

IRAQ

A DECADE OF SANCTIONS

July 2000



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Introduction

Since the end of the Cold War the United Nations Security Council has increasingly resorted to sanctions as a foreign policy tool. In the first 45 years of its existence the United Nations Security Council used sanctions on two occasions – against Rhodesia and South Africa. However, since 1990 it has imposed sanctions against 13 countries: Iraq, Yugoslavia, Libya, Liberia, Somalia, Cambodia, Haiti, Angola, Rwanda, Sierre Leone, Afghanistan and Ethiopia. This proliferation has come under increasingly close scrutiny. In 1999 the House of Commons International Development Affairs Committee held an inquiry into the future of sanctions. The Archbishops' Council submission, prepared by the Board for Social Responsibility's (BSR) International and Development Affairs Committee, suggested that the traditional thinking associated with the concept of 'just war' might be helpful in determining the legitimacy and morality of a particular sanctions regime. The Commons Committee's final report concluded that although "sanctions may well represent a low cost alternative to war in financial terms, they are all too often as damaging - in humanitarian and development terms - as armed conflict". Nowhere is a reassessment of sanctions more urgently required than in the case of Iraq.

In April 2000, the BSR's Assistant Secretary for International and Development Affairs was seconded, for a period of six weeks, to the United Nations Development Programme's Office (UNDP) in Iraq. This initiative was taken in partnership with Christian Aid and Coventry Cathedral's International Centre for Reconciliation and was arranged to coincide with UNESCO's International Year of Culture and Peace as well as the start of the World Council of Churches Decade to Overcome Violence. The access granted by UNDP facilitated data gathering in the centre and south of the country through participant observation. Casual encounters outside the UN system provided useful insights as to household structure and consumption, which allowed a more accurate picture to emerge as to the vulnerability of differing sections of Iraqi society under sanctions and their aspirations for the future. Visits with NGOs, UN agencies, and religious communities to hospitals, schools, farms, water sanitation plants and chlorine production plants provided a useful insight into the state of the country's infrastructure.

This report documents Iraq's decline under sanctions. It examines the effectiveness of the UN's humanitarian programme, commonly known as the "Oil for Food Programme", in meeting the country's humanitarian needs. It surveys the contribution which NGOs and faith communities make to the ongoing relief effort in Iraq and makes recommendations as to how the Church of England, in consultation and partnership with its ecumenical partners, can best utilise the limited resources available to assist in this process. The focus of this study is on the centre and south of the country and not on the three northern governorates, which have now become known as Iraqi Kurdistan. The evidence suggests that the negative effects of sanctions have been disproportionate to the good so far achieved. The condition of the Iraqi people can only be described as desperate. It is questionable whether international security should be achieved by systematically degrading a country's infrastructure or by impoverishing the vast majority of a country's population.

Background to UN Sanctions Against Iraq

The United Nations Security Council introduced a comprehensive sanctions regime against Iraq in 1990 immediately following Iraq's invasion of Kuwait. Although sanctions played an important role in isolating Iraq internationally, they failed to achieve their primary purpose - Iraq's evacuation of Kuwait. This objective was secured by an international military coalition led by the US who ejected Iraq from Kuwait in early 1991 after a five-week air campaign and a four-day land offensive. At the end of the Gulf War, Iraq accepted the terms of UN Security Council resolution 661 which introduced new obligations requiring Iraq to respect Kuwait's territorial integrity, to assist in the repatriation of missing persons and to dismantle its capacity to produce weapons of mass destruction. Until such time as Iraq complied with these measures Iraq's financial and economic assets were to be frozen. An unstated objective was the removal of President Saddam Hussein. Almost ten years later and the United Nations Security Council continues to believe that Iraq has not yet met the conditions that would allow sanctions to be lifted or even relaxed. President Hussein's hold on power appears, if anything, to have been strengthened rather than weakened by sanctions.

