



## OVERVIEW

One of the three governorates that makes up the Kurdistan Region (KR) of Iraq, an area controlled by the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG), Erbil has both a sizeable Syrian refugee and internally displaced people (IDP) population. With the influx of over 30,000 Syrian refugees into Erbil since mid-August 2013 to 5 temporary camp locations, the governorate is coping with related socioeconomic impacts. According to statistics from the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI),<sup>1</sup> KR has seen a slight increase in violence over the last year but is still relatively stable. Water, health care, shelter, and access to work were cited as the current top priority needs of communities in Erbil.

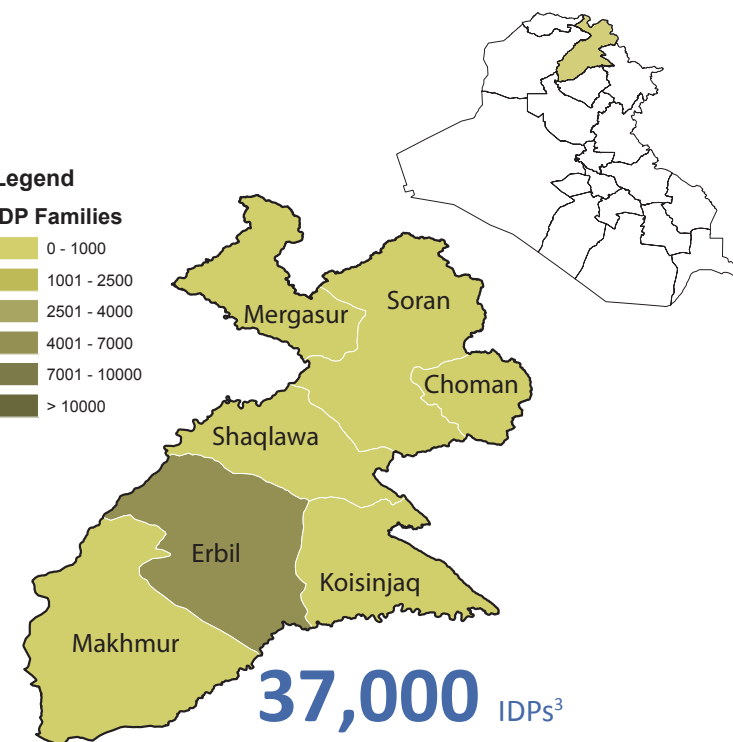
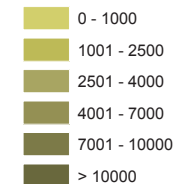
In 2009-2010, large numbers of internally displaced people (IDPs) throughout Iraq were assessed and mapped by IOM's Rapid Assessment and Response Teams (RARTs).

From 2010-2012, IOM RARTs assessed a smaller number of targeted vulnerable communities and families, which included IDPs as well as host community members and returnees, as IOM had found that IDPs had begun to reflect the needs of the communities in which they lived.

Most recently, under the framework of Community Revitalization Program--Phase II funded by the US State Department's Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration, IOM RART conducted key informant (KI) interviews<sup>2</sup> in July 2013 in districts of Erbil to determine current community-wide needs and conducted household surveys, focus group discussions, and KI interviews in June and July 2013 for an associated thematic report on the Syrian crisis. These various sources of data are reflected in this report.

## Legend

## IDP Families



**37,000** IDPs<sup>3</sup>

**40,382** Syrian refugees<sup>4</sup>

**1.5 million** total population<sup>5</sup>

## Key Findings:

- Though the needs of the host community were shared by the IDP families living among them, there were issues that affected IDPs to a greater degree. Difficulties accessing the Public Distribution System (PDS), a type of food ration from the government, was one issue. Other issues affecting IDPs more than the host community (HC) were **shelter, access to basic services, and access to adequate health care.**

- **Large numbers of Syrian refugees flooded into Erbil since the borders reopened on 15 August 2013.** Housed in 5 temporary camps while the construction of permanent camps is completed, these families have particular vulnerabilities and needs that IOM is actively assessing. In an IOM assessment of Syrian populations in Erbil in June and July 2013, access to work, food, education, and non-food items (NFIs) were cited as top needs.

<sup>1</sup> Figures based on UNAMI statistics. More information at: [uniraq.org](http://uniraq.org).

