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Female-Headed Household in Khanke IDP Camp in Duhok
September 2021 [Photo Credit: OCHA]

Gaps and Challenges in the 2021 Response

As humanitarian partners in Iraq prepare for the 2022 Humanitarian Programme Cycle, understanding the current gaps in the 2021 humanitarian response will better inform planning for the year ahead. To this end, the Iraq Inter-Cluster Coordination Group undertook a mid-year response gap analysis, evaluating the activities of humanitarian actors in Iraq between January – July 2021. In the 2021 Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP), humanitarian partners set out to cover the critical needs of 1.5 million people living in 63 districts out of Iraq's total 101 districts. Despite the continuation of the COVID-19 pandemic, humanitarian partners provided at least one form of assistance, at least one time, to 641,000 people (43 per cent of the target) from January to July 2021.¹ At the intersectoral level, all internally displaced persons (IDPs) living in camps were reached with some kind of assistance, while 58 per cent of out-of-camp IDPs and 28 per cent of returnees were reached with some kind of assistance.

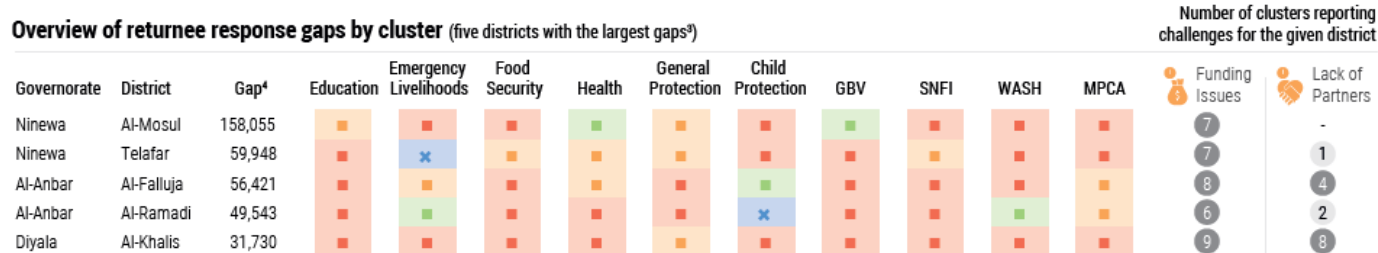
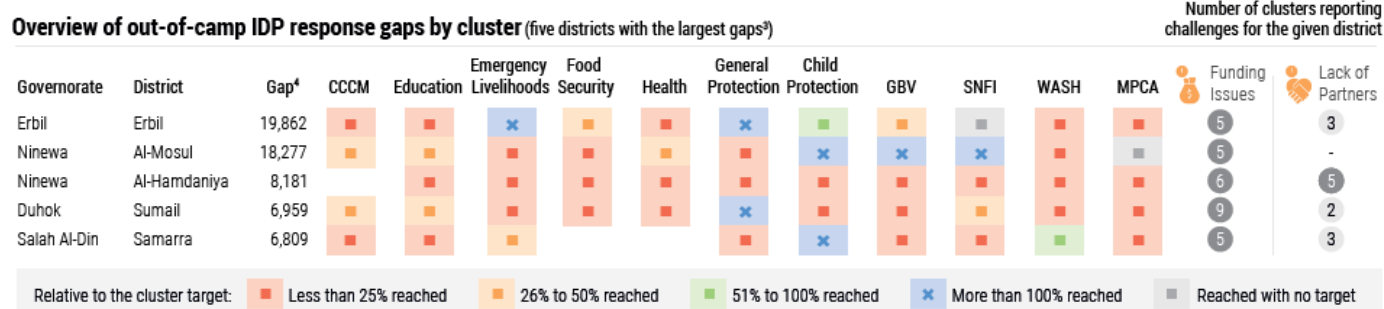
As in previous response gap analyses, the shortfalls were found to be more pronounced among certain population groups and in certain locations of the country. In the first seven months of 2021, all clusters experienced some gaps in their planned response. The largest gaps were experienced by Multi-Purpose Cash Assistance (MPCA), with only 2 per cent of targeted families assisted; Education, with 11 per cent assisted; Child Protection, with 21 per cent assisted; WASH with 24 per cent assisted; and Shelter/NFI with 25 per cent assisted. At the intersectoral level, all IDPs living in camps were reached with some kind of assistance, while 58 per cent of out-of-camp IDPs and 28 per cent of returnees were reached with some kind of assistance. For out-of-camp IDPs, the highest response gaps were observed in Ninewa, Erbil and Duhok Governorates, while for returnees the highest response gaps were in Ninewa, Al-Anbar and Salah Al-Din Governorates. Notably, these are also the governorates with the highest targets, and the same governorates where the largest gaps in the humanitarian response were observed in 2020.

