
COMPREHENSIVE FINAL PROGRESS REPORT FOR THE UNITED NATIONS RESPONSE TO THE TRAGIC PILGRIM STAMPEDE IN BAGHDAD ON 31st AUGUST 2005

Report #7 (FINAL)

Project Title Pilgrim Stampede – Emergency Micro-Grant Response
Project Goal Provision of emergency relief to the victims of the Wednesday the 31st August 2005 pilgrim stampede in Baghdad.

Outputs and Key Activities:

- Identification of victims and their families
- Identification of the most appropriate form of assistance
- Immediate distribution of aid packages and/or micro-grants to victims and their families (approximately 950 beneficiaries within four weeks)
- Monitoring of effective distribution

1. Background

On Wednesday 31st August 2005 an estimated 1,500 people were injured or killed when a crowd of around of approximately 1 million Shiite pilgrims who were making their way across the Azamiyah bridge in Baghdad, which was the sole route for the pilgrimage in its procession to the tomb of Imam Mousa al Kadhim, a 9th century Shiite saint. The pilgrims there was a suicide bomber in their midst. During this panic the crowd frantically tried to flee from where they were only to find that the western end of their escape route was blocked by a security checkpoint. This situation resulted in numerous casualties with many either being injured or killed in the ensuing crush caused by the panicked crowd or drowned in the river Tigris.

Despite the vast efforts of different CSOs, NGOs, the UN, and the government, one of the challenges faced lies in the difficulty of obtaining confirmed lists of the victims. There are cases of missing persons who were later on confirmed dead and others where injured then passed away.



panicked when it was rumoured that



2. Management Arrangements

The UN, through UNOPS, immediately developed an emergency response project to assist the victims of this tragedy, through the distribution of emergency grant packages to the families of the wounded and deceased.

The project is funded by the UNDG-ITF (USD 300,000), the Italian government through OCHA (USD 130,000), and IOM (USD50,000). The total budget is USD 480,000. Additionally, UNHCR provided in-kind contributions.

The project was designed as a complementary effort to the activities of the local NGOs in reaction to the crisis created by the incident and thus developing a partnership between UNOPS and the leading organizations in Baghdad: the Iraqi Red Crescent Society (IRCS) as well as "Friends of Al-Sader City" (Al Sader Office)¹.

All project partners carry out their respective activities without fee or commission.

3. Methodology

3.1 Identification of beneficiaries

The identification of the victims was carried out by the local partners. UNOPS received confirmed lists of names and addresses of the victims and their families. In order to prevent any misappropriation of the relief packages, representatives of the families of the deceased had to present death certificates proving the date and cause of the death before being permitted to receive the planned assistance.



3.2 Assistance packages

The value of the packages of assistance was determined based on budget allocated and the estimated number of families/beneficiaries. The actual needs of the beneficiaries were assessed after consultation between UNOPS and a local partner.

There was need to distinguish between the families of the deceased on one side and the victims injured and their families on the other.

The procurement of the supplies was carried out by UNOPS following an



¹ Due to the urgency of the response to this tragic event, UNOPS was not in a position to conduct a search for potential partners. Therefore, the UNOPS National Liaison Officers through their contacts concluded that Al-Sader office and IRCS are the most reliable partners.

emergency procurement process.

3.3 Organisation of distribution

The transport of the packages to the distribution point was included in the contract with the food supplier. UNOPS and the local partner were responsible for unloading and distribution among the beneficiaries.

Due to the fact that the final recipients often sent a representative of the family to pick-up the food, UNOPS Monitors conducted random assessments and follow up to ensure that the packages are distributed to the intended families.

4. Implementation Status

4.1 Identification of beneficiaries

Although the initial figure of victims deceased was 1,500, the final verified number is 800 as of 13 December 05, all are included in the list of names received by UNOPS.

For the number of injured, IRCS have agreed to assist UNOPS through the provision of a list of names. The initial figure was at 500 out of which a final list of 150 victims has been provided by IRCS.