<sup>2</sup> Key informants in the assessment included government officials, local council members, mayors, and religious leaders.

<sup>3</sup> Figure based on IOM assessments 2009-2010.

<sup>4</sup> As of 1 Sept 2013, UNHCR. [data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees](http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees)

<sup>5</sup> Figure based on GOI COSIT estimate 2007.

\*IDP Density Map based on IOM Iraq assessments from 2009-2010.

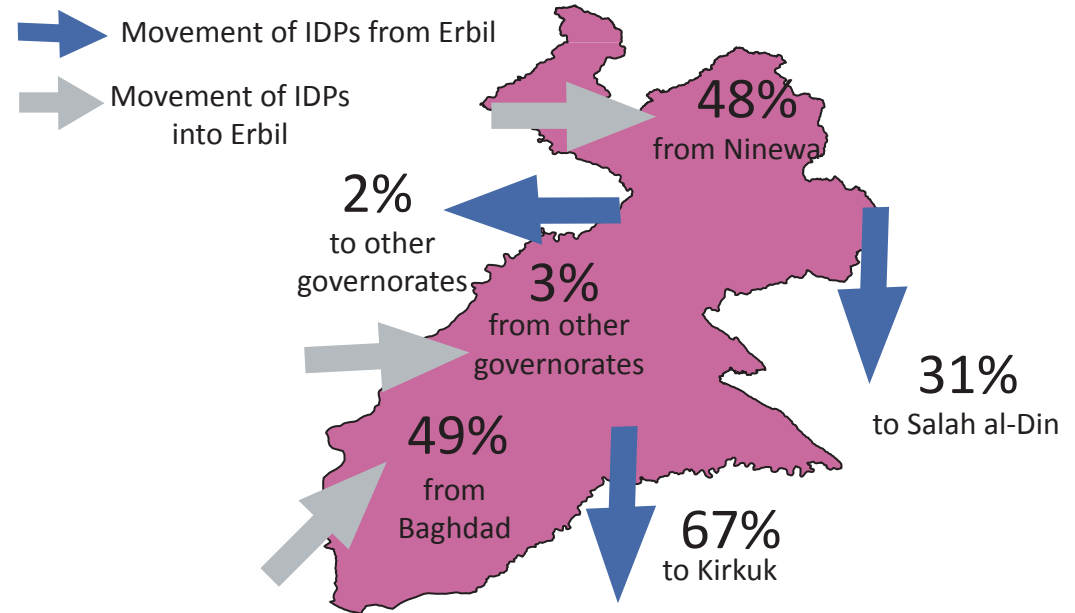
# SPOTLIGHT ON: INTERNALLY DISPLACED PEOPLE

## DIVERSITY

Thousands of people sought refuge in Erbil when violence levels rose in other areas of Iraq. These IDPs were primarily from three ethnoreligious groups. Though Erbil is part of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, less than half of IDPs were Kurdish Sunni Muslims. About a quarter of IDPs were Arab Sunni Muslims and 18% were Chaldean Christians. Most Kurdish IDPs were from Mosul district of Ninewa, while the majority of both Arab IDPs and Chaldean IDPs were from Al Resafa and Karkh districts of Baghdad. All groups had

primarily displaced to Erbil district.

A small population displaced from Erbil to other areas of Iraq. The vast majority of IDPs from Erbil were Arab Sunni Muslims, most of which displaced to Al-Hawiga district of Kirkuk. A sizeable number of Kurdish Sunni Muslims also displaced from Erbil; most displaced to Kirkuk district in Kirkuk. Nearly all IDPs from Erbil displaced from Makhmur district, an area whose governance is disputed between the KRG and Government of Iraq.

