



IRAQ:
THE IMPACT
OF THE SYRIA
CRISIS

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The International Organization for Migration (Iraq Mission)

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

IOM	International Organization for Migration
KR	Kurdistan Region
CRP	Community Revitalization Program
PRM	Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration
KRG	Kurdistan Regional Government
KI	Key Informant
HH	House-Hold
UNCT	United Nations Country Team
RRP	Regional Response Plan
NFI	Non-Food Items
RART	Rapid Assessment and Response Team
UNHCR	United Nations High Commission for Refugees
MoMD	Ministry of Migration and Displacement
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
GoI	Government of Iraq
USD	United States Dollars
IKG	In-Kind Grant

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In light of the necessity for continual assessment of the on-going Syria crisis in Iraq, and acknowledging the importance of informed and targeted assistance to those most affected, IOM Iraq would like to thank the US State Department’s Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration (PRM) for their continued support.

CHIEF OF MISSION’S FOREWORD



Recent developments in the on-going Syria crisis have highlighted the painful truth behind humanity’s capacity for ill-treatment of those it should naturally seek to protect. Whilst international condemnation is mediated by institutional indecision over a suitable and acceptably responsive intervention, the IOM Iraq Mission has never wavered from its fundamental commitment to provide targeted humanitarian assistance to those forced, often violently, from their homes and their communities, displaced across borders created in their infancy to protect the very families now fleeing the violence ravaging their homeland.

The physical and psychological trauma experienced by Syrian refugees and Iraqi returnees, now being displaced for a second time from a country that once provided them with sanctuary from the violence pervading their own country, is only exacerbated by the conditions that often confront them on their arrival in Iraq. With this in mind, the Mission’s remit to provide safe, orderly and humane migration to those in need is particularly pertinent

within a continually escalating crisis environment that shows no signs of abatement.

In order for the Mission to respond in an ever evolving manner that consistently and comprehensively addresses the most urgent and immediate of needs, regular on-the-ground assessment is required in order to tailor any humanitarian response strategy to the extreme conditions and challenges experienced by the growing number of incoming individuals and families, who often arrive at the border with nothing but the clothes in which they stand.

With the crisis entering its second year, the challenges faced by incoming populations will only increase in both diversity and scale over time. These challenges may include psychosocial problems related to the conflict from which individuals have fled and subsequently to the protracted nature of their displacement, a lack of access to basic services including water and sanitation infrastructure, limited access to education, and escalating levels of unemployment with the associated lack of regular income that naturally entails.

“THE WORLD IS NOT DANGEROUS BECAUSE OF THOSE WHO DO HARM BUT BECAUSE OF THOSE WHO LOOK AT IT WITHOUT DOING ANYTHING.”

- Albert Einstein

The assessment detailed in the pages following this foreword will draw conclusions and provide recommendations aimed at addressing challenges generated by the crisis at the community and individual level. This information will be used by the Mission in the development of its emergency response programming in Iraq.

On a final note, the Mission would like to reconfirm its commitment to the people of Syria now present in Iraq, to Iraqis returning to the country they were forced to leave, and to those waiting on the border for the assistance that they so urgently require. As long as there remains a need for assistance, IOM Iraq will continue to respond.

Sincerely yours,

Michael Pillinger
Chief of Mission, IOM Iraq

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The impact of the protracted and escalating situation in Syria is being felt throughout the region, with the growing refugee crisis as one of its most pressing consequences. Amid the rapidly deteriorating situation in Syria, the international community and national actors are struggling to respond to massive population displacements across the region and to meet even the most urgent and immediate basic needs of this extremely vulnerable population group. In addition to recent displacement, the protracted displacement of thousands of refugees who fled Syria in the earlier phases of the conflict is posing new and diverse challenges to the authorities and humanitarian actors, including the growing social, economic and demographic long-term consequences currently facing receiving host communities.

Iraq has not been spared the effects of this regional dynamic. As a consequence of the continued mass influx of Syrian refugees since mid-August 2013, the overall refugee population in Iraq is estimated at over 220,000. The country continues to feel the effects of resultant pressures as the population of Syrian refugees continues to grow. Furthermore, the number of Iraqi returnees, who had previously been displaced to Syria as a result of conflict in Iraq, has reached over 50,000 since the start of the crisis and continues to rise, adding significantly to already challenging conditions.

This unparalleled population influx represents a significant burden for Iraq, as the country is still struggling with the consequences of its own protracted conflicts and internal population displacements. Although the number of Syrian refugees in Iraq remains lower than in other countries in the region, in the present context the crisis may have disproportionately higher effects on Iraq’s stability and security, with subsequent and inestimable effects on the stability of the entire region.

The current report explores the immediate and longer term consequences of the Syria crisis in Iraq, and aims to provide a better understanding of the profile, background, composition and needs of the Syrian refugees and Iraqi returnees in Iraq. The report maps the movements and locations of vulnerable populations, explores their living conditions and access to vital services, assesses the relations between them and host communities and identifies their medium to long-term needs and intentions. The resultant recommendations aim to inform the Iraqi authorities and the wider international community of ways and approaches in which the response to the Syria crisis can be strengthened in the future. Experience has shown

that this is possible when assistance is implemented from the ground up, and in partnership with the people in need of assistance. Therefore, programs must be developed and configured within a framework of interlinked and mutually supportive, sustainable individual and community initiatives that focus on members of the concerned society. IOM believes that the most successful, durable initiatives are all-inclusive, community driven and community run.

The findings and conclusions discussed throughout this report are based on data and information gathered through field assessments carried out in June and July 2013, and on preliminary information and observations provided by the IOM Rapid Assessment and Response Teams (RARTs) related to the recent mass population influx following 15 August 2013.

The report was prepared by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in Iraq between April and September 2013, within the framework of the “Community Revitalization Program (CRP) – Phase II” funded by the US State Department’s Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration (PRM).

KEY ASSESSMENT FINDINGS¹

Over 50,000 Syrians poured into the Iraqi Kurdistan Region (KR) over a period of three weeks from mid-August, 2013, bringing the total number of Syrian refugees in Iraq to over 220,000 individuals as of early September, 2013. Due to the strong geographical, economic and social ties connecting the two countries, and as a result of the increasing violence and insecurity in Syria, the numbers will continue to increase: between 60,000 and 100,000 further Syrians are expected to seek refuge in Iraq before the end of 2013. In addition, more than 50,000 Iraqi refugees have returned to Iraq since the crisis began, while an estimated 65,000 still live in Syria.²

The northern Iraqi KR has been the most affected area of Iraq. More than 160,000 Syrian refugees entered the country between March 2011 and early August 2013.³ Over 60% of this population now lives outside of the camps, mainly in urban communities. The majority are ethnic Kurds who have settled in camps and host communities across the KR of Iraq. It was most common for this population to spend a few days or weeks in Domiz

camp in the governorate of Dahuk before leaving in search of work opportunities and better living conditions. Many Syrian refugees find occasional or temporary work in the growing KR economy; however, the population remains heavily dependent on humanitarian aid provided by the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) and international and non-governmental organizations.

The presence of Syrian families has also been reported in Baghdad, Kirkuk, Ninewa and Najaf, and several hundred are believed to be scattered throughout other governorates in central and southern Iraq.⁴ Their exact location and numbers are difficult to estimate, with some entering Iraq illegally and others avoiding registration due to a restrictive government policy towards Syrian arrivals. IOM assessments reveal that Syrian refugees predominantly settle in areas of Iraq that match their own ethno-religious demographic.

With their displacement entering a second year, the needs of refugees and returnees are evolving and multiplying over time. Access to work and a regular income are today among their main concerns, and represent the determining factor as to whether they will remain in their current location, move elsewhere within Iraq or, in some cases, decide to migrate to third countries. Nonetheless, the vast majority do not wish to return to Syria until the current crisis is resolved.

The mass and continuing influx of Syrian refugees, following the reopening of the Peshkhabour and Sehela border crossings on 15 August 2013, represents the single largest wave of refugees entering Iraq since the Syrian conflict

1 The current report follows on from IOM’s Rapid Urgent Needs Assessment, implemented in August 2012, which addressed the immediate needs of vulnerable populations upon their arrival in Iraq. IOM will continue to evaluate the situation, and provide assistance to those individuals affected by the Syrian crisis.

2 Available at: <http://www.unhcr.org/pages/49e486426.html>

3 The borders were officially closed in May 2013 and reopened on 15 August 2013. During that period of closure, only around 400 most serious medical cases were allowed to cross into KR, and all were transported immediately to the nearest hospitals.

4 Central and Southern Iraq covers all of Iraq except for the Kurdish Regional governorates of Erbil, Sulaymaniyah and Dahuk.

began. According to preliminary assessments conducted by IOM Iraq field teams, the incoming refugees include a mixed population, approximately 70% of which are families with children, including a number of female-headed families. Approximately 30% are individuals, 10% are elderly persons and 3% are disabled. The vast majority are Kurdish. Most of them, on reaching the border, are exhausted and particularly vulnerable⁵ following the long walk to reach Iraq under intense heat and with little refreshment.

Newly arrived Syrian refugees have been accommodated in temporary reception camps and facilities such as schools, mosques and community centers in locations designated by the KRG.⁶ In the absence of adequate accommodation, improvised settlements are being erected throughout the region by incoming families themselves, using their personal household items and other available materials.

The living conditions of newly arrived populations are particularly bad. Families very often live in overcrowded make-shift homes and settlements, exposed to poor hygiene infrastructure and harsh weather conditions which can exacerbate the prevalence of dermatological and respiratory diseases. An initial needs assessment carried out by IOM field staff reveals that emergency relief equipment, including tents and non-food items such as hygiene-related and basic household items have been identified as immediate priority needs. It must be noted, however, that their needs are not limited to the above, and varied and responsive assistance is essential in the meeting of all of the needs of this vulnerable group.

The influx of tens of thousands of destitute men, women and children adds significant pressure to the lives of impoverished

host communities, already dealing with the consequences of the protracted Syrian crisis and previous internal conflict. Relations between refugee and host communities have generally been good in the past, despite sporadic acts of discrimination and abuse. Nevertheless, due to detrimental and escalating socio-economic effects and anticipated migratory pressures associated with the crisis, there is a concern that relations may deteriorate in the months to come.

A further issue adding to the complexity of an already challenging migration crisis is that of the reported ongoing cross-border movements between Syria and Iraq, mainly the Kurdistan Region (KR). It has been noted that some Syrian migrants enter Iraq temporarily, only to return to Syria soon after. The motives for their temporary stay in KR differ from a desire to visit relatives located in Kurdistan, a need for medical treatment, or to search for work in KR.

New pressures continue to exacerbate Iraq's already significant challenges, generated by its own protracted internal conflicts and associated mass population displacements. The country's extremely delicate political and security situation, its

⁵ Vulnerability is defined by IOM as the inability of individuals and communities to withstand the adverse consequences of socio-economic, political and demographic changes and pressures. Vulnerable implies that a population may be directly or indirectly affected by forced migration (IDP, returnees and residents of host communities), displaying a lack of any kind of income (under the poverty line), being unemployed and underemployed, and have no access to basic social services (health care, education, water/sanitation, housing, legal advice, etc.).

⁶ By 22 September 2013, 10 temporary reception facilities and accommodation locations were designated by KRG; Arke Citadel, Qasok, Zahko and Guelam in Dahuk; Baharka Camp, Basirma, Bekhma Dam, Kawa Camp and Gawer Gosik in Erbil; and Aarbat in Sulaymaniyah.

weak socio-economic infrastructure and overstretched emergency and humanitarian relief capacities all undermine efforts to respond to these growing challenges.

The dramatic increase in numbers of Syrian refugees in Iraq, whilst lower than in other countries in the region, may have disproportionately higher effects on Iraq's stability and security, leading to consequences that could potentially spill over the Iraqi borders. These pressures are likely to continue destabilizing the country, pushing it towards greater sectarian violence and further fragmentation, with inestimable implications for the stability and security of the entire region. The stability and prosperity of Iraq, and the region as a whole, will ultimately be determined by future response to the current migration crisis.