The failure of the United Nations and Iraq to reach a satisfactory political settlement has contributed to the systematic degradation of Iraq's infrastructure and the impoverishment of the vast majority of its population. In 1991 a UN report described Iraq as a state which was rapidly approaching the standards of developed countries. It had a modern health system, an extensive telecommunications network, 24 electrical power generation stations, sophisticated water treatment plants and potable water for the large majority of the population. As early as 1991 the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) warned that "Iraq's traditional reliance on imported food, the complexity of its public health system, the dependence of this system on imports and its interdependence with other sectors of the economy, together with the precarious state of the country's infrastructure as a whole make Iraq particularly vulnerable to the effects of comprehensive trade sanctions". This observation proved accurate. The 1999 UNDP Human Development ranked Iraq at 125 out of 174 on the Human Development Index while at the beginning of the decade Iraq was ranked 91 out of 160 countries.

In 1996, the United Nations attempted to mitigate the worst effects of sanctions by allowing Iraq to sell a prescribed amount of its oil in exchange for vital humanitarian goods. However, a number of shortcomings both in the design and implementation of this project seriously impair its effectiveness. A recent report by the ICRC states that "after two international wars and nine years of UN-imposed trade sanctions, the Iraqi economy lies in tatters. The oil for food programme has not halted the collapse of the health system and the deterioration of water supplies, which together pose one of the gravest threats to the health and well being of the civilian population. This situation is now exacerbated by water shortage owing to the worst drought in decades". A number of UN agencies such as UNICEF and UNDP have developed supplementary aid programs, which in conjunction to the efforts of the NGOs, make an important, but limited contribution to the ongoing relief effort.

Relations between Iraq and the UN reached an impasse in December 1998. Iraq's refusal to further co-operate with UNSCOM resulted in "Operation Desert Fox". Since then, the United States of America and the United Kingdom have regularly bombed Iraq as part of their efforts to police the no fly zones. The United Nations Office of the Humanitarian Co-ordinator in Iraq reports that from December 1998 to

August 1999, 110 civilians were killed and a further 350 civilians injured as a result of such action. Against this background, in December 1999 the UN Security Council passed a further resolution aimed at clarifying the terms and conditions under which sanctions could be 'suspended'. The new resolution, UNSCR 1284, also attempts to improve the effectiveness of the oil for food program by allowing, amongst other things, for the lifting of the ceiling on the amount of oil which Iraq can produce in any six month period. Although Iraq is now pumping more oil than it has ever done since the introduction of sanctions, it has yet to accept the full terms and conditions of this new resolution arguing that the new weapons inspectorate, UNMOVIK, is no different to the discredited UNSCOM. Iraq insists that it has already complied with all UN Security Council resolutions.

There is little doubt that President Hussein is a ruthless and uncompromising dictator who has inflicted considerable suffering on his own people as well as those of neighbouring countries. Iraq will continue to pose a potential threat to international security as long as President Hussein remains in power. Yet, it is questionable whether after ten years of sanctions further political advantage can be gained from maintaining the present policy. A different, more creative policy, may be required which targets Iraq's ruling elite rather than the mass of its population.

Overview of the Humanitarian Situation

Even if the question of culpability remains disputed, there is general international consensus that over the last ten years the Iraqi people have experienced an unacceptably high level of social and economic deprivation. This deprivation has been well documented by NGOs and UN agencies operating in Iraq. This section of the report gives a brief insight into the state of Iraq's economy and the various mechanisms that the Iraqi people have developed to cope with the situation as it develops.

As has been noted, Iraq was by all accounts a developing, if not developed, country. Central to this development was Iraq's heavy reliance on oil revenue. However, the wealth of the country's oil reservoirs glossed over those inefficiencies commonly associated with maintaining a command economy, as well as the economic strains placed upon the country as a result of its eight-year war with Iran. In 1989 the oil sector contributed 61% to GDP, while other sectors like services, industry and agriculture contributed 22%, 12% and 5% respectively. By 1991 the lack of revenue from oil sales meant that the GDP level had fallen to three quarters of its 1990 level. Efforts to improve investment in other sectors were overshadowed by rampant inflation. In 1989, Iraq's GNP was about \$22,800 but in 1991 this had fallen to \$1,500. By 1995 the official exchange rate had deteriorated to \$1:ID3000. Although, this rate has now stabilised at \$1:ID2000, the average monthly salary of a middle level civil servant has stagnated at 5,000 ID.