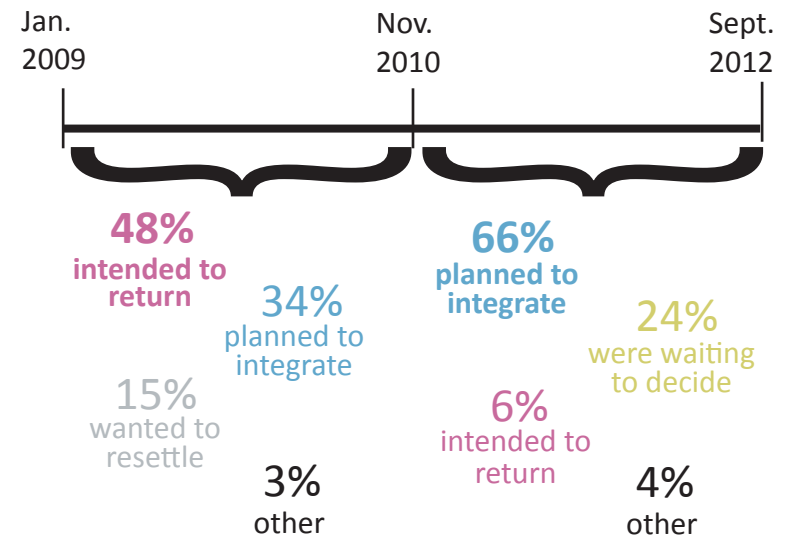


## INTENTIONS

IOM found that the percentage of IDPs who wished to integrate in their current location increased as displacement prolonged. In 2010-2012, IDPs in Erbil were undecided at a significantly higher rate than all Iraq. Of those who were waiting to decide their intentions, most were Kurdish Sunni Muslims originally from Mosul district in Ninewa.

While the majority of families from Erbil planned to integrate in the 2010-2012 assessment, a higher percentage wished to return than the Iraq-wide average. Those who wished to return were almost all Arab Sunni Muslim and had displaced from Makhmur district of Erbil to Al-Hawiga district in Kirkuk.

## IDPS IN ERBIL

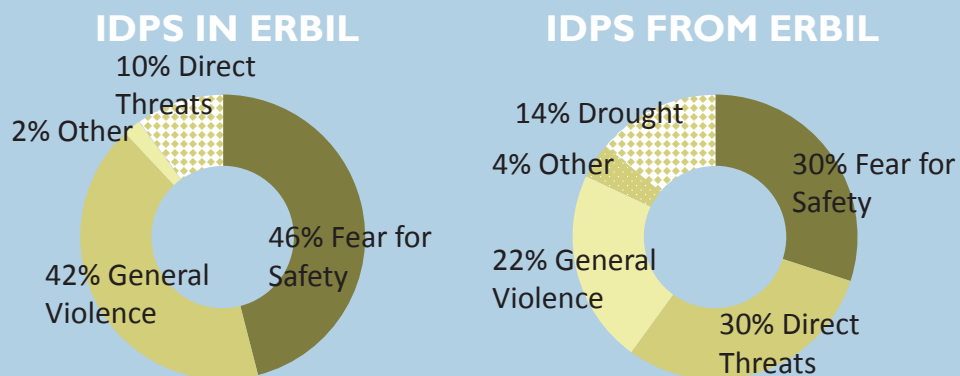


\* Intentions data based on assessments in 2009-2010 and 2010-2012 by IOM Iraq of IDP families.

\* Map and Diversity section based on IOM assessments 2009-2010 of IDPs in Erbil and from Erbil.