Difficulties, as described above, have already been predicted by academics as early as February 2003, albeit in a different context, in the wake of the 1991 Gulf War that produced nearly three million refugees.⁷ The potential for mass forced migration into the semi-autonomous region of Iraqi Kurdistan was thought likely as it had, by that stage, become an easily accessible safe area for Iraqis fleeing Saddam Hussein's regime. It was suggested that, as local authorities did not have the adequate resources to cope with mass population influxes, humanitarian supplies should be pre-positioned inside Iraqi Kurdistan to cope with any sudden increase in population movements. Whilst infrastructure within the region is reasonably good, allowing for efficient

and timely delivery, it was suggested that supplies should be stockpiled both in Kurdistan itself and in strategically positioned nearby locations.

With increasing numbers of new arrivals, predominantly into Iraqi Kurdistan, and the subsequent growth in a variety of needs, this is just as relevant today as it was in 2003. As national and international emergency response capacities become overstrained and available resources quickly become depleted, emergency relief partners face significant challenges in adequately responding to the needs of the continuing influx of an extremely vulnerable population, while also addressing the diversifying needs of those who arrived in the earlier stages of the crisis.

IOM Iraq's Syria Crisis Response:
From Emergency Relief Assistance towards Safety, Security and Long-Term Wellbeing

Since the onset of the crisis in March 2011, IOM Iraq has been working as part of the United Nation's Country Team (UNCT), in coordination with Government of Iraq authorities and humanitarian actors, on the provision of emergency relief assistance designed to meet the needs of Syrian refugees and Iraqi returnees.

As a partner in the implementation of the Syria Regional Response Plan (RRP) in Iraq, IOM assists Syrian refugees located in camps and within host communities through the provision of basic services and non-food items⁸ (NFIs); self-reliance and livelihood support; water, sanitation and hygiene infrastructure; in addition to the facilitation of safe, humane and orderly migration through transportation from the borders to camp and non-camp locations. With an advanced prepositioning, logistics, and supply chain management system, and an extended operational network of partners across the KR, IOM has been able to quickly respond to the exponentially increasing needs of the growing refugee population.

IOM Iraq consists of approximately 330 experts and staff members working across all eighteen governorates of Iraq. The Mission's structure includes three operational hubs in Baghdad, Basrah and Erbil, in addition to 22 field satellite offices.

⁷ Policy Brief "Refugees from War in Iraq", Peter W. Galbraith, Professor of National Security Studies at the National War College and a former US Ambassador to Croatia, Migration Policy Institute (MPI), February 2003, no.2.

⁸ NFIs can include all internal household items.

IOM ERBIL HUB IS RESPONSIBLE FOR MANAGEMENT OF THE IOM IRAQ CENTRAL WAREHOUSE IN ERBIL, AND THE OVERALL PROCUREMENT AND LOGISTICS FUNCTIONS WHICH ARE VITAL FOR ROBUST EMERGENCY AND LIVELIHOOD OPERATIONS OF THE MISSION. IN COORDINATION WITH ITS STRATEGIC PARTNER THE “KUEHNE FOUNDATION”,⁹ IOM IRAQ HAS CARRIED OUT IN 2011 A PROFOUND REVIEW OF ITS SUPPLY CHAIN MANAGEMENT (SCM) IN ORDER TO INCREASE THE EFFICIENCY AND EFFECTIVENESS OF ITS STRUCTURES AND PROCESSES, ADAPTING THEM TO THE INCREASING AND DIVERSIFYING EMERGENCY, HUMANITARIAN AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC NEEDS IN IRAQ.

IOM’s unique network of field-based Rapid Assessment and Response Teams (RARTs) are able to conduct swift nationwide needs assessments through beneficiary household surveys, key informant interviews and focus group discussions, ensuring delivery of aid tailored to the specific needs of IOM beneficiaries. Deployed and operational across all 18 governorates, the RARTs give IOM the capacity to serve vulnerable populations in the most remote areas of Iraq.

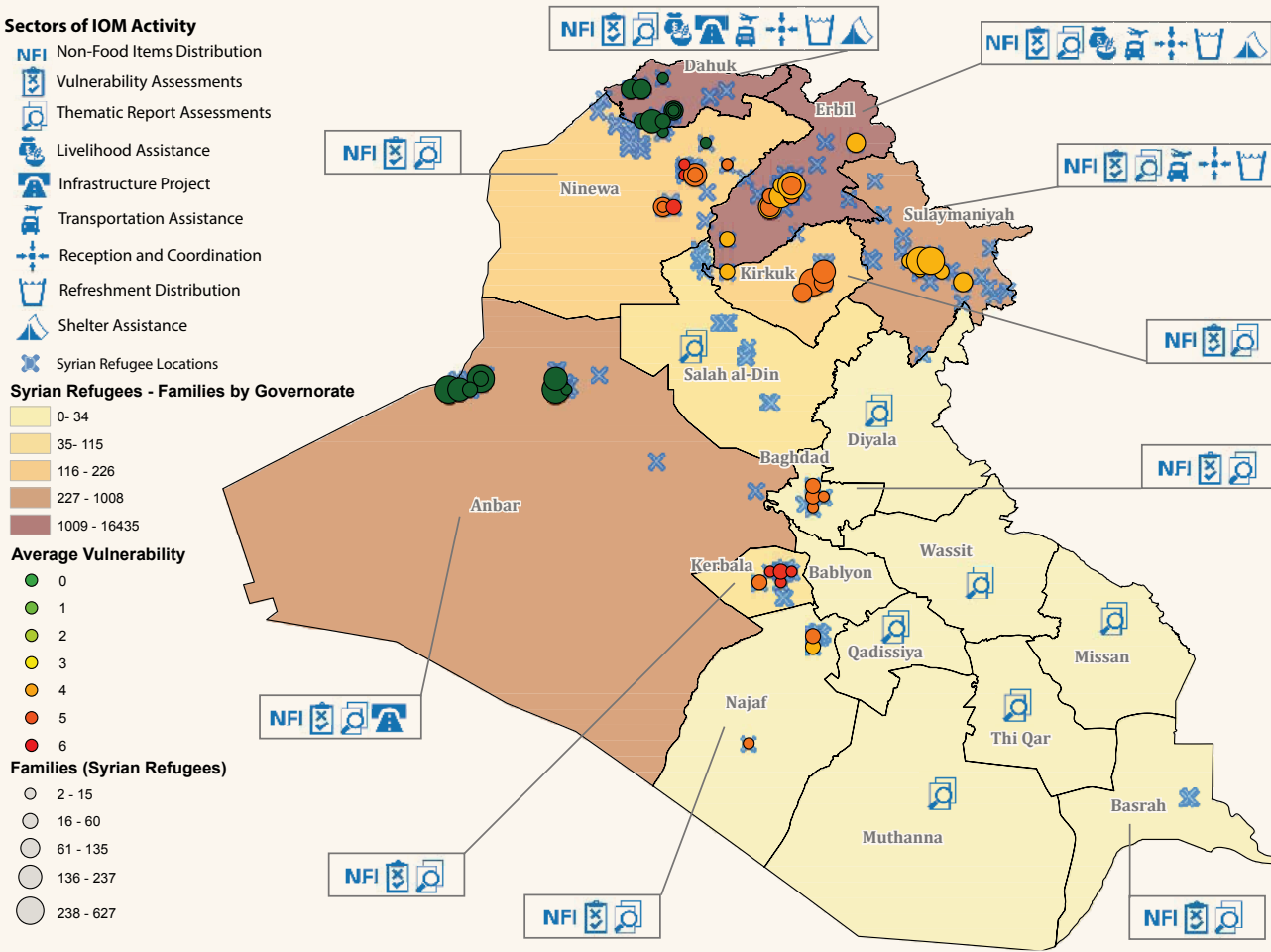
IOM operational methodology integrates beneficiary profiling and detailed needs identification, in response to which the Mission tailors assistance according to specific beneficiary needs. IOM promotes a holistic and future-centered approach, ensuring the provision of immediate life-saving services and basic infrastructural reinforcement, followed by initiatives addressing the longer-term wellbeing and safety of vulnerable populations. The social and economic impact of prolonged displacement is also addressed through individual and community assistance schemes, comprehensive livelihood support programs, and the rehabilitation of socio-economic infrastructure, all contributing to the building of bridges between refugees and their receiving host communities.

The Mission’s response to the Syrian crisis can be seen in the following map. Also shown are the population densities of Syrian refugees in Iraq, identified locations of Syrian families nationwide and the level of vulnerability of these families (as identified by RART field staff prior to NFI distributions to determine beneficiary eligibility and to inform as to the types of items required for a targeted and effective distribution).


Initiatives mapping population density and locating the most vulnerable of families have identified Diyala, Kirkuk, Baghdad, and Salah al-Din as those governorates hosting the most vulnerable of Syrian refugees. Due to IOM Iraq’s experienced and dedicated field staff located across Iraq, the Mission is able to reach and continue to assist those most in need, mitigating further suffering and alleviating the negative impacts experienced by receiving host communities.

⁹ The Kuehne Foundation, founded in Switzerland in 1976, has gained high esteem for its initiatives to promote training, education and research in the fields of logistics and transport. It also supports projects in the areas of culture and medicine. The Foundation is operationally active and initiates almost all of the projects it funds. The sole donor of this public trust foundation, Prof. Dr. h.c. Klaus-Michael Kuehne, regards his commitment to quality and sustainability as an important part of his social responsibility as an entrepreneur. Available at:

http://www.kn-portal.com/fileadmin/user_upload/documents/about_us/Investor_Relations/documents/2011/en/39-kuehne-foundations.html.



As of the 9th of September IOM Iraq has provided:

	54,062 individuals assisted through the provision of non-food item kits.		42,139 individuals assisted with transport to safe locations in Dahuk, Erbil, and Sulaymaniyah.
	11,433 NFI kits distributed, approximately 300,000 individual items.		9,034 individuals assessed for vulnerability and immediate needs to identify NFI assistance eligibility.
	765 individual beneficiaries received direct livelihood assistance in Dahuk, Domiz Camp, and Erbil.		270 tents erected in Erbil and Dahuk.
	3 infrastructure projects completed (two WAT-SAN and one education).		

METHODOLOGY

IOM Iraq conducted the current assessment throughout May, June and July of 2013.¹⁰ Its aim was to investigate the impact of the protracted Syrian crisis on Iraq, identifying short and long-term needs as Iraq continues to face the large influx of individuals crossing its borders. The study focuses predominantly on Syrian refugees in the northern and central western governorates of Iraq, specifically those refugees located outside of camps who are believed to be dispersed throughout the country within receiving host communities. The assessment will also explore conditions faced by Iraqis returning from Syria.

These large population movements have created significant challenges for Iraq. The current assessment intends to establish the movements of Syrian refugees and Iraqi returnees outside of camps, mapping their temporary and final (at the point of assessment) locations in Iraq. The study will then establish the living conditions faced by targeted populations, their ability to access vital services, daily difficulties and coping mechanisms, priority needs, and an understanding of both short and long-term intentions. Furthermore, the assessment will look into the economic, social and political impact of recent large population influxes from Syria on Iraqi receiving communities, providing an insight into the relationship between refugees and their Iraqi hosts. This will inform decision-making and the development of a strategy of project implementation aimed at promoting community stability and livelihood support.

IOM Rapid Assessment and Response Teams (RARTs) conducted 592 household (HH) interviews, 61 key informant (KI) interviews and 19 focus group (FG) discussions with Syrian refugees and Iraqis returning from Syria. The combination of qualitative and quantitative assessment tools was chosen to provide a comprehensive understanding of the impact of the protracted Syria crisis on Iraq. The teams first carried out a location assessment to identify Syrian refugees living in host communities, before using this information to generate a random sample that was employed in the selection of households to be surveyed.

Household surveys were undertaken to gather quantitative data on the demographics of individual families, their living conditions, needs and intentions. This was supported by qualitative information gained from key informants and used in the selection of locations for household surveys and for the mapping of Syrian refugee locations outside of host communities. Key informant response and further information gained from focus group discussions was used to develop a deeper understanding of issues affecting Syrian refugees, and of host community attitudes towards the impact of their presence.

Of the Syrian refugees registered in Iraq, UNHCR has claimed that the vast majority¹¹ are residing in the KR of Iraq. This information informed the geographical focus of field assessments which were predominantly in the northern and western governorates of Sulaymaniyah, Dahuk, Erbil, Ninewa, Anbar and Kirkuk, although other assessment locations were also selected based on the presence of significant numbers of Syrian refugees or Iraqi returnees (17 governorates were reached).

The locations of potential respondents for the household survey were determined by IOM RARTs, in consultation with local government authorities and community representatives. Syrian refugees were then randomly sampled from this list. Iraqi returnees were sampled randomly from information provided by the Ministry of Migration and Displacement (MoMD), local authorities and from information gained from key informant interviews. Overall, IOM staff interviewed 296 Syrian refugee families and 296 Iraqi returnee families.

