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**STRATEGIC EVALUATION OF THE U.S. GOVERNMENT  
HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE PROGRAM IN NORTHERN IRAQ**

**prepared for**

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**Draft Final Report**

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**Background** In response to the Government of Iraq's (GOI) forced displacement of thousands of Kurds at the end of the Gulf war in 1991, the U S European Forces Command provided immediate relief to some 500,000 Kurdish refugees in southern Turkey. Emergency assistance was in collaboration with the technical expertise of the Bureau for Humanitarian Response/Office of U S Foreign Disaster Assistance/Disaster Assistance Response Team (BHR/OFDA/DART). Following the winter of 1991-1992, U S Congressional appropriations to the Department of Defense (DOD) supported continuation of this effort through the Combined Task Force, "Operation Provide Comfort" (CTF/OPC), with technical assistance from the DART. Following the initial emergency phase, the DART's task evolved to include (1) assessing conditions and providing recommendations to the U S military, and (2) planning, organizing, implementing, evaluating, monitoring and reporting on the humanitarian effort. On October 1, 1995, through the present DART, OFDA assumed complete management of the humanitarian program.

**Evaluation Scope of Work** From October 23 to November 13, 1995, a four person team carried out an evaluation of U S humanitarian assistance to northern Iraq. The purpose of the evaluation was to capture the evolution and fabric of the program from 1991-95 and provide lessons learned and recommendations for use by OFDA management and field staff. The evaluation sought to measure the success of the program in meeting the following objectives: a) accelerated resettlement of displaced families to their villages of origin, b) improved productive capacity and food security of resettled villagers, and c) improved living conditions (shelter, health, water and sanitation) for urban families displaced from GOI-controlled territory. The team made over 70 site visits in the governorates of Sulaimaniya, Erbil and Dohuk, interviewing Kurdish farmers, local authorities, and representatives of donor organizations and PVOs, as well as OFDA field staff.

**Key findings/Lessons Learned** The original "commodity-driven" approach, with its overemphasis on inputs, was drawn out far longer than necessary. The role of former military in DART management and staffing was an obstacle to the shift of the program from relief to rehabilitation. Beginning in FY95, U S humanitarian assistance to northern Iraq has moved to a systematic program approach, creating the potential for greater efficiency and effectiveness. Overall progress from 1991-1995 has been significant, as exemplified in: a) successful resettlement of those rural displaced families desiring to return to their villages of origin, b) livestock restored to 60% of original numbers, and c) a three to fourfold increase in major agricultural products.

Although the recent shift to a programmatic approach to relief is encouraging, current, poor conditions of the urban displaced from government-controlled territory continued. One major constraint to alleviating this situation is that existing criteria for targeting those remaining families who are most vulnerable have not been applied consistently.

### **General Recommendations**

- 1 In order to ensure the viability of recent resettlement efforts, the DART should ensure that newly resettled families have food support through two harvests.
- 2 OFDA should re-think its objectives in dealing with the Kurds displaced from GOI territory to northern cities, the urban displaced. Particularly, there is a need to engage the local community and donors to develop a solution.
- 3 Explicit criteria should be used for targeting those remaining urban displaced families who are most vulnerable. With this task complete the DART will have: a) clearly identified target populations for assistance, b) implemented commodity standards for quality control, and c) implemented commodity assistance packages appropriate to the needs of the people in order to cover more vulnerable families.
- 4 As the September 1996 Memorandum of Agreement between the military and OFDA on northern Iraq demonstrates, the increasing cooperation of the military and OFDA in complex disasters requires increased specificity of roles, functions and responsibilities essential to dealing with both the complexity and changing conditions of a response.
- 5 During the early period of emergencies, data baselines should be established against which emergency relief and rehabilitation progress can be measured. Such baselines would also serve for subsequent monitoring and evaluation.

**Conclusion** Overall, U S support of humanitarian assistance is making reasonable progress, in collaboration with other international donors and agencies. While it is believed that more timely progress could have been achieved, OFDA has overcome many odds to deliver the assistance. Recent management changes, while they came late, were significant in underlining OFDA's will and commitment to manage the program assertively.

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*A four-person team evaluated U S humanitarian assistance to the northern Iraqi Kurds between October 23 and November 13, 1995. The evaluation's purpose was to capture the evolution and fabric of the U S Government's ongoing assistance program from 1991 to 1995, and to provide lessons and recommendations for use by Office of U S Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA) management and field staff. The team included two social anthropologists, an architect-engineer, and an economist. During their visit to more than 70 sites in the governorates of Sulaymaniya, Erbil, and Dohuk, the team interviewed hundreds of Kurds, including farmers, urban poor, village community members, local authorities, OFDA staff members, and representatives of non-governmental organizations and international and bilateral groups. The evaluation was performed by John Mason, Robert Brandstetter, Samuel Tadesse, and Lynn Uttal, with the assistance of Karin Schlosser.*

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## **Background**

At the end of the Gulf War on March 6, 1991, northern Iraq's Kurds rebelled against the Government of Iraq (GOI). Within three weeks of the rebellion's inception, more than a million Kurds fled Iraqi aggression into Iraq's northern mountains and neighboring Turkey and Iran. Soon after this massive displacement, Gulf War coalition allies (Turkey, the U S, Great Britain, and France) called for a safe haven for the Kurds in northern Iraq under a United Nations mandate.

