



# COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF SYRIAN REFUGEES STAYING IN AND OUTSIDE CAMPS

**KURDISTAN REGION OF IRAQ**

**MULTI-SECTOR NEEDS ASSESSMENT FACTSHEET**

**SEPTEMBER 2014**

## INTRODUCTION

According to the latest estimates from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), as of 26 August 2014, more than 215,000 Syrian refugees reside in Iraq, over 90% of which currently live in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI). Around 90,000 of these refugees in the KRI reside in nine refugee camps (two of which were set up as transit sites), while the remaining 125,000 have settled among the host communities throughout the three Kurdish governorates of Duhok, Erbil and Sulaymaniyah.<sup>1</sup>

In this context, UNHCR mobilised the REACH Initiative (hereafter REACH) to conduct a Multi-Sector Needs Assessment (MSNA) in order to provide aid actors with a clear picture of the profile and conditions of Syrian refugees staying in host communities. REACH was subsequently asked to support the Joint Assessment Mission (JAM) led by UNHCR and the World Food Program (WFP) by conducting a comparable MSNA for Syrian refugees settled in camps.

Combined, these two MSNA's served to establish a comprehensive baseline dataset on the overall situation of Syrian refugees in the KRI. This factsheet aims to present a brief comparative analysis of this dataset, highlighting the differences between camp-based and out-of-camp Syrian refugees, in terms of their current needs and the assistance they received.<sup>2</sup>

## METHODOLOGY

The list of indicators used in the MSNA of out-of-camp Syrian refugees was developed in consultation with UNHCR and partners involved in technical working groups. This list also served as the basis for the MSNA of camp-based Syrian refugees, adapted to a camp context and expanded with standard WFP food security assessment modules. The list was then reduced to a manageable size to ensure respondent cooperation. As a result, the two MSNA's contained 39 common indicators across all sectors.

Data was collected across the three governorates of the KRI (Duhok, Erbil and Sulaymaniyah), with a geographic spread representing concentrations of refugees among host communities and in nine refugee camps and transit sites (Akre, Arbat Transit, Basirma, Darashakran, Domiz, Domiz II, Gawilan, Kawergosk, Qushtapa). Data collection took place over a period of two months between 25 March and 20 May 2014, with assessment of non-camp settings in the first month and camp settings in the second.

Table 1 - Population and sample sizes

Camp Setting		
Camp name	Refugee households	Sample
Akre	356	76
Domiz	10,000	95
Domiz II	710	85
Gawilan	719	85
Basirma	762	85
Darashakran	1,800	91
Kawergosk	3,662	94
Qushtapa	1,012	88
Arbat	853	86
<b>Total</b>	<b>19,874</b>	<b>785</b>
Non-Camp Setting		
Governorate	Refugee households	Sample
Duhok	25,113	388
Erbil	23,058	390
Sulaymaniyah	9,513	351
<b>Total</b>	<b>57,684</b>	<b>1,231</b>

The sample sizes for non-camp data were set to allow for a confidence level of 95% and a margin of error of 5% at governorate level. Sample sizes at camp level were smaller and allowed for a confidence level of 95% and a margin of error of 10%.

<sup>1</sup> UNHCR Registration Trends for Syrian Persons of Concern 26 Aug 2014, <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/download.php?id=6802>

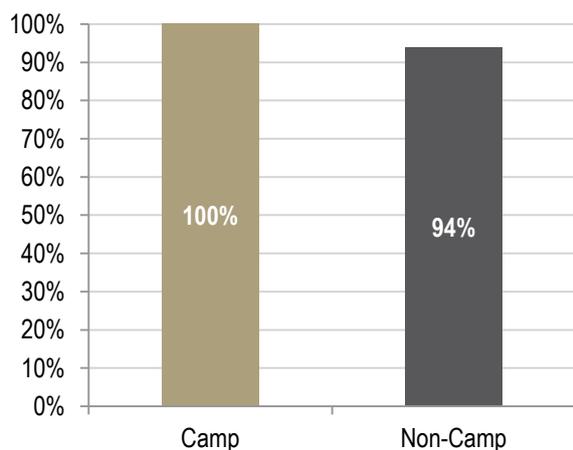
<sup>2</sup> Preliminary results of this comparative analysis were presented to the Inter-Sector Coordination Group in Erbil on 8 July 2014.

