IRAQ
INTER-AGENCY OPERATIONAL UPDATE – SYRIAN REFUGEES IN IRAQ
March 2016

HIGHLIGHTS

- A total of 3,114 Syrians entered KR-I through the Peshkhabour border post during the reporting period. The number of total arrivals on a 15-day visa increased by 6%. Out of them, no new arrivals were granted entry as asylum-seekers or on the grounds of family reunification a significant drop compared to early 2015 when some 50% of new arrivals entered in Iraq as asylum seekers.
- On 30 March, an international conference in Geneva highlighted the need for States to increase resettlement programs or humanitarian admissions of Syrian refugees. UNHCR estimates that at least 10 per cent of the 4.8 million refugees in countries neighbouring Syria will need resettlement or other humanitarian assistance to safely move elsewhere before the end of 2018. Several countries offered to increase significantly their global resettlement programs further this year and in the coming years. However, with 38% of UNHCR estimated resettlement needs covered for Syrian refugees, an even greater increase in the number of places countries are willing to offer for Syrian refugees will have to be achieved to match the number of places UNHCR believes is needed.

3,000
Number of Syrian refugees resettled from Iraq since 2012

FUNDING
USD 298,323,635
Requested by agencies for the operation

PRIORITIES
- Counter the fragile protection environment for children and women
- Enhance livelihoods opportunities
- Improve long term shelter options
- Support the education sector

A Syrian refugee tending his vegetable crop in Gawilan Refugee Camp (Dohuk Governorate). In 2014, UNHCR provided the materials and plants to a group of vulnerable refugee families living in the camp. They started a greenhouse which allowed them and their families to enjoy a supply of fresh greens, while providing them with a steady income selling fresh, home grown vegetables to other families in the camp. The pilot was a success and the families are now planning to bring their fresh produce to markets in local towns. The Gawilan greenhouse project is now being used as a model for setting up other greenhouses in refugee camps across the Kurdistan Region of Iraq: ACF, with the support of UNDP, are working with UNHCR to make this happen in Darashakran and Arbat Refugee Camps in Erbil and Sulaymaniyah Governorates respectively).
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UPDATE ON ACHIEVEMENTS

Operational Context

Since March the Syrian conflict has entered its sixth year and millions of Syrians continue to seek refuge in neighbouring countries, including Iraq. At its peak Iraq hosted more than a quarter of a million refugees, many of them arrived in Iraq more than three years ago, and have not yet been able to return. As of March 2016, there are around 246,000 Syrian registered refugees in Iraq, including some 40,000 Syrian children under five who have effectively spent their life between conflict and displacement.

In the past year and a half, security in Iraq has deteriorated dramatically as armed groups have taken control of significant areas of territory, causing circa 3.3 million Iraqis to flee their homes and seek safety in other areas of the country. In central Iraq, Iraqi Security forces (ISF) are attempting to retake areas of Anbar province, while armed militant groups remain in control of Fallujah city. In the North, the ISF together with the Kurdish Security forces (KSF) have made steady, but limited progress towards Mosul in Makhmour district, south of Erbil Governorate. The fighting has caused the displacement of some 4,000 individuals who fled towards the town of Makhmour.

Areas in northern Iraq already hosting Syrian refugees are also among the locations bearing the heaviest burden of internally displaced populations. Public services have become overstretched. The ongoing economic crisis as well as low oil prices have had severe impacts on the general situation for the Government of Iraq and the Kurdish Regional Government. Delays in salary payments of government employees as well as interruptions to public services have caused frustration within the host community. Overcrowded schools, disruption to formal education, including examinations have significantly impacted children while lists of Syrian refugee families wishing to enter refugee camps are growing, a clear indication of the economic difficulties they are facing. Likewise, there are serious protection concerns over an increase in female-headed households in camps due to the continued migration of males to third countries.

