputy Assistant Administrator
Bureau for Management

Enclosure: a/s

- 2 -

USAID Comments on GAO Report entitled *Displaced Iraqis: Integrated International Strategy Needed to Reintegrate Iraq's Internally Displaced and Returning Refugees* (GAO-11-124)

Recommendation 1: We recommend that the Secretary of State and U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) Administrator work with the appropriate international organizations to assist the Iraqi government in developing an international strategy that addresses impediments to return and prepares for and facilitates the return and reintegration of displaced Iraqis.

Response: USAID agrees with the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) recommendation and will support the development of an international strategy that addresses impediments to returns and facilitates the voluntary return, reintegration, and settlement of displaced Iraqis into local communities. In addition, an international strategy will need to be coordinated with and implemented in partnership with the Government of Iraq.

Recommendation 2: We recommend that the Secretary of State, USAID Administrator, and the Secretary of Defense make public an unclassified version of the U.S. strategy and their implementing plans for assisting and reintegrating displaced Iraqis, including their goals, performance measures, and progress assessments.

Response: USAID agrees with the GAO recommendation and has worked with the Secretary of State/Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM), and others in Washington and in Baghdad on an unclassified version of the U.S. strategy. An unclassified strategy supporting implementing plans for assisting and reintegrating displaced Iraqis has already been approved and was shared with the GAO in July 2010. USAID is currently working with the Secretary of State/PRM and other U.S. Government agencies in the creation of an updated Internally Displaced Person (IDP)/Refugee assistance unclassified strategy.

Recommendation 3: We recommend that the Secretary of State and USAID Administrator work with United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNCHR) and its other implementing partners to take inventory of and assess the purposes, organization, operations, and results of the various assistance, return, and registration centers and mobile units in Iraq to determine and achieve an optimal framework for assisting IDPs, returnees, and other vulnerable Iraqis.

Response: USAID agrees with the GAO recommendation. The process of assessing the purpose, organization, operations, and results of the various assistance, return, and registration centers and mobile units in Iraq is already underway. Furthermore, USAID will work with the Secretary of State/PRM to determine an optimal framework for assisting IDPs, returnees, and other vulnerable Iraqis through the continued use of these centers.

Appendix VII: GAO Contact and Staff Acknowledgments

GAO Contact

Joseph A. Christoff, (202) 512-8979 or christoffj@gao.gov

Acknowledgments

In addition, Audrey Solis, Assistant Director; Martin De Alteriis; Farhanaz Kermalli; Gilbert Kim; Heather Latta; Kathleen Monahan; and Mary Moutsos made key contributions to this report. Additional assistance was provided by Todd Anderson, Gergana Danailova-Trainor, Karen Deans, Timothy DiNapoli, Walker Fullerton, Cheron Green, Emily Gupta, Bruce Kutnick, Charlotte Moore, Christopher Mulkins, Diahanna Post, and Gwyneth Woolwine.

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