Protection Platform Protection Monitoring Report #4 – August 2023

The tools used to collect data for this protection monitoring exercise were developed by members of the Protection Platform in early 2023 and were last revised in July based on feedback received during the pilot phase. The tools cover a wide range of protection-related concerns, including safety and security, access to basic rights and services (including education, labour market, healthcare and social safety net programmes), child protection risks and incidents of gender-based violence and the adverse effects of climate change and disasters. The findings from this exercise serve as the evidence base for a series of protection-related recommendations and advocacy messages found in the conclusion of this report.

Data Collection

Between 1-31 August 2023, participating entities[1] conducted **2,124 household-level assessments, 642 key informant interviews and 114 focus group discussions** across 16 governorates in Iraq (14 in Centre-South and 2 in the Kurdistan Region). In line with the principles of the Protection Platform, protection monitoring data collection included responses from several population groups, including refugees, asylum-seekers, internally displaced persons (IDPs), IDP returnees, stateless persons and vulnerable members of the Iraqi host community.

Protection Monitoring August 2023 – Responses by Population			
Population Type	**# of household-level assessments (HHs)**	**# of key informant interviews (KIIs)**	**# of focus group discussions (FGDs)**
Refugees & Asylum Seekers	430	104	9
IDPs	606	236	29
IDP Returnees	894	216	69
Stateless Persons	8	1	-
Vulnerable Non-Displaced Iraqis	186	85	7

Protection Monitoring August 2023 – Responses by Governorate			
Governorate	**# of household-level assessments (HHs)**	**# of key informant interviews (KIIs)**	**# of focus group discussions (FGDs)**
Anbar	21	64	11
Babil	3	5	-
Baghdad	10	14	1
Basra	10	13	-
Diyala	20	32	2
Erbil	7	6	-
Karbala	5	9	-
Kirkuk	228	89	15
Missan	1	5	-
Najaf	4	8	1
Ninewa	1,066	189	50
Qadissiya	-	2	-
Salah Al-Din	341	84	22
Sulymaniyah	394	112	11
Thi-Qar	2	5	-
Wassit	2	5	-

The geographic coverage and population profiles included in this exercise are dependent on the capacity of the participating entities, and thus the limitations of the data should be taken into consideration. Data collection was much higher in Federal Iraq this round as compared to the Kurdistan Region (KR-I), where Sulymaniyah was the only governorate with significant coverage. More than half of household assessments in this round were conducted in Ninewa, mostly with IDPs and IDP returnees. Across all categories, IDPs and IDP returnees in Kirkuk, Ninewa and Salah Al-Din were overrepresented compared to other population profiles. The majority of refugees and asylum-seekers included in this round were based in Sulymaniyah,

[1] *Danish Refugee Council (DRC), Heartland Alliance International (HAI), International Organization for Migration (IOM), International Rescue Committee (IRC), INTERSOS, Legal Clinics Network (LCN), Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) and Terre des Hommes Italy (TDH-Italy).*

and thus conclusions cannot be drawn regarding the overall protection concerns for refugees and asylum-seekers across Iraq. Whilst this is the second round to include data from stateless persons, the numbers are not yet significant enough to draw meaningful analysis from them. As the current data does not yet sufficiently represent all population groups and areas of geographic coverage, it is not feasible to produce an analytical report which identifies broad protection trends or comparison. This is improved upon during each round of data collection with the adjustment of monitoring tools and the addition of new protection monitoring partners from the members of the Protection Platform.

Profile of Respondents: Household-Level Assessments

Of the 430 household-level assessments conducted with refugees and asylum seekers this round, 86 percent were conducted with Syrian refugees and asylum-seekers, followed by Iranian (10 percent), Palestinian (3 percent) and Sudanese (<1 percent). Native languages among respondents were Arabic (44 percent), Badini Kurdish (43 percent), Sorani Kurdish (12 percent), Turkish and Farsi (both < percent). Household respondents were equally divided by gender (50 percent male, 50 percent female). The majority of refugee and asylum-seeker household respondents were from Sulymaniyah (62 percent), followed by Ninewa (18 percent) and Kirkuk (8 percent), with the remaining 12 percent spread across the other governorates.

Of the 606 household-level assessments conducted with IDPs, 54 percent of respondents were female and 46 percent male. The majority of IDP respondents for this round were based in Ninewa (56 percent), followed by Sulymaniyah (21 percent), Kirkuk (14 percent) and Salah Al-Din (8 percent), with the remaining 1 percent spread across the other governorates.

Of the 894 assessments conducted with IDP returnees, 41 percent of respondents were female and 59 percent male. The majority of IDP returnee household respondents for this round were based in Ninewa (67 percent), followed by Salah Al-Din (24 percent) and Kirkuk (7 percent), with the remaining 2 percent spread across the other governorates.

