

The Inclusion of Internally Displaced People in Iraq's Social Safety Net

From short- term humanitarian cash assistance to durable social protection

A humanitarian-development nexus success story

In a breakthrough development in February 2023, Iraq's Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (MoLSA) *decided* to assess the 180,000 internally displaced Iraqis (IDPs) living in 25 camps in the Kurdistan Region (KR- I) for enrolment in its poverty reduction programme - the Social Safety Net (SSN). The Ministry also decided to *prioritize* the assessment of IDPs and IDP returnees in urban areas across the country, regardless of whether they are registered in the MoLSA's online registration system. Online registration is a requirement for any other Iraqi national claiming to meet the SSN criteria due to their poverty level.

IDPs who meet the MoLSA's vulnerability criteria will benefit from monthly cash payments that will help them meet their basic needs (an average of \$85/IQD 125,000 per person per month). Vulnerable families and individuals, including female-headed households and individuals with disabilities, will receive cash top-ups.

Social Safety Net IDP enrolment modalities

MoLSA's social workers, tasked with conducting household surveys to assess IDPs' eligibility, started prioritizing urban IDPs and IDP returnees in Central governorates in March 2023, and began surveying families in IDP camps in the KR-I *as of May 2023*. The Ministry of Planning scores the surveys based on an eligibility formula, and verifies the applicants' employment status with the Ministry of Finance before sending the list of eligible IDPs back to MoLSA. Eligible IDPs receive a MasterCard through which they can withdraw their SSN payments in exchange shops.

Camp IDP SSN enrolment figures

Since the beginning of MoLSA's enrolment campaign, as of 5 August 2023, a total of 5,490 households in the camps of Duhok and 900 households in the camps administrated by Erbil have already been registered with the SSN and many of them started receiving SSN cash grants since the beginning of July.

Prior to the MoLSA's IDP assessment campaign, only IDPs residing in Iraq' federal governorates, *and who registered in the dedicated online platform* were assessed for SSN eligibility. Meanwhile, IDPs residing in the KR-I did not have the possibility to self-register, as the online registration system does not have the option of recording the applicant's place of current residence in the KR-I. *This effectively excluded all IDPs in camps, as all the remaining IDP camps in Iraq are located in the KR-I.*

In view of this, the UN/UNHCR have been advocating with MoLSA to prioritize the assessment of all IDPs in Iraq, inside and outside camps, and regardless of whether they are registered online. This advocacy effort is part of the UN/UNHCR's transition from individualized IDP humanitarian assistance - particularly UNHCR's IDP cash assistance programme - to promote their inclusion in Iraq's existing public services, such as the social protection scheme. As part of the transition, UNHCR in January 2023 ended its IDP cash assistance programme while continuing to advocate for their inclusion in the SSN.

Why is the SSN a better way of addressing IDP socio-economic vulnerability than UNHCR's discontinued cash assistance?

- *SSN payments have a higher monetary value than UNHCR's discontinued cash assistance (\$85/IQD 125,000 per person per month compared to \$60/IQD 88,000);*
- *UNHCR's cash grants only lasted for four consecutive months, while SSN payments last as long as the individual is considered vulnerable; and,*

- While there is some overlap in IDP profiles falling under UNHCR and MoLSA's SSN (see table below), more profiles are included in the SSN.

In summary, inclusion in the SSN covers more vulnerable IDPs, and provides them with greater, longer-term and more predictable support. IDP inclusion in the SSN also allows UNHCR and its partners to phase out of a parallel cash assistance system, empowering the Government of Iraq to fulfil its role as the primary duty-bearer.

