

POPULATION OF CONCERN

246,051 Syrians refugees

KEY FIGURES

February 2016

2,964

Syrians arrived to KR-I through Peshkabout border

770

Syrians refugees returned to Syria

101

Persons were accepted for resettlement

46,608

Syrian refugees received WFP assistance

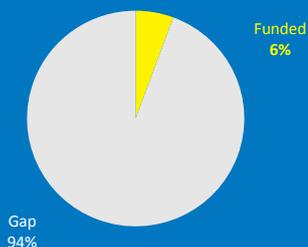
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Unaccompanied and separated children placed in alternative care

FUNDING

USD \$298,323,635

requested by agencies for the operation (source 3RP 2016 – Iraq)



PRIORITIES

- Counter the fragile protection environment for children and women
- Enhance livelihoods opportunities
- Improve long term shelter options
- Support education sector

IRAQ

INTER-AGENCY OPERATIONAL UPDATE - SYRIA

February 2016

HIGHLIGHTS

- A total of 2,964 Syrians arrived to KR-I during the reporting period, using Peshkabout border crossing point; bringing the total number of new-arrivals since January 2016 to date to 6,936 individuals.
- Only 18 of these arrivals were admitted as asylum seekers in February, upon arrival in Peshkabout border post: a drastic decrease this month, representing less than 1% of all Syrian arrivals. Other Syrians obtained a 15-day visa, as temporary visitors.
- A total of 803 individuals returned to Syria through the same border post (714 registered asylum-seekers and 89 unregistered Syrians). This corresponds to an increase of 8%, as compared to the previous month.
- As the economic crisis in the KR-I worsens, refugees are impacted firsthand, seeing their access to healthcare deprioritized, backlogs growing as they wait for their documentation to be processed and the few schools providing a curriculum in Arabic in danger of closure as teachers, along with other civil servants, have not been paid for months.



Young Syrian refugee arriving in KR-I at Peshkabout border point (Dohuk Governorate) 2015. UNHCR/R.Rasheed

UPDATE ON ACHIEVEMENTS

Operational Context

The security situation remained volatile in Central Iraq in February with armed militants fighting around Fallujah and Iraqi Security Forces gathering around Mosul.

Despite a steady increase in oil prices, the budget deficit remains significant both in Iraq and at the regional level in the KR-I, fueling a political and economic crisis across the country.

No agreement could be reached on budgetary issues between Erbil and Baghdad in February, despite several attempts at negotiation by both parties. As a result, public sector salaries have not been paid for the past months, significantly disrupting public services for the local and displaced population. The KRG proposition, as a temporary solution, to deduct a percentage off civil servants' salaries provoked social unrest in certain parts of the KR-I, further disrupting already thin-stretched services in the region. The situation is now becoming critical and this month, humanitarian actors in Erbil have been informed by local authorities that they do not have sufficient budget to cover the cost of fuel for generators in refugee camps, and non-camp areas, or for repair and maintenance of water systems. It has been estimated that without functioning generators, there will be 50 to 60 per cent less water available for displaced and host communities.

As the economic climate in Iraq continues to face challenges, the Kurdistan Region of Iraq is likewise affected by the region's population increase over the last 12 to 18 months, and the costs associated with the ongoing conflict against armed opposition groups. With approximately 245,000 Syrian refugees and more than 1 million IDPs competing with the host community for jobs and resources in KR-I, enormous pressure is applied on the public services and the absorption capacity of the host community.

Activities and impact



Young Syrian boy in Darashakran refugee camp (Erbil Governorate) 2015. UNHCR/C. Covens

OVERVIEW

There has been a sharp decrease of Syrian refugees admitted as asylum seekers at the border this month: the percentage of arrivals permitted to enter as asylum-seekers has seen a critical decline since October 2015, as an average rate of 3% seemed to be systematically applied by border authorities over the last months of 2015. In January 2016, admissions for asylum dropped to 2.5%, while in February the rate reached the insignificant figure of 0.6% of the total Syrian arrivals.

Tightened crossing procedures seem to have been put in place, and KR-I border authorities report that the low figures result from restrictive measures taken on the other side by Syrian border officials at the Semalka crossing point.

