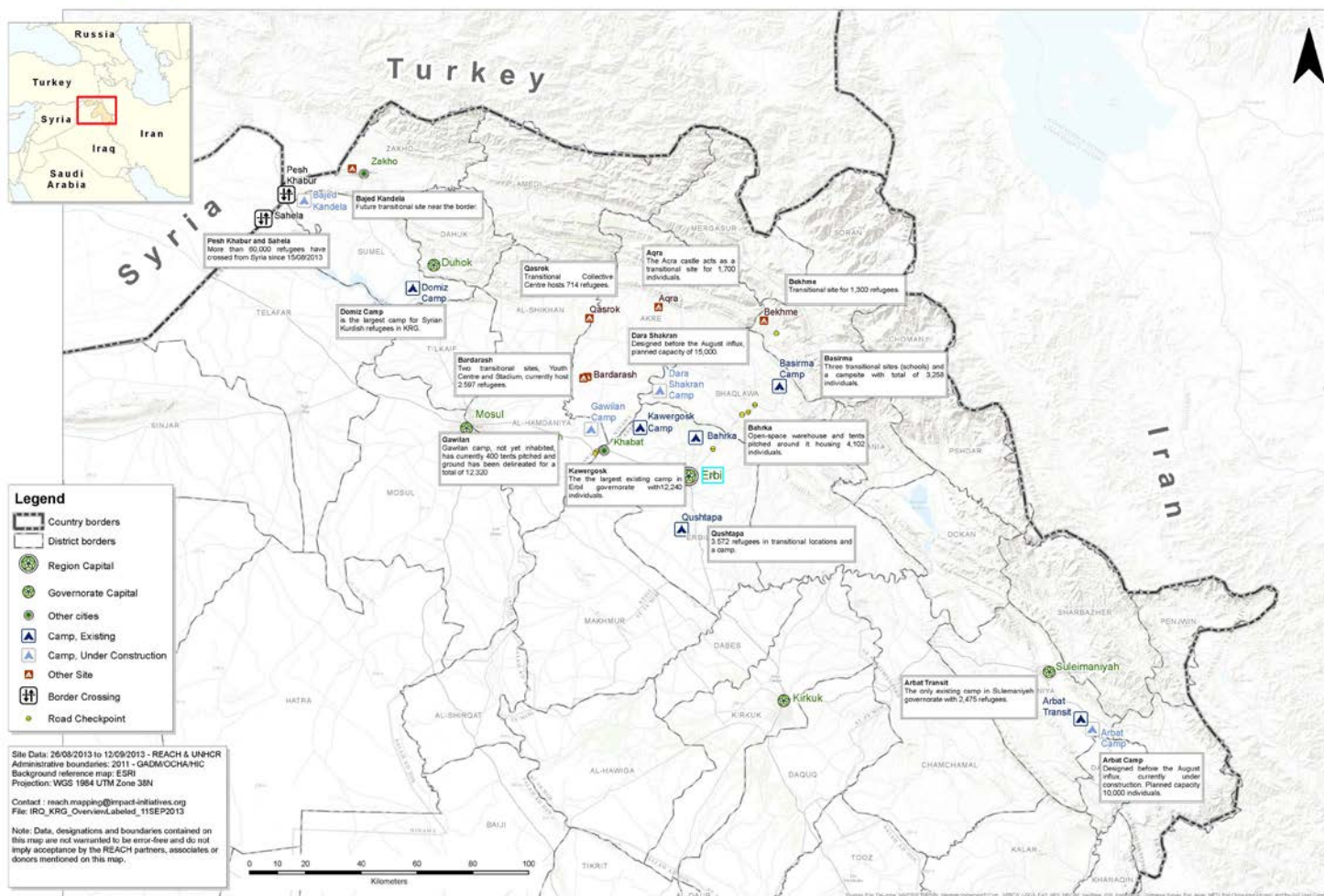




## Refugee influx into Northern Iraq

REACH Situational Report - Qasarok & Bekhme Update  
September 12th 2013



## REACH's Northern Iraq Situation Reports

The current report is produced, in partnership with UNHCR, based on information collected by REACH teams in Northern Iraq through field assessments, as well as semi-structured interviews with authorities and humanitarian stakeholders. The aim of the report is to share REACH's understanding, as of September 12th, of humanitarian challenges and response to the new influx of Syrian refugees in Northern Iraq since August 15th.

This Situation Report details findings of assessments conducted by REACH between 26th August and 12th September in the four Erbil sites (Basirma, Baharka, Kawargosk, and Qushtapa), the one Sulemanya site (Arbat), and the four newly established Ninewa sites (Bardarash, Aqra, Qasrok, and Bekhme) where newly-arrived refugees have been settled. For each site, the report also provides population numbers as well as a facilities map.

The next REACH Situation Report will detail findings of a WASH baseline assessment, requested by the WASH sector, due to be conducted in all sites in which newly-arrived refugees have been settled since the influx beginning on August 15th.

In addition to conducting situational assessments, REACH teams are closely involved with supporting site planning for all camps in Northern Iraq (maps providing geo-referenced information available upon request).



## Context

Since the evening of August 15th, the sudden influx of refugees from Syria to the Northern Iraq has taken many humanitarian stakeholders by surprise. As of 12th September 2013 an estimated 60,000 Syrians have arrived in the Region through the border crossing of Peshkabur and Sahela. The new arrivals added to the already existing 149,258 (UNHCR, 13 Aug) refugees settled in the Kurdistan Region's Domiz camp and among host communities. The number of Syrian refugees seeking refuge in Northern Iraq continues to grow on a daily basis, with 1,180 crossing the border between 09/09/13 and 10/09/13.