For vulnerable non-displaced Iraqi respondents, of the 186 assessments conducted, 51 percent of respondents were female and 49 percent male. Some 41 percent of vulnerable non-displaced Iraqi respondents for this round were based in Salah Al-Din, followed by Ninewa (24 percent) and Kirkuk (23 percent), with the remaining 12 percent spread across the other governorates.

The majority of respondents across all population groups were adults between the ages of 35-59.

For more detailed information about the profiles of respondents, as well as information on key informants and focus group discussions, please see the Protection Monitoring Dashboard.

Protection Analysis

Safety and Security

The majority of household assessment respondents across population groups reported a general feeling of safety and security. Refugees and asylum-seekers (71 percent) and IDPs (64 percent) were more likely to report zero security incidents in their areas in the last three months than IDP returnees (51 percent) and vulnerable non-displaced Iraqis (45 percent). For those who reported security concerns, the most prominent security concern amongst refugees and asylum seekers was **lack of documentation** (13 percent among household assessment respondents) and **restrictions on freedom of movement** (11 percent). For IDPs (28 percent), IDP returnees (28 percent) and vulnerable non-displaced Iraqis (21 percent) assessed at the household level, the main security concern was also **lack of civil documentation**. The

second-most reported concern among IDPs and vulnerable non-displaced Iraqis was also freedom of movement restrictions. For IDP returnees, and particularly for those in the Sinjar district of Ninewa, it was **destruction of civilian property**.

Among focus group discussants, male and female IDPs and IDP returnees in **Salah Al-Din** (Shirqat, Tikrit, Tooz) reported the lowest levels of safety and security, with weekly security incidents occurring in their communities. IDPs in Tikrit noted regular instances of **theft, kidnapping** and a **general lack of social cohesion** among community members. IDP returnees in Shirqat reported **intimidation by security forces** and **discrimination** between returnees and those who were not displaced. When asked about their perceptions of the main causes for security incidents in their localities, key informants across all population groups named **lack of economic opportunities** as the principal factor.

When asked about **movement restrictions** faced by their communities, IDP returnee focus group participants in **Ninewa** (Mosul) reported issues with crossing checkpoints and women reported being subjected to searches. Syrian refugee and asylum-seekers in **Sulymaniyah** (Halabja) reported difficulties traveling to other governorates in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (such as Erbil), **even when in possession of a residency card and UNHCR certificate**.

Focus group participants across geographic locations and population groups reported instances of **discrimination** against specific communities in their area. IDP returnees in Ninewa (Mosul) reported discrimination on the grounds of **race, ethnicity, religion, gender and tribal affiliation** in their communities, with impacts on access to basic services and livelihood opportunities. Iranian refugees and asylum-seekers in Sulymaniyah reported instances of **harassment** based on gender and nationality. Syrian refugees and asylum-seekers in Najaf reported being discriminated from access to basic rights and services due to their nationality.

Access to Legal Services

Reports of barriers to access to legal services, assessed at the household level, were higher among IDP returnees (43 percent), vulnerable non-displaced Iraqis (34 percent) and IDPs (33 percent) as compared to refugees and asylum-seekers (9 percent). The main challenge reported by refugees and asylum-seekers (20 percent) was **lack of registration with the Permanent Committee of the Ministry of Interior (PC-MOI)**, applicable to refugees and asylum-seekers in Federal Iraq. For IDPs (28 percent), IDP returnees (24 percent) and vulnerable non-displaced Iraqis (25 percent) the main barrier to accessing legal services reported was **lack of affordable transportation**. Additionally, IDPs and IDP returnees in Salah Al-Din and Ninewa reported a strong perception of a **lack of available services in the area.** Among focus group discussants, IDP returnees in Ninewa (Mosul) reported a large number of barriers to accessing legal services, including discrimination, ongoing hostilities in their areas, and the lack of available services in their area.

Access to Documentation and Proof of Legal Identity

For refugees and asylum-seekers assessed at the household level, **access to UNHCR registration and a residency permit** was heavily dependent on geographic location. For example, 90 percent of refugees and asylum-seekers assessed in Sulymaniyah reported having access to registration and a residency permit, whilst the numbers were significantly lower for refugees in Federal Iraq, including Anbar (67 percent, with most reporting from Fallujah district) and Ninewa (26 percent)[2]. Whilst the numbers are small, none of the ten

[2] There are also significant variations at the district level: Mosul (83 percent), Telafar (42 percent), Ba'aj (17 percent).

households assessed in Baghdad reported having access to UNHCR registration and a residency permit. For those in Baghdad, the main reasons reported were time restrictions due to curfews/movement restrictions as well as a lack of information on how to register.

In Ninewa, the main perceived barrier to access to registration was the **presence of security actors and checkpoints** as well as a lack of necessary documentation to travel to a UNHCR office in the area.