Recent trends show a growing number of Syrian refugee families wishing to relocate to refugee camps, a further indication of the impact of the economic situation on refugee families who have depleted their initial savings and now need additional support. Likewise, reports of a demographic shift in refugee camps due to continued migration of males to other countries raised protection concerns in February. If these migration trends are confirmed, the resulting increase in female-only and female-headed households in camps, along with young children or elderly persons, could translate into a significant increase in needs for additional assistance.

ACHIEVEMENTS AND IMPACT

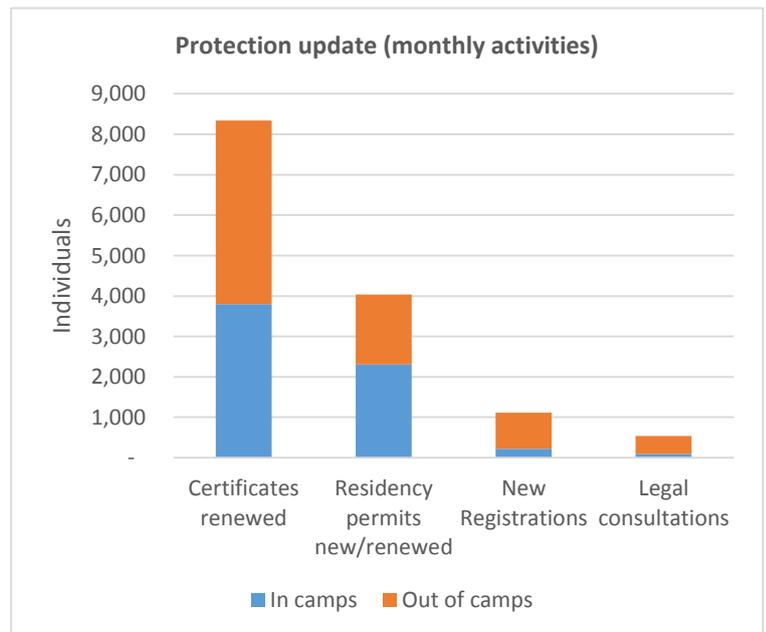
Considering the recent trends, and the shift in refugees’ needs, UNHCR and several partners launched a profiling exercise to assist the KRG, humanitarian and development actors in providing a comprehensive area-based response. Funded by DfID and led by a Steering Committee, the JIPS (profiling exercise) was completed for Erbil Governorate and preliminary findings were presented in February. The process is on-going in Dohuk and Sulaymaniyah Governorates and should be finalized before the summer.

- In Dohuk and Erbil Governorates, psychosocial support services opened for children living out of camp in Waar City and Shaqlawa which both host high numbers of Syrian refugee children. Mobile Child-Friendly Spaces serve all children regardless of nationality, allowing Iraqi displaced and Kurdish host community children to access the services along with Syrian refugees.

IDENTIFIED NEEDS AND REMAINING GAPS

With civil servants on strike and public services open a couple days a week only in some parts of KR-I, the waiting period for document regularization or court dates continues to increase, restricting freedom of movement and leaving families unable to access work, education and medical treatment in the meantime.

- In Dohuk Governorate, close to 800 newly arrived refugees are waiting for the issuance of their first residency card, while over 5,000 refugees have been waiting for 6 weeks or more for their expired residency card to be renewed by authorities.
- In Sulaymaniyah, the tribunal reopened on February 29, after a month and a half break, as civil servants were on strike over non-payment of salaries. It is now open 2-3 days a week only: processing the large back log of cases will thus take time, leaving some refugees in extremely precarious situations.



 Education

OVERVIEW

The financial situation in the KR-I continues to have serious adverse effects on the education system. While UNICEF and UNESCO are providing incentives for volunteer teachers, the teachers on contracts with the KRG Ministry of Education have reportedly not received salaries for up to six months. As a result, a large number of teachers have left for Europe and many others work fewer days a week. The latter means that more lessons take place in a shorter time, with larger class sizes, increasing the number of hours children spend in school on some days, but leaving them without lessons on other days. All of these factors have been noted to lead to low enrolment and high dropout rates among refugee children.