## FINDINGS

### Registration

A gap was found between UNHCR registration figures for camp-based and out-of-camp Syrian refugees. All interviewed households in camps had been registered, whereas 6% of households in non-camp settings were not registered, which may act as a barrier for refugees to potentially receiving aid. Possible explanations for non-registration include lack of knowledge on the registration process as well as a perceived lack of advantage to being registered. This is particularly likely in Erbil Governorate where the local government least supports the provision of assistance to Syrian refugees staying in host communities, and where the proportion of households without UNHCR registration was greatest (13%).

Figure 1: Households registered with UNHCR

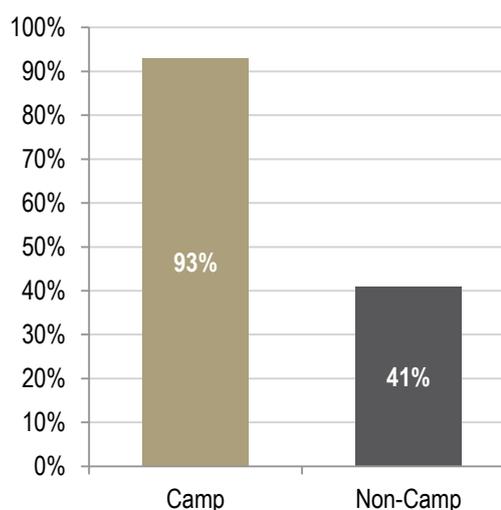


A much starker contrast was found between camp and non-camp refugees in terms of the proportion of households with at least one household member in possession of a KRI residency card. **93% of refugee households in camps across KRI had been issued a KRI residency card**, with refugees in transit sites and Gawilan camp making up the bulk of those who had not received residency status. **In non-camp settings, however, just 41% of all refugee households had at least one member with a residency card**; most of those lived in Duhok, where 89% reported having residency status, compared to just 34% in Erbil and 5% in Sulaymaniyah.

In Erbil, 49% of households mentioned they did not know where to obtain residency cards.

Lack of residency limits refugees' freedom of movement outside camps and more widely within the KRI. It also limits their ability to find a job, as both local employers and international organizations require resident status for all employees.

Figure 2: Households with at least one member with a KRI residency card

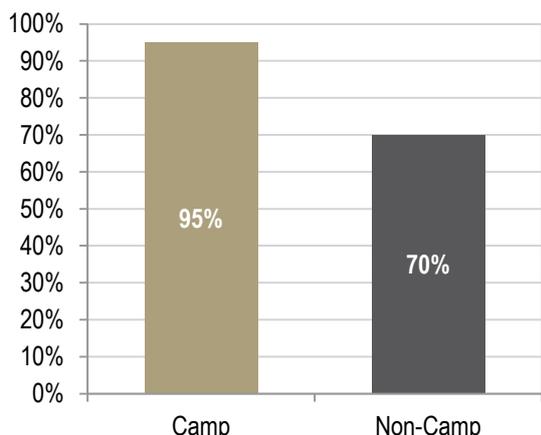


### Basic needs

Looking purely at reported ability to meet their basic needs, it is clear that **refugees in camps are, on average, better off than those in non-camp settings**. 95% of refugees in camps reported being able to afford the cost of meeting their basic needs, which include food, water, fuel, transport, clothing, hygiene items, healthcare, education and rent, as opposed to 70% outside camps.

Of those who could not afford the cost of meeting their basic needs, the majority had also been unable to meet the same basic needs during the previous month.