¹⁰ The assessment was conducted before borders in the KR opened on 15 August where over 50,000 Syrian refugees crossed. Thus, findings and conclusions do not directly reflect the new population, yet the assumption is made that parallels can be drawn.

¹¹ Available at: <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/country.php?id=103>

Key informants were selected based on their professional involvement with Syrian refugees and Iraqi returnees, in order that a deeper understanding of data gathered through household surveys might result. Key informants were drawn from local council, government and community representatives, and included both Syrian and Iraqi respondents. Focus group discussions involved between six and ten participants and were broken down into four main groups: male Syrian refugees living outside camps, female Syrian refugees living outside camps (where possible), members of affected host communities and Iraqi returnees.

The teams went to great lengths to ensure that as wide a range of communities as possible were identified and assessed through several complimentary methods. All groups of participants were selected to include those from multiple districts, rural and urban areas where applicable, female-headed households as well as various ethnic and religious groups.¹²



Syrian refugees attend a community meeting facilitated by IOM field staff in Erbil.

¹² It is important to note that the focus of this report is to provide an overview of the situation to identify the vulnerabilities of target populations as impacted from the continuing influx of people due to the protracted crisis in Syria. The results presented are, thus, not representative of Iraqi society as a whole or of the Syrian population in Iraq, but of the most vulnerable individuals and circumstances in some of Iraq's most vulnerable and marginalized communities. Nonetheless, the assessed population can help identify certain indicative vulnerability criteria, as those displaying the most pressing of challenges faced by Iraq's vulnerable communities and, therefore, may be used as a general indicator of trends within and between governorates.

RECOMMENDATIONS

While Iraq continues to struggle to respond to the ongoing mass influx of an extremely vulnerable Syrian population, it is, at the same time, facing the diversifying needs of those Syrian refugees and Iraqi returnees who arrived in the earlier stages of the crisis and affected host communities. With the protracted and potentially escalating situation in Syria, the return of Iraqis will continue and no end to the displacement of Syrians seems in sight. This will generate yet more complex and longer-term challenges regarding the temporary local integration of Syrian refugees, the durable reintegration of returnees, further negative impacts on host communities, as well as an increasing need for infrastructural adjustments. In addition, and from a longer-term perspective, the continued protraction of the crisis will result in increased migration to Iraq and further displacement within its borders and from Iraq to third countries.

The increasingly diverse consequences of the Syrian crisis in Iraq must be addressed in an integrated and holistic way, through a comprehensive set of immediate, mid- and longer-term measures responding to the various needs of refugees, returnees and host communities, ensuring at the same time the reinforcement and expansion of local capacities and infrastructure. As mentioned previously, all indications point to further significant mass influxes of Syrian refugees and Iraqi returnees into Iraqi Kurdistan. As this region represents, in comparison to other areas of central and southern Iraq, an easily accessible safe area with reasonably good infrastructure allowing for efficient and timely delivery of humanitarian assistance, IOM Iraq will continue utilizing its significant resources and infrastructure, in as comprehensive and efficient a manner as the Mission’s capabilities allow.

The following recommendations are therefore developed and configured within a framework of interlinked and mutually supportive individual and community initiatives that focus on all members of society and not just a selected few. Based on the information, observations and findings generated during this assessment, and in the preparation of the report, IOM Iraq has identified the following priority areas:

I. Emergency and Humanitarian Relief Assistance and Services: Responding to the Immediate Basic Needs of Incoming Syrian Refugees.

In response to current and potentially escalating conditions, it is of the utmost importance that uninterrupted emergency and humanitarian relief operations addressing the continuing influx of Syrian populations into Iraq is ensured. This is particularly crucial during the immediate, post-displacement phase when incoming individuals are at their most vulnerable. The following assistance services are key: reception, medical screening and referrals, transportation from borders to the reception facilities, provision of food and emergency non-food items (NFI) including hygiene and households items, provision of adequate shelter facilities (distribution of tents), as well as the development of sufficient water/sanitation and other infrastructural facilities. This will involve bringing to

bear the full weight of IOM Iraq’s Supply Chain Management system, in order to implement the strategic pre-positioning of stocks in order to allow to hold critical material “in stock” at strategic locations in anticipation of required humanitarian response. Over and above the actual positioning of physical stocks in a particular location, the technique also embraces vendor agreements that make provision for access to stocks when needs arise at pre-negotiated prices, enabling the organization to buffer the excessively high costs that arise during emergencies.

II. Enhancing Immediate Integration: Self-Reliance and Socio-Economic Conditions.

In addition to the provision of basic humanitarian assistance, it is crucial to rapidly address the social and economic consequences of displacement. Forced migration often leads to dependency on aid and frustration associated with isolation from families and social networks. These difficulties can themselves lead to psychosocial problems and related antisocial behavior.

Psychosocial support through the organization of various trading, manufacturing and service provision activities can mitigate these problems and help to build and maintain the social networks of, and relations between, vulnerable groups.

Individual and community-based micro-projects involving refugees, returnees and members of host communities aimed at strengthening local service infrastructure should be prioritized and promoted within vulnerable communities. Such initiatives help to improve access among refugees and returnees to basic services, improve their living conditions and contribute to the creation of a positive climate in the camps and within host communities.

The immediate and temporary integration and reintegration process should be supported by the provision of information, counseling and referral services. To that end, a counseling and referral mechanism should be established to ensure timely access to accurate information about registration procedures, rights, obligations and entitlements, access to basic services and work opportunities, as well as many other issues that could impede successful integration and reintegration.

III. Livelihood Support Initiatives: Employment Generation, Job Matching, and Support for Micro-Businesses.

Access to work and regular income are the main priorities for both Syrian refugees and Iraqi returnees. These primary needs strongly influence the future considerations and plans of both groups: access to work in order to obtain a sufficient, regular income is stated as the main determining factor in deciding whether to remain in the current location, to move elsewhere within Iraq or to migrate to third countries.

Livelihood support programs should be developed to facilitate temporary integration in Iraq for Syrian refugees through employment generation, job matching and support for the creation of small and micro-businesses, as well as through various types of vocational and on-the-job training. At the same time, existing livelihood programs should be strengthened and expanded to support the sustainable reintegration of returnees into Iraq.

IV. Raising Awareness of the Realities of Migration: Prevention of Irregular Migration, Smuggling and Trafficking in Human Beings.

Harsh living conditions, a lack of work opportunities and regular income, and a lack of access to adequate services will inevitably lead to both Syrian refugees and Iraqi returnees contemplating the option of migration to third countries. Irregular migration through smuggling and trafficking networks has, for many years, been a common method for many Iraqis and third country nationals in Iraq to leave the country, predominantly to the European Union (EU). As long as these illegal networks remain active in Iraq, there is a significant risk that vulnerable Syrian refugees and recent returnees will be exploited. This issue should be addressed through comprehensive information and awareness raising campaigns, designed to increase understanding among vulnerable populations of the realities and risks associated with migration, particularly of irregular migration, and to inform on locally available alternatives.

V. Strengthening Iraqi Institutional Capacity to Address the Current Migration Crisis in Iraq.

With increasing numbers of new arrivals and a subsequent growth in a variety of needs, local and national capacities, resources and infrastructure have become too strained to adequately respond to the demands placed upon them. The recommended measures outlined above will require significant reinforcement of local infrastructure, primarily of shelter and housing, health and education facilities, as well as comprehensive capacity building programs for Iraqi authorities and organizations.

VI. Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) System.

The Syrian crisis in Iraq can be characterized by relatively high mobility of Syrian refugees and Iraqi returnees following their arrival to Iraq. The necessity for tracking their post-arrival migration within and from Iraq is posing significant challenges to Iraqi Government authorities and humanitarian actors, as they fail to accurately locate affected populations and ensure timely and focused assistance.

To address this challenge, IOM has developed the Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) which regularly captures, processes and disseminates complex information and data, providing a clear understanding of the locations, profile, vulnerabilities and needs of affected populations. Such a mechanism is designed to support the timely and accurate mapping of displacement locations and the rapid assessment of needs, facilitating the timely provision of assistance and services throughout the duration of the crisis.

From a longer-term perspective, this mechanism would allow for a more in-depth understanding of the longer-term needs and intentions of affected populations. It will also contribute to the development of assistance schemes tailored to future needs, including the return and reintegration of refugees to Syria once conditions allow and the long-term reintegration of Iraqi returnees in Iraq.

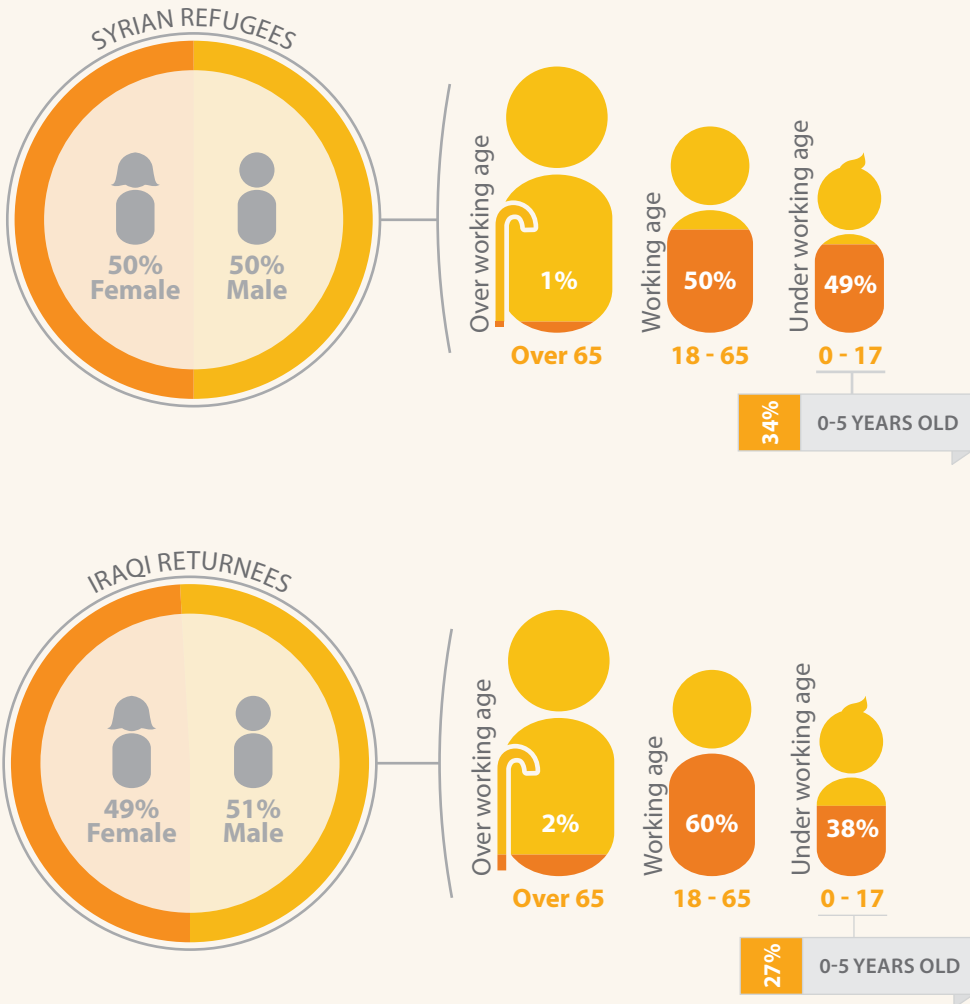


DEMOGRAPHICS

During the course of the field assessment, staff collected data from 1,440 Syrian refugees and 1,126 Iraqi returnees. In terms of gender, the split for both groups is roughly 50% male and 50% female. The average family size amongst the Syrian refugee population is 4.9, whilst Iraqi returnee families have an average of 3.8 members.

Fifty percent (50%) of Syrian refugees are of working age (18 to 65) while this is true of 60% of Iraqi returnees. A large proportion of both groups are less than 18 years old, and therefore of school age. This is true of 49% of Syrian refugees (34% of whom are 5 years old or less) and 38% of Iraqi returnees (27% are 0 - 5 years old). Very small proportions of both groups are over the age of 65 and, therefore, over working age (1% of Syrian refugees and 2% of Iraqi returnees). Of the 296 Syrian refugee families assessed, 204 (69%) are located in an urban environment, while 92 (31%) are found to be living in camp, rural or semi-urban settings. The overwhelming majority (97%) of Iraqi returnees are located in urban areas.