The development of an economy based largely on oil made Iraq particularly dependent on imports. In the 1980s local food production supplied the country with only 30% of its food requirements. This meant that Iraq imported approximately 2,000 million tons of food per annum. In 1987, the Government of Iraq attempted to resolve this

problem by introducing intensive farming techniques and by importing modern agricultural machinery. The shift to intensive farming methods made Iraq's agriculture especially vulnerable to disruptions in investment flows. Prior to 1991, the Government invested approximately \$500m per annum in agriculture whereas over the last ten years the average annual investment in agriculture has been \$48m. By 1995, Iraq's inability to import agricultural spare parts meant that much of the country's agricultural infrastructure was in disarray.

Although the UN sanctions regime never prohibited the import of medicine or food, the lack of oil revenue during the early 1990s created significant shortages. In September 1990, the Government of Iraq introduced a food rationing system to overcome the deteriorating food situation, but by 1995 UNICEF and other UN agencies argued that the deterioration of the country's infrastructure had accelerated to the point where the country was experiencing pre-famine conditions. Although the oil for food program has alleviated the worse cases of malnutrition it has failed to prevent the further deterioration of the country's agricultural infrastructure. Since 1998 there have been frequent outbreaks of foot and mouth disease as well as sreworm, both of which had been under control before sanctions. These diseases combined with the record low levels of rainfall over the last three years have placed ever-greater pressure on the agricultural sector. As a result food prices have rocketed and a dual food economy has emerged which is inaccessible to the majority of Iraqis.

A similar position is evident in the case of water and sanitation. Before 1991 the centre/south of the country had a well developed water and sanitation system comprising over two hundred water treatment plants for urban areas and 1200 compact water treatment plants for rural areas. After ten years of sanctions, access to safe water in urban areas has fallen from 100% to 94% while in rural areas access has fallen from 71% to 41%. The per capita share of safe clean water has also decreased in urban areas from 270 litres per day to 171 litres per day while in rural areas it has dropped from 180 to less than 91 litres per day. The deterioration can be explained by ageing equipment, the lack of spare parts and poor maintenance. Another factor is the lack of investment necessary to supply Iraq's growing population.

The situation is compounded by poor sanitation. The WHO estimates in the centre/south of the country that 250-300 tons of solid untreated raw sewage is discharged directly into rivers each day and that only 25% of the population is served by piped sewerage systems. Power cuts of up to 12 hours have also severely disrupted services. A recent report by the Ministry of Health and the WHO found that in some governorates such as Basra and Thiqr, 40% of water samples were contaminated. The ICRC believes that there is a direct relationship between the disrepair of public services such as water, sanitation and electricity and the increase in disease epidemics and the deteriorating health situation in Iraq.

In August 1999, UNICEF and the Government of Iraq released the first surveys of child mortality in Iraq since 1991. The survey in south/centre showed that under five mortality had risen from 56 deaths per 1000 live births in the period 1984-89, to 131 deaths per 1000 live births in the period 1994-99. If the mortality rates in the 1990s had followed those seen in the 1980s then there would have been 500,000 fewer deaths of children under five. The 1991 UNDP Human Development Report illustrated that the average mortality rates for developing countries was 76 per 1,000 live births. Low

birth weight due to malnutrition of the mothers and/or premature delivery has also increased from 4.5% in 1990 to 23.8% in 1998. UNICEF reports that 1 in 5 children are malnourished and that 1 in 10 are acutely malnourished.

Iraq's hospitals have been so starved of investment that they are incapable of responding to this health crisis. The per capita expenditure on health before 1990 was about US\$90, while after ten years of sanctions it has fallen to US\$12. In addition to the shortage of medicine, there is a lack of basic medical equipment, such as blood bags and syringes, which prevent doctors from performing even basic surgery. Many of Iraq's hospitals are in severe need of rehabilitation. Doctors used to be the one of the best-paid professions, but the current monthly salary of ID30, 000 (\$15) has encouraged a number of doctors to emigrate. Although there has never been a formal embargo on education material the lack of available funds has meant that the remnants of Iraq's medical profession have been prevented from participating in the latest advances in medical science by a de facto cultural and intellectual embargo.