Following a successful winter emergency program during 1991-1992, a DART team was posted to northern Iraq. Its mission was to assess conditions in the area and provide recommendations to the U S military. The DART, headquartered in Zakho, oversees ongoing programs and expenditures of funds as directed by Congress.

## **The U S Response**

The Iraqi Kurds have suffered persecution from Iraqi leaders for decades. The most recent assault, the final *Anfal* [or pillaging and ravaging] campaign of 1987-1988, was a series of military actions by Saddam Hussein's forces that resulted in the systematic killing of 250,000 people, destruction of nearly 4,000 villages, and the forced relocation of Kurds to collective towns. U S humanitarian assistance was a response to the displacement of Kurds by the Iraqi army following the Gulf war.

In response to the Kurdish refugee crisis, on April 5, 1991, President Bush ordered the U S European Forces Command (EUCOM) to direct the immediate relief of some 500,000 Kurdish refugees in southern Turkey. EUCOM provided food, water, tents, and medical assistance in collaboration with a Disaster Assistance

Response Team (DART) from the Office of U S Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA).

After the winter of 1991-1992, Congress appropriated \$43 million in humanitarian aid to the Department of Defense (DOD) to continue the relief effort, appointing EUCOM as the implementing agent. OFDA was tasked to provide technical assistance to EUCOM's Combined Task Force, whose members comprised the Gulf War coalition allies. Together the task force members combined to form "Operation Provide Comfort" (OPC), a coalition created specifically to protect the Kurds.

*On October 1, 1995, OFDA assumed responsibility from the DOD to plan, manage, and implement the humanitarian assistance program.*

As of October 1, 1995, OFDA assumed responsibility from the DOD to plan, manage, and implement the humanitarian assistance program. Under a Memorandum of Agreement between OFDA and DOD, the military now provides specialized services to the DART, including procurement and security reimbursable by the U S Agency for International Development (USAID). This program is not typical of OFDA's role in complex disasters, given the fact that OFDA operated for several years in northern Iraq as an arm of DOD. The aid provided to the Kurds approaches what in many USAID countries would be considered a development standard.

The four-person evaluation team sought to measure the humanitarian program's success to date in meeting the following objectives: a) accelerated resettlement of forcefully displaced families to their villages of origin, b) improved productive capacity and food security of resettled villagers, and c) improved living

conditions (shelter, health, water, and sanitation) for those families displaced from GOI-controlled territories, the urban displaced

### **Rural Resettlement, Food, and Shelter**

The evaluation team found that U S humanitarian assistance from 1991 to 1995 achieved several important results in the areas of rural resettlement and food production and distribution. Achievement of these results required moving from a commodity-driven approach used by OFDA and the military initially to one based systematically on needs assessment, targeting, and monitoring. Only when U S humanitarian assistance to northern Iraq moved from a commodity-driven approach to a systematic program approach, could it create a greater potential for efficiency and effectiveness.

The resettlement of rural populations, the first objective of the relief effort, appears to be on track, with a significant portion of the target population having moved back to a potentially viable village life.

Approximately 170,000 people have rebuilt or are rebuilding their houses with OFDA-provided materials. Most of the resettled villagers say their families are better off in the village than in the collective towns from which they came. Collective towns were established by the GOI in order to control Kurds. Kurds were barred from agricultural production, thereby reducing a critical source of their livelihood and creating a state of dependency on the handouts of Saddam Hussein.

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Agricultural production has expanded throughout northern Iraq. Just one year after the last *Anfal* operation, total agricultural production had fallen dramatically in the region. Yet, by 1995, the area was producing a fourfold and threefold increase, respectively, in wheat and barley. The region's livestock herd has also grown steadily since its massive reduction during the 1980's *Anfal*. From 1991 to 1995 in

Sulaymaniya, for example, sheep and goats increased 150 percent, and cattle 117 percent.

Many families that resettled two to three years ago now produce their own food. At least two agricultural seasons are required to reach a state of food security. Thus, in the initial period of resettlement, resettlers need food support in addition to the seeds and tools provided as part of OFDA's resettlement package.

Based on other emergency resettlement experiences, as well as the team's observations, the DART should ensure that newly resettled families have food support through at two harvests.