Families falling under MoLSA's Social Safety Net eligibility criteria	IDPs falling under UNHCR/Cash Working Group's IDP cash assistance eligibility considerations
Families with no source of income (unemployed and not receiving a salary from another entity) or whose income is below the national poverty line of IQD 110,000 (\$84).	The household's level of income (under IQD 115,000) debt and food insecurity.
People with special needs, including people with disabilities.	Households with a member living with disability or chronic illness.
Residents of government shelters.	Not considered by humanitarian cash actors as eligible
Families of individuals whose prison sentence exceeds one year; and juveniles whose sentence exceeds one year.	Not considered by humanitarian cash actors as eligible
(Female) widows, divorcees, women with missing spouses, single women; and orphans.	Not considered by humanitarian cash actors as eligible
Married male students (up until the end of secondary school).	Not considered by humanitarian cash actors as eligible

UNHCR's information campaign and engagement with IDP communities

To enhance IDPs' awareness of the SSN process, in collaboration with MoLSA, UNHCR and its partners shared **key messages** for IDPs and returnees inside and outside camps. These messages inform about the eligibility criteria, required documentation, and the enrolment process. UNHCR also mobilized its community structures and outreach volunteers for widespread dissemination, as well as to echo IDP impressions and concerns.

UNHCR's outreach volunteers have been referring IDPs who are lacking the required civil documents to UNHCR's protection teams to prioritize them in UNHCR's civil documentation efforts.



The screenshot shows the UNHCR Iraq website interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with 'Menu', 'UNHCR The UN Refugee Agency', and 'Help Iraq'. Below this, there are language options for 'العربية' and 'English'. The main heading is 'UNHCR Iraq Key Messages on Social Safety Net', dated 'Posted on May 7, 2023'. The content includes a section titled 'What is Social Safety Net (SSN) Programme?' which states that the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs has reopened its cash assistance. It lists target groups: 'individuals with specific vulnerabilities including single mothers, widows, elderly persons, people with disabilities, orphans, and low-income families.' Another section 'Who is included?' lists 'Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), local community and IDP returnees living in Iraq are included to be assessed for their vulnerabilities. In SSN Key messages on UNHCR's Help Desk, published in English & Arabic'.



The screenshot shows an Arabic flyer with a megaphone icon. The title is 'إعلان هام للنازحين الساكنين في محافظات إقليم كردستان العراق (الربيل، السليمانية و دهوك)'. The text explains that the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs has reopened its cash assistance program. It lists target groups: 'سراسل الازالة قريبا من الخطين الاجتماعيين الذين سيقومون بزيارات ميدانية للتأكد من احتياجاتهم في محافظات إقليم كردستان العراق (الربيل، والسليمانية، ودهوك) لاجراء التقسيم اللازم لادراجهم في شبكة الحماية الاجتماعية'. It also lists 'مستهدفين قريبا من الخطين الاجتماعيين بما فيهم ذوي الاحتياجات الخاصة والضعفاء والمسنين والأرامل وكبار السن وذوي الإعاقة والادغام، والأشخاص معذوبة الدخل وما دون خط الفقر'. It provides contact information: 'يرجى ملاحظة ان فريق النازحين جميع النازحين سيطلب من النازحين تقديم وثائق اثبات الهوية، وأثبات السكن، واي وثائق أخرى تثبت وجودهم من ضمن الملفات المشمولة'. It includes a URL: 'للمزيد من المعلومات حول شبكة الحماية الاجتماعية ومعايير الضريبة او الفقر والاحتياجات الأخرى قم بزيارة الصفحة المساعدة الخاصة بالمقوضية على الموقع الإلكتروني https://help.unhcr.org/sen'. At the bottom, it says 'إذا شعرت أنك مستبعد أو تم إقصائك، يرجى الاتصال بالخط الساخن 1018 للوزارة بإعلام فريق الوزارة بذلك.' and the UNHCR logo.

UNHCR Arabic flyer on the SSN distributed to IDP communities

A humanitarian-development nexus success story

UNHCR's collaboration with humanitarian and development actors (UNICEF, ILO and WFP), and government entities (MoLSA) to include vulnerable IDPs in their own country's existing poverty reduction programme – in lieu of short-term humanitarian grants - is a successful example of the humanitarian-development nexus. UNHCR's nexus approach in Iraq focuses on building on the Government of Iraq's existing capacities to find long term solutions to address IDP needs, reducing their dependency on humanitarian aid.