The decline in Iraq's health sector is mirrored in education. Prior to sanctions Iraq invested \$230m pa in education. This compares with the \$23m pa it currently invests in education through the oil for food program. A decade of under investment has meant that schools have not been maintained. There are severe shortages of basic schools supplies, classroom furniture, textbooks and teaching aids. UNICEF calculates that 60% of schools in the centre and south of Iraq are unsuitable learning environments. Schools have difficulty in retaining qualified and motivated staff. Lack of investment in teacher training means that poorly trained teachers are entering the profession. Until 1991 all teachers graduated from the government's teacher training institutes, today only 67% of teachers in the northern governorates and 91% in the centre/south of Iraq have this qualification.

The cumulative effect of sanctions is probably best seen at the household level. Insufficient incomes and rising food prices mean that those who can leave the country have already done so, while those who cannot have been forced to take two or even three jobs. The average monthly salary is \$2-5. It is not uncommon to find doctors and university lecturers working as taxi drivers, hotel receptionists and waiters. This brain drain, internal and external, as well as the process of deprofessionalisation has decimated Iraq's middle class and will have important repercussions for Iraq's future development as a stable and prosperous nation state.

The embargo has disrupted the structure of the family. Financial pressures have forced many families to sell their possessions and property and move back to live with their in-laws. It is not uncommon to find one wage earner supporting a household of 10-15 persons. Children are under increasing pressure to drop out of school. In 1999 school enrolment for students aged 6 was 66% whereas in 1989 it was 88%. Although no figures are available there are increasing numbers of working and street children. Disruption to the country's infrastructure means that there is little government response to new and emerging social problems like child prostitution. Many children live in houses which lack toys, books and other opportunities to learn and flourish. NGOs observe an increase in family conflicts, divorce and polygamy.

The embargo has become a way of life. There is little talk about sanctions and even less consideration of life after sanctions. While a small percentage of Iraq's

population has prospered, the vast majority has been reduced to a subsistence state where their only thought is about day to day survival and providing for their families. Conversations with older generations of Iraqis reveal a people self-confident, educated and keen to engage with the outside world. However, similar conversations with Iraqis in their twenties to early thirties reveal a population who have had little, or no contact with the outside world. There now exists a whole new generation of Iraqis who have no experience of life outside of the present sanctions regime. Inter-generational tensions are all too evident in any post sanctions debate about Iraq's position in regional and international affairs.

The erosion of Iraq's middle class, the declining knowledge base of its professional classes as well as that of its youth threatens to undermine Iraq's traditional tolerance. The emphasis on international security without due regard to its effect on society could result in long term problems both for Iraq's future development but also for its eventual reintegration into the international community.

The UN's Humanitarian Programme in Iraq

The United Nations' response to the humanitarian crisis is the oil for food programme. Humanitarian proposals were put forward as early as 1991 but disagreements between the United Nations and Iraq delayed the implementation of this programme until December 1996. Flaws both in the design and implementation of this programme have thwarted its effectiveness. UN agencies including UNICEF and UNDP have developed their regular country programmes to provide supplementary relief assistance which, when combined with the work of NGOs, make an important but limited contribution to the humanitarian effort.

Under the terms of the United Nations Security Council resolution (UNSCR) 986 Iraq was permitted to export \$2,000 million worth of oil over a six-month period. This programme has since been renewed for seven further periods of six months. Under UNSCR 1153, adopted in February 1998, the value of oil Iraq was permitted to export over a six-month period was increased to \$5,300m. Under UNSCR 1284, adopted in December 1999, the ceiling on Iraq's production of oil was lifted. The proceeds from the sale of oil are paid into a UN account where 53% finances the humanitarian programme in the centre and south of Iraq and 13% finances humanitarian projects in the three Northern Governorates of Iraq. 30% is paid into a UN Compensation Commission and the remaining 4% is allocated to operating costs and administration of the oil for food programme, UNSCOM and the Iraq/Kuwait Observation Mission which supervises the border between Iraq and Kuwait.

Under this programme, Iraq is entitled to purchase and import foodstuffs, medicine and medical equipment and other goods for essential civilian needs. It is also entitled to import some spare parts and equipment for use in the areas of water and sanitation, education, electricity, agricultural and mine clearance. Recent expansions to the programme have allowed Iraq to import goods necessary for a limited rehabilitation of civilian infrastructure as well as for some upgrading of its oil industry. The Government of Iraq is required to draw up a 'distribution list' outlining what it wishes to import for each six month period. This distribution plan is then submitted to a UN

sanctions committee in New York, commonly known as the 661 Committee, which then examines each contract against the criteria of the programme. Supplies provided by the oil for food programme are carefully monitored from the time they enter Iraq until the time they reach the end beneficiaries, the people of Iraq.