OVERVIEW

A total of 3,114 Syrians entered KR-I through the Peshkhabour border post during the reporting period. The number of total arrivals on a 15-day visa increased by 6%. All the new arrivals were admitted into the KR-I on a 15 day visa for visits or medical reasons whereas no arrivals were granted access as asylum-seekers or on family reunification grounds during March 2016. The majority of the new-arrivals were families originating from Kurdish controlled areas of Syria. The main reasons cited for leaving Syria are: insecurity or instability, deterioration of economic situation, inflation, lack of job opportunities and political reasons. According to KR-I border authorities, Syrian border officials at Semalka crossing point continue to apply restrictive measures on admission requests submitted by KR-I Peshkhabour border officials, including family reunification requests.

ACHIEVEMENTS AND IMPACT

- On 8 March International Women’s Day (IWD) celebrations were organized in all refugee camps in the KR-I in coordination with partners, local NGOs and government representatives, as part of a joint awareness raising effort regarding child marriage, gender equality and women empowerment.
- The Arbat Refugee camp community centre officially opened this month. The central location and the spacious premises of the new centre are assets in better serving refugees, who have access to a computer room and a conference room. To ensure proper support is provided to the community, and to initiate community engagement in the management of the centre, UNHCR worked closely with the youth in the camp and identified two young refugees who will jointly manage activities alongside UNHCR partner staff.
IDENTIFIED NEEDS AND REMAINING GAPS

- Funding for child protection work in the two Erbil refugee camps of Qushtapa and Darashakran is a concern. UNICEF has had to scale back Child Friend Space (CFS) activities and Child Protection Unit (CPU) support in the camp after funds to support the implementing partner were not renewed; currently only limited services in those two camps are supported by a network of trained volunteers.

- The high fees for blood test necessary for residency permits (30,000 IQD per individual) has proven difficult for refugees, delaying their application as a result. In KR-I, refugees without a residency permit cannot work, or access public services such as health or education. UNHCR is currently advocating with the Ministry of Health and the Department of Health to waive the fees.

- Continuing insecurity at Al-Obaidi camp, Anbar province means that UNHCR only has access to persons of concern through a local NGO, ISHO. The latest reported number of Syrian refugees in Al Obaidi Camp is 1,439 individuals including 573 unregistered individuals. In addition it is reported that 2,971 refugees have settled in the town of Al Qaim on a sponsorship program.

Education

Children playing after school at Kawergosk camp in Erbil Governorate. Like at other schools in the KR-I, teachers, most of them Syrian refugees themselves, haven’t been paid in over six months and many have been had to leave their jobs to find other sources of income to support their families, directly impacting the children’s access to primary school education in the camp. © UNHCR/Michael Prendergast

OVERVIEW

The ongoing crisis continues to affect the education sector. Teachers in the KR-I on Ministry of Education (MoE) contracts have not received their salary for more than 6 months (since the start of the academic year). This continuing issue affects the motivation of teaching and education support staff and has also resulted in increased class sizes, irregular school weeks and underqualified teachers taking up positions, as attempts are made to make up for the shortage of teachers.
ACHIEVEMENTS AND IMPACT

- A temporary incentive programme for Syrian refugee teachers operates in 23 primary schools across Dohuk, Erbil and Sulaymaniyah Governorates. Under this UNICEF supported programme, 329 ‘volunteer’ teachers and 58 ‘education support staff’ (additional school support personnel including guards, cleaning staff and administrators among others) currently receive a payment referred to as an “incentive.” Incentives are disbursed through the relevant Directorate of Education in each governorate, and amount to $250 for teaching staff and $150 for education support staff. Teachers are considered ‘volunteers’ due to the nature of the contract they hold; although the contract is overseen by the MoE, the MoE is not able to guarantee them a salary or other benefits or remuneration for carrying out teaching functions. The ‘volunteers’ are considered a supplementary teaching cohort to those teachers in the KR-I on MoE contracts. More than 14,400 children in the 23 primary schools are benefitting from continued learning as a result of this support.

- As a result of on-going teachers’ shortages, UNICEF in collaboration with the KRG MoE has initiated a large scale training programme. The first training started on March 26 in Erbil Governorate, where 320 teachers will be trained over a 30-day vocational programme covering teaching methodologies; school management; how to provide psychosocial support in the classroom; and, methods for student assessment and evaluation. A similar training will be rolled out in Sulaymaniyah, in May.