ACHIEVEMENTS AND IMPACT

- In cases of non-attendance at school or identified drop out, education actors engage with families, teachers and school principals to discuss the factors and attempt to resolve them. This month, the Parent Teacher Association (PTA) and UNICEF facilitators intervened to support the return to school of 15 students in Darashakran refugee camp.
- After coordination between UNHCR, UNICEF and the Principle of the Primary School in Darashakran, a social-worker will be assigned to coordinate a joint assessment on the main reasons behind school drop outs.

IDENTIFIED NEEDS AND REMAINING GAPS

- Greater efforts are necessary to enable children with disabilities to have access to regular schools. There is a need for specialized training for teachers to be qualified to teach children with disabilities. In addition it was identified that buildings are not disability-friendly, classrooms are overcrowded and children with disabilities do not feel safe in school. Lastly, there is a lack of understanding on the side of parents on the importance of normal schooling for the development of children with disabilities. All of these factors combine to cause children with disabilities to either stay away or to drop out early from school.
- The cost of transportation and books are often unaffordable for many refugees while, due to a lack of places in Arabic speaking schools, many refugees struggle in a Kurdish-language environment.
- Currently there is no regional-level tracking of drop-out numbers among Syrian refugee children across the KR-I and as a result, much of the evidence is anecdotal; coordination is needed with the Ministry of Education and all education actors to uncover the full scale of the problem.



Students at Kawergosk Refugee camp Primary school primary school (Erbil Governorate) 2016. UNHCR/M. Prendergast



Health

OVERVIEW

The ongoing crisis in the KR-I considerably affects the delivery of health services as medications become harder to procure and facilities are often closed due to the lack of staff. Considering the scarcity of some drugs, the local population has lately been given priority of care over refugees.

As a result, risks of public health outbreak remain high, particularly in non-camp settings where health services may not manage regular outreach.

In the long-term, in camp PHC facilities will be handed over by the managing NGOs to the Department of Health (DoH). This has been achieved in Kawergosk, Qushatapa, Basirma and Domiz 1 camps. The handing over of additional camp-based PHC to local authorities has significantly slowed down as the health sector in KR-I is struggling with structural problems compounded by the crisis.

ACHIEVEMENTS AND IMPACT

- For refugees living in camps, access to health care remains reliable in the KR-I. Host community members have even started to use the camp PHC in Sulaymaniyah as the local clinic was closed.
- With support from UNICEF/WHO, a National polio immunization campaign for children under 5 has been conducted by Directorate of Health (DoH) with 95.7 % total coverage in Iraq (Refugees, IDPs and host community) according to WHO. Of the U5 Syrian refugee children in the governorates of the KR-I, this translates to: 9,799 in Duhok; 10, 748 in Erbil; and 2,823 in Sulaymaniyah.

IDENTIFIED NEEDS AND REMAINING GAPS

- In Erbil governorate, it was confirmed by the PHCs in camps and Nana Khalil Hospital in Erbil that refugees are being deprioritized for receiving cancer treatment. According to information collected by the CBP and Community Services team the situation is currently affecting 30 refugee cancer patients in camps and 145 refugee cancer patients in urban areas. This follows a continuing trend of medicine shortages which is a key concern in public health facilities.
- The PHCC in Al Obaidy camp, Anbar province, remains closed and UIMS staff have been instructed by militants to not re-open it until further notice.
- Access to mental health care and psychosocial support services remains limited for non-camp refugees and needs to be further expanded.
- The ongoing strikes in Sulaymaniyah governorate have affected the provision of health services in public health facilities and currently only maternity and emergency hospitals are working.



Food Security and Nutrition



WFP voucher redemption at a shop in Gawilan camp, 2016. UNHCR/S. Gammah



SCOPE e-Voucher Card, 2016. UNHCR/S. Gammah

Focus on “SCOPE” – WFPs innovative e-voucher system

WFP is currently transitioning to the SCOPE e-Voucher Cards, a digital beneficiary and transfer management platform. Unlike paper vouchers, the e-cards are distributed to beneficiaries only once, and can be recharged with the allocated amount every month – a much more efficient administrative process. In addition, the system ensures better tracking of the assistance provided, allowing WFP to register beneficiaries, store information on the amount of food or money they're entitled to and then to transfer money to beneficiary e-cards. The SCOPE platform sends payment instructions to the financial service provider who distributes to beneficiaries at special Point of Sale machines in participating shops and other institutions. Providers then send distribution information back which can be imported into the platform, **allowing for monitoring of distributions in near real time**. SCOPE is already being used by WFP in 12 countries and contains information on 2.6 million beneficiaries. In Iraq, all refugee camps in the KR-I should transition to the system in 2016.

