



## WHO – IRAQ Bi- WEEKLY BULLETIN

Week Ending 25<sup>th</sup> May 2008

### Iraq Health Symposium

A large Iraqi delegation, headed by the Iraqi Minister of Health H.E. Dr. Salih Al-Hasnawi, accompanied by the WHO representative to Iraq Dr Naeema Al Gasseer, participated in the Iraq Health Symposium “*Toward a Surge in Health Services*”, held at the National Academy of Sciences in Washington DC, from the 20<sup>th</sup> to the 21<sup>st</sup> of May 2008. Attended by all major stakeholders in the Iraqi health system, key goals of the symposium were to:

- Share updates regarding Iraq security situation and Iraq health sector issues, initiatives, and challenges and discuss goals and objectives for ongoing efforts
- Promote a ‘surge’ in health services in Iraq to capitalize on recent security gains
- Promote and facilitate NGO, private sector, international donor and academic engagement in and partnership toward the Iraqi health sector, and in supporting sector reform.

The symposium was a good opportunity for the Minister and the delegation to hear the perspectives of WHO/UN, European Union and several partners in the USA, including NGOs on the health sector in Iraq and discuss the support that can be provided to Iraq. Dr Al Gasseer, invited as a representative for WHO, chaired some of the sessions, and conveyed valuable updates and perspective to participants on the health and nutrition situation in Iraq and brought the perspectives of the Health and Nutrition Sector.

The WHO Representative also participated at the ‘Symposium on Tele Health and Telemedicine’ held in Chicago, organized by the Center for International Rehabilitation where the Minister of Health and the delegation also participated. Lessons learnt regarding the use of Tele Health in Iraq were discussed and key recommendations were made for initial steps to expand the Iraqi program. WHO shared its insight regarding the existing Tele Health/Medicine program for infectious diseases between the MoH and WHO.

### The Local Area Development Program (LADP)

The Local Area Development Programme (LADP) is a unique joint initiative coordinated by UNDP, involving WHO, UN-HABITAT, UNESCO, ILO, UNOPS, and UNIFEM, in addition to 8 Iraqi Ministries including the Ministries of Health and Planning. The LADP program arose out of a need to quickly and effectively address the high levels of poverty and unemployment in particularly vulnerable parts of Iraq, through a coordinated multi-sector and sustainable approach.



The LADP program has five basic objectives:

1. Strengthen the abilities of local authorities in six district areas to prepare and implement local area development plans;
2. Work with public, private and community stakeholders to stimulate local economic development and generate short term and sustainable long term employment;
3. Improve local social and physical infrastructure using labor intensive methods;
4. Improve the capabilities of local authorities to



- plan for and deliver basic services; and
5. Develop a model for local area development planning and implementation that can be used by local authorities throughout Iraq in the future.

The unique benefits of the LADP design include engaging local stakeholders directly with district planners so that resulting plans incorporate the perspectives and needs of citizens and service users. Such stakeholder representation emphasizes how participatory forms of planning can contribute to make public decisions more democratic and therefore more legitimate.

WHO is a natural partner in the LADP because of its approach to participatory community-based development in which simultaneous emphasis is put on economic growth, infrastructure development, and improvement in standards of living and health status. WHO is committed to multisector efforts such as the LADP to ensure that health considerations are at the core of all development and environmental activities, from policy planning to project implementation, monitoring, and evaluation. Furthermore, WHO has a successful implementation record in community-based initiatives having worked closely with diverse Iraqi organizations in the past. Lessons learnt directly from community members and leaders in these initiatives will add strength to the LADP project by engaging local actors in setting their own paths to sustainable community capacity building and prosperity.

Partner UN agencies in LADP have counterparts in each of the participating districts of Halabja, Sayed Sadek, Hilla, Mdaina, Maymouna, and Chibayesh. The project is implemented in 5 steps which include development of national and local steering committees, a *Fast Track* planning process, creation of district assessments and data profiles, a longer term strategic planning workshop and final implementation and evaluation.