# DISPLACEMENT AND RETURN

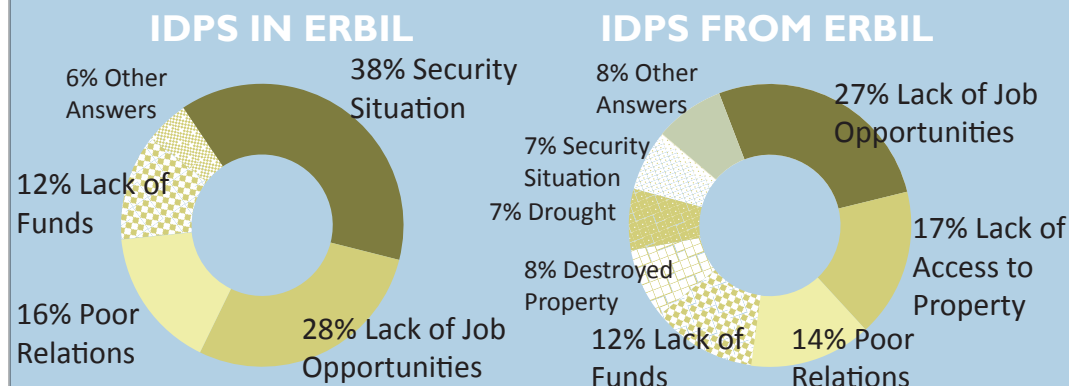
## REASONS FOR DISPLACEMENT<sup>6</sup>



IOM identified that most IDPs in Erbil cited fear for their safety, general violence, and direct threats on their lives as their primary reasons for displacing. These top reasons for displacement were similar between IDPs who had displaced from Baghdad and those from Ninewa. Compared to the overall Iraq average of those assessed by IOM, IDPs in Erbil had left their original location out of fear to a much higher degree. The vast majority of IDPs in Erbil displaced to the governorate in 2006 and 2007, similar to Iraq overall.

IDPs displaced from Erbil to other governorates cited direct threats, fear, violence, and drought as their reasons for displacement. Almost all IDPs assessed from Erbil had displaced from Makhmur district. The majority of IDPs assessed by IOM displaced from Erbil in 2003, 2004, and 2005; a large portion also displaced in 2008. Only 5% of all IDPs assessed in Iraq displaced from 2003-2005, compared to 62% of IDPs from Erbil. Those who displaced in 2008 displaced at significantly higher rates due to drought and direct threats than those who had displaced earlier.

## REASONS PREVENTING RETURN<sup>7</sup>



Answers from vulnerable IDPs in Erbil cited the security situation, the lack of job opportunities in their place of origin, poor relations with the community, and a lack of funds as the top reasons preventing their return. IDPs in Erbil named the lack of job opportunities and the security situation as factors preventing their return at a higher rate than Iraq overall. Almost all of those who cited poor relations with the community were from Mosul district in Ninewa and were Kurdish Sunni Muslim. Poor relations with the origin community can originate from tensions between those of different ethnoreligious backgrounds.

IDPs from Erbil answered that the lack of job opportunities in their place of origin, a lack of access to property in their place of origin, poor relations with the community, and a lack of funds were their top reasons preventing their return. Vulnerable IDPs from Erbil were prevented from returning by the security situation at a much lower rate than the Iraq-wide average but named lack of access to property at a higher rate than IDPs Iraq-wide.

<sup>6</sup>Data from IOM assessments of IDPs conducted 2009-2010.

<sup>7</sup>Figures based on 2010-2012 assessments conducted by IOM Iraq of IDPs specifically selected as being vulnerable. Criteria for selection was having no/low income, another type of vulnerability, or having a lack or no access to some of the following: Health, water, education, housing, roads, electricity, food.

# IDP NEEDS

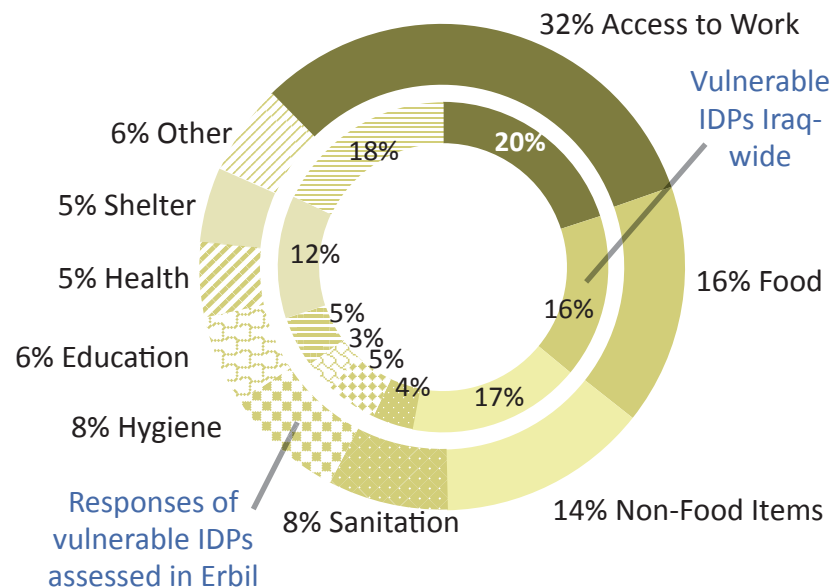
## CURRENT SITUATION

Needs and issues particular to the IDP population in Erbil were noted by key informants (KIs) interviewed. In the 2010-2012 assessments conducted by IOM, IDPs in Erbil named food as a much higher priority need than host community families, as IDPs in some communities had problems transferring their Public Distribution System (PDS) ration cards. PDS is a type of food assistance provided by the government. A mayor interviewed by IOM said that he was without power to transfer IDP or returnee cards from their origin area, and that the Ministry of Trade was responsible for this. As the PDS card was limited to only 5 food items each month, this was cited as a medium priority need. The card, however, was also needed to facilitate the majority of transactions with the government, meaning that IDPs without their card were being disadvantaged.