The sudden influx of Syrians is stretching the response capacity of government, local communities and other humanitarian stakeholders. Being already overcrowded, the only existing and operational refugee camp in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, Domiz camp, cannot host any further refugees. The ongoing camp development in Dara Shakran, Erbil governorate (planned capacity: 10,000 with discussion on extension to 20,000), is due to be completed by end of September and was initially set up as a settlement option for vulnerable refugees currently residing in host communities. Additional camps, designed to host large refugee populations, are currently under development (Arbat in Sulemanya and Gawilan in Ninewa) and are due to be opened in the last quarter of 2013. Before the ongoing influx, local communities already hosted over 105,000 refugees, which already places a significant burden on host community resources.

Upon arrival in Northern Iraq, refugees are settled in a transitory area adjacent to the border where they can access basic facilities set up by authorities and humanitarian stakeholders. On a daily basis new arrivals are then quickly relocated to temporary settlement sites (initially to communal buildings such as schools and mosques; then, when ready, to camps) in Erbil, Sulemanya, and Ninewa governorates through a shuttle system operated by KRG authorities with support from IOM. Given its already high refugee concentration, no new arrivals are settled in Dohuk governorate. In total there are four sites in Erbil, four in Ninewa, and one in Sulemanya at hosting refugees at present, with three new sites under development. The following figures are based on REACH assessments\*:

Governorate	Camp / Site	Population
Erbil	Kawergosk	12,240 (as of 12/09)
	Baharka	4,102 (as of 11/09)
	Basirma	3,258 (as of 11/09)
	Qushtapa	3,572 (as of 11/09)
Sulemanya	Arbat	2,475 (as of 01/09)
Ninewa	Bardarash	2,597 (as of 04/09)
	Aqra	1,700 (as of 05/09)
	Qasarok	714 (as of 12/09)
	Bekhme	1,300 (as of 12/09)

\*REACH teams conducted a random assessment of tents, ensuring a confidence level of 95%, in order to determine the average occupancy of each tent. This data, combined with tent numbers collected whilst geo-referencing each site, allowed REACH teams to rapidly determine site populations.

## REACH Baseline Assessment

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In order to support humanitarian planning and meet information gaps, REACH teams conducted a baseline assessment in the camps established to house the refugees that arrived in KRG during the August influx between 26th August and 12th September. The assessments were conducted by locally recruited enumerators (using ODK mobile phone technology) under the supervision of two international assessment specialists. In total, 304 households in Baharka, 404 households in Kawargosk, 60 in Qushtapa, 241 in Basirma, 224 in Arbat, 145 in Bardarash, 201 in Aqra, 99 in Qasarok, and 207 in Bekhme were selected through random sampling and interviewed. In Kawargosk, Baharka, Basirma, Arbat, Bardarash, Aqra, Qasarok, and Bekhme the sampling can be considered as statistically significant, with a confidence level of above 95%. In Qushtapa the findings are only to be considered as indicative.

### Key assessment findings

**The predominant areas of origin of newly-arrived refugees are the Malika and Quamshili districts,** an average of 80% across eight of the nine sites identified. However, in Aqra the majority, 56%, are from districts outside of the Kurdish majority region of Syria.

**The predominant reason for flight is directed related to ongoing conflict in refugees' village or sub-district of origin,** an average of 67% across all sites identified.

**A large majority of refugees would return home to Syria should their reason for flight be resolved,** an average of 82% across all sites identified. Among those who replied that they would not intend to return to Syria: the predominant reason in all sites except Bardarash, Aqra, and Bekhme was reported as employment opportunities. In Bardarash, Aqra, and Bekhme the primary reasons reported were related to longer term safety concerns.

**Assessment findings indicate an expected continued significant influx of refugees into Northern Iraq;** an average of 49% of refugees, across all sites identified, reported having household members left behind in Syria. Amongst this proportion an average of 67% reported that their family members intend to join them in Northern Iraq.

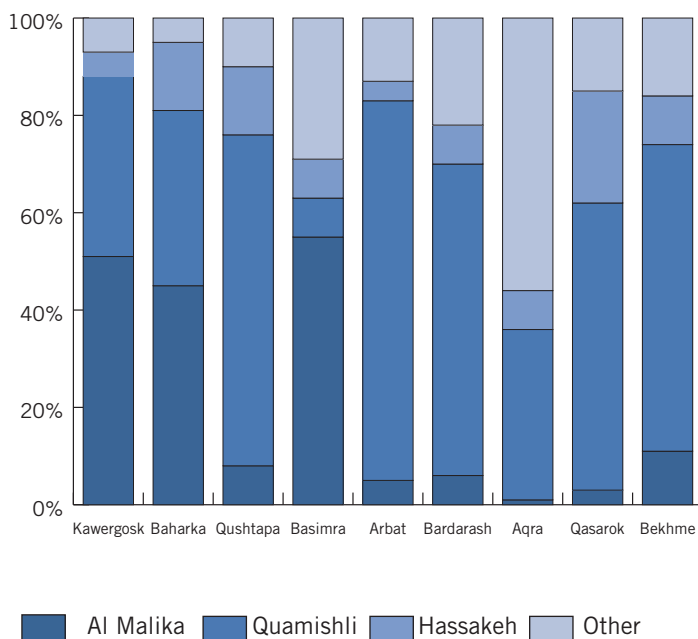
# 67%\*

**of refugees left their area of origin as a direct consequence of armed conflict in their village or sub-district of origin.**