ACHIEVEMENTS AND IMPACT

- This month, 46,608 Syrian refugees received WFP assistance in camps: 21,945 of them are already registered on the SCOPE system.
- The transfer from paper vouchers to WFP's digital platform SCOPE took place in Arbat and Gawilan camps this month.

- Due to WFP’s continuing lack of access to Al Obaidy camp, Anbar province, UNHCR, through ISHO, continued to bake and distribute 2 pieces of bread per refugee per day for the entire camp population (1,421 refugees including unregistered refugees). In addition, 849 registered refugees received complementary food assistance valued at 17,500 IQD. Also through ISHO, UNHCR continued to distribute cash for food in order to fill the gap of delivery of food parcels by WFP and partners who cannot access Al Obaidy due to security situation. Further challenges in the money transfer system had prevented such distribution from taking place in January. This situation has been now resolved and so in February a total of 1,377 refugees received two months cash for food – a total of 50,000 IQD each.

IDENTIFIED NEEDS AND REMAINING GAPS

- Lack of funding in the second half of 2015 prevented WFP from continuing blanket food distribution in camps. Following a food security assessment done in the summer of 2015, food assistance was distributed based on priority, targeting the most vulnerable families since the fall. Waiting for WFP to update its food security assessment (a yearly exercise), WFP and UNHCR are actively working together to ensure that new vulnerable families, who may have been food secure a couple months ago, are now included in food assistance nonetheless.

Water and Sanitation



Water distribution point in Kawergosk refugee camp transit area (Erbil Governorate) 2016. UNHCR/O. Zhdanov

OVERVIEW

The sustainability of water supply networks serving Syrian refugees in camps has continuously improved since the beginning of the crisis. However, shortages in electricity supply in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq affect the availability of water across the region, including in refugee camps. As such, efficient use and conservation of household water remains an area which needs strong community advocacy, especially in light of pumping problems.

Looking towards the summer, issues of water and electricity supply will be ever more critical and conservation in camps and means of reducing wastage will need to be addressed as a priority in the coming months.

ACHIEVEMENTS AND IMPACT

- In Erbil Governorate, UNICEF water and hygiene promotion services during the month of February reached 31,315 refugees in all four refugee camps (Qushtapa, Basirma, Kawergosk and Darashakran). As the move towards more sustainable and cost-efficient WASH interventions continues, the completion of water treatment units and water

networks in Basirma and Kawergosk refugee camps means that water trucking is no longer needed; the units and networks were installed by Directorate of Erbil Surrounding Water with UNICEF support.

IDENTIFIED NEEDS AND REMAINING GAPS

- An estimated 20km of open channels alongside the road and behind tents still need to be closed in Domiz 1 camp. Such open channels increase the risk of disease and also of flooding as foreign objects can clog the system.

Shelter and NFIs



Refugees working on improving their shelter in Kawergosk refugee camp (Erbil Governorate) 2016. UNHCR/O. Zhdanov

OVERVIEW

Although the majority of Syrian refugees (61%) continue to live out of camp in urban areas, there has been an increase in requests for camp places. The majority of families requesting admission have been living in KR-I for some time but recently lost the ability to provide for themselves mostly because of unemployment or the because the main provider migrated to Europe.

ACHIEVEMENTS AND IMPACT

- UNHCR completed a shelter transformation survey and focus group discussions to better understand refugees' concerns about their current shelter status inside Arbat Refugee Camp, Sulaymaniyah Governorate. This survey will guide planning for future shelter interventions, as the Syrian refugee situation evolves into a protracted situation.

IDENTIFIED NEEDS AND REMAINING GAPS

- The above mentioned survey revealed that those who constructed their houses are facing "buyers' remorse" as initially they foresaw a longer stay in KR-I, since the region was stable and offered economic opportunities. Many of these families invested significant amounts of their limited resources in upgrading their shelters and are now even more affected by the economic downturn, limited education, lack of job opportunities and decreasing assistance from humanitarian agencies.