Lack of funding is reported as the main reason for gaps in both out-of-camp IDP and returnee response in 2021, with lack of partners as the second most cited reason for the gaps. COVID-19 restrictions, and reprioritization due to population movements, also continue to be cited as reasons for the response gaps by some clusters. Access challenges are the least reported reasons for response gaps, though a number of clusters have pointed to particular access challenges in certain districts in Al-Anbar, Diyala, Kirkuk, and Salah Al-Din districts. In 2020, specific COVID-19 related movement restrictions contributed to access constraints for many clusters, but these are no longer applicable.

Many clusters have reported that in some out-of-camp locations, populations are too small or too scattered for partners to prioritize those areas, while in other cases, population movements have led to reprioritization of programming. With regard to returnees, there are consistent reports of lack of humanitarian donor interest for funding in return areas; in parallel, several clusters noted that in some districts, the vulnerable returnee population was lower than anticipated when the target was set, due to fewer people having returned than expected.

¹ Iraq HRP 2021: Humanitarian Response Overview Dashboard for January to July 2021: https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/sites/www.humanitarianresponse.info/files/documents/files/iraq_humanitarian_response_dashboard_jan-jul2021_-_cleared_20210819.pdf

Clusters are working to further analyze the reasons for gaps in their cluster-specific response with a view to finding solutions, including through advocacy with partners and donors to address the challenges observed with regard to lack of funding and partners for parts of the response.



Establishment of the Mosul Area-Based Coordination Group

On 16 September 2021, the Governor of Ninewa, Mayor of Mosul, and the Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq, Irena Vojáčková-Sollorano, accompanied by the OCHA Head of Office, other United Nations (UN) representatives, and NGO representatives, officially launched the Area-Based Coordination (ABC) group in Mosul, Ninewa governorate. ABCs are active in eight localities in Iraq (including Mosul), and are the forum where local government, humanitarian actors and development organizations come together to coordinate humanitarian, development and government activities that contribute towards durable solutions to internal displacement, to ensure maximum impact on people in need. Per the [Iraq Durable Solutions Strategy and Operational Framework \(June 2021\)](#), the ABCs will jointly identify priority locations, define key interventions, and agree on stakeholders to engage—including non-governmental actors, community-based organizations, community representatives, local counterparts, displacement-affected communities, and any other relevant stakeholders—and draft plans of action based on the expressed commitments and contributions of key governmental, international, and non-governmental entities. ABCs are to undertake comprehensive stakeholder mapping which considers existing power dynamics and the importance of working within and around established structures. Initial engagement with these counterparts will entail a scoping discussion to outline the current understanding of needs and priority locations and groups from the perspective of international and non-governmental actors, promoting that a coherent and coordinated proposal is brought forward to kick-off preliminary discussions.