IDPs were also noted as being more affected by poor quality health centers and essential community services than the HC. More IDPs were without jobs and could not afford to attend private clinics for treatments, and the city outskirts and suburbs that most IDPs lived in usually lacked services like potable water, making them more vulnerable to illnesses.

In both the 2009-2010 and 2010-2012 assessments conducted by IOM, IDPs in Erbil cited access to work as a need at a higher rate than those IDPs Iraq-wide. Considering Erbil's relative economic success compared to other governorates of Iraq, it is interesting that IDPs cited access to work so highly. As some IDPs have faced difficulties obtaining employment due to a lack of specific documents and a host community Kurdish sponsor, however, the need is more understandable.

## PRIORITY NEEDS<sup>8</sup>



**Legal Help**  
has decreased as a cited  
priority need from **25%**  
of answers in 2009 to just  
**3%** in 2012.

**Food**  
has increased as a cited  
priority need from **2%** of  
answers in 2009 to **16%** in  
2012.

<sup>8</sup> Figures based on 2010-2012 assessments conducted by IOM Iraq of IDPs specifically selected as being vulnerable. Criteria for selection was having no/low income, another type of vulnerability, or having a lack or no access to some of the following: Health, water, education, housing, roads, electricity, food.

\* Data based on assessments in 2009-2010 and 2010-2012 by IOM Iraq of IDP families in Erbil, supplemented with key informant interviews conducted July 2013.

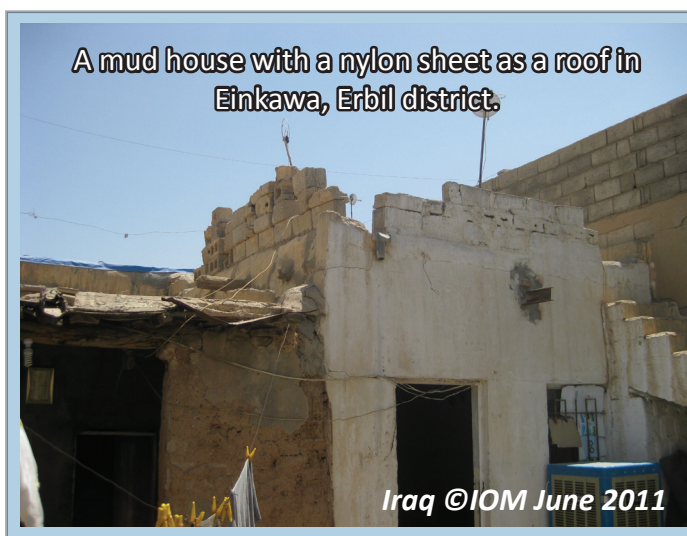
# COMMUNITY NEEDS

## SHELTER

Low-income families had been very affected by the rising rents and lack of available housing. KIs believed these issues had been caused by the influx of Syrian refugees into the governorate. Due to the ever increasing number of refugees, the provision of low-cost housing for families was cited as a need.

IOM identified that 31% of all vulnerable families assessed in Erbil lived in rented housing, 20% lived in their own house, 17% lived in an improvised shelter, and 17% lived in a durable shelter. IDPs were much more likely to live in rented housing and much less likely to own their own house than host community members assessed. Compared to the Iraq-wide average, a much higher percentage of families in Erbil lived in rented housing. Only 7% of all families in Erbil, vulnerable and non-vulnerable alike, lived in a dwelling made of non-durable materials.<sup>9</sup> This figure was much higher for the vulnerable families assessed by IOM-- 17%.

**17%**  
of vulnerable  
families assessed by  
IOM lived in an  
improvised shelter



The housing  
situation has  
worsened due to the  
increasing number  
of Syrian refugees.