986 is by design a short term and temporary programme which is incapable of meeting the long term needs of the country. 986 operates on a six monthly basis which prevents any long term socio-economic planning. The programme is relief rather than development driven and is ultimately unsustainable. It is an input orientated programme, which makes little or no provision for institutional and individual capacity building. The programme, for instance, provides for a limited amount of medicines but does not allow the rehabilitation of the health infrastructure or for the training of medical staff, which is central to the safe and effective delivery of such medicines. The lack of a cash component in 986, which could be used for local procurement, further stifles the economy. Although the latest United Nations' Security Council resolution, UNSCR 1284, provides for a cash component, there is still no international consensus as to how this should be implemented in practice.

The oil for food programme discriminates against the centre and south of the country. The three northern governorates receive 13% of the humanitarian programme, while the centre/south of the country, which comprises 87% of the population, receives only 53% of the humanitarian programme. The southern city of Basra receives less humanitarian aid per head of the population than Dohuk, which is located in the north of the country. There seems little rationale for this division. Basra's infrastructure has been severely damaged as a result of the eight-year war against Iran and the subsequent Gulf war. As a port economy Basra has been particularly vulnerable to sanctions.

The programme encourages a top heavy and politicised bureaucracy, which is remote from, and insensitive, to the humanitarian situation on the ground. The Government of Iraq submits its distribution plan to UNOCHI which in turn submits it to the Office of the Iraq Program in New York, who then submits it to the UN's sanctions committee. At each of these stages contracts can be subject to delays and revisions. Each member of the 661 Committee has the right to veto any contract, which it considers to contravene the 986 guidelines. Even when authorisation has been granted further delays can be expected in securing the necessary funds from the UN bank account. Contractors also have to deal with national export departments, such as the Department for Trade and Industry, which might seek further clarification on individual contracts from the UN sanctions committee. The process is protracted and open to political interference.

The effectiveness of the humanitarian programme has suffered considerably, not only because of shortfalls in the funding levels for earlier phases of the programme, but also because of the very large number of applications placed on hold, in particular those concerning electricity, water and sanitation, transport and telecommunications. The same applies to the very large number of holds on applications for spare parts and equipment in the oil sector. At the time of study, 8 May 2000 there were \$1.84b worth of contracts on hold by the 661 Committee pending further investigation (See Table One). This represents 13.5% of the total number of contracts submitted by the Government of Iraq under the oil for food programme. The number of contracts on

hold has increased significantly since Operation Desert Fox and the departure of UNSCOM from Iraq in December 1998. As a rule, the total value of contracts on hold fluctuates between \$1.5b and \$2b. Two members of the 661 Committee, the United States of America and the United Kingdom, remain concerned that without effective monitoring there is no way of guaranteeing that all supplies authorised by the 661 Committee, including potential dual-usage items and/or spare parts are utilised for the prescribed purpose.

The Government of Iraq has not helped to facilitate the smooth implementation of 986. The Government sees the 986 programme as an infringement of its sovereignty. While the Government of Iraq is responsible for implementing the oil for food programme in the centre/south of the country, the United Nations is responsible for the programme's execution in the north of Iraq. The Iraqi Government is keen to impose some control over 986. For example, the Government insists that all medicines entering the country pass a quality control test. While this is its prerogative and although less than 2% of medicines fail this test, it does create unnecessary delays in the delivery of vital medicines. Similarly the Ministry of Health insists that 15% of medicines should be retained as a buffer against emergencies, like outbreaks of cholera or flu. Although this figure is well below the WHO guidelines of 25% retention stock, it does make the Government of Iraq susceptible to the charge that it is diverting essential medicines away from civilian needs. The Government is reluctant to move away from a six monthly to a yearly phased based programme as it believes that this would give the programme greater permanence. It has sometimes used the 986 system as form of patronage and issued contracts to dubious and unreliable suppliers. It has also introduced a number of obstacles, which prevent the UN's humanitarian observers from carrying out their tasks, which in turn undermine the 661 Committee's confidence in the ability of the UN monitors to fulfil their mandate. This mutual mistrust has contributed to downward spiralling in the efficiency of the 986 programme.