Figure 3: Households able to afford the cost of meeting their basic needs



Of those with unmet basic needs, refugees from both groups reported food and clothes among the top three needs they were unable to meet, although in a different order (non-camp prioritizing food over clothes).

A notable difference, however, was that rent was reported as the main unmet need in non-camp settings, which was obviously not relevant within camp settings. In camps, medical costs were commonly reported as a priority unmet need. Looking forward, refugees in non-camp settings who rely mainly on their savings to pay rent are likely to struggle even more, as their limited financial resources become increasingly stretched.

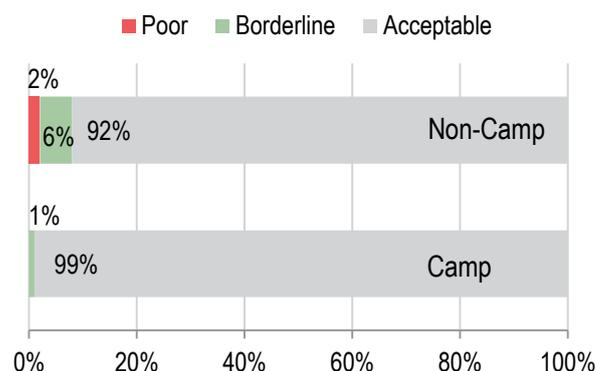
## Food

While the vast majority of refugees in both camp and non-camp settings were assessed as having an 'acceptable' *Food Consumption Score* (FCS)<sup>3</sup>—a composite score based on dietary diversity, food frequency and the relative nutritional importance of different food groups—a greater percentage of refugees in non-camp settings had scores rated as 'poor' or 'borderline'.

For these refugees, food consumption scores varied across the region assessed, with a larger proportion of households rated as 'borderline' in Sulaymaniyah (13%) compared to Erbil (4%) and Duhok (1%).

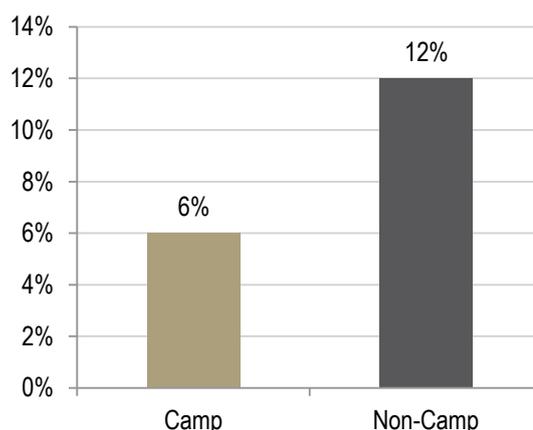
<sup>3</sup> For further information on the FCS, please refer to WFP guide "Food consumption score: Construction of the FCS", which can be found at <http://home.wfp.org/stellent/groups/public/documents/ena/wfp196627.pdf>

Figure 4: Food consumption scores



**12% of refugees in non-camp settings reported a lack of food in the seven days prior to the assessment, compared to only 6% of refugees in camp settings.**

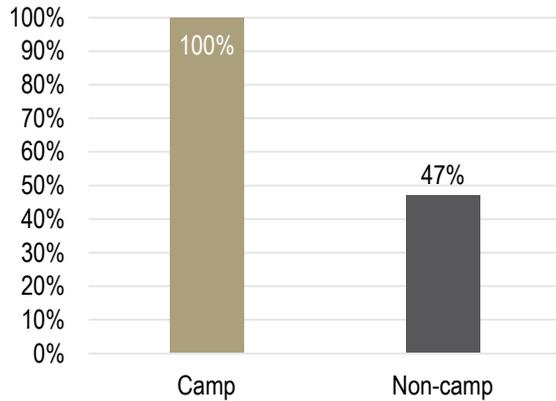
Figure 5: Households reporting a lack of food in the 7 days prior to the assessment



The findings also highlighted regional variation for non-camp refugees, with the highest proportion found in Erbil (16%) compared to 12% in Duhok and 9% in Sulaymaniyah. Food assistance, in the form of food parcels or vouchers, was received by 100% of refugees assessed in camps. WFP food parcels are distributed on a monthly basis, which may explain the higher food stocks and food consumption scores of refugees in camp settings.