Health Sector *Fast Track* projects under the guidance of the WHO have included assessment of health facilities, plans for infrastructure rehabilitation, design of school health programs, training of DOH staff in public and environmental health, design of health-related awareness campaigns, and capacity

building in the area of strategic planning and policy development.

From May 18<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup>, UN LADP partners and Iraqi focal points met in Amman, Jordan to discuss strategic stakeholder recruitment, district data profiling, and workshop design strategies for an upcoming development planning workshop to be piloted in Suleimaniyah, Iraq in July, 2008.

WHO staff and Iraq counterparts will enhance this planning process in each health district through formal community dialogues with local community members. Starting in June, six focus groups will be hosted in the regions to gain a deeper understanding of citizens' perceived public health needs; their family, school, community, and environmental health concerns; and perceptions of citizen participation in local planning and decision making. Using the results of the focus groups, 4-6 representatives from each group will communicate their communities' perspectives in the district planning process.

The multi-sector and community participatory approaches of the LADP project reflect WHO's strong commitment to address the needs of vulnerable Iraq communities through long term sustainable health development.

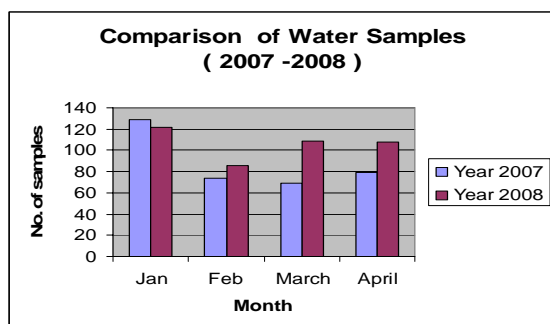
### Global Humanitarian Platform Workshop

WHO Participated in the 'Global Humanitarian Platform' workshop held in Amman on the 20<sup>th</sup> of May 2008 attended by representatives of UN agencies, RCRC and NGO's. The objectives of the workshop were to analyze the currently sector coordination mechanism for Iraq and gaps in partnerships and to set the recommendations to take concrete steps forward for accountable and predictable sector and inter-sector coordination based on partnership.



### Water Supply in Iraq

A WHO sanitary engineer, Eng. M Hamasha, conducted a mission to Erbil from the 11<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> May to audit the Water Quality Control Lab (WQCL) and discuss the results of sanitary inspections with technical teams from the departments of Water Supply and Health. The audit results showed that there has been an increase in the number of water samples tested in the last four months when compared to the same period last year. In addition, the percentage of bacteriological contamination for the last 4 months is less than the percentage for the same period last year.



These results indicate that the technical recommendations made by WHO; namely to enhance the water quality monitoring system through increasing of the number of collected samples in a joint approach, in addition to continuous support from WHO technical staff has led to improved coordination between the Departments of Health and Water Supply, and has resulted in improved water quality within the governorate.



WHO Sanitary Engineer audit DOH/Erbil water quality control Lab.

In addition, WHO supported Suleimaniyah DoH & DWS (Water Supply) water quality monitoring teams by renting 4 vehicles for transporting water samples from different water sources to the water quality control lab (WQCL). These vehicles are crucial to the continued WHO effort to sustain and improve water quality surveillance in Suleimaniyah.

### Environmental Health

WHO shipped 270 copies of WHO 'environmental health' publication to the Ministry of Environment of Kurdistan (KRG). These will be used as a base for the establishment of an environmental health library within the Ministry which will be used as a tool for enhancing the capacity of Ministry employees as well as a source for students conducting research on environmental health. Increasing the knowledge base and the continued building of resources is part of WHO's overall strategy to facilitate sustainable environmental health projects and initiatives throughout Iraq.

### Strengthening school health services

Four WHO supported training courses on psychosocial support and counseling of students with mental health problems have been completed in Baghdad. Attended by 125 doctors, teachers and paramedics the trainings taught skills on issues regarding mental illness and to how to reduce the associated stigma. Through the use of examples, drawn from general health experiences, the trainings illustrated the difficulties in integrating people who appear or behave differently.