# 49%\*

**of refugees have left behind some family members. Among them, 67% plan on joining them in KRG.**

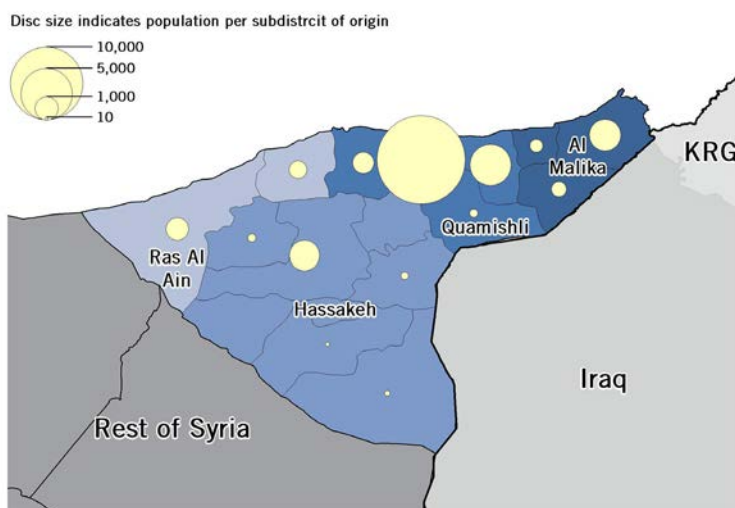
\*Weighted average based on camp / site population size



## Area of origin

In Kawergosk, Baharka, and Basirma the predominant area of origin of newly arrived refugees is Malika district (reported by 51%, 45%, and 55%), followed by Quamishli (37%, 36%, 8%). In Qushtapa, Arbat, Bardarash, Qasarok, and Bekhme the majority of refugees reported their areas of origin as Quamishli district, 68%, 78%, 64%, 59%, and 63% respectively.

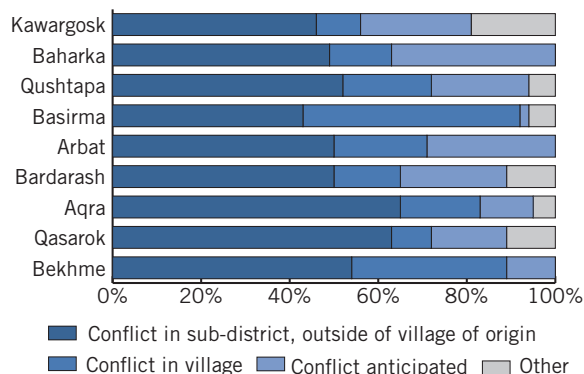
Unlike other sites targeted for assessment, the majority of refugees resident in Aqra reported their district of origin as being outside the Kurdish majority region of north-eastern Syria.



## Reasons for flight

Across all sites over 65% of refugees reported that the predominant reason for flight from their area of origin was as a result of conflict in their sub-district. In addition, a significant proportion of refugees reported that conflict in their village of origin was the primary cause for displacement; an average of 18% across all sites. In Basirma the proportion of refugees reported conflict in their villages of origin as the primary cause for displacement was particularly high, at 49%.

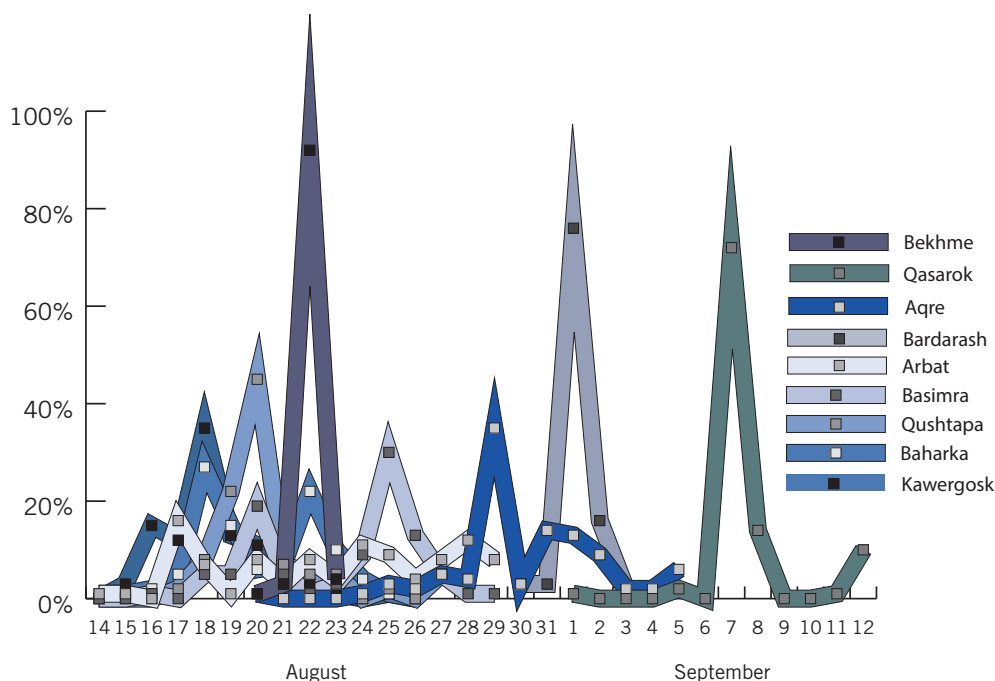
When refugees gave a reason other than conflict, the predominant reason for flight was the perceived availability of employment opportunities in KRG.