For civil documentation, the numbers of IDP returnee (46 percent), vulnerable non-displaced Iraqi (41 percent), and IDP households (41 percent) with at least one member **lacking one or more core civil documents** were relatively equal. For IDPs, location proved significant, as IDPs in Ninewa (59 percent)[3] and Salah Al-Din (42 percent) were more likely to report missing one or more core civil documents than IDPs in Kirkuk (26 percent). None of the IDPs assessed at the household level in Sulymaniyah reported missing any core documents.

Focus group discussion participants in Ninewa (Mosul) and Kirkuk (Kirkuk) identified members of the community who were at risk of **statelessness**, including persons **perceived to be affiliated with Da'esh**. IDP returnees in Mosul also noted the presence of **Bidoons** in the community who they perceive to be at risk of statelessness.

Access to Livelihoods

Focus group discussants across all population groups and locations reported limited opportunities to access livelihoods. IDP returnees in Ninewa (Mosul) and Salah Al-Din (Tikrit, Shirqat) reported no access to livelihoods on account of discrimination against their communities. Perceptions of access to livelihoods across Sulymaniyah varied widely by population; Syrian refugees and asylum-seekers reported full access to livelihood activities, whilst Iranian refugees and IDPs (Ashti camp) reported no access. Focus group discussants across all groups saw very few alternatives for accessing livelihoods – IDP returnees in Mosul reported that members of the community were turning towards **criminal activity, including drugs and online blackmail** as a result. IDPs in Bzebiz, an informal site in Anbar, reported a reliance on **agricultural livelihoods.**

Child Protection and Education

Some 53 percent of key informants representing IDP returnees reported barriers to **accessing child protection services** in their communities, followed by IDPs (31 percent), refugees and asylum-seekers (19 percent) and vulnerable non-displaced Iraqis (4 percent). For refugees and asylum-seeker, IDP and IDP returnee key informants, the main barriers reported was a **lack of available services** in the area, particularly across Ninewa governorate.

Among households assessed, partial or full dependency on **child labour** was a highest among IDPs (18 percent, 4 percent fully dependent) and IDP returnees (17 percent, 4 percent fully dependent), followed by refugees and asylum-seekers (10 percent, 3 percent fully dependent) and vulnerable non-displaced Iraqis (8 percent, 3 percent fully dependent).

Focus group discussants from Syrian refugees and asylum seekers in Kirkuk (Kirkuk), IDP communities in Anbar (Bzebiz), Kirkuk (Kirkuk), Salah Al-Din (Shirqat, Tikrit) and Sulymaniyah (Ashti camp), IDP returnees in Kirkuk (Hawija), Ninewa (Hatra, Mosul) and Salah Al-Din (Tooz) and vulnerable non-displaced Iraqis in Kirkuk (Kirkuk) and Salah Al-Din (Shirqat) reported **child labour** as a common practice in their communities. Participants across all population

[3] There are also significant variations at the district level: Mosul (70 percent), Baaj (68 percent), Telafar (58 percent), Sinjar (46 percent), Hassansham U3 (44 percent).

groups reported that children often work long hours begging or selling small goods on roadsides.

Child marriage was reported as a common practice by Syrian refugee and asylum-seeker focus group discussants in Kirkuk (Kirkuk), IDPs in Anbar (Bzebiz) and Ninewa (Baaj) and IDP returnees in Ninewa (Mosul) and Salah-Al Din (Tooz). Focus group discussions participants across all population groups in the Shirqat district of Salah Al-Din reported child marriage as a common practice as well, including vulnerable non-displaced Iraqis. Discussants noted that the practice usually involves young girls dropping out of school and is often financially motivated or seen as a cultural tradition.

At the household level, 44 percent of IDP returnee families, 33 percent of IDP families, 27 percent of vulnerable non-displaced Iraqi families and 17 percent of refugee and asylum-seeker families reported having girl children who were **not enrolled in school**. There is a **gender disparity** as these are higher than the number of IDP returnee, IDP and vulnerable non-displaced Iraqi boy children out of school (40 percent, 30 percent and 19 percent, respectively). However, more refugee and asylum-seeker families reported having boy children out of school (19 percent) than girl children. For all population groups, the main reported barrier to enrolment in school was **poverty**, followed by involvement in child labour.

Gender-Based Violence Prevention and Response

At the household assessment level, the groups that reported experiencing the most **barriers to accessing GBV services** were IDPs (48 percent of male respondents and 40 percent of female respondents) and IDP returnees (46 percent of male respondents and 36 percent of female respondents). Barriers to accessing GBV services were reported more by female non-vulnerable Iraqi respondents (24 percent) than their male counterparts (20 percent). Barriers to accessing GBV services were lowest among refugee and asylum-seeker households (5 percent for male and 9 percent for female respondents). For male and female IDPs and IDP returnees, the most significant barrier to access GBV services was a perception of a **lack of available GBV services** in the area. This was the same for refugee and asylum-seeker women, but for refugee and asylum-seeker men the main barrier was the **high cost of transportation**. For male and female vulnerable non-displaced Iraqis, the main barrier to access was the **stigma surrounding GBV**.

