

Reconstructing Iraq

Improving Health



Photo: Thomas Hartwell

Health conditions in Iraq deteriorated substantially under Saddam Hussein. By 2003, almost a third of the children in the south and center of the country suffered from malnutrition. Low breastfeeding rates, high rates of anemia among women, low birth weight, diarrhea, and acute respiratory infections all contributed to a high child mortality rate. Major rivers used for drinking water were filled with raw sewage and streets were garbage-strewn and infested with rodents.

Services in the health sector were disrupted and equipment, medicine, and supplies were looted from hospitals and warehouses. While there have been no major outbreaks of communicable diseases, the potential for such outbreaks remains a source of concern.

On behalf of the American people, USAID:

- Is meeting urgent health care needs while normalizing health services rapidly by providing medical supplies, rebuilding health centers, and providing clean water and sanitation to both cities and rural populations.
- Provided 25 million doses of measles, tuberculosis, hepatitis B, diphtheria, whooping cough, tetanus, and polio vaccines—enough to treat more than 700,000 pregnant women and 4,000,000 children under 5.
- Established a surveillance system to monitor for any cholera outbreaks.
- Worked on a diarrhea survey with the Iraqi Director of Public Health.
- Established a database for tracking and coordinating international medical donations.
- Helped prepare and distribute public service announcements about sanitation and breastfeeding.
- Provided essential drugs and supplies, in conjunction with Save the Children, to two obstetric, gynecological, and pediatric hospitals in Mosul.
- Restored four looted health clinics in Kirkuk and returned them to operating status.

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