## ACCESS TO WORK

In Erbil, job opportunities were a high priority need for the HC, IDP, and refugee communities alike. There was a reported lack of skilled employment opportunities, as well as a lack of vocational training centers. KIs requested professional and agricultural centers in order to enable youth to develop skills. It was noted in Koisinjak district specifically that the lack of jobs had led to migration to neighboring areas or leaving Iraq altogether. With the rising number of refugees who also were in need of work, the situation was reportedly getting worse.

IOM found that 42% of vulnerable men over 18 assessed had occasional employment, but only 15% were employed with a salary. 12% of men and 8% of women from the vulnerable populations assessed were unemployed. Most women, however, were unable or unwilling to work. 29% of those men and women who were employed worked in construction, 20% worked in the public sector, and 19% were unskilled workers. The unemployment rate for those vulnerable individuals assessed by IOM was notably higher than the Erbil-wide rate of 6%.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>9</sup>Figures based on 2010-2012 assessments conducted by IOM Iraq of locations and HC, IDP, and returnee families specifically selected as having displacement-related vulnerability. Criteria for selection was having no/low income or having a lack or no access to some of the following: Health, water, education, housing, roads, electricity, food. Data also pulls from key informant interviews conducted July 2013.

<sup>10</sup>Iraq Knowledge Network, 2011. <sup>10</sup>Iraq Household Socio-Economic Survey, 2007.



# COMMUNITY NEEDS

## HEALTH CARE

Health care was a key issue in many districts. Common problems were a shortage of general staff and medical specialists, the lack of emergency and birthing facilities at existing health centers, and a lack of health centers in areas away from the district centers. IOM found that 86% of vulnerable locations in Erbil had no hospital within 30 minutes of the community, 41% did not have a health center with doctors, and 55% were without a pharmacy.

Psychosocial and mental health care was also cited as a need in some areas. Reportedly, there were no specialists to serve this need, even at private hospitals in the area, and there was a fear to use such treatment even if it did exist due to a lack of awareness in the community of the importance of mental health care.

## ESSENTIAL COMMUNITY SERVICES

While all vulnerable locations assessed in Erbil had access to water and electricity, nearly all locations did not have a central sewage system or garbage collection. This was similar to the figures Iraq-wide.

Not all districts named sewage and sanitation as a need, but those that did said it was a top priority. There was reportedly a lack of integrated infrastructure for sewage and landfills. In other areas, the sewage system was very old, with exposed ducts above the ground and external drainage. There was a need for a plan to organize such infrastructure.





# COMMUNITY NEEDS

## ROADS AND TRANSPORTATION

Roads and transportation issues were named as a high priority need in a few areas of Erbil. Key issues were the rising number of cars on the roads each day and damaged roads that had been unable to cope with the rising demand. There were government projects reported to be ongoing in some areas, and these had improved the situation. IOM found that 51% of vulnerable locations assessed in Erbil had roads that were paved but needed rehabilitation. 14% had unpaved roads that were still accessible.

## EDUCATION

Overcrowding, a lack of buildings, the rise in schools operating on a shift system, and a need for equipment were the most commonly cited issues regarding education.

When asked the highest level of education completed, answers from those vulnerable individuals over the age of 15 in Erbil were similar for the host community and IDPs. 41% of men had completed a primary education, 22% had no education or no formal education, 18% finished intermediate school, and 10% had completed secondary. 43% of women, however, had no education or no formal education. 18% of men and 40% of women over age 15 assessed were illiterate. All locations assessed had access to school.



# LIVING CONDITIONS

## WATER

Water issues had improved significantly over the last few years due to government projects in districts of Erbil. Other areas, however, stated that water was a high priority need. In Koisinjaq and Banslawia districts in particular, there was some damage to pipes and the water network and a reported lack of sufficient water management. Large amounts of water were being wasted due to lack of awareness by residents and poor management of the system in general, leading to water scarcity.

In IOM's 2010-2012 assessments of vulnerable communities in Erbil, however,

families assessed had very high rates of water security. In Erbil, almost 100% of vulnerable families assessed stated that their water was safe to drink. This was significantly higher than the Iraq-wide figure of 61% of vulnerable families. When asked if they had sufficient water for personal use, 99% of those vulnerable populations assessed in Erbil said yes; this was again much higher than the 64% of those throughout Iraq who said they had sufficient water. 99% of those in Erbil said they used the municipal water/pipe grid as their main source of water, while only 52% of those assessed in all Iraq said they used the municipal water.