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### **Political Obstacles**

Various political obstacles have impeded assistance to the Kurds, one of the most imposing of which is the current double economic embargo (which has resulted from UN sanctions on the entire country and a tightening of Saddam's embargo on the north). The embargo serves as both the stimulus for U S humanitarian assistance as well as the cause of constraints on that assistance. The embargo has perpetuated severe economic hardships in the region while slowing the process of international aid. Household wealth in particular has suffered a general reduction because of embargo-induced inflation.

Turkey, though an OPC coalition member, presents another frustration. Deference to Turkey and its problems with its own Kurdish population seems to lie at the heart of much of the aid policy on external assistance to the Iraqi Kurds. Similarly, the Turkish parliament's quarterly review to decide upon renewal of the OPC agreement causes a sense of uncertainty among donors about the future of their programs. Signaling its concerns, Turkey recently imposed increasingly severe restrictions on the movement of relief commodities and NGO and donor agency officials across its borders.

Conflict between Kurdish political parties within northern Iraq continues to undermine reconstruction efforts and to exacerbate northern Iraq's economic recovery. This has put a disproportionate burden of relief and resettlement on international donors and implementing NGOs. On some occasions, such political conflict has even blocked the delivery of shelter materials from one party's zone to the other, rival party's area.

Internal politics play a similar role in constraining assistance to those internally displaced Kurds from GOI-controlled territory. Because no action has been taken by local authorities to deal with them, many of these people are living in abandoned public buildings. Their largest concentration occurs in Sulaymaniya, where as many as 100,000 occupy a variety of buildings, including a former security building once used for interrogating and torturing prisoners. Other places of refuge are military warehouses, unfinished college dormitories, and a former hotel.

*Alternative solutions to assisting those Kurds displaced from GOI territory remain unexplored*

Sulaymaniya's shelters are overcrowded and substandard, lacking proper ventilation, lighting, heating, and water and sanitation facilities and therefore are unsuitable in the face of the customary harsh winters. Interviews with assisted families and nongovernmental organization (NGO) monitors indicated that many of the urban displaced children are suffering from waterborne gastrointestinal diseases. OFDA's program to address these problems includes rehabilitating public buildings through weatherization and water and sanitation facilities.

Based on these debilitated conditions, there is a serious need for major actors, including local authorities, international donors, and local and international NGOs to rethink objectives and interventions to better help the internally displaced Kurds. Alternative solutions to assisting those people displaced from GOI territory remain unexplored, such as using vacant public buildings in contrast to constructing new settlements (as in the present plan). Local officials in particular must be engaged in this effort, through the UN-Iraq Relief Coordination Unit (IRCU), whose

purpose is to coordinate the above-named actors in focusing and concentrating the relief and to raise important issues.

### **The Struggle to Sustain Nutrition and Income**

OFDA provides food to displaced Kurds through WFP. Interviews with WFP staff and the families WFP assists, however, suggest that WFP food rations are inadequate. That situation, it seems, will only worsen in 1996. Until 1995, each family received a standard food package containing preset amounts of wheat flour, lentils, vegetable oil, and sugar. For 1996, however, because of reduced donor contributions and a growing number of urban destitute, those who are not displaced but equally as poor as the displaced, the size of the food package had to be reduced. Furthermore, to cover more destitute people, the reduced food packages will be distributed only on a rotational basis, beneficiaries are expected to augment their diet with their own resources.

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Interviews with WFP, FAO (Food and Agriculture Organization), UNICEF (United Nations Children's Fund), and NGO staff suggest that lactating mothers among the displaced urban population are severely anemic and that malnutrition is highly prevalent among their children. The conditions of some of these mothers and children are expected to worsen over the next year unless they are targeted for supplemental feeding. An NGO has recently been given a grant to survey the level of severity of this problem. Interviews with assisted families and with NGO monitors also indicate that, while the internally displaced have access to health care facilities and doctors, many of them are unable to pay even minimal amounts for prescribed medicines. (Since the evaluation was completed, grants have been authorized to develop baselines for the purpose of monitoring these deteriorating conditions.)

### **Selecting the Most Vulnerable**

The "most vulnerable" are defined in this evaluation as people who, if not assisted for at least two agricultural seasons (for rural people)

or through the winter (for urban people), will be put at considerable risk concerning their ability to survive

For purposes of defining the most vulnerable numerically, no accurate demographic statistics are available for northern Iraq. The UN estimates that the total population of the three northern governorates is 3.28 million. Of this total, roughly 65 percent (2,091,000) live in towns or cities, 22 percent (746,000) live in collective towns, and 13 percent (443,000) live in villages.

In its resettlement strategy, OFDA has focused on the most vulnerable populations--those living in the collective towns, in public buildings, in rented urban lodging, and in temporary structures in rural areas. This is a highly diverse population, as its resettlement patterns show.