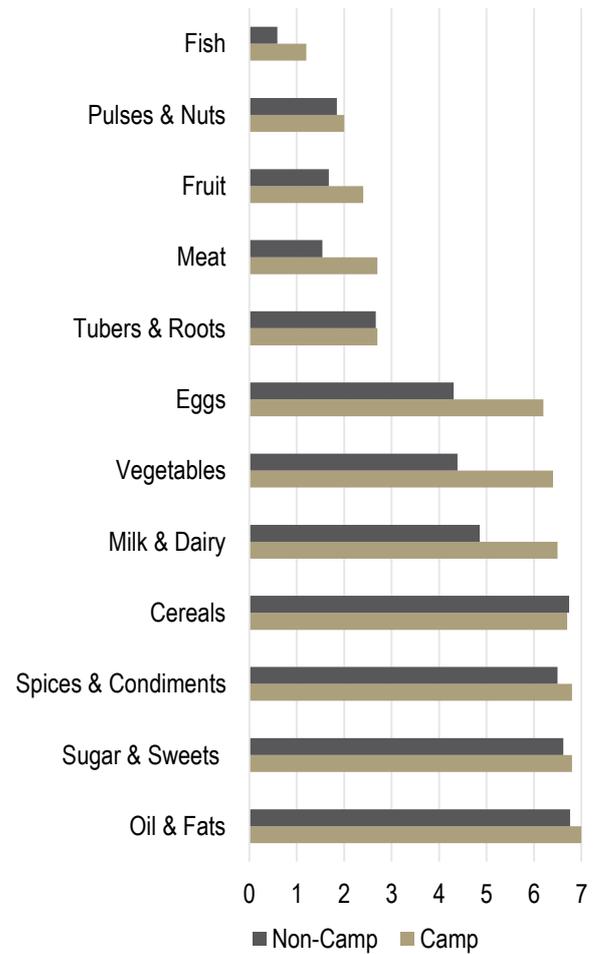
In non-camp settings, refugees across the KRI bought an average of 85% of their food with cash. Food assistance was received by 21% of non-camp refugees in Duhok Governorate, compared to only 1% of refugees in Erbil and 2% in Sulaymaniyah.<sup>4</sup>

Figure 6: Households having received food assistance since arrival



**Refugees in camps consumed a wider variety of food groups more often than those in non-camp settings.** A notable difference was seen in high-protein foods such as meat, eggs, and dairy. This varied considerably by region, with refugees in camps in Duhok—where there is a food voucher system—consuming meat twice as often as their counterparts elsewhere in the KRI. For non-camp refugees, WFP distributions were also an important source of protein and responsible for around 25% of meat, dairy and eggs consumed by this group.

Figure 7: Average number of days households consumed food groups in the week before assessment



### Coping Strategies

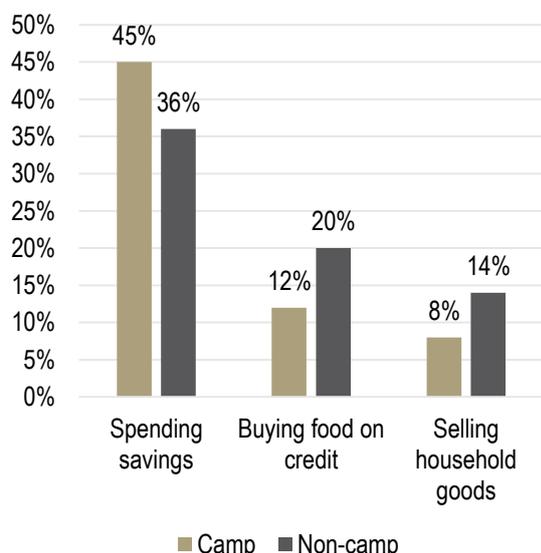
When asked about the different strategies employed to cope with a lack of food, or lack of money to buy food, the most common consumption-based coping strategy for refugees from both camp and non-camp settings was to buy less expensive food.