## Date of arrival

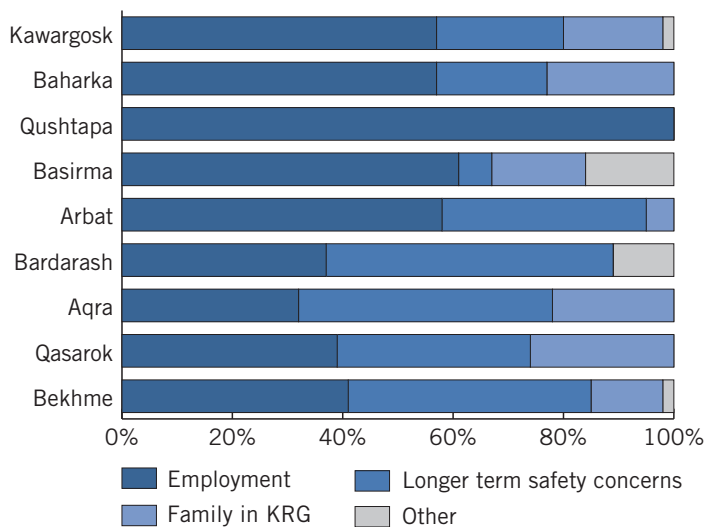
Trends show, and confirm field observations, that arrivals in Kawargosk and Qushtapa slowed down after August 21st; while in Baharka there was a second wave of arrivals on August 22nd and 23rd. In Basirma the first significant influx of refugees was on August 20th, with the site experiencing its highest influx of refugees on August 25th. The first significant influx of refugees into Arbat occurred on 17th August, with 16% of refugees resident at the time of assessment arriving. From 19th August influxes into the camp occurred on alternating days, a pattern that continued until the date of assessment.

In Aqre, Bardarash, Qasarok and Bekhme the majority of arrivals occurred in a single day, 35% on August 29th, 76% on September 1st, 72% on September 7th, and 92% on August 22nd respectively.

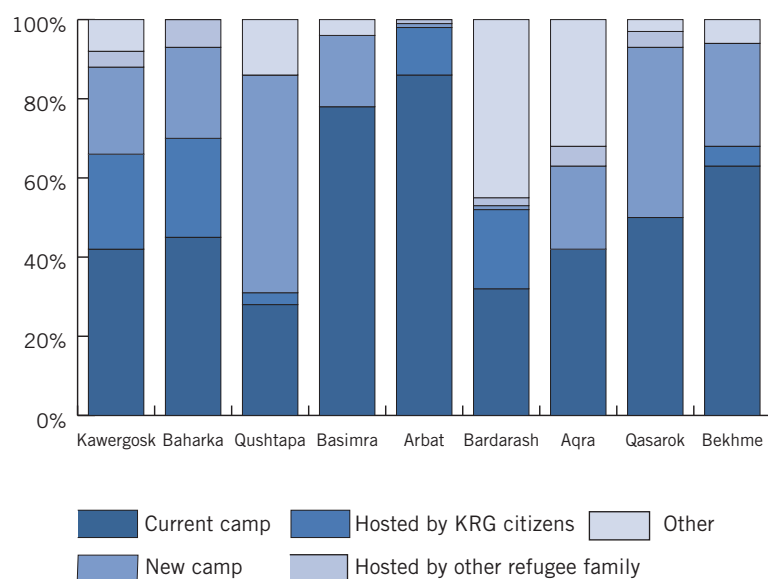


## Return intention

Interviewed refugee households were asked whether they would return home should their reason for flight be resolved. Across all sites the large majority, over 75%, replied positively. In six out of nine camps, households wishing to remain in KRG reported the main reason as employment opportunities (57% in Kawargosk and Baharka, 95% in Qushtapa, 61% in Basirma, 58% in Arbat, and 39% in Qasarok). In the newly established sites; Bardarash, Aqra, and Bekhme the predominant reason for seeking to remain in KRG was longer term safety concerns, 52%, 46%, and 44%.