*OFDA has focused on the most vulnerable populations--those living in the collective towns, in public buildings, in rented urban lodging, and in temporary structures in rural areas*

The vulnerable populations OFDA assists are found on the plains and hills. Plains villages are surrounded by vast fields cultivated in wheat, barley, and chickpeas. Houses tend to be made of cement block and other materials salvaged from nearby collective towns and public property. The large tracts of land, cultivated with tractors, plows, and combines, are owned by the state or absentee landlords. Sharecroppers, renters, or day laborers are used for labor. Other villagers cultivate their own farms of between 40 and 60 *donams* (four donams are equal to one hectare).

Conversely, hill villages are surrounded by numerous small plots of privately owned land. Here, a virtual supermarket of crops is cultivated. In addition to wheat and barley, the hills, cultivated by animal traction, are home to rice, grapes, walnuts, sunflowers, tobacco, and other crops. Sheep, goats, and cattle are also in evidence and are the most important production assets for many hills people. Because land is at a premium, houses are more concentrated than on the plains, often being built into the hillside. Some are multi-storied. Most are thick-walled and built with stone, although cement blocks

salvaged from the collective towns are also used when available.

### **Who Are the Resettlers and How Well Have They Adapted?**

The resettlement process has followed a three-stage process, reflecting participation of three types of people. The first comprises a relatively small number of "pioneers" who returned to their villages and land shortly after the 1991 uprising. At first they lived in tents and other traditional shelters while they began to cultivate their land and herd animals. By now, they have built permanent housing and are close to being food-sufficient. These pioneers returned to their villages with no outside assistance.

The second group of resettlers consists of households who are the object of the resettlement program. As these assisted resettlers build their houses and village infrastructure is reconstructed, they join the pioneers in forming a critical mass that lends the new villages a certain viability.

Such villages become magnets that attract a third group of settlers, the "uncertains." For various reasons, including fear based on a perception of insecurity and lack of educational opportunities for their children, the uncertains originally choose to remain behind in the collective towns. As they see other family and village members successfully resettled, however, they gain confidence that they, too, can return home safely. The uncertains return on their own, without OFDA assistance. It is too early in the resettlement process to know what percentage of the resettled comprise the uncertains, but field interviews point to a significant figure.

*the program successfully resettled those rural displaced families desiring to return to their village of origin*

It has been primarily through this three-stage process that the U.S. Government and other donors have helped to resettle 2,472 of the estimated 3,900 villages destroyed during the *Anfal*. The program successfully resettled those rural displaced families desiring to return to their village of origin. The success is due to a number of factors: the domino effect of people perceiving the benefits of resettlement and then following suit, improved expertise of both

OFDA and NGO monitors in overseeing the program, and the sense of urgency imposed by the anticipated rapid onset of winter

A fourth group of potentially eligible people do not resettle in villages, this group can be called "residuals " These are people who either cannot or do not wish to return to their villages The latter have become urbanized, have jobs, and for one reason or another are unwilling to return The former cannot return because their villages are too remote or are too close to international borders, their land is heavily mined, or the population mass is too small for a viable village (OFDA resettlement criteria also stipulate that villages must be free of land tenure problems and disputes over water rights Assisted families must also be vulnerable and show a commitment to supplying labor to rebuild their house )

### **Beneficiary Perceptions and Priorities**

OFDA has faced two basic problems in attempting to realize the resettlement program's objectives First, beneficiary expectations exceed what the program can actually provide, a misunderstanding that traditionally leads to recipient dependency on the donor and often retards their own initiative This perception stems in part from a high level of welfare formerly provided in the collective towns

Second, there were miscommunications within OFDA about exactly what elements were necessary to achieve program objectives For example, the lack of provision for primary schools threatened to cause families to remain in the collective towns, so their children could attend school, thereby undermining the resettlement objective The absence of schools from the initial package occurred as a result of a misunderstanding between OFDA and the DART Schools, it is noted, are not a typical component of OFDA programs

According to the beneficiaries, their foremost priorities for resettlement are security and all-weather access between villages and towns Next most important is the availability of community infrastructure such as schools, water systems, and clinics Kurds consider education to be a crucial aspect of modern life Rural families have refused to remain year-round in villages without schools Less important are individual shelters and production assets like

seeds, tools, and livestock The conclusion is that the focus on village resettlement is the appropriate strategy

### **What Is the "Resettlement Package"?**

The resettlement package consists of several elements, providing an incentive for the Kurds to return permanently to their villages of origin Most significant are roads, water and sanitation facilities, schools, clinics, houses, and agricultural inputs

Access roads were originally rebuilt to deliver building materials to construction sites They are even more important, however, for the movement of goods and people to and from trade centers Water, too, is important, indeed, in Muslim culture, it is a precondition for settlement All of the villages now being resettled contain preexisting water sources, albeit some sustained damage during the *Anfal* Currently, UNICEF and several NGOs is performing water system rehabilitation and water quality monitoring through OFDA funding