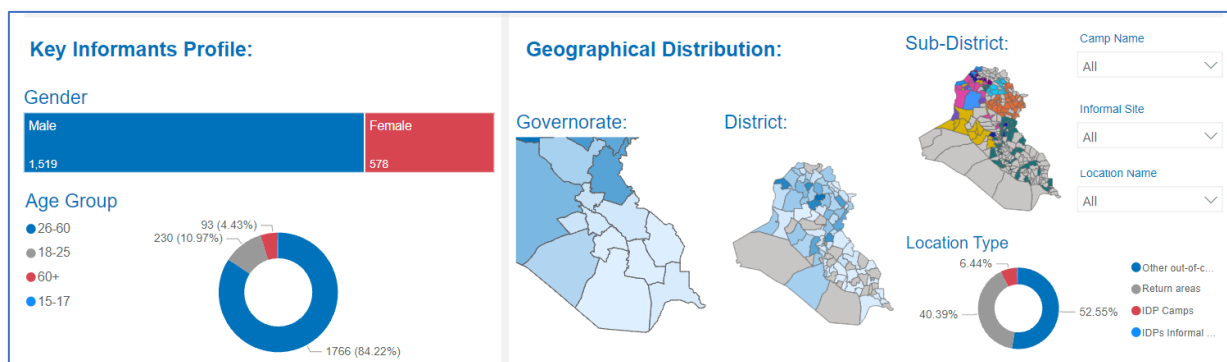


At the Mosul ABC launch, the Governor of Ninewa opened proceedings, stating that he hoped the Mosul ABC group would assist the process of IDP returns, speed up the rebuilding of Mosul city and coordinate the international development response between Ninewa authorities, the UN and NGO partners. The Mayor of Mosul, also present, outlined the challenges in service delivery, internal coordination and the hesitancy of IDPs to return to Mosul without comprehensive recovery and reconstruction efforts. The Mayor expressed his desire to work with development partners to ensure such efforts got underway as quickly as possible. The Humanitarian Coordinator recalled her earlier visit to Mosul in June 2021 during which she and local counterparts agreed on the need to establish an ABC in Mosul, and expressed her appreciation to all parties for their engagement. Immediate next steps would be to finalize membership, determine the frequency of meetings and division of work (area mapping, data collection, activity mapping, local consultation), and to obtain and share key information (including area/geographical coverage, priorities, and initial target locations) with all relevant parties.

Latest Findings of Protection Monitoring System

In late September 2021, the National Protection Cluster of Iraq released the [third round of findings from its Protection Monitoring System](#), covering July-August 2021. The assessment surveyed nearly 2100 key informants (KI) across 18 governorates, 75 per cent of whom were men and 25 per cent of whom were female. The largest subset of those interviewed were IDPs or returnees themselves (approximately 33 per cent); others assessed include community leaders, government officials, and representatives from civil society organizations located in or otherwise concerned with displaced and returned families. KI surveys took place in IDP camps; out-of-camp locations of internal displacement, including informal sites; and returnee areas. While protection concerns were reported in all governorates, they were more prevalent in locations found within the former conflict-affected governorates in the central and northern part of Iraq:

- 12% of KIs report that violations of the right to life and physical integrity against civilians occur sometimes or frequently
 - *Frequency of rights-violations reportedly the highest in Anbar (28%), Diyala (19%) and Duhok (17%)*
- 21% of KIs report restrictions on freedom of movement to other districts/governorates
 - *Severity of restrictions on movement reportedly the highest in Anbar (46%), Diyala (30%), Sulaymaniyah (22%)*
- 49% of KIs report that some or most people are facing issues to obtain or renew their civil documentation
 - *Prevalence of issues related to civil documentation reportedly the highest in Duhok (67%), Anbar (63%), Ninewa (59%),*
- 16% of KIs report that social tensions and conflicts occur sometimes or frequently
 - *Frequency of social tensions and conflicts reportedly the highest in Anbar (25%), Duhok (23%), Ninewa and Diyala (18%)*
- 48% of KIs report that people some or most people face Housing, Land and Property (HLP) issues
 - *Prevalence of HLP issues reportedly the highest in Ninewa (57%), Anbar and Diyala (56%),*
- 23% of KIs assess the protection situation of women as negative
 - *Severity of protection issues affecting women and girls reportedly the highest in Anbar (45%), Diyala (35%), Ninewa (24%)*
- 30% of KIs assess the protection situation of children as negative
 - *Severity of protection issues affecting children reportedly the highest in Anbar (46%), Diyala (39%), Salah al-Din (36%)*



