

IOM-IRAQ SPECIAL REPORT

Syria Crisis Rapid Assessment



INTRODUCTION

Between August 1st and August 14th, 2012, IOM conducted a rapid assessment of populations in Iraq who had been affected by the conflict in Syria. The assessment was based in part on interviews conducted with Syrians and Iraqis who had recently been displaced from Syria. It was also based on key informant interviews conducted with border representatives, Ministry of Migration and Displacement (MoMD) representatives, local council representatives, and camp/ Transit Receiving Center (TRC) managers. During the course of the assessment, IOM monitors conducted 65 interviews with displaced Syrian families in Anbar, Dahuk, Erbil, and Sulaymaniyah. They also conducted 196 interviews in 15 governorates with Iraqis who had recently returned from Syria. In addition, monitors also interviewed 42 key informants. Results of the assessment are discussed in the following sections.



DEMOGRAPHICS

According to MoMD and local council representatives, nearly all recent arrivals from Syria are either Iraqi returnees or displaced Syrians. Those interviewed as part of the IOM assessment were all either Iraqis or Syrians. 59% of interviewed Syrian families were Kurdish and 41% were Arab. All of the interviewed Syrian families were Sunni Muslims. In contrast, just 3% of interviewed Iraqi returnees were Kurdish and 90% were Arab. 56% of interviewed Iraqi returnees were Sunni Muslims, 35% were Shia Muslims, and 7% were Christians.

Most Syrian and Iraqi families that have recently arrived in Iraq are headed by men. MoMD and local council representatives, however, report that there are also many female headed households among the recent arrivals. Most of these women find themselves as heads of household due to the death of a husband, divorce, or because their husband has stayed in Syria to protect property or to work. Some cases have also been reported in which the husband was prevented from leaving Syria. Among assessed Syrian families, 11% were female headed. The incidence of female headed households among assessed Iraqi returnee families was even higher, at 25%.

The average age in assessed Syrian families was 24, and for heads of household it was 37. In the Syrian group, interviewees were up to 82 years old, and 43% of the family members were 14 years old or younger. Among assessed Iraqi families, the average age was 25, and for heads of household it was 44. Assessed Iraqis were up to 89 years old, and 33% of the family members were 14 years old or younger.

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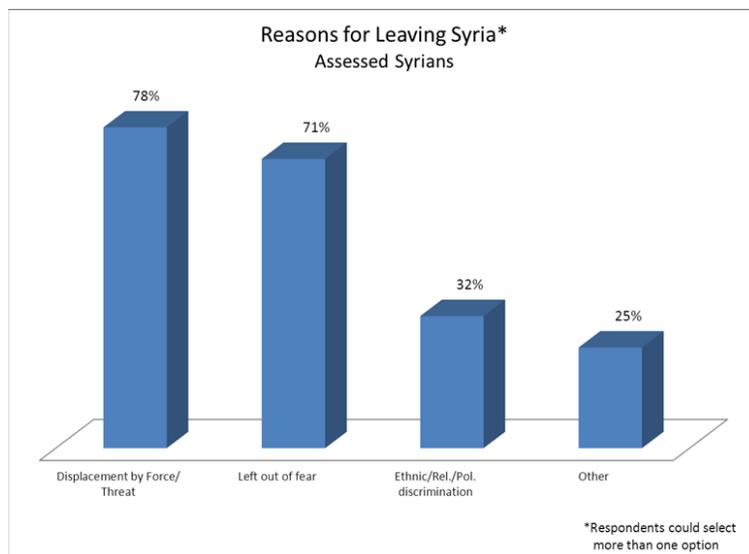
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MIGRATION PATTERNS

REASONS FOR DISPLACEMENT

Most assessed Syrian and Iraqi families report leaving Syria due to the conflict and unrest there. Asked to list the reasons for their displacement, 78% of assessed Syrians cited force or threat, 71% cited fear, 32% cited ethnic, religious, or political discrimination, and 25% cited other reasons (respondents could choose more than one reason). Among assessed Iraqi returnees, 54% cited a general fear of the current situation, 42% cited a direct threat to their life, 27% cited ethnic, religious or political persecution, 25% cited being forced to leave their homes, and 15% cited being directly assaulted.