ACHIEVEMENTS AND IMPACT

- The high rate of acceptance decisions from resettlement countries observed in January continued during the reporting period with 101 persons accepted for resettlement this month (84 persons by the UK, nine persons by Sweden and eight persons by Denmark).

IDENTIFIED NEEDS AND REMAINING GAPS

- At the end of February, 311 persons were still waiting for decisions by resettlement countries, following their submission for resettlement consideration in 2015.
- Among the persons accepted for resettlement in 2015, 218 are still waiting for their departure to be finalized.



Working in partnership

Nine sector working groups are responding to the needs of the affected population. The Regional Refugee Resilience Plan (3RP) programme is a collaborative effort between the Government of Iraq and the Kurdistan Regional Government, 11 UN agencies and over 70 national and international NGOs with various levels of engagement (listed below), as well as the refugee and host communities, in close coordination with the donor community.

ACF Action contre la faim | Agence d’Aide à la Coopération Technique et au Développement (ACTED) | AFKAR | Al-AHIBA | Alpha Organisation for Expanding Capacity | Alehya’a Scientific Association (ASA) | Al-Masala Assistance for Refugee Children Organization (ARCO) | Asuda | Barzani Charity Foundation (BCF) | Bojeen Organization for Human Development | Board of Relief and humanitarian Affairs (BRHA) | Civil Development Organization (CDO) | Danish Refugee Council (DRC) | Dar Baru | EMEREGNCY | The Engineering Association for Development & Environment (E.A.D.E) | Erbil Refugee Council | FAO Food and Agricultural Organization | Federazione Organismi Cristiani Servizio Internazionale Volontario (FOCSIV) | French Red Cross (FRC) | Freunde Der Erziehungskunst Rudolf Steiners | GIZ | Hana Group | Handicap International | Harikar NGO | Heartland Alliance (HA) | Humedica International Aid | International Media Support (IMS) | International Medical Corps (IMC) | IOM International Organization for Migration | International Rescue Committee (IRC) | INTERSOS | Iraqi Salvation Humanitarian Organization (ISHO) | Islamic Relief Worldwide (IRW) | Japan Iraq Medical Network (JIM-NET) | Jiyan Foundation for Human Rights (Jiyan) | Koraw | Kurdistan Center for Strengthening Administrative and Managerial Abilities (KCSAMA) | Kurdistan Reconstruction and Development Society (KURDS) | Kurdistan Save the Children (KSC) | Kurdistan Student Development Organization (KSDO) | Médecins Sans Frontières (France) (MSF) | Médecins Sans Frontières (Switzerland) | Medica International Aid | Mercy Corps | Mines Advisory Group (MAG) | Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) | Orchard Association for Children Protection and Education | Peace Winds Japan (PWJ) | People in Need | Public Aid Organization (PAO) | Première Urgence - Aide Médicale Internationale (PU-AMI) | QANDIL | Qatar Red Crescent (QRC) | Rehabilitation Center for Torture Victims | Rise Foundation | Rwanga Foundation | Rehabilitation Education and Community Health (REACH) | Save the Children International (SCI) | Seeking to Equip People (STEP) | Start | Technisches Hilfswerk (THW) | TDHI Terre des Hommes Italia | Triangle GH | UNDP United Nations Development Programme | UNESCO United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization | UNFPA United Nations Population Fund | UN-Habitat | UNHCR United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees | UNICEF United Nations Children’s Fund | The United Iraqi Medical Society (UIMS) | Un Ponte Per Organization (UPP) | United Arab Emirates Red Crescent (UAE Red Crescent) | United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) | UN Women | War Child UK | Women Empowerment Organization (WEO) | Womens Rehabilitation Organisation (WRO) | WFP World Food Programme | WHO World Health Organization | YOUTH Activity Organization (YAO) | Zhin

STORIES FROM THE FIELD

Without pay but not without hope; Refugee teachers refuse to let the kids' education suffer

Since 2012 and the beginning of the conflict in Syria, the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KR-I) has seen a quarter of a million Syrian refugees and subsequently over one million internally displaced persons (IDPs) flee to safety in a region roughly the size of Switzerland with a population of circa 5 million. To compound this, KR-I is also suffering from a dire economic crisis which has left many public sector staff without pay for a number of months. Schools are amongst the hardest hit with teachers not paid since September.¹

The result for many is an almost impossible situation – continue without pay, putting their families at risk financially or leave and risk the school closing down. In Kawergosk Refugee camp in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, this impossible situation is a daily reality. Around 15% of the primary school teachers have already left, unable to continue without a salary; in some camps it is reported than as many as one third of teachers have had to leave.