One percent (1%) of Syrian refugee families and 2% of those of Iraqi returnees are coping with at least one physically or mentally disabled family member. Of greater concern, in terms of prevalence, are the 6% of Syrian refugees suffering from chronic illness. This is also true of 6% of Iraqi returnees. Also of interest, in terms of vulnerability, are the 2% of Syrian refugee households headed by a single individual and 3% of those of Iraqi returnees.



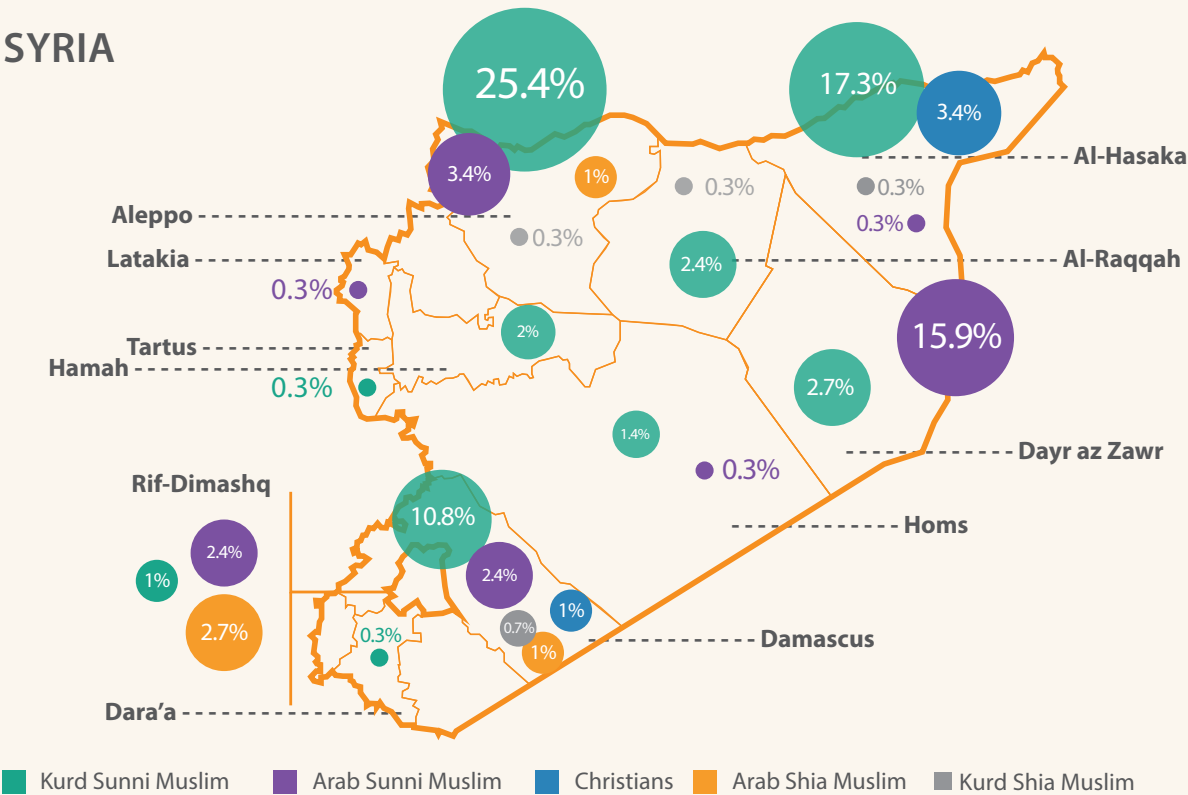
MOVEMENTS

The actual number of Syrians in Iraq and full details of where they are located is unknown. IOM assessments have confirmed that the number of individuals who have crossed into Iraq is higher than the current number of individuals who have registered. Nineteen percent (19%) of Syrians interviewed by IOM field staff have not registered with the authorities. The assessment also indicates that Syrian refugees often relocate several times within the KR and in southern and central Iraq.

Over 50,000¹³ Iraqis have re-entered Iraq from Syria since the start of the crisis. Syria still hosts thousands of Iraqis¹⁴ and the protracted crisis is likely to force many more to return to their country of origin. The number of Iraqis returning is also unclear as, again, 19% of returnees interviewed by IOM state that they have not registered with MoMD.

IOM Iraq has discovered that Syrian refugees entering Iraq have been displaced from a large number of locations within Syria.¹⁵ There is no clear correlation between place of origin and where people choose to settle. The assessment has revealed that Syrian refugees often stop at multiple locations in Syria and Iraq before reaching their final locations.

SYRIA



13 Available at: <http://www.unhcr.org/51c0399c9.html>

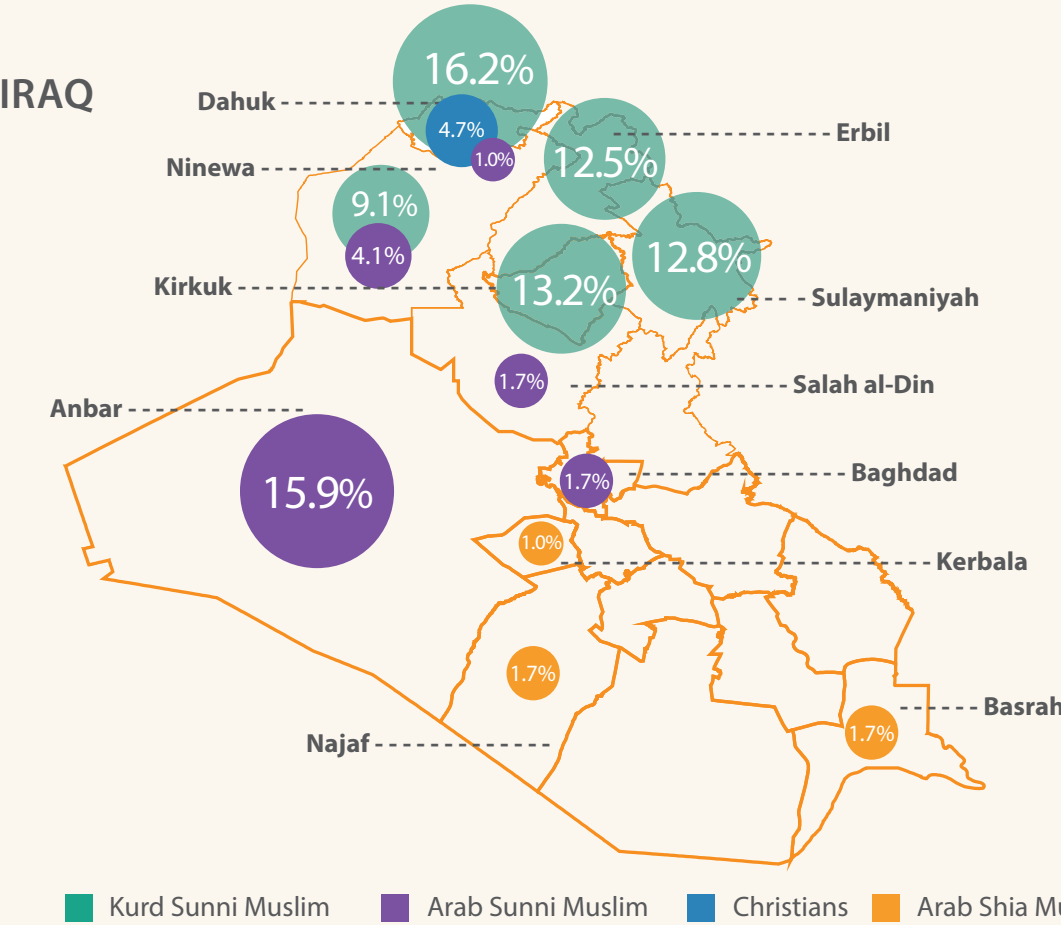
14 Chatelard, G. (2011) Iraqi Refugee and IDPs: From Humanitarian Intervention to Durable Solutions. Middle East Institute. Foundation pour la recherche Strategique,

15 Aleppo (31%), Al-Hasaka (21%), Dayr az Zawr (19%), Damascus (16%), Rif Dimashq (6%), Al-Raqqah (3%), Hamah (2%) and the remaining 2.7% originate from Homs, Tartus, Latakia and Daraa.

IOM has identified two primary routes taken by incoming refugees and returnees. The indicated routes follow the main roads into Iraq, leading to Anbar and Dahuk. The routes taken by Iraqi returnees back into Iraq were generally far more direct, as they knew the country, were legally entitled to enter and had specific intended destinations.

Assessment data suggests that the religion and ethnicity of people displaced to Iraq are often influential in determining where they settle. IOM estimates that 89% of Syrian refugees in Iraq are Sunnis and, of this figure, 64% are Kurds and 25% are Arab.

IRAQ

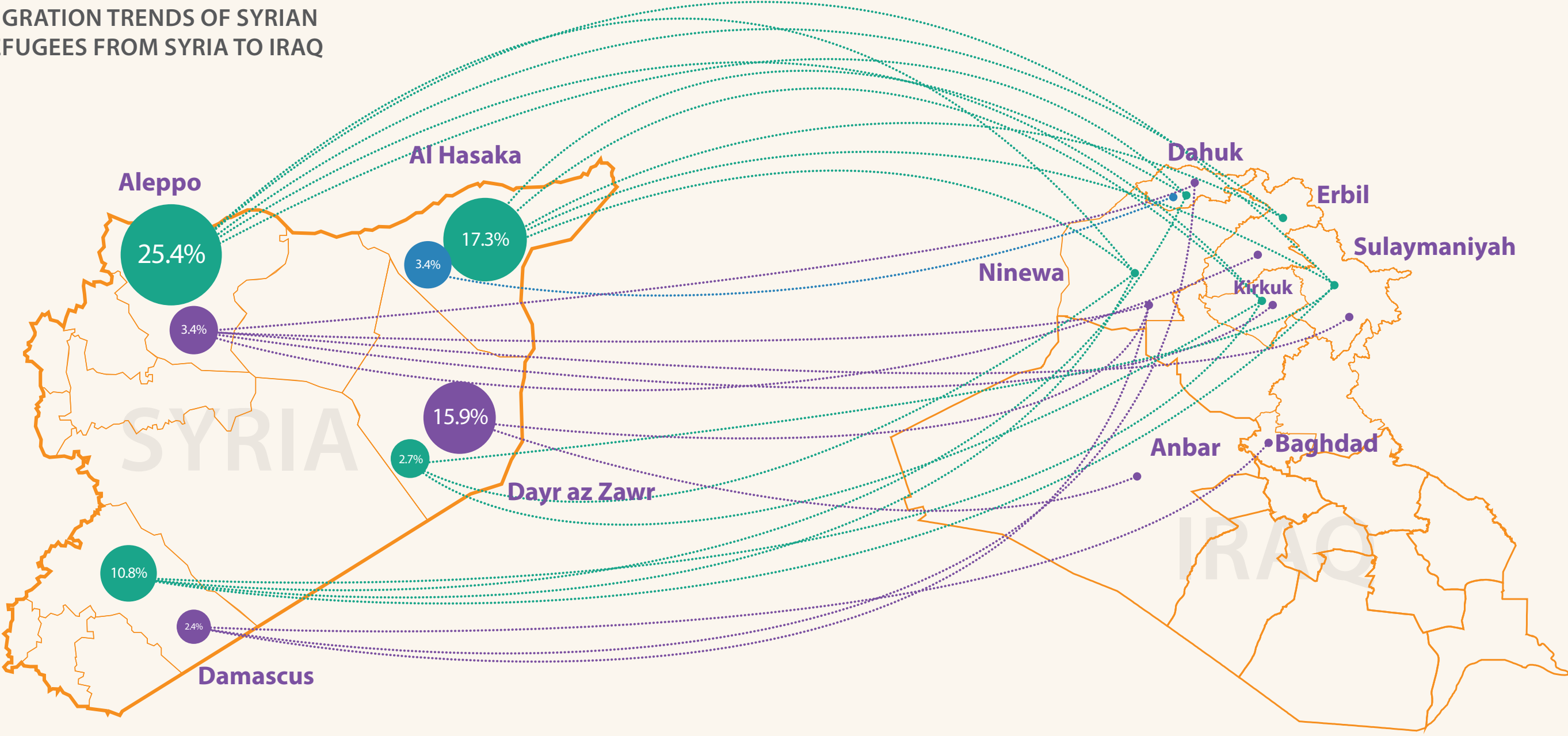


The overwhelming majority of Kurdish Sunnis settle in the KR of Iraq whilst Arab Sunni Muslims tend to settle in the north and west of Iraq. The remaining 10% of Syrian refugees were either Christian or Shia Muslim. Christian Syrians predominantly settle in Dahuk while Shia Muslim Syrians have primarily settled in the central and southern governorates.