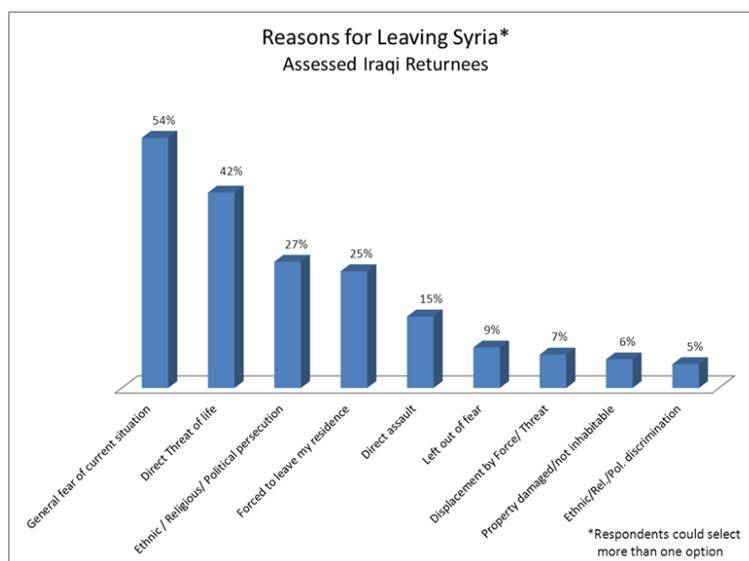


FUTURE PLANS / TRENDS

Nearly all of the MoMD representatives, local council representatives, border representatives, and camp/TRC managers interviewed believe that the number of arrivals from Syria will continue to increase over the coming months.

Most also believe that recent arrivals will remain in Iraq in the short term due to continuing instability in Syria. Some families plan to return to Syria if the security situation there improves, however MoMD representatives and other officials expect most to remain in Iraq long term.

Asked about their future plans, 63% of the assessed Syrian families who responded indicated that they plan to integrate locally in Iraq, 27% indicated that they are waiting on one or several factors to make a decision, and 10% indicated that they plan to resettle to a third location. None of the assessed Syrian families indicated plans to return to Syria in the near future. 67% of the assessed Iraqi families who responded reported that they intend to integrate locally, 17% are waiting on one or more factors to decide, 10% plan to resettle to a third location, and 6% plan to return to Syria. MoMD and local council representatives indicate that Syrian and Iraqi families' future plans depend largely on the local situation. If security, job prospects and other conditions in Iraq are acceptable, many will choose to stay. If not, families are more likely to consider returning to Syria.



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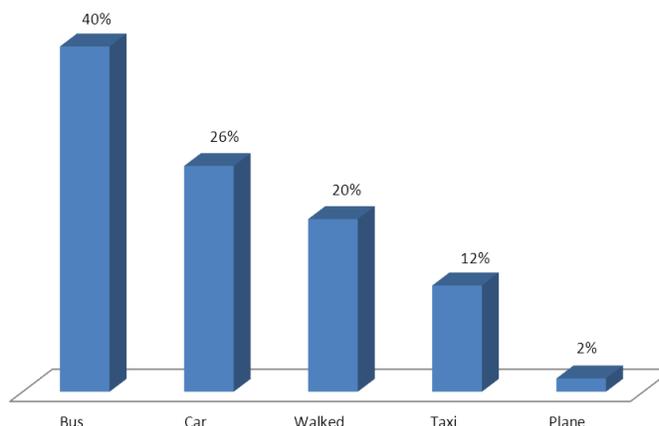