*[There is a need to] encourage participating NGOs to train villagers in the maintenance and repair of water systems, as well as other infrastructure*

Problems with newly installed water systems are cropping up For example, many appear to be undersized, and maintenance training is unavailable In addition, no clear sense of communal responsibility exists regarding care of the systems Because of these problems, water system repairs will likely continue to require outside funding To remedy this situation, the evaluation team has recommended that the DART encourage participating NGOs to train villagers in the maintenance and repair of water systems, as well as other infrastructure

Sanitation facilities are usually included as part of water improvement projects In most villages, tradition calls for a sanitation unit for men to be attached to the mosque, women usually use a nearby spring for bathing and waste disposal, with the obvious consequence of pollution In many resettlement villages where mosques have been rebuilt, attached sanitation units for men and a separate communal women's facility have been provided

Some families that have lived in collective towns for several years tend to prefer individual washing and toilet facilities. In most villages, communal toilets are usually constructed with the expectation that individual home owners will build their own private facilities when their resources permit.

Clinics, as well as schools, existed in many large villages before the *Anfal* destruction. The clinic designs used in resettlement activities are based on standards provided by northern Iraq's health department. They include two examination rooms, a store room, and a pharmacy. Each clinic is intended to serve a minimum of 400 families. While curative health care has been the rule in the region, UNICEF is planning to promote primary and preventive health care in the rebuilt clinics. In fact, UNICEF's role, as well as those of WFP and the NGOs, is generally being enhanced by a transfer of health, food, and water and sanitation functions from OFDA as the Office phases out its direct presence in northern Iraq.

The house materials in OFDA's resettlement package allow for each unit two rooms of about 3 square meters by 4 square meters, and a covered porch in each unit. The package includes cement, gypsum for use as plaster, *spindars* (wooden roof beams) and palm frond mats for roofing, and doors and windows. Traditional houses using these materials can last 20 years or more.

In most cases, resettlers build their houses where their old house stood. Property rights are respected: even the rubble of destroyed houses is considered the property of the former home's owner and is not scavenged until he returns.

House designs and materials costs differ among the three governorates. Houses in Dohuk, where the program started, are somewhat larger and more complex than those in the other governorates. Unit housing costs are about twice as much in Dohuk as in Sulaymaniya. A UN-sponsored housing workshop held in late September 1994 addressed some of the problems that had arisen in earlier resettlement activity, and set more appropriate design and materials standards for village housing. Because Sulaymaniya was just starting resettlement activities at the time of the workshop, it was able to profit from some of the recommendations.

With experience, the construction of housing in the resettled villages has become more efficient. NGOs now assign monitors to oversee construction and control of building materials, ensuring that only those materials needed for the current stage of construction are released, thereby reducing theft and waste. Field monitors from the DART regional offices also follow the projects closely.

*The OFDA guidelines also allow for selected beneficiaries including widows and handicapped families, to receive small livestock, increasing both social status and the prospect of future income.*

The *Anfal* destruction was so complete that most farmers lost their agricultural assets, including seeds, vines and trees, livestock, irrigation systems, and tools. In order to encourage a return to food self-reliance, some resettlement projects include a production asset replacement component. To reestablish agriculture, seeds and tools originally were supplied to each participating family. The OFDA guidelines also allow for selected beneficiaries, including widows and handicapped families, to receive small livestock, increasing both social status and the prospect of future income.

The goal of returning beneficiaries to their villages within a year of village reconstruction has often proven unrealistic. The reason is that regenerating agriculture, for example, even in limited degrees, takes much longer than a year. Also, since the 1994 and 1995 building seasons started late, achievement of resettlement objectives in one year became that much more difficult in many villages. Such objectives, which in many countries would be tantamount to development, are unique to the northern Iraq program.

### **Overall Success of Rural Resettlement**

The rural resettlement program has had a significant impact on the lives of its beneficiaries. In all of the nearly 40 villages that the evaluation team visited, a remarkable number of men, women, and children were working to complete their houses before winter. Showing their eagerness to return to their villages, people have demolished their former houses in the collective towns, taking with them

roofing materials, cement blocks, windows and doors, and anything else they can salvage

Despite the absence of spare parts for farm machinery, diesel fuel, and sufficient pesticides, the amount of land being cultivated is impressive. The sharp increase in the size of cattle, sheep, and goat herds is equally remarkable. Even given these signs of success, the evaluation team has suggested that as the number of eligible families for resettlement is diminishing, the DART should reexamine its interventions to further focus its resources and fill missing gaps in the program.

### **The High Price of Poor Monitoring**

In June 1993 the U.S. Congress allotted \$30 million to DOD for continuing aid to northern Iraq, in addition to the \$43 million it appropriated in 1992. Because no financial data are available from the field, however, it remains impossible to trace the dollar-for-dollar impact of U.S. humanitarian assistance to the region from 1991 to mid-1995.