The *Coping Strategy Index* (CSI) is a tool for measuring household behavior when faced with a lack of food. When calculated on basis of consumption-based coping strategies, the CSI was found to be similar for camp and non-camp populations.

<sup>4</sup> It should be noted that the high number of non-camp refugees reportedly receiving WFP assistance is contrary to KRG policy, which provides food assistance only to those residing in camps and registered with UNHCR.

When looking at longer-term coping strategies, mostly related to livelihoods, findings showed that whilst camps and non-camps population exhibited similar strategies, they did so in varying proportions.

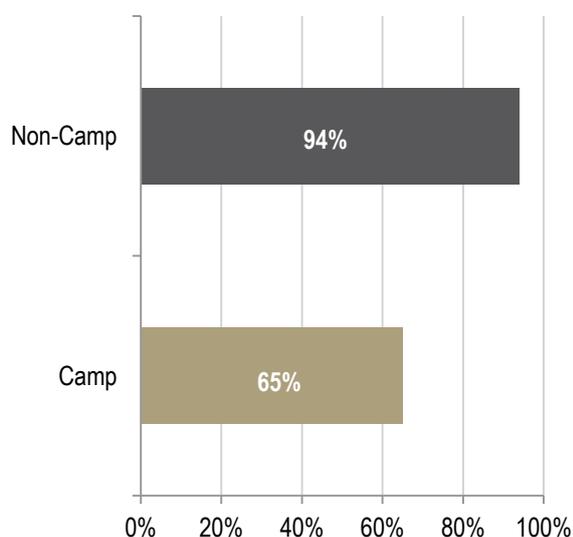
Figure 8: Main 3 livelihood coping strategies for lack of food



## Water

A higher proportion of refugees in non-camp settings (94%) than in camps (65%) felt they had sufficient access to water, both for drinking and other purposes.

Figure 9: Perception of households on water sufficiency for basic needs

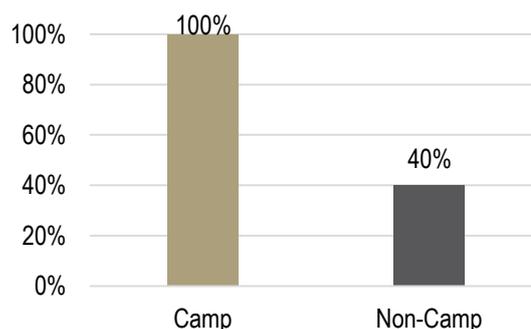


Access to water varied considerably between camps, from 98% of refugees in Darashakran camp stating they had sufficient access to drinking water compared to only 37% in Qushtapa camp. In non-camp settings, 90% of refugees relied on the mains water network, although access also varied across governorates. In Duhok governorate, 14% of refugees in non-camp settings reported having insufficient access to water, compared to only 4% in Erbil and 2% in Sulaymaniyah.

## Assistance

All refugees in camps had received some form of assistance, notably shelter and food—either in-kind assistance or vouchers—which had both been received by 100% of those assessed.