TABLE ONE
STATUS OF APPLICATIONS (ALL PHASES)
As of 9 May 2000

<i>Sector</i>	<i>Number on Hold</i>	<i>\$ value on hold</i>	<i>Percentage on hold</i>
Agriculture	64	\$125,012,424	14.97%
Education	89	\$64,326,649	21.67%
Electricity	162	\$498,621,241	28.79%
Food Basket	2	\$1,233,750	0.02%
Food Handling	72	\$260,379,542	25.64%
Medicine	110	\$178,090,274	13.44%
Telecom	55	\$214,179,922	87.37%
Water/San	65	\$160,341,152	25.62%
Oil Spares	578	\$343,125,531	31.31%
<i>TOTAL</i>	<i>1197</i>	<i>\$1,845, 310, 485</i>	<i>13.51%</i>

The failure of the United Nations and the Government of Iraq to resolve their differences over weapons inspectors has adversely affected the implementation of the humanitarian programme. UN agencies like UNDP, UNICEF and FAO have used their regular country funding to develop supplementary relief programs. UNDP, for

instance, has assisted the Government of Iraq in rehabilitating a chlorine production plant in Basra, which is now capable of meeting the country's chlorine needs. UNDP has also developed small income generating projects for disabled people and other highly vulnerable groups. Although these are important projects their success has been curtailed by their own budgetary constraints. In this respect, NGO's such as Care International, Enfant du Monde, Premier Urgence provide more comprehensive relief programmes than UN agencies such as UNDP. Care International, for instance, has an annual budget of approximately \$5m, which enables it, amongst other things, to rehabilitate water purification plants and to repair the distribution network between the plant and local institutions, like schools and hospitals. However, all NGOs recognise that aid and handouts cannot be a substitute for a country's long term economic development.

Efforts to rehabilitate Iraq's basic infrastructure, most of which is in an appalling state of disrepair, have been undermined by the continued political stalemate. It can be questioned whether the successful implementation of the humanitarian programme should be so dependent upon progress made in military and security matters. Unless there is a review of applications placed on hold, and a simplification of the sanctions regime then the situation will deteriorate further.

Indigenous Religious Responses

Although no exact statistics exist, it is believed that the Christian community makes up 3.5% of Iraq's 22m population. The majority of Christians are Chaldean Catholics but there are also Syrian Catholics, Armenian Catholics, and Latins. In addition to this sizeable Catholic community there are also Orthodox Syrians, Armenians, Greeks, Assyrians and Coptics as well as a National Evangelical Protestant Community. Prior to sanctions there was a small but vibrant Anglican community in Iraq.

Despite the relatively small size of Iraq's Christian community, Christians make up a disproportionately large percentage of Iraq's middle class. It is estimated that in professions such as medicine and teaching, Christians make up anywhere between 10-15% of the total and as such they have experienced the full force of sanctions. Conversations with local religious leaders reveal that over the last ten years the size of the Christian community has shrunk with a number of Christians choosing to emigrate. In the absence of reliable data, it is hard to ascertain the extent of this exodus. However, some religious leaders suggest that there are now six Christian women for every one Christian man. There has been a reported increase in interfaith marriages.

Churches provide important welfare services to the local community and can often be found distributing supplementary food parcels, clothing and bedding to those families most in need. There are also a number of religious orders, which have developed outreach programmes. The Chaldean Sisters of the Immaculate Conception, for instance, have a number of convents throughout Iraq, which service the sick, minister to the poor and provide pastoral care to abandoned girls. In addition, the Chaldean Sisters of the Sacred Heart of Jesus have six convents in Iraq which offer social and health care and take care of illiterate girls and women. In 1991 the Mother Theresa Sisters arrived in Baghdad, at the invitation of

the Government of Iraq, to assist in the care of mentally and physically handicapped and abandoned children.