*OFDA had originally failed to conduct needs assessments, set commodity quality standards, or establish monitoring and quality control procedures*

Aside from the potential for a communication gap between OFDA and DOD, part of the prior lapse in relief tracking can be attributed to poor coordination between the DART office in Zakho and its three field offices. Field officers often were not told when commodities were being delivered to NGOs and UN agencies in their regions. Moreover, a review of records and interviews with DART staff show that OFDA had originally failed to conduct needs assessments, set commodity quality standards, or establish monitoring and quality control procedures.

One example of loose control over the spending of relief funds was a reliance on verbal contracts for commodity purchases and deliveries. Informal promises were made to vendors with no documentation of transactions, and truckloads of commodities have been dropped at NGO sites without notification or appropriate paperwork. Vendors who had failed to show proof of a delivery order were requested to

obtain some form of documentation before being paid.

In such a loosely monitored system, it was not surprising to find that sole-source and noncompetitive contracting were the norm. A few local vendors allegedly profited disproportionately because of such contracts. In light of this past situation and to ensure its correction in the future, the evaluation underscores the need, under normal conditions, for the DART to base commodity purchases on competitive bids while considering potential vendors to short-list.

Even today, occasional monitoring problems continue because of improper procedures and the absence of quality control systems. Based on a field visit to the WFP warehouse in Sulaymaniyah, for example, the evaluation team was informed of substandard commodities, including contaminated vegetable oil and underweight bags of wheat, all of which were purchased and delivered to WFP with DOD funds. In addition, UNICEF reported that it had received truckloads of unsolicited medicines from OFDA, most of which had expired or were otherwise unusable. Since mid-1995, the DART, through its monitoring system, has begun to manage these problems. (Since the evaluation was completed, many of these targeting and monitoring functions have been corrected.)

Previously a lack of standardization in commodity distribution, shelter packages and the houses built using them sometimes differ from one NGO to another, creating discontent among recipients. Shelter material is not always used appropriately and, in some reported cases, recipients have sold their shelter material.

One general constraint that compromises monitoring has been the absence of a data baseline. While it is difficult in the early stages of an emergency to collect data, initial assessments should provide at least an estimate of population size and composition. The baseline then allows for setting targets and benchmarks to use in measuring later progress toward achieving program goals. This is why the evaluation team has suggested that during early assistance periods, a data baseline should be established against which emergency relief and rehabilitation progress can be measured. Such a baseline can also serve in subsequent

monitoring and evaluation Plans were unfolding during the evaluation to collect and organize baseline data for selected sectors

### **The Push for Criteria and Quality Control**

From 1991-1994, neither the DART nor the implementing NGOs conducted much monitoring or follow-up by which to measure the progress of the resettlement program Although the DART required that NGOs submit progress reports, the information requested was not standardized, and the process was little more than a formality Only data on the amount of commodities received and distributed was reported, with no indication of their impact on the lives of the beneficiaries Consequently, no accurate account of how many shelters were built was available, and potential misuse of shelter commodities that occurred is impossible to trace Since 1994, monitoring of the program by local staff though tracing commodities from delivery to NGOs to end-use has become a model for other OFDA programs

Currently, proposals for resettlement are submitted by NGOs to the appropriate field office Those proposals recommended for funding are then forwarded to the program office Before April 1995, NGOs often dealt directly with the program office, bypassing the field offices, according to field staff

*explicit criteria should be used for targeting those remaining urban displaced families that are most vulnerable with the goal of serving the greatest number of families with declining U S resources*

DART field staff reported that in the past, Zakho personnel often arbitrarily adjusted the volume of shelter commodities requested, without consulting regional officers or implementing agencies Furthermore, they used no criteria for disallowing or increasing the requested relief commodities Instead, Zakho would arbitrarily decide which families to resettle and which items to provide them This became particularly difficult when the program began to move away from a commodity emphasis to a focus on rehabilitation, a transition that required specific items that varied from the housing materials the program originally provided

It seems clear that based on OFDA's objectives, explicit criteria should be used for targeting those remaining urban displaced families that are most vulnerable In that way, the DART will have clearly identified the target population to be assisted, developed commodity standards for quality control purposes, and developed commodity assistance packages appropriate to the needs of the resettlers, all with the goal of serving the greatest number of vulnerable families possible with declining U S resources

### **Regulating Rations The WFP Food Monitoring Program**

Since June 1995, targeting and monitoring procedures have been put in place that should help prevent many of the problems described above The WFP food monitoring system serves as one such mechanism Established in collaboration with local authorities in the three governorates, WFP's monitoring system screens and targets needy families With assistance from a committee of local community leaders, needy families are targeted if they fall into one of the following categories a) elderly with no income, b) female or handicapped-headed families with no income, or c) families in relatively remote areas with no access to income-generating activities