## ELECTRICITY

In Erbil, vulnerable families assessed indicated that they received on average 10 hours of electricity each day, using both generators and the public grid. IDPs in Erbil, notably, reported only receiving an average of 7.8 hours of electricity each day. Overall, 26% of electricity hours were provided by generators, while 74% were provided by the public grid.

*Iraq @IOM March 2010, Badawa area*



**One key informant noted that water was being wasted due to lack of sufficient dams.**

## CULTURES

One key informant from Soran district informed IOM that there was a lack of social freedoms, due to the tribal nature of some areas. Even with the increasing mix of people from different cultures living together in Erbil, the social problems were still evident. The issue had gotten better, due to the opening of social centers and government support.



# SPOTLIGHT ON: SYRIAN REFUGEES AND IRAQI RETURNEES

## OVERVIEW

With the influx of over 30,000 Syrian refugees to Erbil in August 2013, the overall needs and circumstances for migrants<sup>11</sup> in the governorate have changed and are being actively assessed by IOM staff to best meet needs. Permanent camps are being constructed as of September 2013 to house the ever growing Syrian population in the governorate, while refugees are housed in temporary camps at Gawer Gosik, Baharka, Kawa, Bakhma, and Basirma.

From IOM's assessment in June and July 2013, most of those Syrian refugees and Iraqi returnees in Erbil assessed were Kurdish Sunni Muslim, matching the predominant ethnoreligious background of the host community in the governorate. The majority of families were living in Aleppo governorate in Syria and did not have relatives living in Iraq.

## RELATIONSHIPS

While many key informants (KIs) stated that the relationship between the host community and refugees was generally good, several issues came to light. There had been some cases of sexual exploitation, where women were working as prostitutes in Erbil; this was causing issues with the host community, who rejected this behavior. Syrian women said that they believed that the host community had a bad image of Syrian women in general and that they were being harassed when they left home due to the way they dressed. Women claimed that no action was taken against harassers when complaints were filed at the police station. Some migrant families and children were working as beggars, and some Syrian women stated that Syrians were being accused of theft whenever "someone from the host community loses something." All groups, however, stated that in Erbil there was safety, freedom of movement, and security.

## INTENTIONS

Over the next three months, the vast majority of migrants assessed intended to remain in Erbil. When asked their intentions for the next year, nearly all families were waiting on one or several factors to decide. Some Syrian refugees stated that they wished to migrate to Europe, while others spoke of returning to Syria after the security had stabilized, and still others mentioned settling and buying a house and car amongst the host community.



\* Data based on key informant interviews, household surveys, and focus group discussions conducted for a thematic report on the Syrian Crisis in Iraq, June and July 2013.

<sup>11</sup> The term "migrants" is used to refer to both Syrian refugees and Iraqi returnees.

# SPOTLIGHT ON: SYRIAN REFUGEES AND IRAQI RETURNEES

## LIVING CONDITIONS

When IOM conducted its assessment in June and July, there were no camps in Erbil. All those migrants assessed were living among the host community. The majority lived in a durable shelter, were renting, were accommodating 2-4 people in each room, and had access to electricity from the public grid for 20+ hours each day. The main sources of food for those assessed were shops, NGOs, and community distributions. Many more families relied on only shops for their food than in other governorates assessed, showing a greater degree of self-reliance.

Migrants and the host community reportedly had the same basic services and public utilities. Almost all families assessed used the main grid for water. Most reported that there was no discrimination regarding health care, and that health

care was generally good. Private clinics were often too expensive for migrants to use, however. A lack of proper documentation was expressed as a difficulty in registering children for school in Erbil. Iraqi returnees appeared to have an easier time accessing education—many were supposedly already registered and attending regularly. Those Syrian refugees who are Arabic-speaking mentioned the lack of schools teaching in Arabic and a lack of spots for Syrians in such schools.

With the newly arrived Syrian population being settled in camps, it will be important to reevaluate the situation. IOM is actively evaluating the needs of this community.

### Arabic-speaking refugees

reported difficulties  
finding spaces in  
schools teaching in  
Arabic.

