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Fire destroys part of Shariya IDP camp on 4 June 2021, Duhok Governorate [Photo Credit: OCHA]

## Situation and Needs Monitoring in the 2021 Humanitarian Response



Sinjari family displaced in Mamrashan IDP camp (2021)  
[Photo Credit: OCHA]

In June 2020, the Iraq Inter-Cluster Coordination Group (ICCG) published a [Situation and Needs Monitoring Report](#), evaluating the implementation of the humanitarian response in Iraq between January - May 2021, and taking stock of the changing operational context in Iraq during this period. Its analysis summarizes key trends and changes in the humanitarian situation and evolution of needs based on available data provided by the clusters.

During the reporting period, Iraq witnessed no major shocks which significantly affected the scale or scope of humanitarian needs in the country. However, the consequences of camp closures and the impact of COVID-19 have now been more thoroughly evaluated.

The humanitarian situation in camps for internally displaced persons (IDPs) remains largely as assessed in the 2021 Humanitarian Needs Overview (HNO), with services required to support approximately 185,000 people. While government-led camp closures carried out between October 2020 and January 2021 significantly reduced the need for in-camp services in federal Iraq—where all but two IDP camps were closed or consolidated—the population in the 25 camps under the administration of the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) has remained relatively stable. Against a net reduction of 5,000 IDPs leaving camps in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI) during the first five months of the year, approximately 1,700 people have sought readmission to camps in KRI, due to concerns about security, lack of housing and basic services, and livelihood opportunities in areas of origin.

In federal Iraq, as people left camps and either returned home or relocated to out-of-camp informal displacement sites, humanitarian needs in Iraq have substantively and geographically changed. This has manifested in various ways: increased exposure to protection risks for communities who left camps unexpectedly; increased difficulty accessing some services; limited livelihood opportunities in the new areas of displacement or return; and different shelter/NFI needs, with a slight increase in the number of people living in critical shelters.

While the COVID-19 pandemic continues to negatively affect Iraq, indications are that the economic impact on some of the most vulnerable groups in Iraq—including IDPs and returnees—has started to stabilize. Due to effective preparedness and response measures put in place by partners, the health impact of a second wave of COVID-19 was mitigated in IDP camps, against a backdrop of wider outbreaks in the community.

However, humanitarian actors continue to monitor other indicators to determine their impact on humanitarian needs at the household level, including fluctuating oil prices, and the devaluation of the Iraqi dinar. The initial increase in prices on basic commodities included in the Survival Minimum Expenditure Basket (SMEB) has begun to stabilize, but remains higher than at the end of 2020. The SMEB is also subject to the influence of the unseasonably dry weather conditions and reduced water supply, which could impact the food security, livelihoods, and access to water of already vulnerable populations. Reduced quantity and quality of the water supply could lead to an increased cost of water, as well as changes in sanitation practices leading to negative health outcomes, such as acute watery diarrhea and an increased risk of cholera.

## Continued Analysis of the Impact of COVID-19 on Vulnerable Iraqis

Globally, COVID-19 has become more than a health crisis. It has also created a socio-economic crisis and severely disrupted livelihoods, food security, and education. Those most affected are vulnerable groups such as IDPs, women, children, people with disabilities, and poorer households. In Iraq, ensuring inclusive and sustainable recovery from COVID-19 will require special consideration of the manner in which COVID-19 has impacted vulnerable groups, so that the recovery can be tailored to include their specific needs.

A report released in June 2021 by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Iraq, in collaboration with the United Nations Human Settlement Programme (UN-Habitat) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM), highlights the long-term consequences of COVID-19 for vulnerable Iraqis. The report—*Impact of COVID-19 on Iraq's Vulnerable Populations*—is the seventh publication in a series of policy papers exploring the socio-economic impact of COVID-19, which provide contextual analysis intended to inform the responses of the Government of Iraq, the United Nations system and donor partners.