The list of targeted food recipients is further scrutinized by a comprehensive premonitoring effort conducted by WFP monitors NGO and WFP monitors and DART staff say that before the establishment of WFP's premonitoring system, registering as a displaced person was very easy to do Consequently, before premonitoring, an individual could register and receive food packages under different names A premonitoring effort conducted in September and October 1995 in Sulaymaniya uncovered many cases of registration fraud and inaccurate targeting

A final component of the new food distribution program is WFP's post-food-distribution monitoring effort Under this system, WFP tracks the activities of food agents assigned by the local food department Each month, a food agent distributes WFP food packages to an allocated list of beneficiaries Postmonitoring determines whether food agents are distributing all food packages, cutting rations or overcharging recipients, or using incorrect measures

WFP has also addressed the need to monitor the quality and quantity of food commodities, as well as their distribution. The program has begun reweighing and rebagging wheat flour to detect underweight bags and report shortages to Zakho. However, the consolidation and reporting of shortages and contaminated food items remains quite slow.

### **Managing Relief to Rehabilitation**

OFDA's effort has ranged from rapid response in mid-1991 to an extensive resettlement program in late 1995. As the program has unfolded, more strategic thinking has emerged, resulting in the 1995-1997 and the new, 1996 strategies. But, as the evaluation team's findings suggest, the evolution of the program in the earlier periods had been too slow and uneven and, ultimately, diminished the degree of progress possible.

OFDA/Washington has faced two dilemmas in trying to fulfill its responsibility for coordinating the humanitarian assistance program for the Kurds. First is the hard fact that program funds have not been its own. In essence, OFDA has had responsibility for a politically sensitive and highly visible activity without commensurate authority for decision making. Second is the reality that DOD, until recently, was effectively in charge of the operation because funding was directed to it by the Congressional House Armed Services Committee. Although DOD took a "backseat" to OFDA in implementing the program (except regarding the financial aspects), the Office never exerted complete responsibility for the management of it. This situation created a gap which, by default, was filled by a manager whose expertise was not in the relief field.

The military probably would have been relieved not to have been put in the role of providing humanitarian assistance. Equally, OFDA was never fully comfortable with the role of advising the military about a program it was basically expected to organize, plan, and coordinate, but not to manage. According to one senior OFDA official, "OFDA played its proper role in dealing with the 1991 emergency and was uncomfortable carrying out the post-emergency phase."

Over the past few years, OFDA has become more and more involved with complex

disasters--disasters that require well beyond what typical natural disaster relief operations can provide. Fully 80 percent of OFDA's funding now goes to such complex disasters.

More frequent as well has been OFDA's greater involvement with the U.S. military in responding to complex disasters. Response actions in Rwanda, Haiti, Somalia, and more recently, Bosnia exemplify such joint efforts. This cooperative mode more than likely portends the shape of things to come. Given these facts, the U.S. military and OFDA need a better mutual understanding of the roles necessary for dealing with both the complexity and the changing conditions of emergency responses.

*The military influence on DART management and staffing, with its emphasis on commodity inputs rather than people-level impacts, was, in the final analysis, an obstacle in the shift from relief to rehabilitation.*

Once OFDA came to realize it should and could begin to assume responsibility for U.S. humanitarian assistance, it did so assertively and with commitment since the 1995 Memorandum of Agreement was signed. Since mid-1995, a decision to change the earlier leadership and DART orientation has given the program a much greater chance of making an impact than it had earlier. The military influence on DART management and staffing, with its emphasis on commodity inputs rather than people-level impacts, was, in the final analysis, an obstacle in the shift from relief to rehabilitation. Furthermore, had OFDA taken responsibility sooner, even in the absence of authority, the program likely would eventually have had an even greater impact.

To provide a transition from emergency relief to rehabilitation sooner than it did, OFDA would have had to address the military commodity-driven approach early on. This "commodity-driven" approach, with its over-emphasis on inputs, was drawn out far longer than necessary. Dealing with that approach--depicted by one seasoned relief expert as an awkward "bi-cultural marriage"--would have demanded that agency management take a strong stance. OFDA did not take adequate responsibility for the program because it was heavily involved in responding to several other complex disasters,

and because it did not have authority over the northern Iraq program. The result was a situation, over several years, in which the wrong response (relief) continued to be applied to a changing situation (rehabilitation)

*This "commodity-driven" approach, with its overemphasis on inputs, was drawn out far longer than necessary*

After OFDA had finally moved from a relief to rehabilitation mode of assistance, managing results rather than inputs, there still remained some wrinkles to iron out. One of these was the contract management process.

Field proposals targeting villages for resettlement in 1995 came in late this past summer, late enough such that deliveries ended up interrupting the harvest and impeding villagers' ability to build their shelters before winter. Factors affecting a delay included the transfer of program management from DOD to OFDA, especially including the need for OFDA to set up special systems for NGOs. Another factor in the delay was the need for NGOs to submit proposals according to OFDA, not DOD guidelines. Lastly, the former team leader's inability to articulate OFDA's mandate and strategy caused severe delays in NGO submission of proposals.