MIGRATION PATTERNS

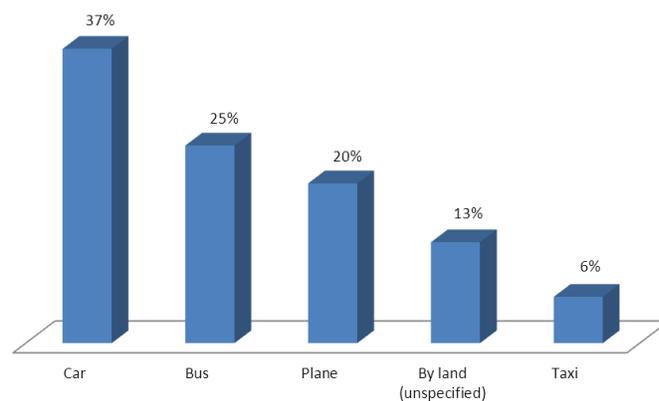
MEANS OF ARRIVAL IN IRAQ

MoMD, local council, and border representatives report that the majority of displaced Syrians and Iraqis returning from Syria arrive in Iraq by bus or other vehicle. 40% of assessed Syrians indicated that they arrived in Iraq by bus, 26% by car, 20% walked, 12% took a taxi, and just 2% arrived by plane. In contrast, 37% of assessed Iraqi returnees arrived by car, 25% by bus, 20% by plane, 6% by taxi, and 13% arrived overland by other means. Assessed Syrian families most commonly used the Qa'em border crossing to enter Iraq (40% of assessed Syrian families), whereas assessed Iraqi families most commonly used the Al-Waleed border crossing (31% of assessed Iraqi families).

Means of Arrival in Iraq
Assessed Syrians



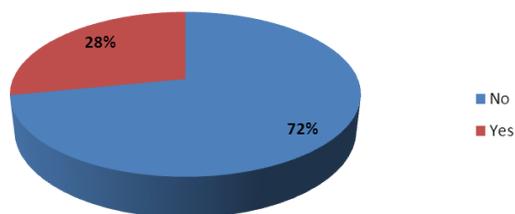
Means of Arrival in Iraq
Assessed Iraqi Returnees



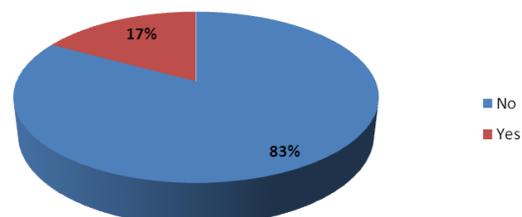
EXTRA BORDER FEES / BRIBES

Although the majority of assessed families did not have to pay extra fees or bribes to enter Iraq, the incidence was higher among Syrian than Iraqi families. 28% of assessed Syrian families reported paying excess fees or a bribe when they crossed into Iraq, whereas the proportion was just 17% among assessed Iraqi families.

Had to pay extra border fee or bribe
Assessed Syrians



Had to pay extra border fee or bribe
Assessed Iraqi Returnees



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LIVELIHOODS

FINANCES

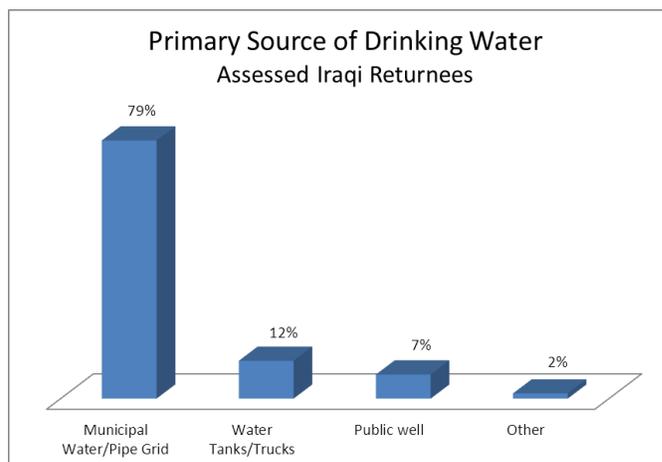
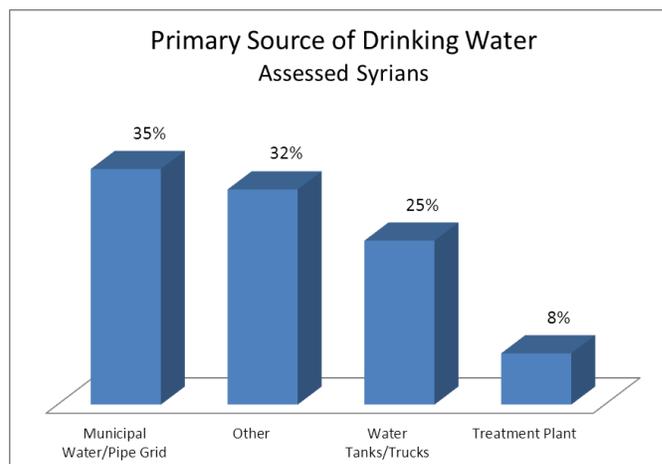
Local council representatives interviewed during the assessment report that most displaced Syrians and Iraqis returning from Syria are relying on savings or assistance from relatives to manage financially. Some have also dealt with the financial pressure by selling property in Syria or by taking out loans from family or friends. Representatives in Thi Qar report that families there have also started selling their personal belongings to meet financial needs. Economic pressure has also led some heads of household to stay in Syria so they can continue working and send money to support family members who have fled to Iraq. Although many Iraqi returnees are eligible to receive returnee financial grants, few of the recent arrivals have yet received them. Adding to the financial strain, many of the Syrians and Iraqis arriving in Iraq have limited savings to help them cope with displacement. Among assessed Syrian families, just 14% reported that they had access to savings. Compounding the problem, 27% of assessed Syrian families also reported that they were in debt. As for assessed Iraqi returnee families, 24% reported having access to savings and 34% reported being in debt.