4.2 Assistance packages

The value of the packages of assistance was determined based on the initial allocated budget (US\$300,000) and initial estimated number of families/beneficiaries (1,500).

UNOPS determined the actual content of the package through consultation with Al-Sader Office who conducted an assessment on the traditional basis, such as providing food for the people visiting the affected families "for condolences" for three days.

The total value of the package is (US\$190). For the families of the deceased it consists of USD 120 in cash and USD 70 in food supplies. The package contains 50kg of rice, 50kg of flour, a 24 tin case of tomato paste and a 16kg tin of vegetable oil.

For the injured, full assistance is given in cash, because the families of the injured need cash in order to assist in the treatment, while the provision of food is not considered essential as there is no three day condolence period to be observed.



5. Organisation of distribution

5.1 Assistance to the families of the deceased

The center of gravity of the tragic event was Al-Sader city, therefore this location was decided to become the distribution point for all families affected. The site as well as security arrangements for the entire area was provided free of charge by Al-Sader office, while for the distribution point itself a number of guards were hired by UNOPS.

In close coordination with Al-Sader Office which has a special office called *Al-Sria Servant* with links to the specific community groups, UNOPS Officer took the responsibility of informing the families about the distribution date and time. The UNOPS Officer and the staff of Al Sader Office then distributed the assistance packages to the families listed.

The UNOPS Monitors, recruited for this project, visited a number of randomly selected families, asked them about the food distribution, and received confirmation on the receipt of food.



As of 13 December 05:

5.1.1 800 Families/beneficiaries of the deceased have received their food basket, which are located as in the locations indicated in the following table.

#	Name of Area	Number of families/beneficiaries
1	Al-Sader City	500
2	Shaab	120
3	New Baghdad	25
4	Adhamiya	8
5	Al-Benook	8
6	Al-Talibiya	5
7	Um Al-Geer	12
8	Caravanat	3
9	Hay Ur	8

10	Al-Shurta	7
11	Habibiya	12
12	Jamila	16
13	Doura	5
14	Fadaliya	20
15	Al-Hissainiya	15
16	Al-Khahera	8
17	Wehda Project	5
18	Taji	5
19	Al-Shamiya	5
20	Baladyat	5
21	Al-Nahrawan	8
	Total	800

5.2 800 families/beneficiaries (as per the table under point 1 above) have received their cash assistance (US\$120 each).

5.3 Assistance to the injured and their families

The assistance to the injured was carried out under the leadership of the IRCS who also provided the confirmed list of beneficiaries and secured a distribution point at their main office in Baghdad. Furthermore, IRCS informed the recipient families as to the exact time and locations of these distributions through announcement in the local radios and other media means as well as through hospitals.

Coordination meetings have taken place between IRCS and UNOPS liaison officers with the objective of securing other distribution points outside Al Sader city, as this would enable the implementation of a wider and swifter distribution process.

The cash portion of the assistance package (USD 190) has reached to 150 families/beneficiaries as of 13 December 05, which is the list confirmed by IRCS.

In order to ensure that the assistance package is not being misappropriated, hand-over requires presentation of a valid ID card confirming 1st grade relation to the victim.



5.4 Kadimiya Area List

Due to the fact that Kadimiya was the destination of the pilgrims, the area was also affected. UNOPS Liaison Officers in Baghdad contacted the relevant offices in Kadimiya area in order to arrange for the provision of lists of affected families, identify distribution point/s and determine the best possible mechanism of conducting an efficient distribution of assistance as soon as possible.

A list of 809 names was provided by Dr. Dhiaa Al-Mawlawi (Mr. Hussain Al-Saied Ismael Al-Sader) in Kadimiya. This list was cross checked with the list already assisted and the result was that only 91 families/names appeared to be deserving assistance and the rest were already assisted through the UN emergency response, which means all the other names were duplicates.

Dr. Dhiaa Mawlawi at the last moment rejected to distribute to the 91 families only and demanded the assistance to be provided to the initial list provided of 809 names. Moreover, Mr. Hussain Al-Saied Ismael Al-Sader office in Kadimiya insisted to carry out the distribution without the presence of UN/UNOPS supervisors.