## Intended final settlement among those wishing to remain in Northern Iraq in the longer term

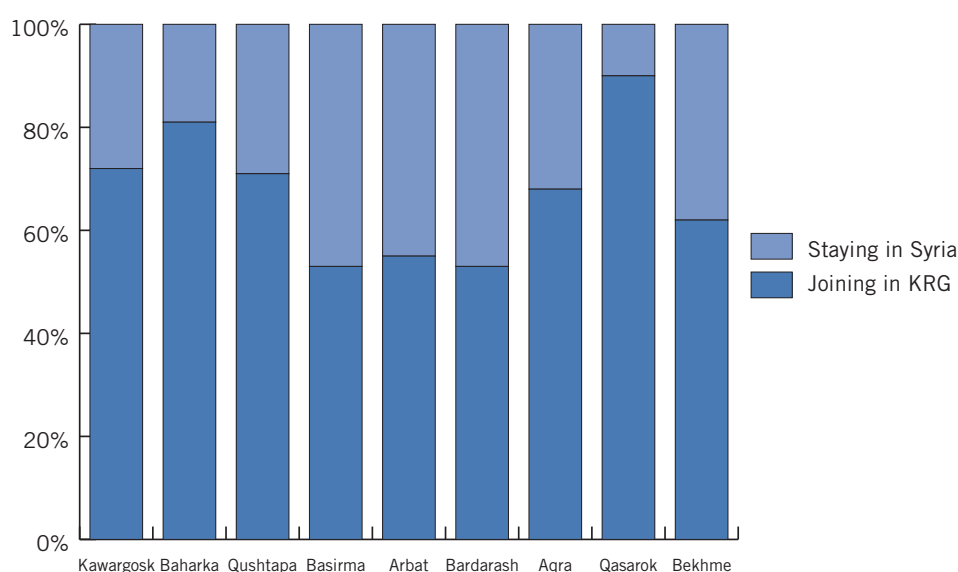


Among those who would not wish to return to Syria when the reason for flight is resolved, a minority in five of the seven sites identified reported wanting to stay in their current site in the longer term. In spite of being planned as temporary solutions, in Basimra, Arbat, Qasarok, and Bekhme a very high proportion of refugees wish to stay in their current location; 78%, 87%, 50%, and 63% respectively.

## Reported household members left behind in Syria and their intentions

An average of 49% of refugees across all sites identified reported having household members left behind in Syria. Of those households reporting family members left behind in Syria, over 50% in all sites reported that the members would be joining them in Northern Iraq in the future.

This indicates that the influx of Syrian refugees into the North of Iraq can be expected to continue into the future. This underlines the need for continued contingency planning in order to prepare for population increases in the camps, sites, and host communities of Northern Iraq.



## Intention of moving within the camp

In order to inform site planning efforts, refugees in Kawargosk and Baharka were asked their intention to move within the camp where they are currently residing. 12% of refugees in Kawargosk and 22% in Baharka reported wanting to relocate within the camp. Among them, in Baharka 57% want to relocate to be closer to services and 42% to be closer to their family members and/or refugees from their area of origin. In Kawargosk, 65% reported wanting to relocate to be closer to their family members and/or refugees from their area of origin.

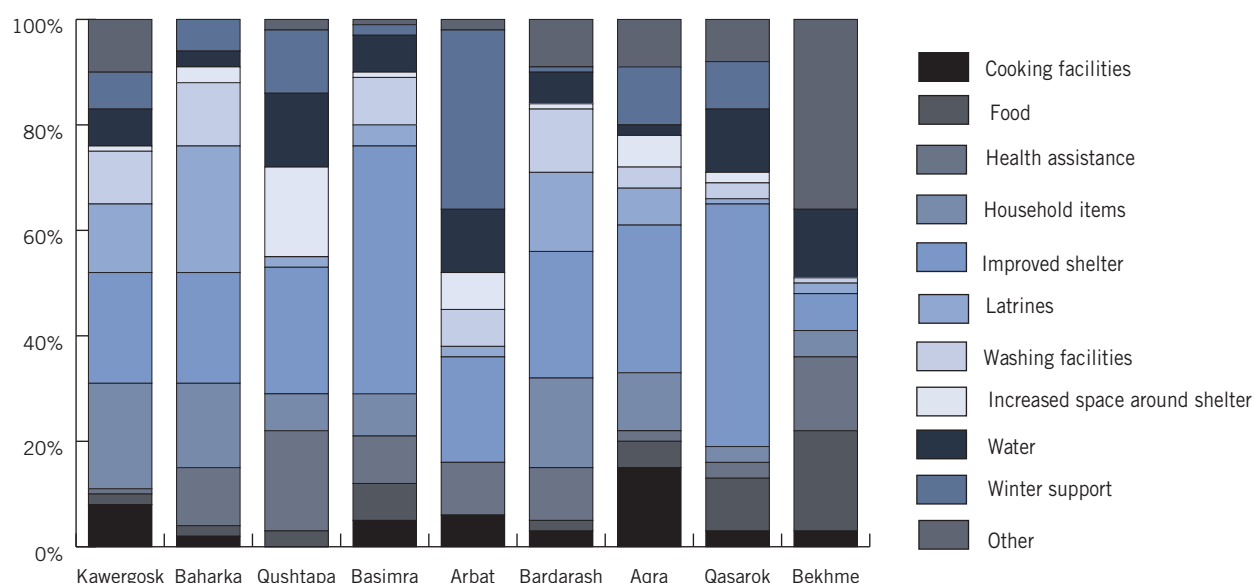
The higher proportion of refugees wanting to move within Baharka can be explained by the more developed site planning and aid delivery system in Kawargosk.

Note: the question was not asked in the other sites targeted for assessment (Qushtapa, Basirma, Bardarash, Aqra, Arbat, Qasarok, and Bekhme) due to their temporary nature; and in Qushtapa, Basirma, Bardarash, Aqra, Qasarok, and Bekhme the predominant shelter context at the time of assessment (collective centres)



## Priority needs

Improved shelter was reported as a primary priority need by a considerable proportion of refugees across all sites assessed. At present food is not considered a high priority in the most established sites; this can be explained as a result of the meal distributions being conducted by local humanitarian actors. However in the newly identified sites of Qasarok and Bekhme food was selected as a primary priority by a large proportion of households; indicating the need to scale up regular food distributions across all camps.