FOOD

Among assessed Syrian families, 83% reported that they have access to food and 17% reported they sometimes have access to food. In addition, 55% reported that they had to change their diet since leaving Syria. 75% of assessed Iraqi families reported that they have access to food, 16% reported that they sometimes have access to food, and 9% reported that they do not have access to food. 34% of assessed Iraqi families indicated that they had to change their diet since leaving Syria.

DRINKING WATER

Drinking water sources varied between assessed Syrian and Iraqi families. Just 35% of assessed Syrian families reported using the public grid, while 25% reported relying on water trucks. In contrast, among the assessed Iraqi families, 79% reported using the public grid for drinking water and just 12% reported using water tanks or water trucks. This difference reflects the fact that a large proportion of displaced Syrians in Iraq live in camps and have limited access to the municipal water grid.



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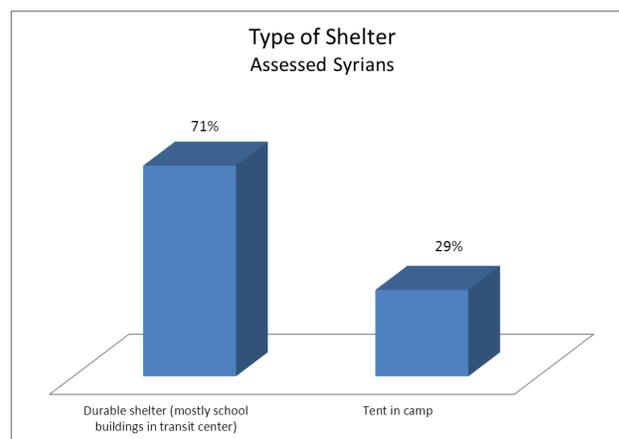
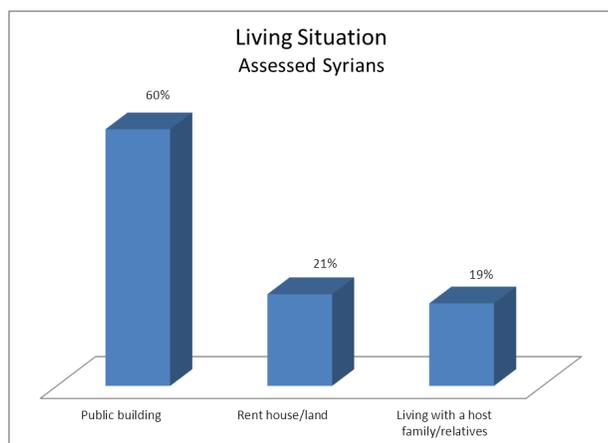
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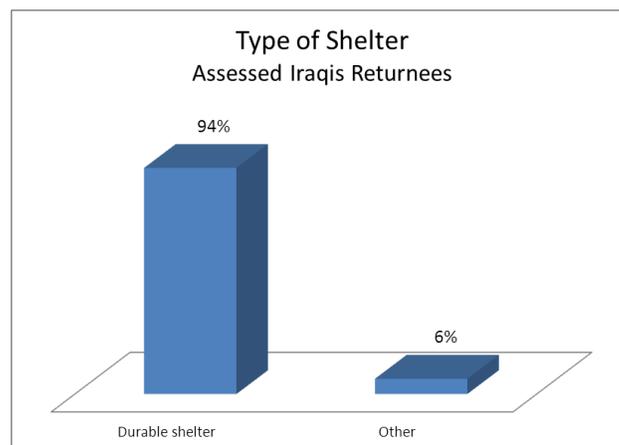
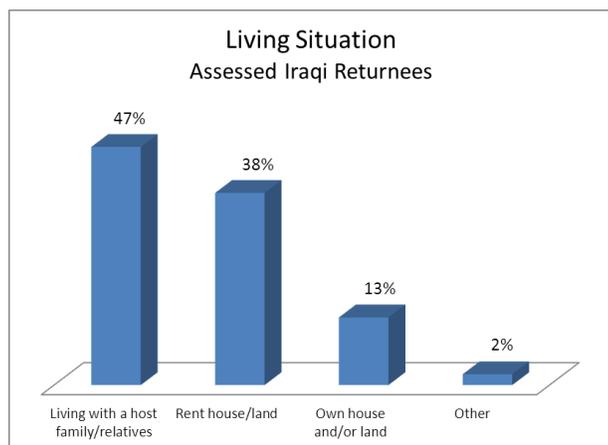
LIVELIHOODS