It was communicated to Mr. Hussain Al-Saied Ismael Al-Sader office in Kadimiya that their condition contradicts with the UN rules and regulations and no distribution can take place without the monitoring and supervision of the UN staff. No distribution has been incurred in Kadimiya. Food was procured and distributed to the hospitals.



5.5 Assistance to the Hospitals

UNOPS' distribution of UNHCR tents, has been completed, where 50 tents were distributed to the Department of Health/Hospitals in Baghdad. The Department

of Health (DOH) in Al-Rasafa area will use 20 of the 50 distributed tents as Emergency Mobile Shelters to accommodate casualties on the spot. Dry food was also distributed as mentioned in paragraph 5.4 to compensate the unexpected number of casualties that the hospitals had to treat.

#	Name of hospital
1	Qazema Hospital
2	Karkh Hospital
3	Yarmouk Hospital
4	Medical City Hospital
5	Al-Nohman Hospital
6	Al-Noor Hospital
7	Al-Sader Hospital
8	Imam Ali Hospital

6. Summary

All the victims which UNOPS has received confirmed details about; have received the allocations, helping them to cope with the immediate effects of the tragic event on their families' lives.

The cooperation with the project's partners has been excellent. This is expected to have a positive impact also on the future perception of the international community in the area affected.

Al-Sader office in Al-Sader city sent an appreciation letter to the UN for its efforts in helping the Baghdad-Stampede affected families.

7. Budget/Disbursements to Date

7.1 The following table shows the expenditure as at 13 December 2005:

Category	Expenditures US\$	Remarks
Food Assistance	62,358.96	
Cash Assistance	125,496	
Monitors and Guards	3,175.2	
Miscellaneous	2,257.94	
Total Expenditures	193,288.1	
Total Budget	480,000	
<u>Remaining Balance</u>	<u>286,711.9</u>	

Following is a table showing how to charge the above expenditures against the different sources of funding (UNDG-ITF, Italian Government through OCHA and IOM) refer to the Management Arrangements paragraph (2) above:

7.2 Table showing the utilization of funds against different funding sources:

Source of funding	Contribution Amount US\$	Amount of expenditures to be charged US\$	Balance US\$	Remarks
UNDG-ITF	300,000	63,288.1	236,711.9	The total amount of funds was received
Italian Government	130,000	130,000	0.0	The funds are not yet deposited
IOM	50,000	0.0	50,000	The funds are not yet deposited
Total	480,000	193,288.1	286,711.9	

As the Italian contribution was announced before the availability of funds from the trust fund, it was decided to commit those funds (Italian Contribution) immediately since the need was very urgent. Upon completion of the Italian contribution, funds from the trust fund, which were by then made available, were used. IOM funds were never received.

8. Phase II – Additional Assistance Provided

Following the tragic stampede, and after UNOPS provided 800 beneficiaries with food baskets and cash packages, the Iraqi Government was intending to provide additional help to families that experienced extreme precarious living conditions. For various reasons, the government did not manage to do so. In line with this state of affairs, and as can be seen from the previous table, UNOPS has a remaining balance of \$106,711 that it decided to put at the disposal of those previously selected beneficiaries that are in need for additional help. Requested by UNOPS, Al-Sader Office re-evaluated and assessed during the past month those victims that currently live in most unstable and unsecured conditions and that would greatly benefit from more support. Hence, Al-Sader Office evaluated the necessity to assist 250 beneficiaries out of the formerly selected 800 beneficiaries. Together with Al-Sader office and within the next month, UNOPS will be finalising the specific kind of aid and assistance the beneficiaries shall receive, always taking into consideration the current deteriorating security situation, which is greatly affecting the beneficiaries' ability to surmount this tragedy.

9. Annexes

9.1 Letter of appreciation from Al-Sader Office Baghdad Al-Rasafa (Al-Sader City)

9.2 PDF lists of beneficiaries