The staff at Kawergosk camp primary school, almost all of whom are Syrian refugees themselves, have every reason to be down and out but their enduring spirit and their unwillingness to let the children and their education suffer the consequences of this impossible situation is striking. “Whether there is a salary or not, we will keep coming” says deputy principal Mohammed Zekki “these children are our future, we cannot let them down.” Nonetheless, having already fled his home in Syria and now seeing his teaching staff dwindle, he admits that the circumstances are taking their toll “We feel like pieces of wood in the sea being moved by the waves; we have no control over our situation.”

Education is a lifeline of normality for displaced children; without such opportunities they either sit at home and waste away or end up working odd jobs to support their families.

The perseverance of the teachers is all that stands between the 1,700 children enrolled at the primary school in Kawergosk Refugee camp and such a fate.

Under the circumstances of multiple displacements and the current economic crisis which leaves local and displaced communities competing for jobs,

peaceful co-existence amongst communities is both a priority and a challenge. Interestingly, amongst the pupils in this school are 30 Iraqi internally displaced children whose parents live in Kawergosk town nearby. Outside in the playground we spoke to Zain and Rawnaq, two of the IDPs in the third grade from Samarra in central Iraq. Neither of them had ever met a Syrian before they joined the school in September and now their best friends are all Syrian. The only disagreements between Zain and his new friends concern who is better – Barcelona or Real Madrid; Rawnaq and her best friend Rajah have no such problems – “football is silly.” After initially being afraid of joining the school the kids quickly settled in, as Zain puts it “Syrian kids are just like us.” The world could learn a lot from the wisdom of an eight year old.

By Michael Prendergast



Zain (centre) and his two best friends Diar and Rahman share a joke on the primary school playground in Kawergosk Refugee camp (Erbil Governorate) 2016. UNHCR/M. Prendergast

¹ Some volunteer refugee teachers are paid incentives by UNICEF and UNESCO but public sector teachers are not receiving salaries.

FINANCIAL INFORMATION

Agencies are very grateful for the financial support provided by donors who have contributed to their activities with unearmarked and broadly earmarked funds as well as for those who have contributed directly to the Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan (3RP) in 2015 and so far in 2016:

