Iraq Protection Platform Protection Monitoring Report No. 1 – April – May 2023

The questionnaire used to collect protection monitoring data were developed by members of the Protection Platform in early 2023. The tool covers 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. A broad range of populations are covered under the tool, including refugees, asylum-seekers, IDPs, IDP returnees, stateless persons, migrants and non-displaced vulnerable Iraqis.

The protection monitoring tool was piloted by two partner organizations, Heartland Alliance International and Legal Clinics Network in March. Based on the results of the pilot phase, minor technical issues were addressed and certain questions re-phrased to ensure respondents' ability to effectively share their perspectives. A training-of-trainers session on the protection monitoring exercise was held at the end of March for extended pilot participating organizations[1], who subsequently trained their enumerators in the following weeks. Protection monitoring was officially launched in mid-April. It is a dynamic exercise and future rounds of data collection will be tailored to ongoing developments. In addition, the scope of the protection monitoring coverage will be expanded to all Protection Platform's members in June 2023.

Data Collection

Governorate	# of Household-Level Assessments (HHs)	# of Key Informant Interviews (KIs)	# Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)
Babil	9	24	0
Baghdad	36	61	0
Basrah	23	46	0
Diyala	42	86	1
Erbil	24	26	1
Kerbala	15	33	0
Kirkuk	44	47	7
Missan	2	4	0
Najaf	13	24	0
Ninewa	264	122	2
Qadissiya	0	8	0
Salah Al-Din	129	69	22
Sulymaniyah	753	170	23
Thi-Qar	3	20	0
Wassit	6	21	0

Population Group	# HHs	# KIs	# FGDs
Refugees and Asylum-Seekers	728	[illegible]	11
IDPs	367	287	25
Host Community	268	202	20

Iraq Protection Platform Protection Monitoring Population Coverage – April – May 2023

In April and May 2023, participating entities conducted **1,363 household-level assessments, 761 key informant interviews and 56 focus group discussions** across 15 governorates in Iraq (13 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, and vulnerable members of the Iraqi host community.

The limitations of the data collection and analysis given the geographical coverage and population profiles included in this exercise should be taken into account. As the current data does not yet sufficiently represent all population groups[2] and areas of geographic coverage, it

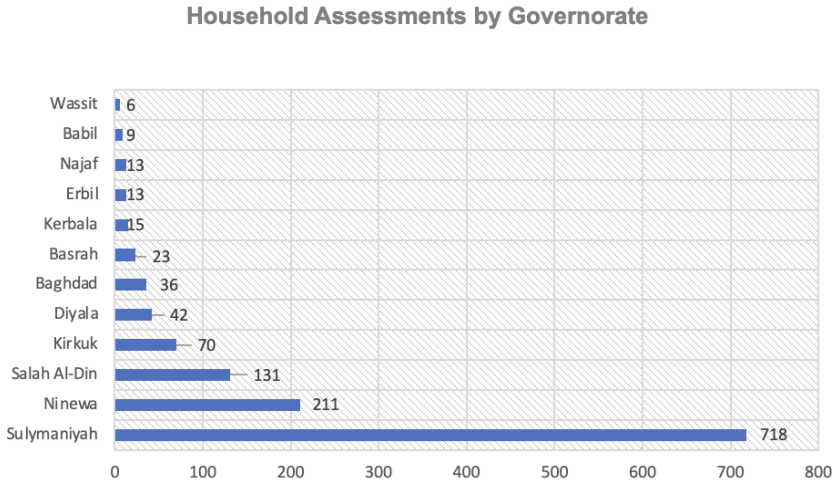
[1] *Danish Refugee Council (DRC), Heartland Alliance International (HAI), International Organization for Migration (IOM), International Rescue Committee (IRC), INTERSOS, Legal Clinics Network (LCN), Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) and Terre des Hommes Italy (TDH-Italy).*

[2] To read more about the development of the protection monitoring tool and the sampling methodology, please see this report.

is not yet feasible to produce an analytical report which identifies broad protection trends or comparison. This will be improved upon in future phases of data collection, particularly with the addition of new protection monitoring partners under the Protection Platform as of June 2023.