Climate Change

More than half (53 percent) of vulnerable non-displaced Iraqi household respondents reported being directly impacted by a disaster or climate change, with highest rates in Salah Al-Din. Rates were nearly as high among IDP returnees (50 percent) and IDPs (47 percent), but significantly less for refugees and asylum-seekers (20 percent). The most common impacts reported across the country were the loss of livelihoods and water quality issues, particularly in urban areas.

In focus group discussions, Syrian refugees and asylum-seekers in Kirkuk (Kirkuk) and Halabja, IDPs in Halabja and IDP returnees in Kirkuk (Hawija), Ninewa (Hatra, Mosul) and Salah Al-Din (Shirqat, Tooz) reported impacts of climate change in their communities, including a loss of livelihoods and poor air and water quality. Water issues were particularly prevalent among discussants in Ninewa.

Action Items for Protection Advocacy

This data collection, though limited in its geographic and population scope, suggests that protection challenges for asylum-seekers, refugees, IDPs, IDP returnees and vulnerable Iraqi

nationals are often similar, with particular exacerbations related to specific profiles. It is clear that nationwide socio-economic instability is a driver of many protection risks, including for children. For displaced and non-displaced persons alike, access to documentation continues to be a prominent protection concern as it facilitates access to most basic rights, services, safety and security.

The data collected through the Protection Platform protection monitoring mechanism is essential to the advancement of the Platform's core mandate as a forum for high-level, strategic advocacy on a variety of protection issues for a broad population across Iraq. The initial insights highlighted in this report suggest the need to pursue further advocacy in the following areas:

- **Access to legal services** is an essential part of the ability to exercise fundamental rights. This includes **ensuring the right to low-cost or free-of-charge legal aid services,** such as those provided for in Iraqi criminal law and those proposed in the draft Legal Aid Bill currently with the Iraqi parliament. Additionally, measures should be taken to ensure that **persons with family members who are perceived to be affiliated with Da'esh** should not be excluded or discriminated against in trying to access legal support. **Legal awareness** initiatives informing refugees, asylum-seekers and IDPs on their rights in situations of displacement is also clear must be strengthening to more effectively address needs.

- While significant progress has been made on facilitating **access to core civil documentation** for those who are legally entitled to it, there are still persons in need. There is strong momentum within the Government of Iraq to overcome the remaining obstacles and stakeholders should continue to reflect upon ways to **streamline and expedite the process** of acquiring civil documentation.
- There is a need to increase awareness on and remove barriers to **accessing registration for refugees and asylum seekers**, including the ten households assessed in Baghdad during this protection monitoring round as well as other parts of Federal Iraq. Registration with UNHCR as well as with the Permanent Committee of the Ministry of Interior (PC-MOI) (if applicable) is an important pre-requisite for refugees and asylum seekers to be able to exercise their rights in Iraq and to access basic services. **Mobile registration missions** should be carried out in areas where a UNHCR office is not easily accessible.

- Efforts to increase awareness on and access to **social safety net programmes** for refugees, IDPs and vulnerable non-displaced Iraqis are crucial to overcoming socio-economic instability. Investing in the livelihoods of the country's most vulnerable populations will contribute to the overall economic resilience. Additionally, actions should be taken to ensure that all persons can access their **right to decent work**.

- All children, regardless of gender, location, or displacement status, should have **access to quality education**. There is an obvious **gender disparity** in access to education in Iraq amongst vulnerable population groups. Access to education is closely linked with socioeconomic mobility, and removing children from the education system decreases their ability to pursue livelihoods.

- Harmful practices such as **child labour** and **child marriage** must be discontinued immediately. Iraq is a signatory of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and laws against child marriage and child labour are enshrined in national laws, but more work is needed to ensure the **comprehensive implementation of child protection laws** (including the current draft child protection law) across the country to protect the rights of all children in Iraq.

- The effects of **climate change and sudden and slow-onset environmental disasters** in Iraq continue to raise alarm. Efforts should be made to support the Government of Iraq to take actions to address climate change with a **rights-based approach**, in line with its national and international human rights obligations.

Thank you to all participating actors in this initial protection monitoring exercise: Danish Refugee Council (DRC), Heartland Alliance International (HAI), International Organization for Migration (IOM), International Rescue Committee (IRC), INTERSOS, Justice Centre (JC), Legal Clinics Network (LCN), Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) and Terre des Hommes Italy (TDH-Italy).