IOM has identified additional pull factors influencing decision making as to settlement location.

Thirty eight percent (38%) of Syrian refugees reported that they had relatives already living in Iraq. The assessment confirmed that they predominantly chose to settle in the governorate in which their relatives are located. In addition to this, refugees also indicated that their decision had been influenced by the favorable economic and security conditions in the KR, and the greater employment opportunities that have resulted.

MIGRATION TRENDS OF SYRIAN
REFUGEES FROM SYRIA TO IRAQ



Aleppo

25.4% **Dahuk, Erbil, Sulaymaniyah, Kirkuk, and Ninewa**
3.4% **Dahuk, Erbil, Sulaymaniyah, Kirkuk, and Ninewa**
3.4% **Dahuk, Erbil, Sulaymaniyah, Kirkuk, and Ninewa**

Dayr az Zawr

2.7% **Kirkuk, Ninewa, and Sulaymaniyah**
15.9% **Anbar, Ninewa**

Al Hasaka

17.3% **Dahuk, Erbil, Sulaymaniyah, Kirkuk, and Ninewa**
3.4% **Dahuk**

Damascus

10.8% **Dahuk, Sulaymaniyah, Kirkuk, and Ninewa**
2.4% **Baghdad, Dahuk, and Ninewa**

Kurd Sunni Muslim Arab Sunni Muslim Christians

Iraqi returnees were also influenced by several factors when deciding where to settle upon return. It was found that the majority of Iraqi returnees maintained family ties and often still owned property in their places of origin. Seventy percent (70%) of these individuals chose to return to their original location. Amongst the remaining 30%, some have not been able to return to their governorate of origin due to poor security conditions and the fear of targeted violence. The threat of violence has also hindered some returnees from registering.

Approximately 50% of assessed Iraqi returnees are Shia Arabs whilst 43% are Sunni Arabs. Nearly all of the Shia returnees have settled in predominately Shia communities in central and southern governorates.¹⁶ Sunni Arabs, however, have often settled in governorates with mixed ethno-religious groups, as well as governorates that are predominantly Sunni. IOM identified that Christian Iraqi returnees are predominantly settling in Dahuk.

Pull factors influencing Sunni Arab returnees are not restricted to those associated with religion, as they do not always relocate to areas with a Sunni majority. It is clear, however, that religious affiliation is still somewhat influential. Family ties, property rights and security concerns are other factors that influence final decision making on return location.

A further issue adding to the complexity of an already challenging migration issue is that of Syrian migrants entering Iraq temporarily only to return to Syria soon after, seemingly for a variety of reasons. IOM Iraq RART field staff present at the Sehela and Peshkhabour border crossings have reported, on a daily basis, the return to Syria of approximately 150 Syrian refugees at Sehela (predominantly those who arrived in Iraq after the 15 August border opening) and approximately 30 to 40 individuals at

Peshkhabour (mostly refugees that had crossed into Iraq more than 6 months previously).

Interviewees among these groups revealed a number of reasons for this cross border activity, including a desire to visit relatives located in Kurdistan before returning to Syria, and the discovery on arrival in Iraq that there were fewer job opportunities than expected. Some had entered Iraq in search of medical assistance but, on discovery of the high costs involved, returned without treatment. Others reported having come simply to receive the aid provided by humanitarian organizations which they would then take back to Syria. Still more were engaging in cross border trading and there were sporadic reports of migrants entering Iraq for short-term periods of rest and recuperation.

Rights to Legal Residency

Different policy approaches to the legal residency of Syrian refugees have been applied in the KR, in comparison to central and southern governorates.

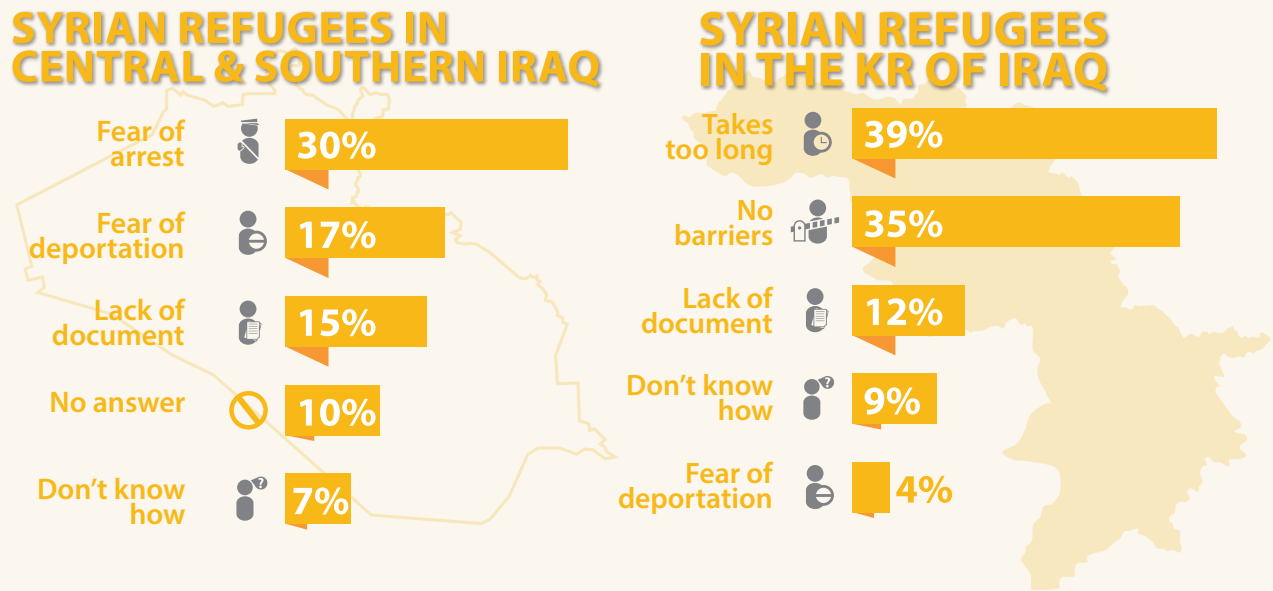
The KRG has, since the early days of the crisis, exhibited a welcoming policy towards Syrian refugees, granting all registered refugees with wide-ranging rights and providing assistance during their stay in the KR. Assessed Syrian refugees generally indicated that registration and the obtaining of ID documents were simple procedures, although some refugees reported it to be a lengthy process. Assessment findings confirm that the vast majority of Syrians in the KR are registered and hold temporary residency status, which entitles them to access work and services and freedom of movement throughout KR. Currently, Syrian refugees who entered the KR after the 15th August border crossing opening are accommodated in closed temporary camps and their registration process is ongoing.

16 Najaf (26%), Basrah (26%), Kerbala (16%), Missan (5%)

In contrast, entry and the securing of legal residency status for refugees in central and southern governorates has been subject to various restrictions. In summer 2012, Syrian refugees were entitled to temporary residency that allowed them access to the labor market and limited freedom of movement within some areas of Anbar, the governorate that hosts the majority of Syrians in this part of the country. As the crisis continued, and following the closure of the borders in October 2012, the Gol restricted legal entries to emergency cases and rare cases of family reunification, denying the right of legal residency to all other Syrian refugees. Al Obaidy camp in Anbar is currently the only Syrian refugee camp in southern and central Iraq. Residents commonly report that they cannot leave the environs of the camp to seek work.

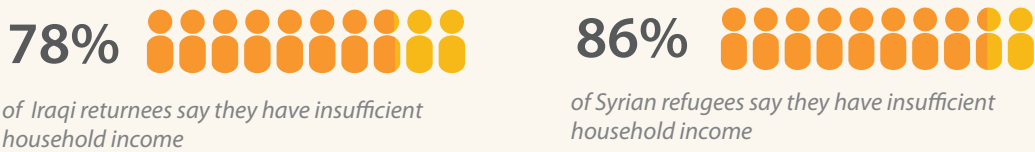
The assessment has identified a perceived risk of arrest and even deportation as a major concern for refugees in central and southern Iraq. As a consequence, many Syrian families remain unregistered with Gol authorities and, therefore, unaccounted for and increasingly marginalized. During the implementation of IOM assistance distributions, it was observed that Syrian refugees often do not stay in one location for long. Since mid-2013, Syrian refugees have increasingly registered with UNHCR in central and southern governorates.

REASONS FOR NOT REGISTERING



INCOME

Syrian refugees entering Iraq are generally not financially self-reliant and struggle to find sustainable livelihood opportunities.



Syrian refugees in Iraq are predominantly aid dependent. Assessment findings indicate that 32% of refugees primarily rely on financial support from relatives. Twenty nine percent (29%) report receiving income through employment. A much higher proportion of those living in the KR of Iraq, compared to those in central and southern Iraq, gain income through formal or informal employment. In the governorates of Erbil and Sulaymaniyah, 82% and 79% of refugees respectively claim that temporary or occasional employment is their main source of income. However, the vast majority of Syrian refugees throughout Iraq are still having to deal with insufficient levels of income and remain dependent on assistance provided by the humanitarian organizations.

An ability to secure sufficient income is often the root cause of many difficulties experienced by Syrian refugees. These include an inability to provide sufficient and adequate food, particularly outside of the camps. Families often indicate the eating of fewer and lower quality meals is their first coping mechanism, while some families also cut back on healthcare.

Iraqi returnees also frequently have to deal with the problems associated with insufficient income. Assessment data has revealed that 40% of Iraqi returnees cite family assistance as their main source of income, 30% receive their income through formal or informal employment and 16% indicate other sources of income. They also report eating fewer and lower quality meals as a result of insufficient income, and some seek support from relatives.



Adverse socio-economic conditions have a direct impact on relations between returnees, refugees and host community residents. Assessment findings suggest that, in communities with prospering economic conditions, relations between Syrians and their host community tend to be positive. However, in communities suffering from high levels of poverty, relations between the two groups are generally poor. The greater the vulnerability of host communities, the more common it is for tensions to emerge.

EMPLOYMENT

Restricted access to work is by far the main concern amongst Syrian refugees and Iraqi returnees as it represents a major barrier to securing a sustainable livelihood. This is an issue affecting many communities throughout Iraq today.¹⁷

Lack of employment is perceived as the most significant threat to a family’s wellbeing by 26% of Syrian refugees and 39% of Iraqi returnees.

A lack of employment opportunities directly affects a family’s capacity to service their needs. These include, but are not limited to, food, NFIs, shelter and education. Access to the local labor market is considered as an essential precondition of temporary integration in Iraq.

While the KRG authorities allow Syrian refugees to access the labor market throughout the KR region, they are currently not entitled to apply for formal employment in the southern and central governorates of Iraq.

Despite higher levels of employment amongst Syrian refugees in the KR region of Iraq, access to work is still their top priority, and a lack of job opportunities a major concern. In the southern and central governorates, Syrian refugees have informed IOM field staff that, despite the legal obstacles, they still seek employment and will work informally when possible. This is more common in areas where ethno-religious links between refugees and host communities are found.



Syrian Refugee working in his barber shop in Domiz camp. (IOM beneficiary of livelihood support)

¹⁷ As reported in IOM Iraq's 2012 Annual Report, access to employment opportunities was identified as the main need amongst those living in Iraq's vulnerable communities. In 2012, 79% of IOM assessed respondents claimed access to work was a main priority.