HOUSING

Most displaced Syrians in Iraq live in designated refugee camps or transit centers. Asked where they were currently living, 60% of assessed Syrian families who responded reported that they were living in a public building, 21% reported they were renting a house or land, and 19% reported that they were living with relatives or a host family. 71% of assessed Syrian families indicated that they were living in durable shelters (primarily in school buildings in transit centers), and 29% in tents in camps.



MoMD, local council, and border representatives report that most Iraqi families who have returned from Syria are currently living with host families or relatives. A smaller proportion of returnees rent homes or are staying in low-cost hotels. According to local council representatives, some returnees have also moved back to their original homes in Iraq. Among assessed Iraqi families who responded, 47% reported that they were living with relatives or a host family, 38% reported that they were renting a house or land, 13% reported that they owned their home or land, and 2% reported they were living in a military camp. In addition, 94% of assessed Iraqi families reported living in a durable shelter and 6% in other types of shelter.



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LIVELIHOODS

HEALTH

Many of the Syrians and Iraqis arriving from Syria suffer from health issues. According to the MoMD, local council, and border representatives interviewed, many recent arrivals complain that they suffer from physical and psychological problems. One MoMD officer in Baghdad estimated that 25% of those who have arrived are sick or injured. According to a border representative, arrivals are often suffering from fatigue after long journeys from Syria, and many have been injured as a result of the unrest there. Most assessed Syrian and Iraqi families reported having access to health facilities, however access was lower among Iraqi returnees. 100% of the assessed Syrian families indicated that they had access to health facilities, whereas the proportion was just 77% among assessed Iraqi returnee families.

REGISTRATION

DOCUMENTATION

Most MoMD representatives interviewed for the assessment indicated that Iraqis returning from Syria usually have the documents they need to register as returnees. Representatives report that returnees need both a passport and a national ID to register. Those who do not have these documents have to visit the National Centre for Returnees before they can register. One border representative reported that many Iraqi returnees have expired passports, but indicated that officers had been instructed to admit anyone with documentation proving that they were Iraqi. Although the parents in Iraqi families returning from Syria usually have the documents they need to register, their children sometimes do not. In some cases, returnee children have a birth certificate but no passport. Failure to secure appropriate documentation can have significant implications for both children and adults. A MoMD representative in Erbil reported that new arrivals must get a Kurdish resident to serve as a sponsor if they want to establish residence. These individuals need legal help to secure appropriate documents – particularly because their children cannot enroll in school there without them. Another MoMD representative in Kirkuk reported that some families do not have PDS cards and as a result they are unable to register (PDS cards, however, are not required for registration outside of Kirkuk). As for displaced Syrians, an MoMD representative in Anbar indicated that, due to the current situation, even Syrians without all required documents had been allowed to enter Iraq.