Further exacerbating the difficulty of shifting from relief to rehabilitation, the process was slowed by the need to obtain waivers and deviations in order to fund local NGOs. The evaluation team was informed that late issuance of permits to ship materials across the Turkish border also retarded a quick response to beneficiary needs, especially of those in mountainous villages where the onslaught of snow makes roads impassable.

Given the above types of constraints, OFDA needs to ensure that the USAID grant contracting staff is aware of exigencies in the field and that it tailors the speed of grant processing accordingly.

When OFDA and the military are working side by side, OFDA must reinforce its collaborative role in both relief and rehabilitation responses. It was suggested by the military command that one way of achieving this would be to place a USAID contracting officer alongside the DOD contracting officer.

## **A New Assistance Approach: Managing Outcomes, Not Inputs**

By early 1995, OFDA realized that a policy break with the past was essential if the program was to meet the changing shape of humanitarian assistance. The program needed to shift from a commodity delivery to a more targeted assistance program.

Such a policy break with the past implied a new strategy based on diminishing funds yet with a greater need to demonstrate impact. It meant, in effect, doing more with less. This new approach would take the program through late 1997, underscoring the need for 60,000 resettlement shelter units, hundreds of schools and clinics, and hundreds of kilometers of roads. Clearly, OFDA could not do this by itself but needed to collaborate with other donors and international NGOs, as it is beginning to do more actively through the UN/IRCU.

Prior to the transition from relief to rehabilitation, the DART expanded its field offices in Sulaymaniya, Erbil, and Dohuk. Field staff, including OFDA representatives and locally hired field monitors, have been very competent and effective in ensuring compliance with OFDA guidelines and standards, in helping NGOs develop their proposals, and in assessing the quality of NGO work and beneficiary satisfaction. OFDA would do well in its future rehabilitation programs to institutionalize the use of foreign service nationals or other local staff, under U.S. direct-hire supervision, as monitors to oversee the work of participating NGOs, not only to ensure adherence to guidelines and standards but to encourage local participation as well.

Much credit for the field staff's excellent work goes to the DART program office which has been largely responsible for the training of monitors in the new rehabilitation-mode implementation system. Since June 1995, interim DART leaders and Washington's regional team have also contributed significantly to the program's improved position.

*local NGOs are a valuable resource and should not be eliminated from the program*

One result of the DART's new management approach is the need for increased diligence in accepting NGO proposals and monitoring program results. There are too many small organizations to manage, especially considering past difficulties in getting these groups to comply with USAID/OFDA guidelines. Particularly troublesome are past failures of local NGOs to comply with USAID's financial auditing requirements. Whatever the management approach, local NGOs are a valuable resource in implementing the program and should not be eliminated.

### **Coordinating with Others The Need to Rally the Forces**

The humanitarian assistance mandate originally fell under the aegis of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) because the UNHCR was the organization designated to deal with the massive flight of Kurds into Turkey and Iran. Once the international refugee problem was resolved, UN coordination of humanitarian assistance was turned over to the recently-formed UN Department of Humanitarian Affairs (UNDHA).

Because of insufficient staff in-country, UNDHA shares coordination with its sister agency UNICEF. UNDHA, in liaison with UNICEF, heads the IRCU. IRCU consists of sector committees working in such areas as water and sanitation, health, roads, agriculture, and resettlement. These committees meet biweekly and are usually attended by representatives of relevant UN agencies, local and international NGOs, local authority technical departments, and bilateral agencies such as the European Community Humanitarian Office (ECHO) and OFDA.

Since OFDA is the major player in resettlement, its participation on the IRCU village resettlement committee has been especially important. In the past, DART did not always follow the guidelines, criteria, and standards the committee recommended. With OFDA's new management and monitoring systems in place since mid-1995, that situation is turning around.

### **Conclusions What the Future Holds**

Overall, U.S. support of humanitarian assistance to northern Iraq is making reasonable progress. Although more timely progress could have been

achieved up to this point, OFDA has overcome the many constraints described herein. The recent management changes, while overdue, are significant in underlining OFDA's will and commitment to manage the program assertively.

The question of how open-ended the U.S. Government's commitment to the Kurds should be looms large. That question is a political one, beyond the scope of this evaluation. As in all OFDA operations, a transition is based on program requirements, including how long the physical presence of the DART is necessary. The program evolution to a standard OFDA approach with NGO and UN agencies providing full implementation is already underway.

Ultimately, the effort in northern Iraq will need to be downsized to the level of an essential relief program that deals exclusively with remaining emergency conditions. (As we speak, the program is being consolidated from four DART offices to one and U.S. personnel from seven to three.)