ACCESS TO WORK



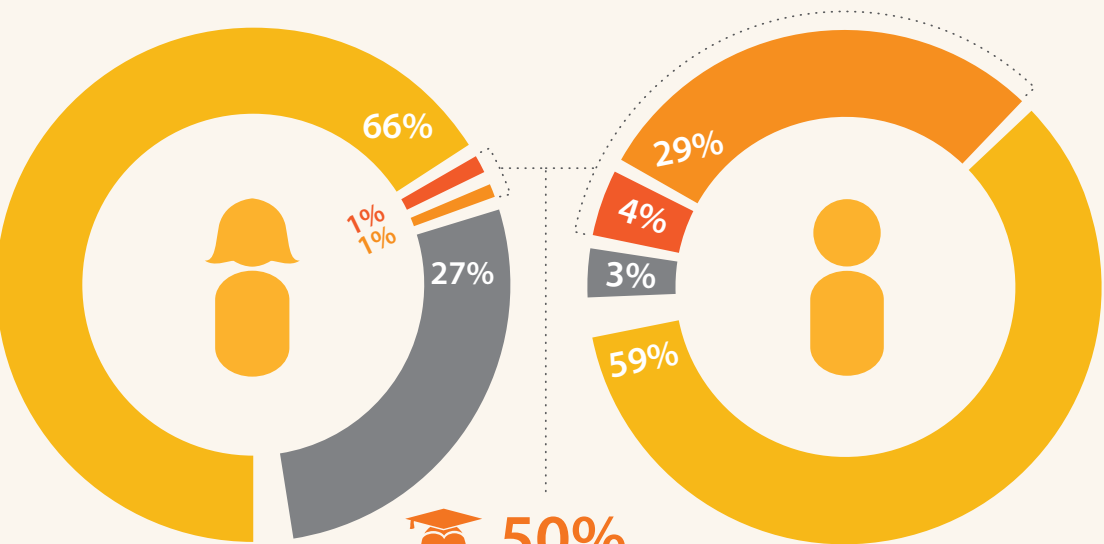
Syrian refugees in central and southern Iraq
74% State Poor Access



Syrian refugees inside KR of Iraq
12% State Poor Access

EMPLOYMENT STATUS OF ASSESSED SYRIAN REFUGEES BY GENDER

● Unemployed ● Employed {daily wages} ● Employed ● Unable / Unwilling



50%
of the employed have an education past the primary level



12%
Employed Refugees in the central and southern governorates



25%
Employed Refugees inside KR of Iraq

THE 3 MAIN SECTORS



11%
WORK IN RETAIL



16%
WORK IN SERVICES

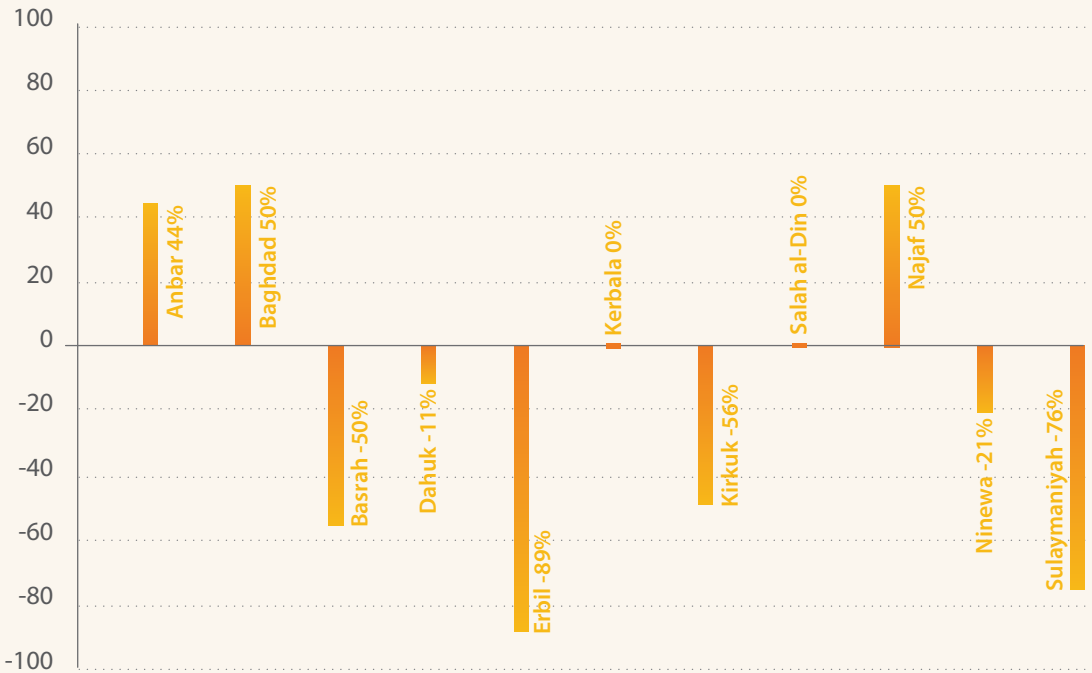


19%
WORK IN CONSTRUCTION

Assessment findings indicate that Syrian refugees generally receive a lower daily wage than Iraqi workers in the same sectors. In addition, cases of Syrians not receiving agreed levels of pay for the hours they have worked have also been reported. These issues are the result of various factors, including high demand for jobs, widespread occurrence of informal employment, and more generally, a weak legal framework and labor rights protection in Iraq which has led to labor exploitation and increased vulnerability among Syrian refugees. The various causes of the problem must be addressed if the consequences of this pay disparity are to be mitigated. Sufficient support must be provided to prevent labor exploitation and to ensure fair labor practices.

Cases have been reported of Syrian construction workers receiving approximately 10 USD per day, while Iraqi workers receive 18-20 USD per day for the same work. Such disparities represent a source of tension as Iraqi workers struggle to compete with lower paid Syrians, who themselves feel exploited by employers. This gap in pay levels may potentially have serious and long-term repercussions for local Iraqi-Syrian relations.

Rating of Syrian refugees' perception of equal pay



Lack of income due to unemployment or underemployment is a causative factor of a range of problems, including an inability to pay for accommodation and to support basic family needs.

This issue was common across all assessed governorates and has resulted in the overcrowding of households as families pool their limited resources to pay rent. In extreme cases, a lack of income has led to homelessness. Other associated problems identified through the assessment are an inability to send children to school, and an inability to access more specialized healthcare services from private healthcare providers that are not provided by public health facilities.

HOUSING ARRANGEMENTS

Poor housing conditions are a common complaint amongst Syrian refugees and Iraqi returnees. The majority of Syrian refugees located in camps and within host communities are living in poor conditions which are constantly subject to deterioration as the number of refugees crossing the border continues to increase. This situation could become even more desperate as resources run dry and winter sets in. IOM field staff have observed that, due to the nature of forced displacement, the majority of Syrians crossing the border have no pre-organized living arrangements on entering Iraq. Before the mass influx of Syrians that began on 15 August, an estimated 50,000 to 60,000 individuals were located in Domiz camp in Dahuk and Al Obaidy camp in Anbar,¹⁸ the remainder located within host communities under various living arrangements and conditions. In addition, two new camps in Erbil and Sulaymaniyah were under development.

Following the mass influx of the 15

August, 10 new temporary reception and accommodation locations were designated by the KRG to host incoming refugees in Erbil, Dahuk and Sulaymaniyah by mid-September 2013. Newly arrived Syrian refugees have also been accommodated in temporary facilities such as schools, mosques and community centers. Occasionally, improvised settlements have been established throughout the KR by incoming families who construct shelters and tents themselves.

Of those Syrian refugees living within host communities in Iraq, the majority rent accommodation. This is, however, often unsustainable in the long-term as refugees struggle to obtain sufficient income. IOM has identified a minority of Syrians living with relatives.

The majority of those assessed report that their current accommodation is in poor condition. When asked about facilities that are either unavailable or of poor quality in their current accommodation, Syrian refugees commonly cite poor sanitation, a lack of non-food items, a lack of potable water, and a lack of space.

As mentioned earlier, in central and southern governorates, 25% of Syrian refugees state that they fear either eviction or deportation. This has led them to actively avoid the attention of the authorities, hindering their ability to secure long-term housing. The fear of eviction is not seen to be an issue for Iraqi returnees.

Of those IOM-assessed Syrian refugees not living in camps, 81% are renting their accommodation, less than 3% own their housing and 9% are being hosted by friends or family. Shelter is a major concern for the Syrian population with many citing shelter amongst their top priority needs.

SYRIAN REFUGEES OUTSIDE OF CAMPS

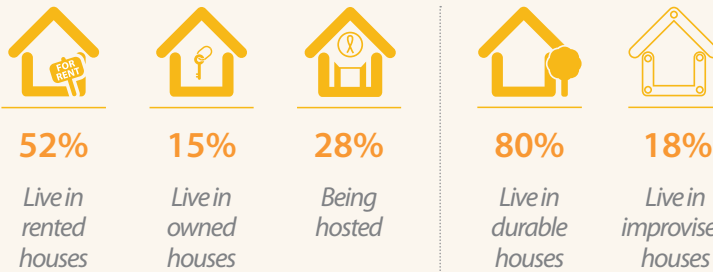


18 June 2013 saw the movement of 550 refugee families from the two previously existing camps in Al Qaim to Al Obaidy.

More than half of Iraqi returnees report renting their accommodation, while significant numbers report living with family members and friends, and some own their property. When interviewed, Iraqi returnees commonly indicate that they are dealing with poor living conditions. Common problems include a lack of electricity, hygiene and sanitation facilities, non-food items and potable water. They also report a lack of living space and low quality building construction as factors exacerbating the poor nature of their conditions.

IRAQI RETURNEES

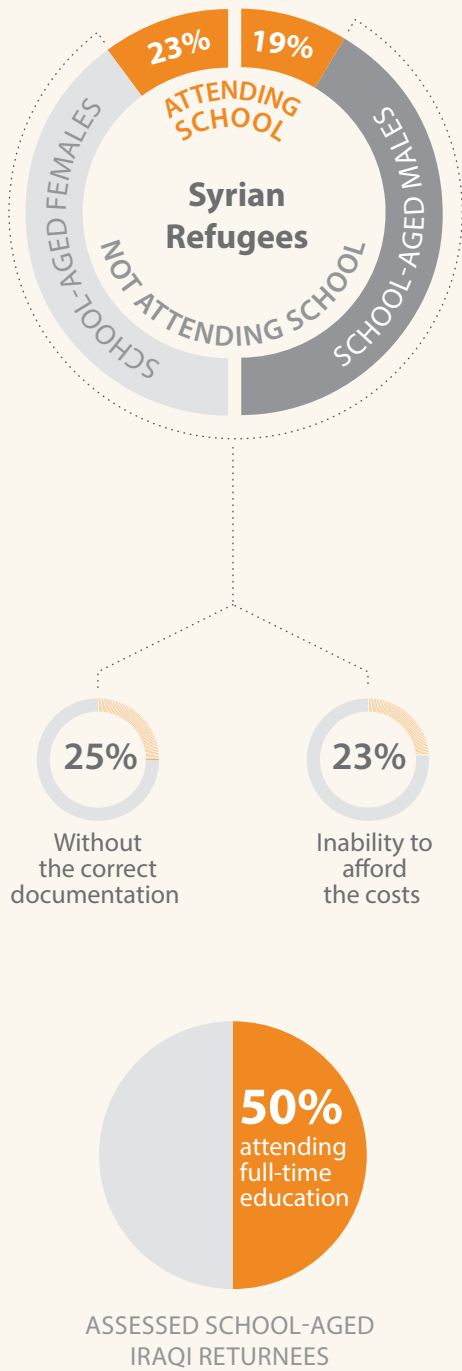
Assessment findings suggest that 52% of Iraqi returnees are renting their housing, 15% own their housing, and 28% are being hosted by friends or family and, therefore, not paying any rent.



Syrian refugee family at home in a host community in Dahuk governorate.

EDUCATION

Education is not currently cited as a top priority need among Syrian refugees, despite a low school attendance rate among the Syrian population.



Only 19% of school-aged boys and 23% of school-aged girls are attending full-time education. Currently, access to work, food, NFIs and shelter are cited as the most pressing needs among Syrian refugees; however, once these needs are addressed, education is expected to become a more urgent priority for families.¹⁹ Measures should be taken to increase school attendance and to strengthen educational facilities in order to accommodate increasing demands on the education system.

Barriers to school attendance cited by Syrian refugees include a lack of finance and procedural difficulties. These include an inability to register with schools without the correct documentation, a lack of knowledge on registration procedures, and an inability to afford the costs associated with school attendance. These costs include, but are not limited, to transport, uniforms, text and notebook costs, and the loss of income sustained by families that would otherwise send their children out to work.

Syrian refugees often report difficulties with schooling in the KR. Though the vast majority of refugees in the KR are Kurdish, they are accustomed to being taught in Arabic, and therefore struggle with lessons taught in Kurdish. Schools that have the facility to teach in Arabic are often too far away from refugee locations to be considered as viable options.