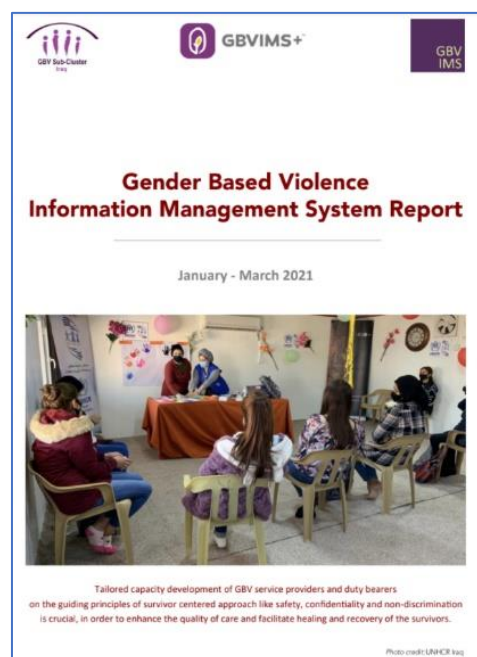
The report's assessment and analysis indicates that while income losses were widespread, the effects were disparate between federal Iraq and the KRI, displaced versus non-displaced populations, and women and men. Falls in employment income were higher for IDP and refugee households, as well as for female and youth workers, compared to male adults. IDP households saw greater changes to average household income (declines of 28 percent) than non-displaced households (declines of 27 percent for returnees and 14 percent for host community households), which may be attributable to IDP households' greater reliance on casual and daily labour. The report notes that prior to the pandemic, 2.39 million IDPs needed emergency livelihood support, with many having exhausted their coping strategies and savings. For IDP households, a lack of livelihood opportunities has potential to again displace families and further disenfranchise vulnerable people.

While all population groups reported decreases in average monthly employment income from the start of the pandemic, this change was slightly higher for IDPs and refugees compared to host community members and returnees. Female-headed households also reported a decline in the number of household members earning employment from casual labour or regular work (33 percent for female-headed households versus 24 percent for male-headed households). The incidence of child labour was reportedly higher among displaced populations as these populations overall experienced a greater loss in employment income.

Reduced access to aid due to movement restrictions imposed by government actors further disadvantaged displaced populations, as many people could not reach offices responsible for issuing necessary documentation to obtain aid and/or rations. Compounding the challenge of accessing the relevant office, some government agencies required mandatory COVID-19 tests prior to making appointments; the costs of such tests—IQD31,500 per family member, around \$22—likely created an economic barrier for many families.

Among the report's short-term recommendations, the authors propose that policymakers pay particular attention to vulnerable groups, especially women, youth and IDPs, in national and subnational recovery agendas. In the longer-term, policymakers are advised to include the formalization of the informal sector in longer-term service and infrastructure development, as such measures will address the needs of the most economically vulnerable and those who experienced the most significant declines in income during the pandemic.

## Gender-Based Violence Information Management System Reporting Trends



The Gender-Based Violence Information Management System (GBVIMS) has been operational in Iraq since January 2014. It classifies all incidents reported by the GBV survivors into the following six categories: rape, sexual assault, physical assault, forced marriage, denial of resources, opportunities or services, and psychological/ emotional abuse. The [most recent GBVIMS quarterly report](#) highlights the trends and emerging Gender based violence (GBV) incidents in the first quarter of 2021 compared to previous quarters.

Following the easing of COVID-19 movement restrictions in Iraq, GBV services resumed in most locations. GBV service providers have continued to provide services in-person and remotely where in-person services were not feasible. The reporting period recorded an increase in the number of reported incidents by 111 per cent compared to the same period in 2020, which was attributed to the greater number of open and accessible service providers that share data with the GBVIMS. Concurrently, under-reporting by IDPs (compared to the increasing trend of incidents reported by host community and returnees) is attributed to the rapid closure of IDP camps in late 2020, and to the reduced presence of GBV actors in out-of-camp displacement settings.

The data from January to May 2021 shows that women and girls continue to be disproportionately affected by GBV. Most incidents were reported by adults (78 per cent) and occurred at home (79 per cent). These were mostly incidents of intimate partner violence; the perpetrators of the majority of reported incidents are known to the survivors. However, the report notes that this trend should not imply there are no male survivors. GBV incidents reported to the Iraq Information Centre (IIC) highlight the increasing trend of GBV reporting by male survivors (29 per cent of GBV-related calls) in the first quarter of 2021, compared to 6 per cent in the same period of 2020. The GBVIMS recommends that targeted and gender-specific services should be available for men and boys.

In 2021, humanitarian partners are targeting 460,000 people in acute need of GBV assistance, with 27 partners reporting activities between January and May.

## Fire Destroys Section of Shariya IDP camp

A major fire broke out in Duhok Governorate's Shariya IDP camp on 4 June 2021, destroying nearly 300 tents and affecting 1,400 people. Twenty-five people suffered minor injuries and were treated in the camp's clinic and eight people received medical assistance in the hospital and were discharged that evening. Affected families were transferred to the camp's school and other public spaces in the camp, with another 30 families transferred to nearby public buildings. Partners and authorities distributed water, food, non-food items (NFI), clothing, tents, COVID-19 prevention items, and provided psychosocial support. In the week following the fire, partners registered those whose civil documents such as birth certificates were destroyed, with the Ministry of Interior later travelling to Duhok to process applications for replacement documents.