Figure 10: Households who have received assistance since arriving in KRI

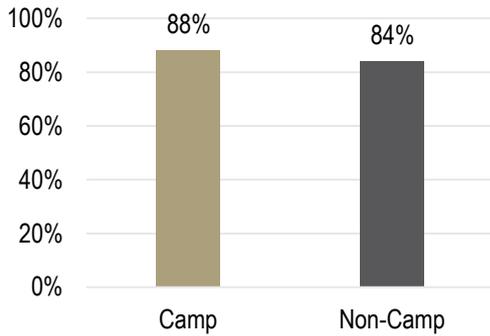


While 60% of refugees in non-camp settings reported receiving no assistance at all, for those who did, the most commonly reported forms of assistance were food (53%), household items (28%) and hygiene items (28%). **Only 6% of non-camp refugees reportedly received shelter assistance, despite rental assistance being stated as the top priority need across all governorates assessed.**

## Livelihoods

The majority of refugee households in both camp and non-camp settings reported earning an income. Despite this, 16% of refugees in non-camp settings and 12% in camps reportedly had no household income in the 30 days preceding the assessment.

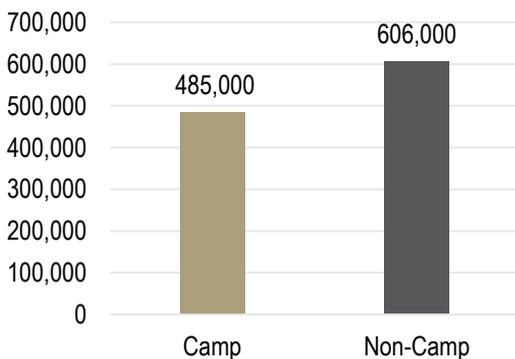
**Figure 11: Households with at least one member earning an income**



The high percentage of working refugees in camps can be explained by the open nature of most camps, allowing refugees to easily leave to undertake casual labour. It can also be explained by the presence of various organizations hiring the refugees within the different camps. While the assessment reported a higher percentage of households in camps with at least one member in work, households in non-camp settings received a higher average monthly income.

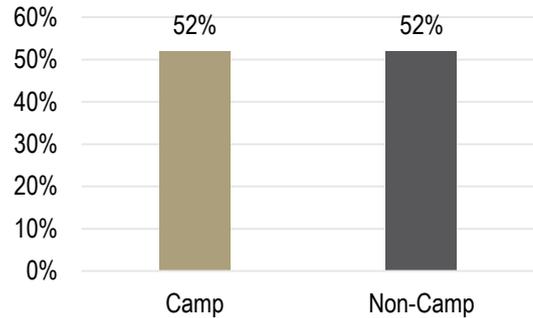
While salaries in urban centres are generally higher and more reliable than daily labour, the percentage of households in non-camp settings earning no income at all shows that moving out of a camp for work is a gamble that does not always pay off.

**Figure 12: Average household income in the past 30 days for households reporting an income (IQD)**



Just over half of all households (52%) reported borrowing money, the same figure in both camp and non-camp settings.

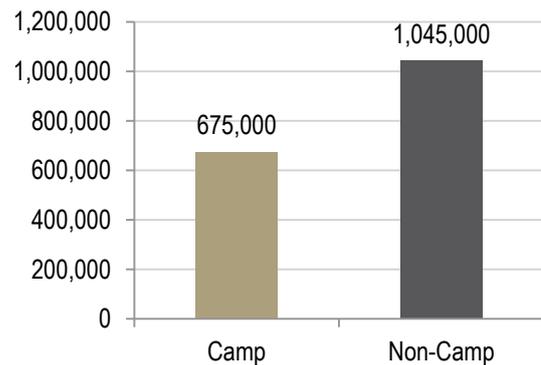
**Figure 13: Proportion of households who borrowed money since arriving in KRI**



An economic survey of Syrian refugees in the KRI, also conducted by REACH, found that nearly all refugees in camp settings had exhausted their savings and over half had contracted debts since arriving in the region.<sup>5</sup>

The findings of the MSNA for refugees outside camps suggest that refugees in non-camp settings are similarly resorting to negative coping strategies, including borrowing, to pay for their basic needs. Among both camp and non-camp refugees, a positive correlation was observed between higher borrowing and higher earning. This correlation is supported by the finding that non-camp refugee households, who on average earn more, also borrow more than their counterparts in camps.