In contrast, over 50% of assessed school-aged Iraqi returnees are attending full-time education. Iraqi returnees report that they generally have no issues registering their children, and have all the necessary documents. Returnees located within the KR of Iraq, however, have also complained of the long distances necessary to reach an Arabic-speaking, rather than Kurdish-speaking, schools.

¹⁹ As indicated through Maslows' Hierarchy of Needs, until basic needs are serviced other lesser needs will not be taken into consideration. He identifies a hierarchy of 5 levels; basic needs, safety needs, social needs, esteem needs, self actualization.

HEALTH



Throughout Iraq, healthcare provision can generally be described as poor due to the low capacity and weak infrastructure of the healthcare system. Hospitals and clinics are generally ill-equipped and often unable to provide certain treatments, including psychosocial support. In addition, there is a general lack of female medical staff. Syrian refugees and Iraqi returnees commonly report unhindered access to the public healthcare system, but state that only limited services are available. Private medical care is often too expensive to represent a viable option.

In the KR of Iraq, where the majority of Syrian refugees are located, hospitals are overstretched as a result of the significant increase in population, and also have had to deal with the necessary prioritization of urgent Syrian arrival cases. This has, in some cases, meant that existing patients are superseded, creating a situation in which host community members no longer have access to the medicines and care available before the crisis. Syrians refugees living in central and southern governorates also report limited access to the public health system due to restrictions associated with their residency status.

IOM field staff have reported that health problems are more common amongst individuals located in camps than amongst those living within host communities. This is predominantly the result of close-quarter living conditions in the camps.

Continual assessment and medical intervention is needed to prevent the spread of infectious diseases in more densely populated urban areas, an issue which could potentially be exacerbated by poor living conditions.

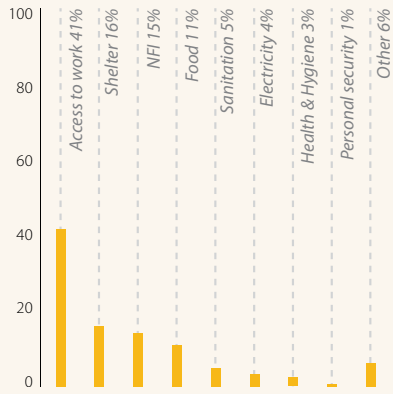
NEEDS AND NECESSARY ASSISTANCE

Current emergency response does not meet the needs of affected populations. As the crisis continues and numbers of incoming refugees and returnees increase, the gap between assistance available and that required is likely to increase. Livelihood development programs are therefore essential in order to address long-term needs.

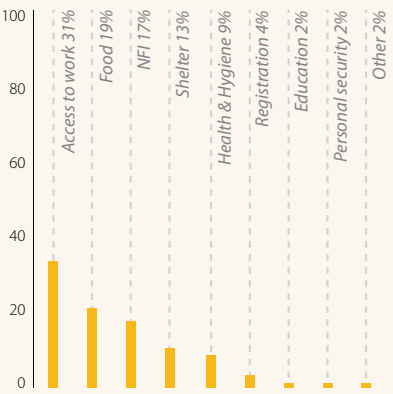
A lack of access to work negatively impacts all other needs. The need for shelter and more frequent distributions of food and non-food items (NFIs) such as furniture, household supplies and hygiene items was regularly reported through the assessment. It was also suggested that NFIs should be specifically tailored to individual or household needs and that they should be of better quality.

The needs of Iraqi returnees broadly mirror those of Syrian refugees, with the most pressing priorities being access to employment and permanent or durable housing. Respondents have not regularly identified health care or education as priority needs. This may be due to the fact that other needs are currently more pressing; however, in the longer-term, these secondary needs are likely to become of greater concern.

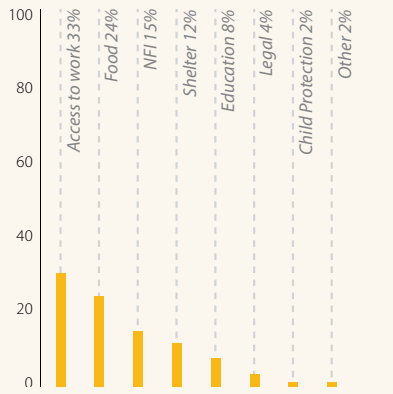
PRIORITY NEEDS



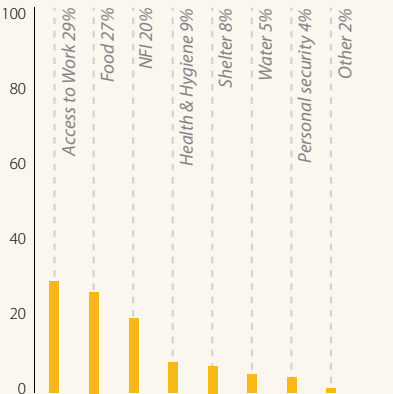
Iraqi returnees



Syrian refugees in central and southern Iraq



Syrian refugees in the KR of Iraq

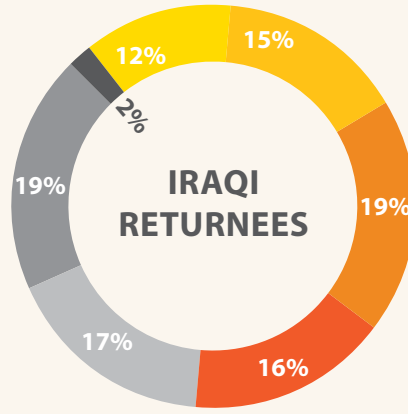
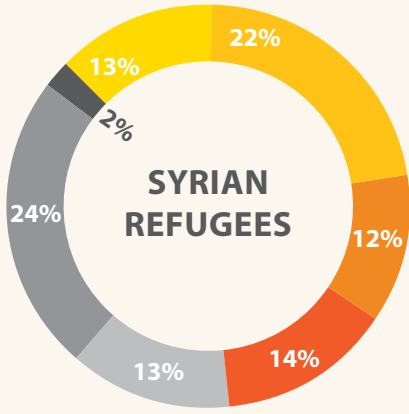


Syrian refugees in camps

Members of vulnerable receiving host communities regularly cite services and infrastructure as areas of concern. National and local service infrastructure, already lacking in capacity, is now heavily overburdened due to increasing numbers of Syrian refugees and Iraqi returnees. Future support will be essential in ensuring that Iraq’s infrastructural capacities are developed and expanded according to growing needs.

All assessed groups report receiving some form of assistance provided by authorities, international and local NGOs or from local groups and individuals within host communities. Despite this currently available assistance, Syrian refugees and Iraqi returnees report that it is insufficient, and that additional and more frequent support is required.

TYPE OF ASSISTANCE RECEIVED



- Remittance
- Family support within the country
- Community support
- Family support within the household
- Government aid
- NGO aid
- Other

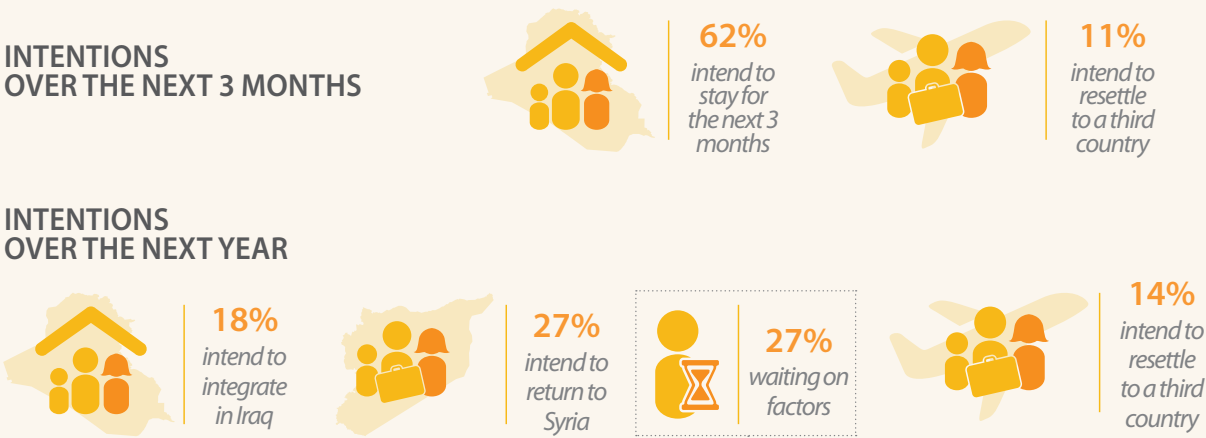
Fifty three percent (53%) of respondents, including both Syrian refugees and Iraqi returnees, cite that they receive some form of financial assistance, mainly from family and friends.

While needs may differ between individual families, there is a clear requirement for additional, comprehensive and timely assistance, primarily supporting individual livelihoods and community infrastructural development.

FUTURE INTENTIONS

With the protracted crisis in Syria showing no signs of subsiding, the majority of Syrian refugees show no immediate desire to return to their homeland. Their displacement outside of Syria is, in turn, likely to become protracted, with future intentions dependent on various factors. The vast majority of Iraqi returnees declare their long-term intention to reintegrate in Iraq.

The majority of Syrian refugees want to stay in Iraq in the short-term. However, when asked what their intentions were over the next year, the responses become more varied as more factors were taken into consideration once their immediate, basic needs are met.



Refugees cite the security situation in Syria and access to employment and services to be factors that will further influence their intentions. Many families indicate that they are looking for employment and to enroll their children in school. This suggests that, in spite of any desire to return to Syria in the long-term, they recognize that this may not happen soon and are, therefore, taking steps that will contribute to their integration into Iraq.

“...we will stay here and integrate with the current community until Syria is settled.”

A Syrian Refugee in Najaf

The vast majority of Iraqi returnees indicate firm intentions to stay in Iraq. While 48% had intended to integrate into Syrian society, now that they have returned to Iraq, the overwhelming majority intend to reintegrate. For the minority of undecided returnees, improvements in services and livelihoods in Iraq and the security situation in Syria are key factors in the determination of their future intentions.

RELATIONS BETWEEN REFUGEE, RETURNEE AND HOST COMMUNITIES

Host community residents have generally welcomed Syrian refugees, often providing support in the form of food and clothing. In some cases, Syrian refugees are hosted within their houses until alternative accommodation is located. Syrian refugees often mention feeling welcomed and having good relations with their host community. The residents of these host communities, however, may only be able to assist in the short-term. External assistance will be essential to prevent a potential deterioration in relations between refugees and their host communities in the future as their displacement becomes more protracted.

Host community members frequently demonstrate solidarity, speaking of an obligation to provide for the needs of Syrian refugees due to the past hospitality shown to Iraqi refugees in Syria displaced by previous conflicts in Iraq.

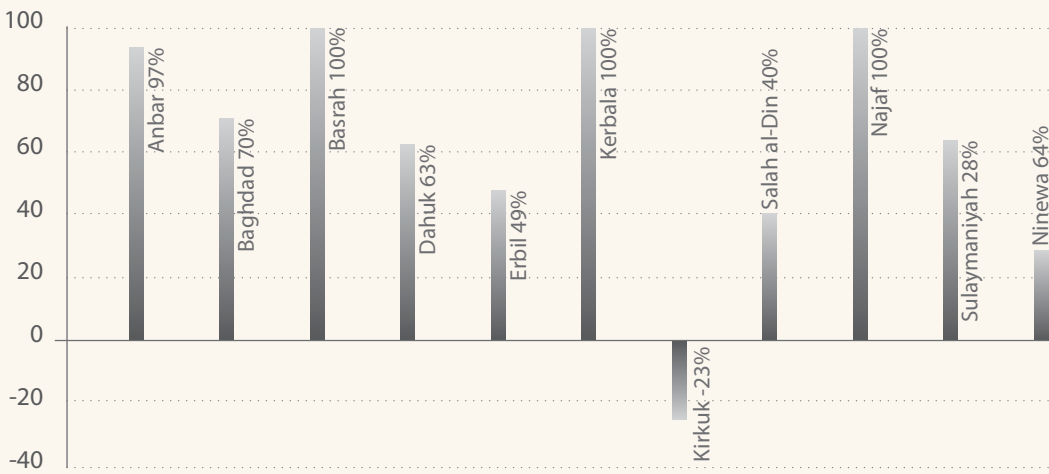
“In Iraq, for example, when the Iraqi families moved in 2006 and 2007 to Syria, we found that there was complete freedom to live and facilitation of services and all matters, and so we ask the international organizations to coordinate with the government to make these families have a decent life”

Host community respondent: a graduate in the faculty of engineering.