FAILURE TO REGISTER

Not all Iraqis returning from Syria register with the Iraqi Government. Some returnees do not know how to register or do not know that they need to register. Others do not register because they do not have their residency papers or because they have returned to their home villages. One MoMD representative in Diyala reported that some returnees are reluctant to register because of a rumor that those who register will be prevented from leaving again. Representatives suggested that IOM and others could help raise awareness about registration among the returnee population.

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REGISTRATION

REGISTRATION CAPACITY

MoMD staff report a variety of capacity limitations that make registration difficult. Many offices do not have sufficient staff to complete document verification quickly. This adds to the amount of time it takes for returnees to register and receive returnee grants. One MoMD representative in Baghdad, for example, reported that his office had only one employee in its legal committee to audit documents. In addition to having insufficient staff, MoMD representatives also report that many staff members are not properly trained and that offices often lack adequate equipment.



Interviews also indicate that different procedures are in place in different areas concerning the processing of returnee documents. This may indicate a need to establish standard operating procedures among all registration centers. MoMD representatives report that the registration process could be facilitated by offering quick courses or workshops to train MoMD staff, having proper equipment (computers, printers, stationary and archiving tools), increasing the number of staff in certain MoMD offices, and reducing the number of documents required for registration. An MoMD representative in al-Qaeem also suggested the need to create a form to gather information about arrivals and to establish a database to track that information.

HOST-COMMUNITY IMPACT

The arrival of displaced Syrians and Iraqis returning from Syria is likely to present challenges for host communities. MoMD representatives suggest that large numbers of arrivals could increase rental rates and competition for jobs in certain areas. Because most Iraqi returnees are living with relatives or local families, their arrival can create a special burden for the hosts. Iraqis returning from Syria have generally been welcomed by host communities, but many of the families hosting returnees already face economic challenges. Accepting more people into their homes leads to overcrowding that can strain host resources.

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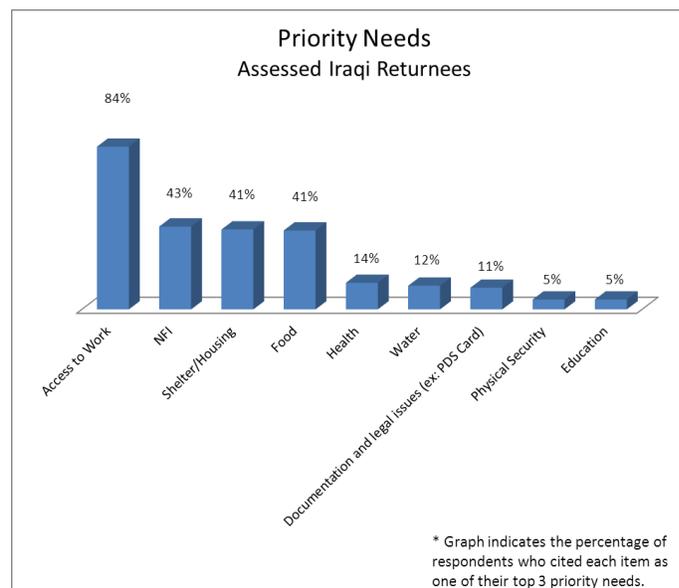
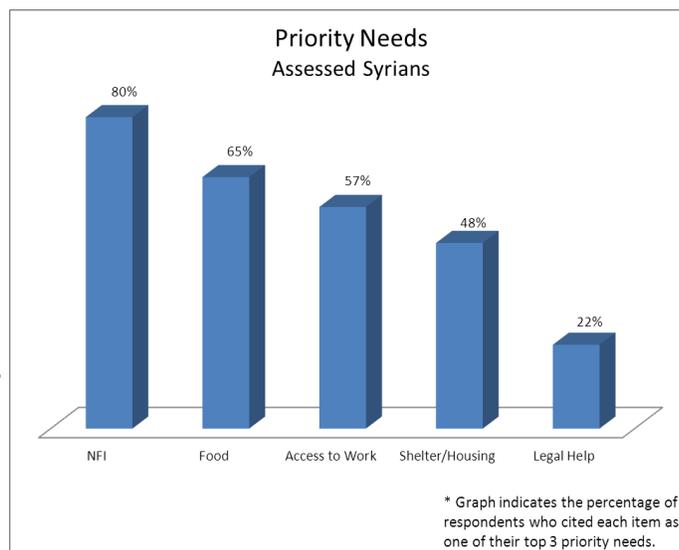
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NEEDS