**Figure 14: Average household debt (IQD)**



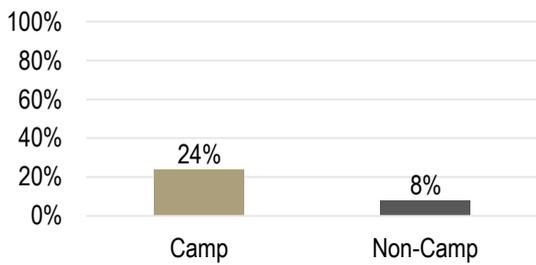
## Health

The health situation varied between camp and non-camp settings, both in terms of needs and available

<sup>5</sup> REACH (2014) Economic survey of refugees in refugee camps in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, April 2014.

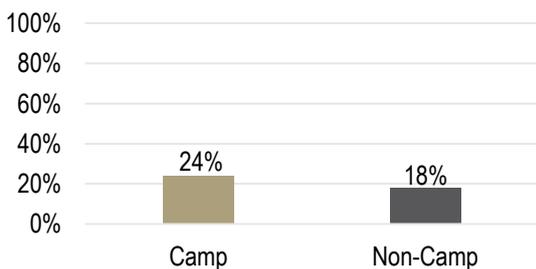
healthcare provision. A higher proportion of households reported a sick member in the two weeks preceding the assessment in camps (24%) than in host communities (8%), and so did they when asked if they required health care since their arrival in the KRI – 51% for camp settings versus 44% for non-camp. The three most commonly reported health problems in non-camp settings include fever, physical injuries and diarrhea. In camp settings, these were respiratory tract infection, diarrhea and physical injuries. A higher percentage of households reporting members with a chronic illness was found in camp (20%) than in non-camp (14%).

Figure 15: Household with one or more sick member in 2 weeks prior to assessment



Almost two thirds of households in who sought healthcare non-camp settings reported that they received all the health care they needed, although around half of these had to pay all related costs.

Figure 16: Households reporting difficulty accessing healthcare

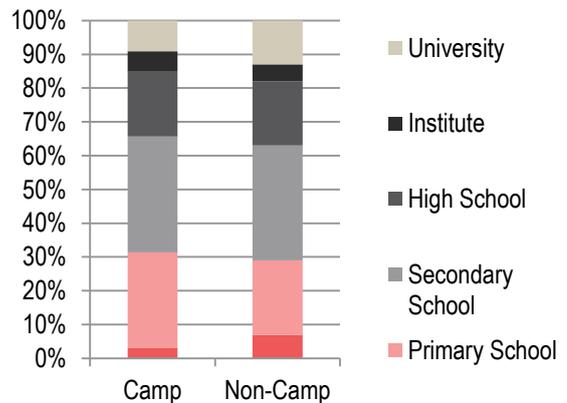


For those who struggled to access healthcare, cost was reported by non-camp households as the as the greatest barrier, whilst the main reported issue in camp settings was a lack of availability of treatment at the public health clinic.

## Education

Overall, levels of completed education were similar for both groups of refugees, suggesting no significant difference in this respect between refugees inside and outside camps. For both camp and non-camp refugees, households in which no members reported having completed formal education were found to have a lower than average income, although they did not appear in either case to struggle more than average to afford their basic needs.

Figure 17: Highest level of education in household



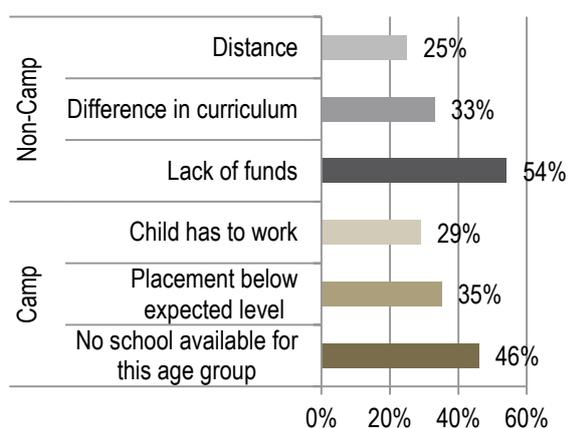
School attendance figures were more concerning, with **significant proportions of school-age children not attending school, 35% in camps and 61% in non-camp settings**. These figures were particularly low for children of secondary school age (11-17), with boys attending less frequently than girls.