Arriving Syrian families predominantly choose their final locations according to ethno-religious similarities with the host community. This partly mitigates the difficulties of integration, positively impacting on relations with host communities. Assessment findings suggest that, in governorates accommodating large Syrian refugee populations, relations between Syrian refugee and host communities are more strained and tend to deteriorate over time.

Although relations within assessed communities are generally reported as positive, it must be noted that conditions and perceptions vary from one governorate to another.

Rating of Syrian refugees’ perception of their relationship with the host community



Factors affecting community relations are not limited to demographics and population size. There is also a link between the economic conditions experienced by a community and the relationship between arriving and host populations. Generally, in communities where the economic situation is stable, the relationship between Syrians and their host communities is positive. However, in communities where poverty is widespread, and where populations are not ethno-religiously homogenous, such as Baghdad, Kirkuk and Salah al-Din, the relationship between the two groups is generally more strained. The greater a community’s vulnerability, the more likely it is that tensions will emerge.

INCREASING VULNERABILITIES AMONG SYRIAN REFUGEES²⁰

DUE TO THE FORCED NATURE OF THE DISPLACEMENT, MANY SYRIAN FAMILIES CROSSED INTO IRAQ WITH VERY LITTLE, IN TERMS OF PERSONAL POSSESSIONS AND MONETARY WEALTH, LEAVING THEM EXTREMELY VULNERABLE AND POTENTIALLY EXPOSED TO ABUSE AND EXPLOITATION. SPORADIC OCCURRENCES OF THIS TYPE OF TREATMENT HAVE BEEN REPORTED ACROSS IRAQ, INCLUDING INSTANCES OF LABOR EXPLOITATION, SEXUAL EXPLOITATION INCLUDING PROSTITUTION, CHILD ABUSE, FORCED BEGGING, EARLY MARRIAGES, HUMAN TRAFFICKING AND SMUGGLING. IN ADDITION, SOME SYRIAN WOMEN HAVE REPORTED RECEIVING VERBAL ABUSE AND HARASSMENT WHEN THEY ARE NOT DRESSED IN ACCORDANCE WITH LOCAL TRADITIONAL DRESS CODES.

“IN THE PAST FEW MONTHS IT HAS BECOME MORE COMMON TO SEE SYRIAN CHILDREN AND WOMEN IN THE STREETS AND MOSQUES BEGGING FOR MONEY. I THINK THESE ARE THE EARLY INDICATORS OF OCCURRENCES OF EXPLOITATION, HUMAN TRAFFICKING, CHILD ABUSE, AS WELL AS POTENTIAL PROSTITUTION.”
IOM FIELD STAFF MEMBER

IN TERMS OF SECURITY, THE ASSESSMENT INDICATES THAT ASSESSED SYRIAN REFUGEES AND IRAQI RETURNEES FEEL SAFE AND NO LONGER IN DANGER OF PHYSICAL HARM, AT THE INDIVIDUAL AND FAMILIAL-LEVEL, IN ALL GOVERNORATES EXCEPT KIRKUK, WHERE POLITICAL AND SECURITY CONDITIONS CONTINUE TO DETERIORATE.

20 Instances of abuse have been reported; however, this is not representative of the experiences of all Syrian refugees within Iraq. The extent and severity of cases of abuse vary by governorate and are likely to represent the worst cases of maltreatment.

IMPACT AT THE COMMUNITY LEVEL

As the crisis in Syria becomes more protracted, the socio-economic consequences affecting communities receiving incoming migrants from Syria, particularly in the northern governorates, become increasingly challenging. The growing demands of those individuals and families crossing the border into Iraq gradually increase the strain on resources, infrastructure and services, often influencing how host community residents relate to and view their Syrian neighbors.

As the emergency developed into a large-scale crisis, the Iraqi authorities and community members struggled to respond. This has had a detrimental effect on the living conditions of both those crossing the border and those receiving them.

The mass influx of vulnerable individuals has, in some cases, exacerbated existing problems such as overcrowding in schools, poor service provision by an already struggling health system, and the overcrowding of public transport. Where services are not currently compromised, concerns have been raised that, if the number of refugees and returnees crossing into Iraq continues to rise, services will be affected.

“I don’t think there is competition over the services because these families are very few and do not affect the society, but if there is more displacement of the Syrian families in large numbers, then surely there will be an effect and lack of services.”

A host community resident of Najaf: a nurse

Host community members and key informants throughout Iraq have expressed concern over the seemingly inevitable consequences of the crisis on local economies and labor markets. Interviewees have, in general, pointed to a significant decline in job opportunities as demand rises, cheap labor becomes more readily available, competition increases and wage levels begin to fall. In addition, local market prices and rent levels have increased. In contrast, some positive accounts of the influx of Syrian refugees have been reported in Erbil, where host community members describe how the arrival of Syrians has bolstered the labor market by bringing in new skills and capacities (brain-gain).

These incoming individuals include educated professionals such as engineers and doctors, in addition to skilled construction and craft workers.

Assessment findings suggest that the impact of the crisis varies depending on the size of the population received by a particular host community. The influx of large numbers of vulnerable families with poor access to poor quality services and weak markets exacerbates consequences which tend to be felt most keenly by those same vulnerable families.

As the crisis escalates, its impact will intensify leading to further significant damage to local economies and service infrastructure, and potentially leading to further tensions between host community residents and those seeking refuge within that community, inhibiting integration and the development of socio-economic conditions.

It is clear that, as numbers entering Iraq continue to increase, the growing impact will be keenly felt in everyday life through rising competition for employment, increasing

rent levels and market prices, growing overcrowding in schools, and a heightened demand for utilities and services. This has become increasingly the case following events commencing 15 August when the KR border crossings witnessed an influx of over 42,000 individuals in just over a week.

Reported cases of begging, petty crime and prostitution have led to the development of negative perceptions among host community members regarding incoming refugee populations. It has also been reported that some Syrian refugees struggle to adapt to the more conservative nature of their host communities. Syrian refugees generally demonstrate an awareness of the impact that their presence has on a host community's perception of them. Appropriate and targeted assistance to the most vulnerable of populations must be ensured if segregation and marginalization within host communities is to be avoided.

Syrian refugees in the central and southern governorates are likely to experience further marginalization as a result of their socio-economic exclusion and worsening living conditions that could increase their vulnerability and the risk of exposure to abuse and discrimination. As a result

of this issue, Syrian refugees often express dissatisfaction with their level of integration within host communities, further fueling tensions.

Syrian men interviewed by IOM field staff regularly state that the securing of employment opportunities in Iraq has helped them to develop their standing within the community. The availability of cheap labor within host communities has, however, raised mixed feelings. While some Syrian refugees welcome the opportunity to work, even at rates of pay that would have been unacceptable in Syria, others have described the situation as exploitive.

The lower wage levels being accepted by Syrian refugees continue to negatively affect the host communities. Host community members have reported a lack of motivation to seek work, as wages have fallen to a level that no longer enables employees to support their families. These conditions are exacerbated by the increasing cost of essential items such as fruit and vegetables, inflated as the market rises to meet the increasing demand. The recent prolonged closure of border crossings between Syria and Iraq, particularly in Anbar, has resulted in a decrease in trade between the populations living on either side of the border, affecting the availability and price of commodities. Thirty one percent (31%) of Syrian refugees and 27% of Iraqi returnees cited food prices as their primary concern. This is likely to contribute further to a rise in animosity between host community members and those seeking refuge.

The increasing severity of conditions and the length of displacement will affect how host communities perceive and relate to their new neighbors. This dynamic is extremely complex and must be approached with sensitivity in order to mitigate tensions within communities and to foster harmony and integration.

THE SPORADIC BUT PROLONGED CLOSURE OF BORDERS BETWEEN SYRIA AND IRAQ HAS DISRUPTED TRADITIONAL CROSS BORDER EXCHANGE, INCLUDING TRADE, EXACERBATING THE ECONOMIC DIFFICULTIES FACED BY HOST COMMUNITY RESIDENTS, IRAQI RETURNEES AND SYRIAN REFUGEES .

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Iraq will continue to be exposed to severe socio-economic and migratory pressures as a direct consequence of the Syria crisis.

“The increasing number of Syrian refugees will continue to impact negatively on the local economy and social landscape. If support is not given in the next six months, we will see quick erosion of the situation in Iraq.”

IOM Field Staff Member

The Syria crisis is likely to continue generating further immediate and longer-term impacts on the Iraqi socio-economic landscape, impacts which are hard to predict in terms of severity and scope. A common sentiment expressed by various interviewees is the likelihood that, under current conditions, the situation in Iraq will continue to deteriorate. In the short-term, incoming Syrian refugees and Iraqi returnees will continue to require comprehensive emergency assistance in the form of food, NFIs and shelter. IOM Iraq, in coordination with UN Country Team counterparts, and local, governorate-level and GoI stakeholders, will continue to contribute to the provision of emergency supplies and infrastructure, including reception, medical screening and referrals, transportation from borders to the reception facilities, provision of food and emergency non-food items (NFI) including hygiene and households items, provision of adequate shelter facilities (distribution of tents), as well as the development of sufficient water/sanitation and other infrastructural facilities. In order to do this, the Mission will fully utilize its existing Supply Chain Management (SCM) system in order to implement

the strategic pre-positioning of stocks. It will also continue to develop a comprehensive reception, transportation and tracking system designed to facilitate the safe, orderly and humane migration of incoming individuals and families from border crossings to final camp and non-camp destinations.

Medium to long-term challenges include the inability of incoming individuals to secure sufficient income to provide for their families. The mass influx of Syrian refugees and Iraqi returnees, who remain dependent on aid until such time as they can locate employment, increases the possibility of exploitation within the workplace, leading to an increasingly compromised local economy and rising living costs. Syrians employed on wages that are very often lower than the market rate represent competition to those Iraqis that are themselves struggling to secure an income or who remain unemployed, leading to instability within affected communities. It is clear that the level of difficulty faced by communities dealing with the arrival of increasing numbers of refugees and returnees is determined by that community's existing characteristics. A strong economy and sufficient infrastructure provide a community with greater capacity to cope with demand and to provide support to incoming vulnerable families. The current report highlights a clear correlation between higher numbers of those seeking refuge in a community and greater economic consequences. In response to these challenges, the Mission will continue to implement livelihood support programs to facilitate integration through employment generation, job matching and support for the creation of small and micro-businesses, as well as through various types of vocational and on-the-job training. This individual assistance will only be effective if local markets and associated infrastructure are supported and assisted to expand in order that they may

cope with increasing demand. To this end, IOM will contribute to community-based development in the form of programming aimed at strengthening local service infrastructure. Such initiatives will not only help to improve access among refugees and returnees to basic services, improving their living conditions, but will also increase the capacity of the local economy to absorb increasing numbers of employees and the small and micro-businesses that will employ them.

In the longer-term, an inability to find employment is likely to force many Syrian families who are currently living in rented property out of their homes as they struggle to make rent payments. This has and will result in more refugees living in non-durable shelters, forced into dependency on aid. The provision of sufficient livelihood and community infrastructural assistance in support of a stable local economy, capable of supporting all members of

a vulnerable community, whether incoming or receiving, is paramount. As the crisis continues and the priorities of refugees and returnees change, other issues will need to be addressed, such as the expansion of educational facilities, the development of sufficient healthcare infrastructure and the further provision of more durable housing. As Iraqi authorities continue to face significant challenges in responding to these growing and diversifying needs, hindered by fragile and ever changing security conditions, the international community must come together in support of the people of Iraq.

IOM Iraq will continue to implement a comprehensive package of mutually supporting measures, formulated and strengthened over the last ten years since its establishment in January 2003. Experience gained during this period has enabled the Mission to develop an extensive network of staff and infrastructure, facilitating the implementation of a range of livelihood, capacity-building and emergency assistance programs that will allow for the provision of support designed to address the various needs detailed above, and to contribute to the mitigation of consequences felt throughout Iraq as a result of the mass influx of both refugees and returnees fleeing from the violence and political turmoil that continues to pervade Syria.



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The background of the right half of the page is a photograph of a white bus with its rear door open. Several people are standing around the bus, some appearing to be boarding or disembarking. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent orange filter that matches the left side of the page.

IRAQ: THE IMPACT OF THE SYRIA CRISIS