*Iraq ©IOM July 2013*



IOM Staff meeting with a Community Management Team (CMT) to discuss the changing needs of the community and the arriving Syrian migrants.

**50%**

of migrants assessed  
said their home  
was **damaged but  
inhabitable**



# SPOTLIGHT ON: SYRIAN REFUGEES AND IRAQI RETURNEES

## ECONOMIC SITUATION

Syrian refugees had high unemployment rates and, therefore, had difficulties paying for rent, non-food items, and food. Iraqi returnees also reportedly suffered from a lack of job opportunities, shelter, and the ability to pay rent. Despite this, most of those migrant families assessed reported that their main source of income was salary or work wages, not NGO assistance or support from family. All those assessed reported that they were legally allowed to work, but most stated that their income was not sufficient for their family. Many reported that job opportunities were predominately in construction, manufacturing/crafts, and skilled services.

The host community reported that they had been negatively affected by the influx of migrants due to an increase in general prices and rent and a lack of

job opportunities. In June 2013, many KIs believed that if more Syrians were to come, these problems would worsen. Since this fear was expressed to IOM, more than 30,000 Syrian refugees flooded into Erbil in August 2013. It is crucial to reevaluate the employment situation in Erbil after this recent influx.

Some Syrians with jobs reported that they didn't receive extra wages after working overtime, and a group of Syrian women reported that they weren't being paid on time. As Syrians were reportedly being employed at minimum wage but rent prices were continuously increasing, families were forced to move constantly. Syrian men and women reported that their situation in Erbil was unstable because of high rent prices. Most families assessed said that high food prices and violence were their biggest concerns.

## NEEDS

All Syrian migrants assessed named access to work as their top priority need. For Syrian refugees, food, education, and non-food items (NFIs) were also priority needs. Iraqi returnees were reportedly in need of food and NFIs, and the host community (HC) noted their need for monthly food assistance for widows, divorcees, and other HC families without providers. Iraqi returnees suggested that organizations should provide job opportunities for competent returnees, provide NFIs for returnees with limited incomes, and start small projects as job opportunities. Syrian men and women suggested that organizations should assist the vulnerable host community with the same aid given to the Syrians, distributing aid for the ones in need first.

A Syrian refugee receiving an In-Kind Grant from IOM to start a small business.





## SPOTLIGHT: SHAWAYS

Located in Erbil district, Shaways is a Sunni majority community in an urban area. In November 2012, IOM field staff interviewed several individuals at this location in order to best determine the needs of the community to inform programming under the Community Revitalization Program--Phase II (CRPII) funded by the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration. At the time of IOM's interviews, the population was approximately 2,400, with an IDP population of 950. A large portion of the overall population were also reported to be returnees.

Services in the area were reportedly quite good. Residents had access to electricity for approximately 16 hours each day, public disposal was available, all residents had access to the public water grid, low cost transport was available,

and roads were unpaved but accessible. The literacy rate was quite high and health care was generally acceptable, though there were low numbers of trained professionals. Major issues reported were the lack of a public sewage system, the education system, and the lack of job opportunities.

Overcrowding was a major issue in schools, so schools had begun to run on rotation. There were no secondary schools near the community, so all schools were run out of the same building. There was a reported unemployment rate of about 50% in the community and small business trainings to raise the capacity of business knowledge were requested. It was reported that the current infrastructure in the community was sufficient to support local business, but further development was needed.



## RESPONSE

In Shaways, IOM renovated the local school after finding that it lacked the capacity to accommodate all children in the area. As well, the school needed its bathrooms renovated due to unsanitary conditions. The project facilitated the construction and installation of new sanitation units, in addition to the renovation of an outside area in which children can exercise. Additionally, 20 individuals received In-Kind Grants (IKGs) composed of materials and tools to start small businesses and Business Development Services (BDS).

IOM Iraq, taking into account the findings of the field visits throughout Erbil, has conducted many projects and initiatives in the governorate under CRPII in the past year. Assistance has included transportation assistance, service provider mapping, IOM staff training, BDS, vocational and farmer trainings, IKGs, job placements, rehabilitating a health clinic and a school, providing schools with electricity, expanding a health center, and supporting youth radio services. **In total, IOM has conducted over 50 projects in Erbil since 2003 in various sectors of intervention.**