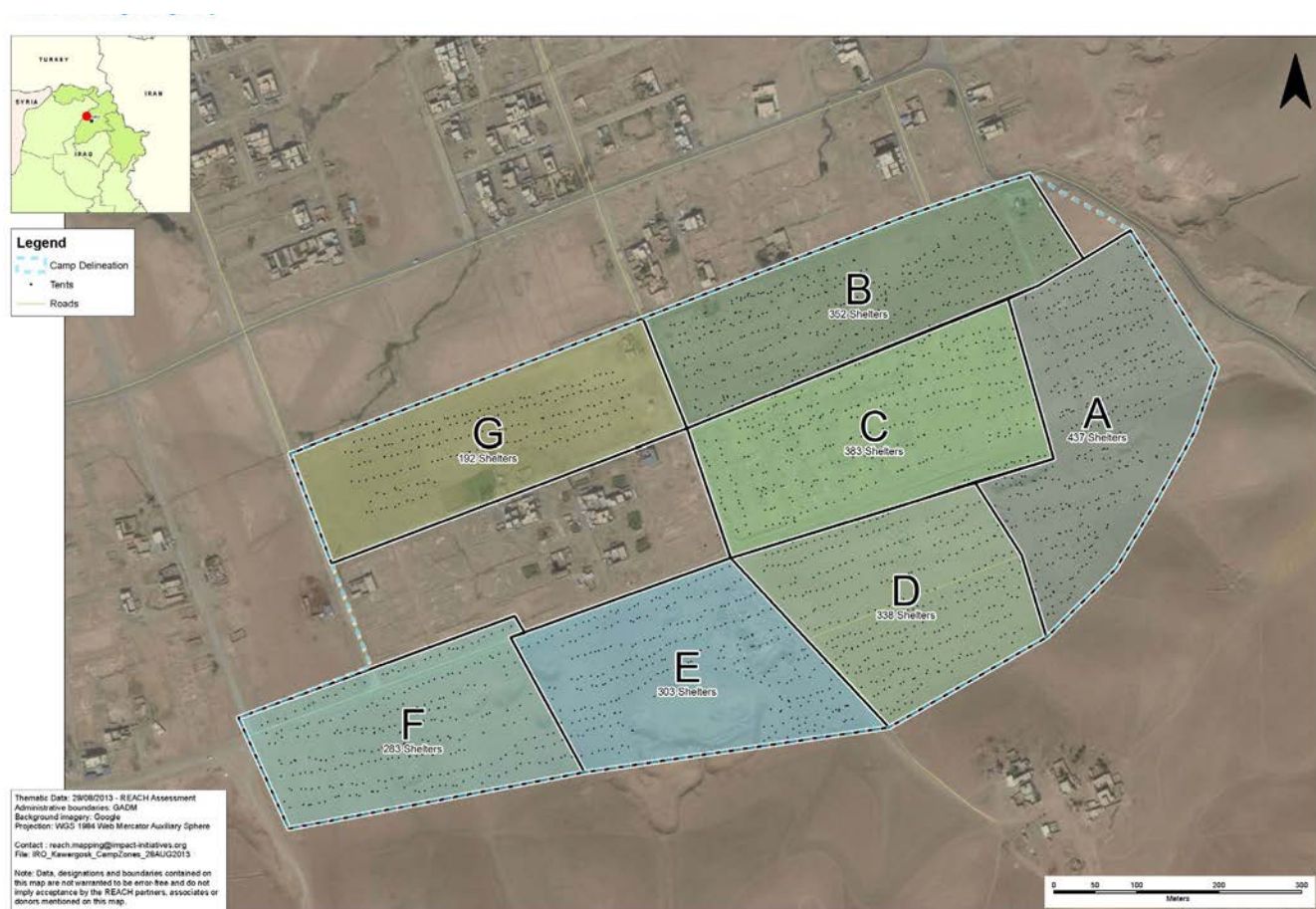




# Situation overview per site

## Kawargosk

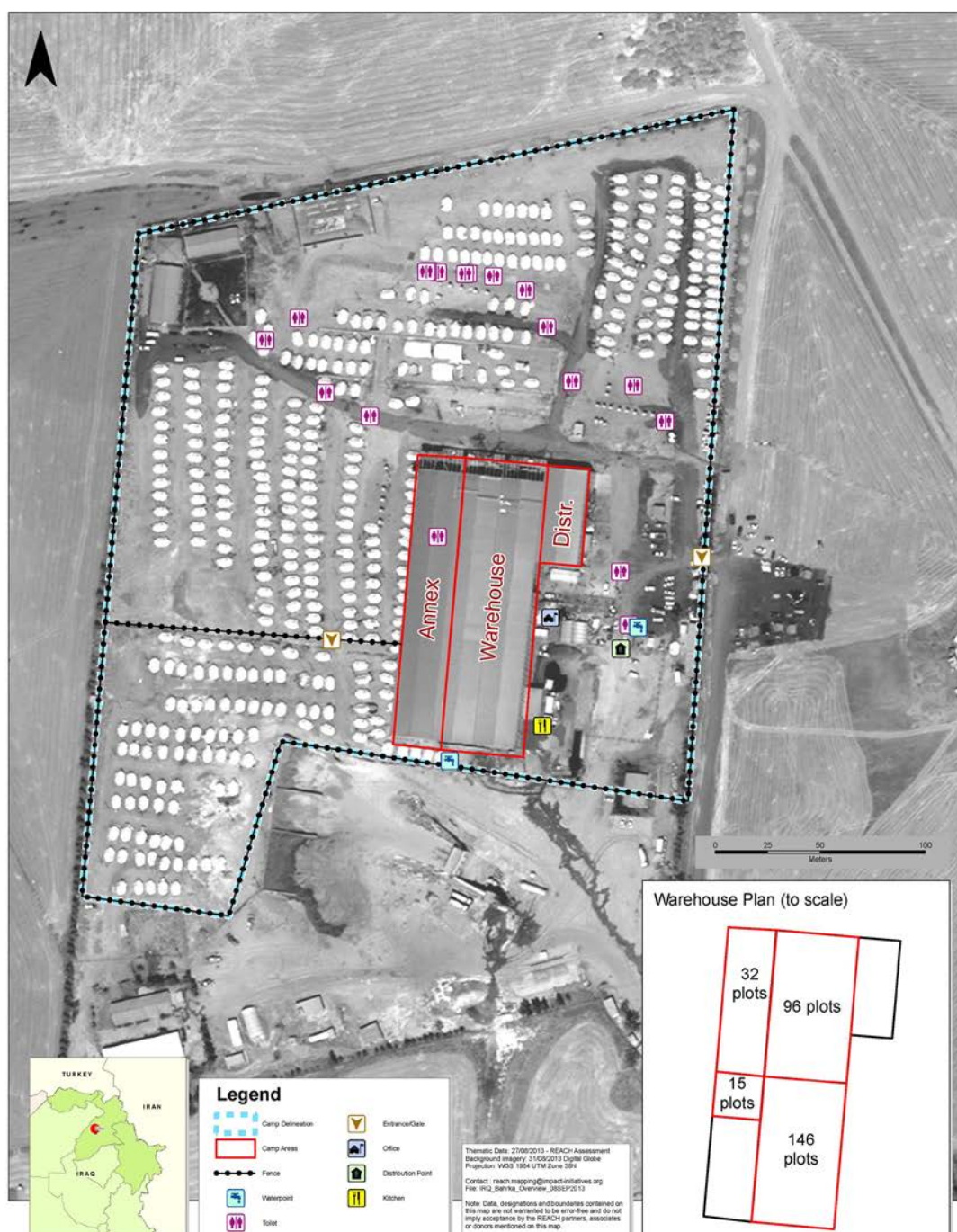
Kawargosk is the largest of the new camps built to house refugees that entered KRG after 15/08/13. It is estimated as having a population of 12,240 as of 12/09/13 (REACH figures). Kawargosk was the first camp to be set up and has the most developed infrastructure. An addressing system was completed by REACH field teams on 29/07/13; this system will increase the ability of humanitarian actors to trace aid / service delivery within the camp and track population movements. REACH is currently supporting UNHCR in developing site plans to increase the camps capacity.



Map 1: Kawargosk camp sectors, 05/09/2013

## Baharka

Baharka camp site includes refugees hosted in a large warehouse and in tents that surround it. As of 11/09/13 the population of the warehouse is 1,533 individuals with 2,569 individuals living in tents surrounding it (REACH figures). Camp infrastructure is currently being improved by local authorities and other humanitarian stakeholders, particularly with regards to WASH.



Map 2: Baharka camp infrastructure, 08/09/2013



## Basirma

As of 11/09/13 the population of Basirma stands at 3,258 individuals. The majority of the refugee population of the area had previously been resident in collective centres (schools and mosques). With the exception of a few remaining families, the entire population of collective centres has been transferred to the permanent camp in Basirma.



Map 3: Basirma camp infrastructure, 11/09/2013

## Qushtapa

As of 11/09/13 the population of Qushtapa is 3,572 individuals (REACH figures). Previously the 5,000 individuals (according to key informants) that had settled in the area were resident in a variety of collective centres (8 schools, 1 youth centre, 1 park, and 1 empty house). Thus to date, the majority of refugees have been transferred to the recently developed camp in Qushtapa.

To support information management efforts in the camp, REACH field teams completed an addressing system and geo-referencing of the camp on 01/09/13.