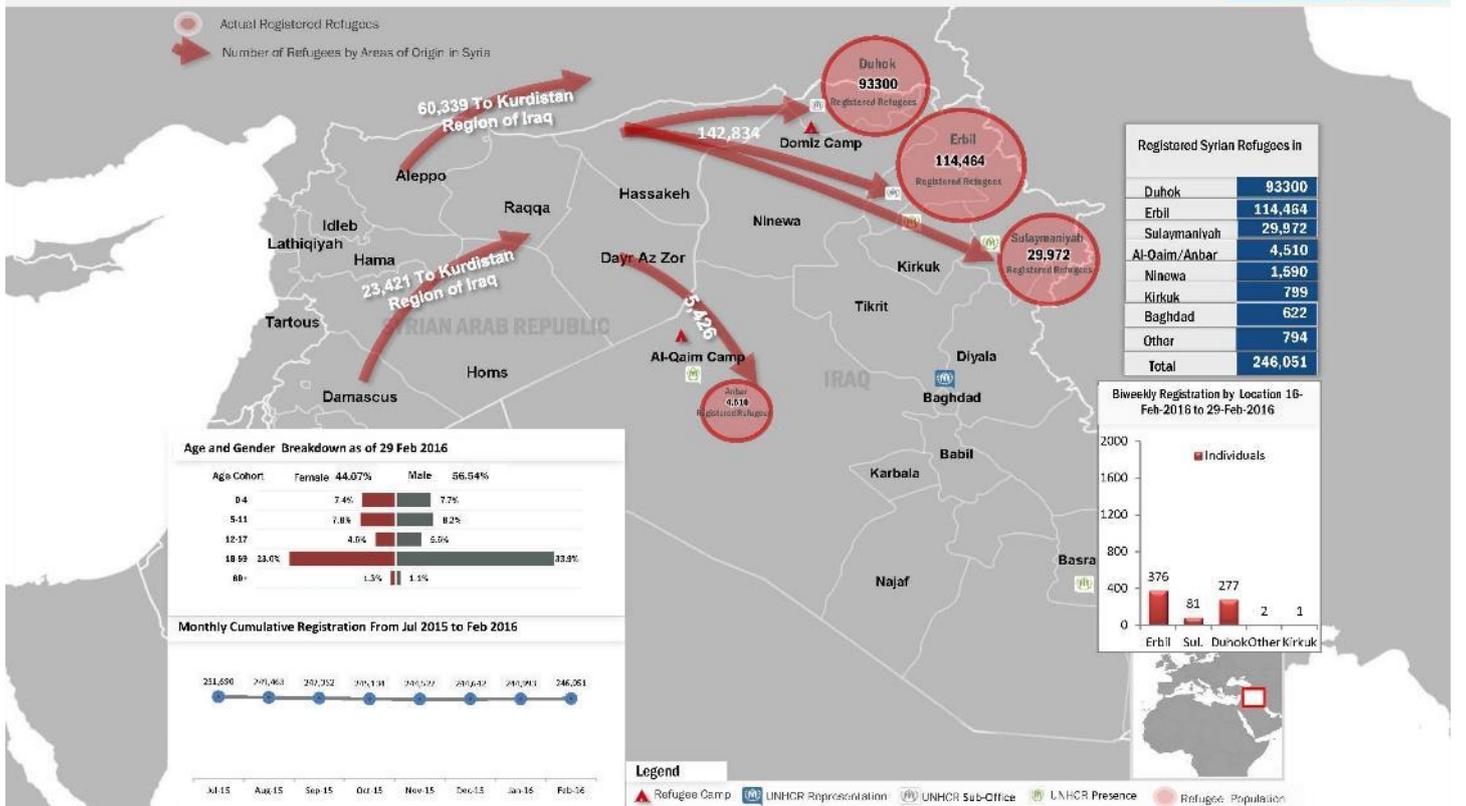
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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AOG	Armed opposition group
ANC	Antenatal care
BIA/BID	Best Interests Assessment/Best Interests Determination
CRI	Core Relief Items (formerly known as non-food items/NFIs)
DDM	Department of Displacement and Migration
DoE	Department of Education
DoH	Department of Health
DVAW	Directorate for Combatting Violence Against Women
EVI	Extremely Vulnerable Individual
HH	Households
IDP	Internally displaced people
ISHO	Iraqi Salvation Humanitarian Organisation
KDP	Kurdistan Democratic Party
KR-I	Kurdistan Region of Iraq
MoDM	Ministry of Migration and Displacement
MoE	Ministry of Education
PARC	Protection Assistance Reintegration Centre
PHC	Primary Health Care
RSD	Refugee status determination
SGBV	Sexual and gender-based violence
SWG	Sector Working Group
UASC	Unaccompanied and separated children
WASH	Water, sanitation and hygiene

ANNEXES

Refugees by Area of Origin in Syria



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Links:

For information on the Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan (3RP) please click on <http://www.3rpsyriacrisis.org/>.

Announcements of all sector meetings along with respective agendas and minutes, and other information on sector-wide progress such as 3Ws, dashboards and camp profiles, are available on the inter-agency information sharing portal at <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/regional.php>.