In non-camp settings, school attendance varied across governorates, from 21% in Erbil to 51% in Duhok. Despite this regional variation, the reasons given for a lack of school attendance remained consistent, including lack of funds, distance, and difference of curriculum. A slight correlation was noted between families who reduced non-essential spending as a coping strategy, and those who sent only some or none of their school-age children to school.

In camps, school attendance varied considerably depending on age group, with 95% of children attending primary school (age 6-11), 45% attending secondary school (age 12-14), and only 12% attending high school (age 15-17).

Just as in non-camp settings, the percentage of boys attending school was lower than for girls across all age groups. Reasons given for not attending school include lack of availability of schools for particular age groups (specifically pre-school or high school, since primary and secondary schools were available in all camps assessed); children reportedly placed at the wrong level; and children needing to work. It was not clarified whether this referred to child labour or to house work.

Figure 18: Top three reasons for not attending school



## CONCLUSION

The stabilization of the refugee situation over the past months has allowed camp services and infrastructure to scale up to meet demand, providing refugees with assistance that helps many to meet their basic needs, especially with regards to food and shelter.

**Overall, the findings of this comparative analysis suggest that refugees in camps are better off than those in non-camp settings, particularly with regards to access to food, education, registration and employment.**

Many of the problems faced by Syrian refugees outside camps may be attributed to their lower visibility, and the perception that they are less vulnerable than those in camps. In the case of food assistance, government policy only allows distributions to refugees in camps.

Nonetheless, assessment findings suggest that many non-camp based Syrian refugees continued to benefit from food vouchers. On the other hand, refugees living within host communities can be seen to be benefitting from established infrastructure and services, notably as water networks and healthcare, to a greater extent than those in camps.

Both camp and non-camp refugees were also reliant on their own resources to meet their basic needs, with 60% of non-camp refugees reporting they were entirely reliant on earnings and savings. While the open nature of most camps means that many refugees are able to find work in non-camp settings, earnings are not high enough to fully cover the cost of living. Refugees in non-camp settings are faced with the additional cost of rent, which was reported as their main unmet need. With over half of families resorting to negative coping strategies, including borrowing money, this situation is clearly not sustainable, and this group will need further support as resources become increasingly depleted.

Furthermore, the escalating internal crisis in Iraq causing massive amounts of internally displaced persons (IDPs) since these MSNAs were conducted, has placed considerable additional strain on host communities, governments, national and international aid actors. At the time of writing, an additional 75, 066 IDP families were being hosted within the KRI, the majority of these in non-camp settings.<sup>6</sup> Furthermore, the geographical distribution of IDPs is uneven, with the vast majority hosted in Duhok Governorate, already hosting the largest number of Syrian refugees. Extra assistance will be required to assist both this ever increasing number of people in need, but also the local governmental structures hosting both these refugee and displaced populations.

### About REACH

REACH facilitates the development of information tools and products that enhance the capacity of aid actors to make evidence-based decisions in emergency, recovery and development contexts. For more information please visit: [www.reach-initiative.org](http://www.reach-initiative.org). You can also write to us at: [geneva@reach-initiative.org](mailto:geneva@reach-initiative.org) and follow us @REACH\_info.

<sup>6</sup> IOM Iraq Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) 18 August 2014, [file:///C:/Users/Acted%20HP%20\(1\)/Downloads/dtm\\_summary\\_report\\_20-8-20142.pdf](file:///C:/Users/Acted%20HP%20(1)/Downloads/dtm_summary_report_20-8-20142.pdf)