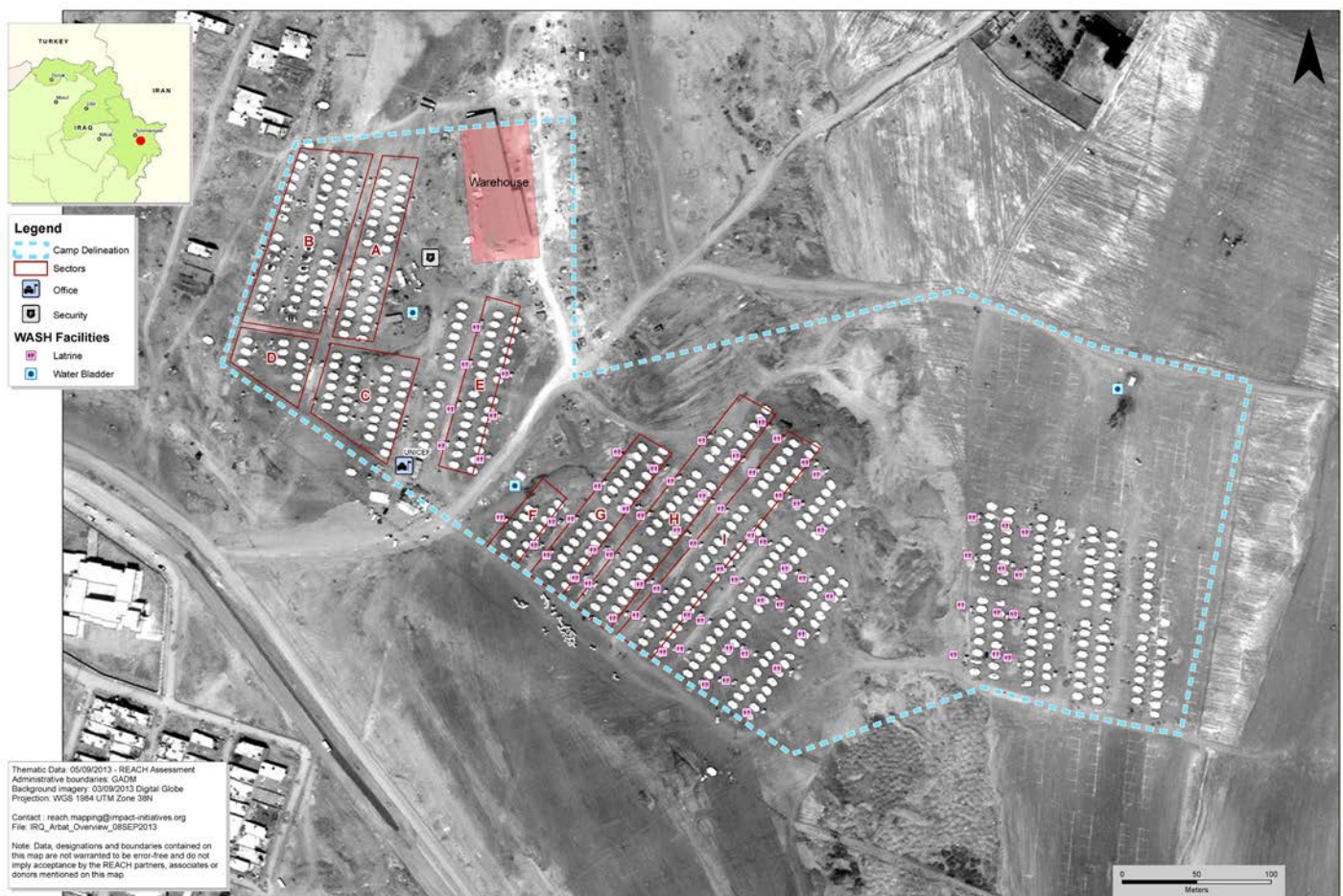
Map 4: Qushtapa camp infrastructure, 11/092013



## Arbat transit site

At present there are 2,475 refugees resident in the Arbat transit camp (01/09 – REACH figures). REACH is currently supporting UNHCR and the local authorities in the development of the long term camp, Arbat, located nearby in Sulemanya. To date there still remains a considerable number of empty tents on the site, indicating that new arrivals at the border may be transported to the site until it reaches capacity.

Interestingly, despite the temporary nature of the camp and the planned population transfer to the permanent Arbat site, a large proportion of refugees wish to stay in the camp in the longer term.



Map 5: Arbat camp infrastructure, 08/09/2013

## Bardarash

The two transit sites Bardarash, a football stadium and a youth centre, are the newest to be established to shelter newly-arrived refugees; having been setup on 30/08/13. As of 04/09/13 there were 1700 individuals in the football stadium and 897 in the youth centre. Due to the limited number of tents available at the sites, a large proportion of refugees are living in makeshift shelters. According to key informants the population of the transit sites is due to increase considerably over the coming days.



Map 6: Bardarash Youth Centre, 05/092013



## Gawilan

Gawlian refugee camp, located 19km from Bardarash, is currently being developed by the local authorities in order to house a reported 50,000 refugees. Although empty at present, a transit site (consisting of 400 tents) is under development and will house the refugees currently resident in collective centres in Bardarash. It has been reported by key informants that the first refugees will begin arriving at the new transit site within three days.

According to REACH site analysis, the land allocated for the new camp has the capacity for 12,320 tents.



Map 7: Gawilan camp site, 04/092013



## Qasarok

At present refugees resident in Qasarok are being sheltered in a school in the town. As of 12/09/13 the refugee population of the school was 714 individuals (REACH figures).

Nearby the school a camp is currently being developed by the local authorities. At the time of assessment 160 tents, out of a maximum of 300, had been erected on the site. Following the successful installation of electricity and water services the refugee population resident in the nearby school will be transferred to the camp.



Map 8: Qasarok overview, 12/092013



## Bekhme

Currently the refugee population of Bekhme, numbering 1,300 individuals (REACH figures), is resident in multiple apartments that form part of an unoccupied mountainside holiday resort. Key informants reported that the future plan is for the refugee population to be transferred to Basirma camp.



Map 9: Bekhme overview, 12/092013

## About REACH

REACH was formed in 2010 as a joint initiative of two INGOs (ACTED and IMPACT Initiatives) and a UN program (UNOSAT). The purpose of REACH is to promote and facilitate the development of information products that enhance the humanitarian community's capacity to make decisions and plan in emergency, reconstruction and development contexts.

At country level, REACH teams are deployed to countries experiencing emergencies or at-risk-of-crisis in order to facilitate interagency collection, organisation and dissemination of key humanitarian related information. Country-level deployments are conducted within the framework of partnerships with individual actors as well as aid coordination bodies, including UN agencies, clusters, inter-cluster initiatives, and other interagency initiatives.