TOP PRIORITY NEEDS

Both displaced Syrians and Iraqi returnees are in need of a variety of forms of assistance. According to MoMD and local council representatives interviewed during the assessment, top priority needs include employment, shelter, non-food items, and assistance securing legal documents. In addition, they indicated that access to financial aid, healthcare, food, water, and hygiene were also important needs. Assessed Syrian and Iraqi families reported a similar list of top priority needs. Among assessed Syrian families, 80% cited non-food items as one of their top 3 priority needs, 65% cited food, 57% cited access to work, and 48% cited shelter/housing. As for assessed Iraqi families, 84% cited work as one of their top 3 priority needs, 43% cited non-food items, 41% cited shelter/housing, and 41% cited food. One local council representative in Erbil reported that the biggest challenge facing people there is obtaining permission for residence. Securing such permission is only possible with the support of a Kurdish sponsor, making the process difficult for many. MoMD and local council representatives suggest that the best ways to assist those arriving from Syria is to help them find jobs that fit their skills and to provide them with financial assistance. They also suggest that it would help to encourage new arrivals to register with MoMD, for NGOs to provide emergency distributions, to decrease the time it takes to issue returnee grants, to assist arrivals with securing shelter and to assist them with securing legal documents. One border representative in Anbar also reported that it would be helpful to provide air conditioning in waiting rooms at the border crossing because people currently have to wait for long periods of time in the heat.



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DISPLACED SYRIANS

DISPLACED SYRIANS IN ANBAR

A large number of the displaced Syrians in Iraq are living in Anbar Governorate where many of them have tribal and family ties. At the time of the assessment, local council representatives reported that displaced Syrian families were being housed in 18 locations in Anbar. Most of those families were living in schools, health centers, or mosques in transit receiving centers (TRCs). Since then, a large portion of the families have been relocated to camps. Host communities have been welcoming, but have been prevented from providing shelter for the displaced Syrians due to legal restrictions and security concerns.

DISPLACED SYRIANS: SNAPSHOT OF A TRANSIT RECEIVING CENTER

CHARACTERISTICS OF ARRIVALS

Most displaced Syrians in Iraq are either living in transit receiving centers or one of several camps. During the assessment, IOM monitors interviewed a TRC manager in Anbar. At the time of the interview, the manager reported that there were a number of injured people and widowed women in the center. All of the center's residents were from the same rural area in Syria and many had arrived with limited financial resources. Most of those living in the center came to Iraq by bus, and the manager indicated that he expected more to continue arriving.

CONDITIONS

At the time of the interview, the manager reported that the center was hosting 189 individuals from 40 families. Families have to share 14 rooms in the center, which has led to overcrowding as multiple families live in a single room. Facilities in the center are generally inadequate for the number of people there. There is, for example, just one bathroom for men and one for women. There is a small clinic in the center, but according to the manager, supplies are inadequate. At the time of the interview, there were no educational activities in the center. Electricity is available approximately seven hours per day, and thanks to donors, the center also has air conditioners. In addition, the Iraqi Government has hired a contractor to handle garbage collection there. The center is currently under the control of the Iraqi Army, and residents cannot leave without permission.

FOOD AND WATER

The Government of Iraq regularly distributes filtered drinking water to families living in the center. Most get water for personal (non-drinking) use from the municipal grid, which is often unreliable. There is also a water truck which brings water to the center directly from the river. When Syrians first started arriving in the center, local residents provided food-aid. Since then, however, government agencies and Islamic organizations have taken over that responsibility. A Government-hired contractor now provides food to the center on a regular basis. There are no refrigerators in the center, however IOM donated 2 gas cookers which help families there prepare meals and make tea. The manager reported that aid agencies are currently providing assistance, but he does not think that assistance will continue indefinitely.

NEEDS

According to the TRC manager interviewed for this assessment, the Syrian residents' primary needs are improved shelter, diapers, sanitation, milk, water tanks, and filtered water. Families living in the center also need additional bathrooms and a more reliable source of water for washing.