For more information on the work of UNHCR and our partners in Iraq, please follow us on Twitter at @unhcriraq and on Facebook at "UNHCRinIraq"

UNHCR Registration Trends for Syrian Persons of Concern

29 Feb 2016



Registration Unit

Total Persons of Concern

Individuals

246,051

Households

87,297

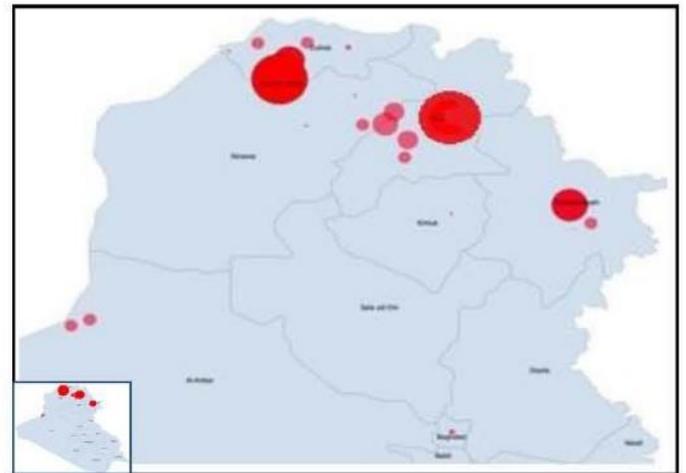
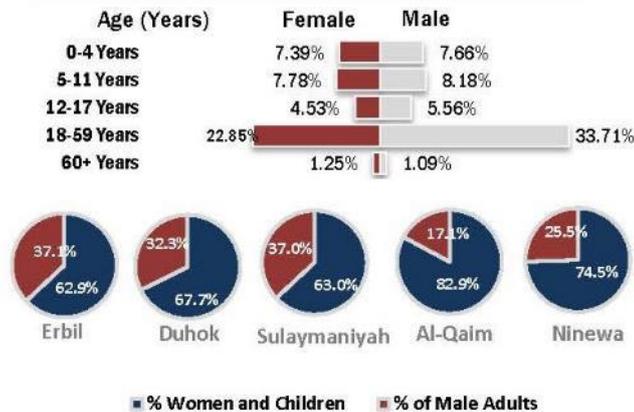
Registration Trend

Total registered Syrians

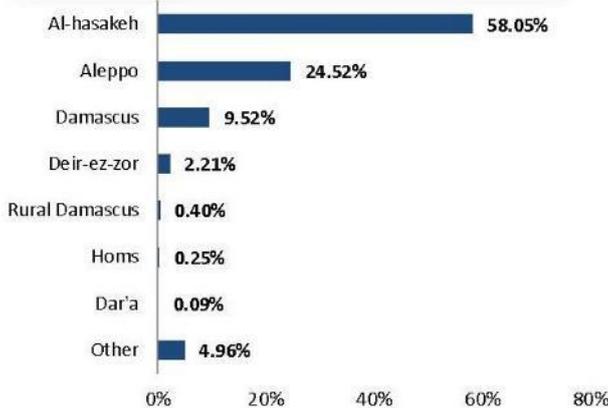


This profile is based on **246,051** proGres registered Individuals

Age and Gender Breakdown

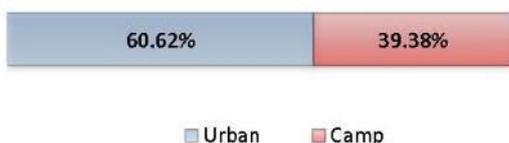


Place of Origin



Governorate	Individuals	Households	% Total
Duhok	93,300	29,277	37.92%
Erbil	114,464	43,605	46.52%
Sulaymaniyah	29,972	11,725	12.18%
Anbar	4,510	1,150	1.83%
Ninewa	1,590	526	0.65%
Kirkuk	799	285	0.32%
Baghdad	622	311	0.25%
Other	794	418	0.32%
Total Iraq	246,051	87,297	100%

Camp and non-camp population comparison



Camps Registered Population			
Camp	Individuals	Households	% Total
Al-Obaidi Camp	1,519	319	1.57%
Akre Settlement	1,286	318	1.33%
Domiz Camp 1	40,592	13,276	41.89%
Domiz Camp 2	7,354	1,701	7.59%
Gawilan Camp	7,410	1,813	7.65%
Basirma Camp	3,596	866	3.71%
Darashakran Camp	10,951	2,524	11.30%
Kawergosk Camp	10,292	2,819	10.62%
Qushtapa Camp	6,634	1,813	6.85%
Arbat Camp	7,272	1,964	7.50%
Total	96,906	27,413	100%

From 16 June 2014, as Al-Obaidi Camp became inaccessible to UN agencies and other humanitarian staff, the camp registered population figure is not updated.