Population Profile – Household Assessments

Household-level assessments have been conducted with persons across diverse age, gender and location profiles. In the first round of data collection, approximately **55 percent** of household-level assessments were completed by women and **45 percent** by men. **Half** of the respondents were identified as refugees and asylum seekers (**87 percent** of whom are Syrian), **30 percent** were IDPs, **10 percent** were identified as vulnerable non-displaced Iraqis and **8 percent** were IDP returnees. The majority of assessments were conducted with households located in Sulymaniyah (**47 percent**), followed by Kirkuk (**14 percent**), Salah Al-Din (**9 percent**), with additional responses from Erbil and Centre-South governorates.



Protection Analysis

Several key protection issues were identified across the initial dataset. One particularly interesting feature is that, despite the variety of populations surveyed (internally displaced, non-displaced Iraqis, migrants and refugees), respondents often reported the same types of protection-related risks. This suggests that, rather than specific scenarios of displacement, there are larger systematic challenges at play in Iraq that affect everyone, but that people in a position of vulnerability may be more adversely affected.

Safety and Security

The majority of respondents across all geographic and population groups indicated a general feeling of **safety and security** in their current areas of residence or displacement (80 percent among household assessment respondents). Perceptions of a lack of safety were slightly higher in Salah al-Din focus group discussion participants highlighted security challenges in the Sinjar area of Ninewa for IDPs and IDP returnees. The most prominent security concerns for respondents were **lack of civil documentation** (17 percent among household assessment respondents) and restrictions on **freedom of movement** (13 percent among household assessment respondents), particularly for respondents located in Centre-South governorates. Male and female key informants in Salah Al-Din (Shirqat) and Ninewa (Al-Ba'aj) noted risks of detention and arrest for IDPs and IDP returnees in relation to restricted movement, either due to lack of proper documentation or other security reasons. Key informants also noted similar detention risks related to movement for Syrian refugees in Baghdad, Kirkuk, Najaf and Wassit.

In focus groups, refugees and asylum-seekers in Salah Al-Din and Basra reported difficulties crossing checkpoints (such as being subjected to searches) or travelling outside of their areas of residence/displacement due to a lack of necessary documentation.

Based on the limited data collected thus far, there are few reports of discrimination against specific ethnic and religious minority groups. This may change as additional data is collected from a wider variety of sources.

Access to Legal Services

Respondents from all population groups reported some difficulties in **accessing legal services**. This is particular the case in rural areas and those with active conflict; for example, 50 percent of households surveyed in Salah al-Din reported significant barriers to legal services. Generally, in the household assessments, women (13 percent) reported slightly more difficulties with access to legal services than men (11 percent). Across all population groups, **high transportation costs/lack of means of transportation** was the primary challenge reported in related to accessing legal services, as well as high costs of legal services, a lack of necessary documentation, and a general lack of information on access to legal services. These are interesting responses, as there are no required documents to access legal services provided by NGOs – this will be explored further in future reporting. The focus on the high costs related to legal services is also interesting given the wide variety of free-of-charge legal aid services available to displaced populations in Iraq as well as free-of-charge legal aid provisions guaranteed in Iraqi law (however, only in criminal cases). This could suggest that respondents may not be aware of the breadth of legal aid options available to them. Additionally, given the ubiquity of socio-economic instability as a protection concern for most respondents, any costs may feel burdensome, regardless of the amount.

Discrimination against particular population groups was raised by IDP and IDP returnees, with focus group participants in Ninewa and Salah Al-Din relaying that this is a particular issue for families with perceived affiliation to Da'esh. When asked about potential solutions, focus group participants from all population groups suggested that **increased awareness-raising** campaigns, particularly on opportunities to obtain **reduced-cost or free-of-charge legal aid**, could help many overcome these barriers to access to legal services.

