



Joint News Release

13 May 2020

UNHCR AND WFP EXTEND ASSISTANCE NET TO COVER DISPLACED AND REFUGEE FAMILIES AFFECTED BY PANDEMIC

BAGHDAD – The UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) and the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) are stepping up their collaboration to help meet the essential needs of vulnerable people in Iraq. WFP has worked with UNHCR and partners to identify an additional 35,000 Syrian refugees and 10,000 people displaced by conflict who will be included in WFP food assistance programmes to help them cope with the impact of COVID-19.

Refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) are among the groups most affected by the pandemic in Iraq because they frequently depend on daily and seasonal employment to put food on the table. Much of this type of work has stopped amid lockdowns and precautionary measures.

WFP will now reach 76,000 refugees who will receive food assistance and 280,000 IDPs, including households who are struggling to make ends meet. Many of these families were in a position to stop receiving assistance but are now being pushed into food insecurity on the back of the pandemic.

To help families purchase basic hygiene items to prevent the spread of COVID-19, UNHCR continues the second month of hygiene cash assistance, supporting 550,000 refugee, internally displaced, and returnee members of the community. This is part of UNHCR's package of assistance which includes strengthening health care services and disinfection activities in camps. UNHCR, WFP and partners also continue to run awareness sessions on COVID-19 precautionary measures with people assisted, and camp shop staff.

"Throughout the pandemic, UNHCR and WFP's joint work has prioritised reaching the most vulnerable IDPs and refugees, while taking measures to safeguard their health. We call upon the donor community for additional support as we scale up our response because many people cannot work at this time and needs have increased," said Acting Representative of UNHCR in Iraq Philippa Candler, and WFP Representative in Iraq Abdirahman Meygag, in a joint statement.

UNHCR and WFP in Iraq are appealing for US\$26 million and US\$31.9 million respectively for their COVID-19 response. Special precautions during distributions have included maintaining safe distances as people redeem their food or cash entitlements, using masks and hand sanitiser, disinfectants to clean frequently used items, washing hands regularly and more. Both agencies are also implementing emergency livelihoods projects, to help affected people to earn an income

again. These are to provide essential support to vulnerable families and inject cash into the local communities.

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About WFP

The United Nations World Food Programme is the world's largest humanitarian organization, saving lives in emergencies, building prosperity and supporting a sustainable future for people recovering from conflict, disasters and the impact of climate change.

About UNHCR

Our primary purpose at UNHCR is to safeguard the rights and wellbeing of people who have been forced to flee. Together with partners and communities, we work to ensure that everybody has the right to seek asylum and find safe refuge in another country. We also strive to secure lasting solutions.

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