At the time of writing CARITAS International and the Middle East Council of Churches (MECC) are both active in Iraq. CARITAS is active throughout the country, whereas the MECC is confined to the centre and south of the country. Both organisations work with and through local churches as well as other NGOs. Their work can best be described as emergency relief and includes the distribution of supplementary food, clothing and bedding to hospitals and the most disadvantaged groups. They are also engaged in rehabilitating some parts of the country's infrastructure. The MECC, for instance, has assisted, on a small scale, in rehabilitating water treatment plants, primary health care centres, and sewage works. More recently the MECC has helped the Ministry of Agriculture in setting up a project for the production of a new variety of tomato which produces higher yield through reducing seed wastage.

The Church of England and Iraq

The Church of England has become increasingly concerned at the deteriorating condition in Iraq. In 1999 Coventry Cathedral's International Centre for Reconciliation organised a senior Church of England delegation to Iraq (May 3-10, 1999), as well as a reciprocal visit of Iraqi religious leaders to the United States of America and the United Kingdom (September 20-30, 1999). As a result of these bridge building initiatives, the BSR's International and Development Affairs Committee's submission to the House of Commons' International Development Committee's inquiry into the future of sanctions argued that while not wanting to absolve the Iraqi government from its responsibility for precipitating the present crisis, it was clear, that sanctions in their present format are unacceptable because they are hitting the weakest and most vulnerable within society. There is no reason to alter this conclusion.

In response to the humanitarian crisis, Coventry Cathedral's International Centre for Reconciliation has been working with the Flying Hospital, a UK based charity, to send up to 80 doctors and nurses to Iraq. These medical staff will help with complicated surgery and assist in retraining some of Iraq's medical staff lecturing in Iraq's medical colleges. It is hoped that this initiative will help to compensate for the ten-year knowledge gap, which has emerged as a result of the embargo. The success of this project has been dependent upon maintaining the good will of Iraq's Ministry of Health and the United Nations sanctions committee.

The BSR's International and Development Affairs Committee has helped to raise public awareness of the need for a thorough revision of the current sanctions regime. It has repeatedly argued that humanitarian considerations should become the central principal informing any sanctions policy. In August 1999 the International and Development Affairs Committee (IDAC) organised a one-day consultation between churches and NGOs designed to develop greater collaboration on the subject. This meeting encouraged greater ecumenical consultation, which resulted in a senior church delegation meeting with Peter Hain, Minister of State at the Foreign and

Commonwealth Office, on 19 June 2000. The IDAC had a subsequent meeting with Peter Hain on July 10, 2000. It is anticipated that further representations will be made in the future.

Opportunities exist for other forms of engagement with the humanitarian relief effort in Iraq. Churches could consider financially supporting the ongoing relief work of the MECC or one of the UN agencies like UNDP, which is doing important work providing micro credit for vulnerable groups of people. The BSR's IDAC continues to work with Christian Aid and Coventry Cathedral's International Centre for Reconciliation in raising public awareness of the humanitarian situation in Iraq.

Conclusion

In 1999, UN Humanitarian Panel concluded that "the gravity of the humanitarian situation of the Iraqi people is indisputable and cannot be overstated". The vast majority of the Iraqi civilian population is suffering grievous harm both physically and psychologically as a direct result of the sanctions policy imposed on the country by the UN Security Council. The harm caused by the comprehensive sanctions policy, both to the country's infrastructure and to its civilian population is disproportionate to the good so far achieved. Iraq's decline from relative prosperity to poverty constitutes a social disaster that needs to be challenged and reversed. As stated by the House of Commons' International Development Committee's report into the future of sanctions: "the UN will lose credibility if it advocates the rights of the poor whilst at the same time causing, if only indirectly, their further impoverishment".

There are a number of measures that the United Nations Security Council could take, independently of the Government of Iraq, to improve the situation. The UN's sanctions regime could be streamlined and a concerted effort made to reduce the number of contracts on hold. The UN should press head with plans to undertake a comprehensive, multidisciplinary assessment of the present situation in Iraq. The results of such a study should be used to inform the political decision making process and progressively challenge the existing policy framework. It is possible, however, that even if such steps were taken there would only be a modest improvement in the implementation of the oil for food programme. For this reason the United Nations should also consider substituting the present sanctions regime with an arms embargo and financial sanctions specifically targeted against the Iraq's ruling elite. Such an alternative might be more effective than the current sanctions policy, which after ten years is unlikely to yield further political dividend, without creating further human suffering.

This paper only has the authority of the Committee by which it was prepared.

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