Civil Documentation for IDPs, IDP Returnees and Non-Displaced Iraqis

The fundamental importance of **civil documentation** as a key component of accessing fundamental rights and services featured prominently in responses from IDPs, IDP returnees as well as vulnerable Iraqi persons. In the household assessments, approximately 54 percent of consulted IDP returnees, 41 percent of vulnerable non-displaced Iraqis, 28 percent of IDPs across the country reported that they were missing at least one core civil document. Reports of missing documents were recorded from respondents in Baghdad (vulnerable non-displaced Iraqi), Basra (stateless), Kirkuk (all population groups), Najaf (IDP), Ninewa (IDP, IDP returnee, and vulnerable non-displaced Iraqi), Salah Al-Din (IDP, IDP returnee, and vulnerable non-displaced Iraqi) and Sulymaniyah (IDP), with higher numbers in Ninewa and Salah al-Din governorates. Notably, 45 percent households that reported missing one or more core civil documents also noted that they had already applied for said documents. For those who had not yet applied, the overwhelming majority reported that they had not done so due to what is perceived as prohibitively high costs associated with obtaining documentation. This is an interesting response as, currently, individuals can apply for civil documentation through NGO legal partners for a processing fee only. Further questioning is needed to understand why applying for civil documentation is considered a costly process.

Socio-economic Instability

A common protection concern underpinning many ongoing challenges for displaced and non-displaced populations alike is the barriers in **access to employment** and a lack of **socio-economic security,** both in Federal Iraq and the Kurdistan Region. Those who were able to find job opportunities reported low salaries and a lack of stable work due to informal arrangements (i.e., day labour in construction or agriculture). Unemployment was widely reported across all populations and in all geographic areas, and **Syrian refugees** in particular reported experiencing **discrimination in the labour market**. Key informants representing Syrian refugees and asylum-seekers in Kerbala and Najaf reported that they are aware of incidents of labour trafficking in the community, including in the domestic and construction sectors. The consequences of socio-economic insecurity are widespread; approximately 30 percent of respondents from household assessments across all profiles cited poverty as the main reason that **children were not enrolled in school**. In focus group discussions, a lack of socio-economic independence was cited as a particular challenge for **women**, particularly among IDP, IDP returnees and vulnerable non-displaced Iraqis, and also noted as a potential contributor to domestic violence.

Climate Change

The effects of **climate change and disasters** are also impacting socio-economic prospects, particularly for IDPs and IDP returnees in the Centre-South governorates. The majority of household assessment respondents from IDP and IDP returnee categories in Salah al-Din, Baghdad, and Najaf reported a loss of livelihood impacted by the adverse effects of climate change, including a lack of sufficient irrigation systems for agriculture. While stress and anxiety were common impacts of climate change across governorates, respondents in Ninewa were particularly concerned about water quality and those in Salah al-Din reported issues with air quality. Overall, very few respondents saw climate events as a risk factor for further displacement (the highest rate was among IDPs at 6 percent).

Education and Child Protection

Several concerns related to the wellbeing of children across all profiles are reflected in the data collection. The number of school-aged IDP, IDP returnee and vulnerable non-displaced Iraqi **children who are not enrolled in school** is of significant concern. For the household-level assessments, families with girls who were not enrolled in school (52 percent of vulnerable non-displaced Iraqis, 47 percent of IDP returnees and 40 percent of IDPs) was larger than the number of families with boys not enrolled in school (33 percent of IDPs, 27 percent of vulnerable non-displaced Iraqis and 10 percent of IDPs) across all geographic locations. These numbers are accompanied by reports of **child labour** and **child marriage** practices in refugee, asylum-seeker and IDP communities. Focus group discussion participants noted that child labour and child marriage were two of the most prevalent reasons for children dropping out of the education system, and that these practices are seen as a means of economic support. The types of child labour (children below fifteen years old) reported by respondents include informal employment in the service industry, begging/street labour and supporting the family business.

Action Items for Protection Advocacy

This initial 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, with few respondents seeing a clear path towards improving the security of their livelihoods. For IDPs and non-displaced Iraqis, access to documentation continues to be a prominent protection

concern, and perceived affiliations to Da'esh across all communities are a major barrier to accessing rights, services and achieving 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 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.

- 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**.

- 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.

- Refugees, asylum-seekers, IDPs and other vulnerable persons are uniquely susceptible to the adverse impacts of climate change and disasters. Thus, there is an imperative need to **include refugees, asylum-seekers and other displaced persons in national and regional climate change action and mitigation strategies**, taking into account the specific vulnerabilities of these populations.

- 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** across the country to protect the rights of all children in Iraq.

- Adjust the piloted monitoring tool, based on limitations of the questionnaire identified during the pilot phase.

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, Legal Clinics Network (LCN), Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) and Terre des Hommes Italy (TDH-Italy).