The KRG's Directorate of Migration and Crisis Response reported that 288 tents were completely destroyed, along with critical water and sanitation infrastructure. In the fire's aftermath, Duhok authorities announced that it will consider construction of safer, transitional semi-permanent dwellings in some camps in the governorate, acknowledging the longer-term displacement of many of the governorate's IDPs and the need to reduce the risks of fire. At least 24 other fire incidents have been recorded in Duhok IDP camps in 2021, damaging more than 50 shelters, and contributing to the urgency of finding durable solutions to those in prolonged displacement who are living in shelters that were meant to be temporary and are not appropriate for long-term habitation.

The Humanitarian Coordinator visited Shariya camp on 9 June 2021 with OCHA and other partners to meet families affected by the fire and ascertain more on the plans for upgrading shelter options in Shariya and other IDP camps in the KRI.



Humanitarian Coordinator Visit to Shariya Camp  
[Photo Credit: OCHA]

## Displacement and Returns Challenges in Salah Al-Din

In June 2021, OCHA coordinated a key inter-agency mission to Salah Al-Din, providing coordination and logistics to a protracted displacement site in Balad, which has experienced long-standing challenges for humanitarian access.



IDPs near the former Balad train station informal site, Salah Al-Din [Photo Credit: OCHA]

On 6 June, more than 10 humanitarian and durable solutions partners visited the former Balad train station informal displacement site in Yathreb sub-district. The Balad train station site was closed by the Government of Iraq in December 2020, but still hosts about 75 IDP families living near the long-defunct train station, including about 20 families secondarily-displaced from nearby Al-Ishaqi camp, which was closed in November 2020. Many of the IDPs are originally from nearby areas but have been unable to obtain permission to return to their villages, reportedly because security entities are blocking their access.

About 40 IDP families live in caravans on a thin stretch of land between an out-of-use railway line and a water channel. The land is privately owned and there are two caravan sites. NGOs have renovated the caravans (provided by the Ministry of Migration and Displacement) and connected

them to electricity and water. Male household members find irregular daily wage work, but the income is insufficient to support families. Other families rent nearby houses, often in critical condition. One IDP explained that she has no electricity and no sanitation in her rented home, and is incurring significant debt.

Twenty-three displaced families from the original Balad train station camp have not found shelter. They were not allocated caravans and cannot afford to rent; instead these families squat in and around the train station site, with no electricity and no sanitation infrastructure, at risk of being evicted at any time. Many women report that they suffer from severe medical conditions and urgently need medical assistance. Several households include disabled children who also need medical treatment. However, there is no medical service at the site and IDPs cannot afford to pay for transport to visit a medical facility in a nearby town. Children have no access to virtual learning and attend school only sporadically. Families at the site are in need of shelter, NFIs, food, livelihoods, medical services, and basic services.

The mission team also met with the Mayor of Yathreb, an MOMD representative, local leaders and security actors to discuss protracted displacement and obstacles to return, including lack of shelter and basic services. The Mayor of Yathrib invited partners to support durable returns through long-term commitments and agreed to facilitate partners' access to the sub-district.

Following the mission, partners issued a series of humanitarian and durable solutions recommendations, including emergency assistance with income support, water supply, access to education, shelter upgrades, food supply and further engagement with partners on development and stabilization support.

According to the CCCM Cluster's [Informal Sites Mapping](#) overview, as of June 2021, there were 547 informal sites in Iraq, hosting 107,000 people. This tally includes 82 sites hosting 15,400 people in Salah Al-Din.

### Informal Sites

#### What is an Informal Site?

- Site where more than 5 displaced households have settled collectively.
- Sites not built to accommodate people, but serving that purpose, set up on state-owned or private land/buildings.
- IDP families are living in the site as a group, possibly with shared leadership.
- Shelter is sub-standard (critical shelter) e.g. tents, improvised shelters, unfinished buildings, or buildings not meant for living in e.g. schools, mosques.
- Facilities in the site are likely sub-standard. Families share basic public/communal services and facilities, e.g. WASH facilities.
- Government authorities have not assumed responsibility for management and administration.
- Services and assistance are delivered collectively, and even if available are not provided regularly.
- Land use is conflicting, or not in line with, the land use for the location as defined by approved urban master plans and/or detailed plans, if any.
- Degraded urban environment.