UN General Assembly Side Event on Durable Solutions for IDPs

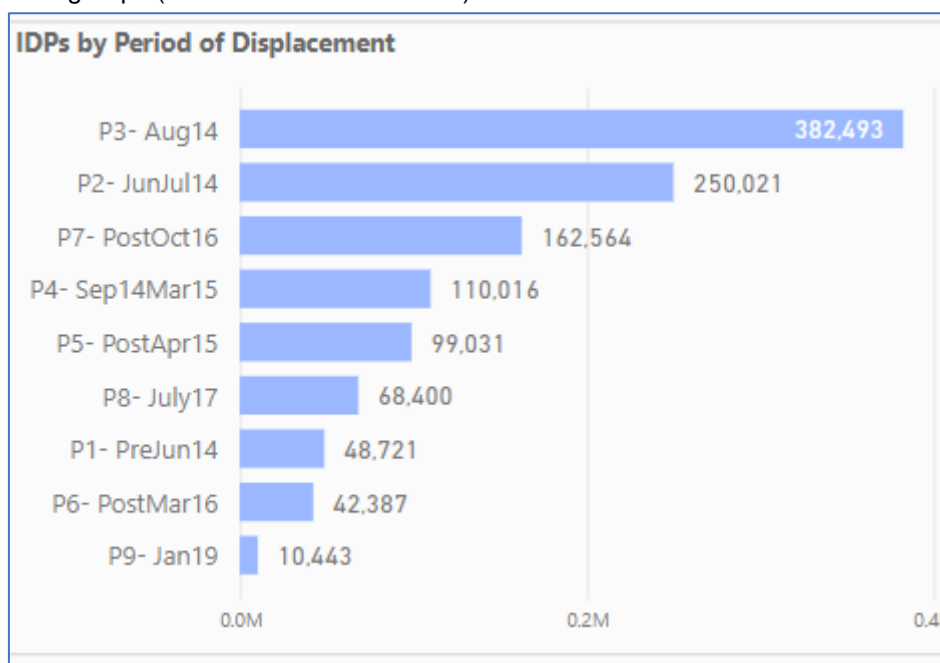


During the 76th UN General Assembly in mid-September 2021, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) co-hosted a side event calling on the international community and governments around the world to intensify efforts to find durable solutions for the tens of millions of people worldwide living in internal displacement.” Entitled “[Durable Solutions; Ending Protracted Displacement in a World of Increased Complex Mobility](#),” participants included Mr. Ali Ahmed of the Kurdistan Regional Government’s Joint Crisis Coordination Centre. As of 2020, there were an estimated 55 million people living in internal displacement due to conflict, violence and disaster. Around two-thirds of these IDPs have been in protracted displacement for more than three years. In Iraq,

over 92 per cent of all IDPs are in protracted displacement—having been displaced for three years or longer—with the vast majority (79 per cent) displaced for more than 5 years.

A durable solution for IDPs is achieved when individuals no longer have any specific assistance and protection needs linked to their displacement and can enjoy their human rights without discrimination on account of their displacement.² The manifestation of a durable solution is often measured in terms of three types of movement: sustainable reintegration at the place of origin (voluntary return); local integration in areas where displaced persons take refuge with full knowledge and agreement of the hosting community; or re-settlement in another part of the country based on their choice and informed decision. IDPs in Iraq face various challenges that prevent them from finding a durable solution to their displacement. Lack of housing—due to destruction of land, property, or housing rights issues—is the primary obstacle to return for those who remain displaced; however, many also cite lack of security, basic services and livelihoods in areas of origin as impeding their return. Local integration, while potentially possible in some areas—and the de facto circumstances in certain contexts—continues to be a subject of some contention in Iraq due to ethno-sectarian dynamics. Although some out-of-camp IDPs have been living safely and amicably in governorates geographically distant from their areas of origin for many years, and while many in this subset do not face pressure to return, such arrangements are not officially sanctioned by local authorities, and are not publicly spoken about as permanent. IDP re-settlement in another part of the country is similarly contentious due to the same dynamics.

The United Nations and its partners have established a comprehensive approach to support the Government of Iraq and affected Iraqi families in addressing and overcoming these barriers to durable solutions. In coordination with the Government of Iraq and the Kurdistan Regional Government’s efforts to end internal displacement, international humanitarian and development actors have both set durable solutions as a stated goal of their respective activities, including through the Iraq Humanitarian Response Plan and the UN’s Strategic Development and Cooperation Framework for Iraq. The nexus between humanitarian, development, reconstruction, and stabilization activities is operationalized through the Area-Based Coordination groups (discussed in detail above).



² Inter-agency Standing Committee Framework on Durable Solutions for Internally Displaced Persons, 2010