- UNHCR conducted preliminary meetings on Education in light of the roll out of DAFI scholarship system for Syrian refugees in Iraq. Every year, the DAFI programme provides scholarships to thousands of refugees to allow them to continue into third level education. It is expected that some 120 students in Iraq will benefit from DAFI scholarships in the next year, Syrian students who are currently enrolled in Kurdish public universities (an estimated 250 Syrians) can also apply for the scholarship.

IDENTIFIED NEEDS AND REMAINING GAPS

- 17 teachers in the primary school in Qushtapa camp in Erbil have been identified to be in need of WFP food assistance. The teachers’ living conditions have deteriorated because of non-payment of salaries.

- The Principals of the secondary schools in the refugee camps are reporting the need for basic stationary and uniforms. Overcrowding in the classrooms is also rife due to limited availability of schools with Arabic curricula in urban Erbil (34 in total), as Arabic is the preferred language of instruction for Syrian refugee and IDP children.

Health

OVERVIEW

All refugees have access to primary health care facilities. Nonetheless, the ongoing budgetary crisis in the KR-I affects the delivery of health services, in particularly in Sulaymaniyah Governorate where many public health facilities are partially or wholly closed due to non-payment of salaries to staff. Risks of public health outbreak remain high, particularly in non-camp settings where health services may not manage regular outreach.

ACHIEVEMENTS AND IMPACT

- In March 2016, a total of 27,906 patient consultations were conducted in Primary Health Care (PHC) facilities in refugee camps (source UNHCR HIS-Health Information System).

- In Kawergosk camp, Erbil governorate, the handover of psychiatric cases from MSF-F to UPP has been completed. UPP will continue to provide mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) services in the camp.

- In order to improve mental health services and coordination among health partners, MHPSS working groups have been established in Erbil, Sulaymaniyah and Dohuk. MHPSS WG will be chaired by DoH in each governorate.

IDENTIFIED NEEDS AND REMAINING GAPS

- Access to mental health care and psychosocial support services remains limited for non-camp refugees and needs to be further expanded.

- The strike in Sulaymaniyah governorate due to financial crisis is still ongoing which affects provision of health services in public health facilities, only maternity (Emergency department) and emergency hospitals are working.
The PHCC in Al-Obaidi camp, Anbar province, remains closed since 31 January after partner NGO UIMS was instructed by militant groups not to open until further notice.

Food Security and Nutrition

OVERVIEW
As part of WFP’s gradual transition to the SCOPE e-voucher card system in Iraq, all refugee camps in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq are now assisted using the SCOPE system, a much more efficient administrative process. A cash distribution pilot project is being tested in Akre Refugee camp. If successful, the pilot in Akre will be extended to other camps in the KR-I later in the year.

WFP is also working closely with World Vision to finalize a Food Security and Vulnerability assessment for non-camp refugees. The results of the assessment will help WFP identify the food security and vulnerability status of Syrian refugees living in the community, and design potential interventions.

ACHIEVEMENTS AND IMPACT
- A total of 42,672 Syrian refugees received assistance from WFP in March. In Arbat, Kawergosk, Darashakran, and Gawilan, e-voucher cards were topped-up directly at shop level under the supervision of the WFP team and its cooperating partners, who were trained by the SCOPE team on the use of Point of Service (PoS) machines.
- WFP has started a new round of assessments for new arrivals and families who were not previously assessed, starting with Arbat refugee camp this month. Assessments in the other camps will begin in April.

IDENTIFIED NEEDS AND REMAINING GAPS
- Due to ongoing safety concerns, WFP has been unable to provide assistance in the Al-Obaidi camp in western Anbar governorate since June 2014.
- Currently WFP is not providing assistance to non-camp refugees. However, this position will again be considered on the basis of the results of the on-going WFP/World Vision joint food security assessment.
Water and Sanitation

OVERVIEW

Overall supply of electricity has improved across the KR-I in March, potentially due to warmer spring temperatures reducing overall use and thereby relieving pressure on the national grid. Improved water supply rates were reported in the four Erbil camps that were particularly affected in February.

However, the humanitarian actors in Erbil have been informed by the Directorate of Erbil Surrounding Water (DESW) that there will be not enough electricity to support the generators in refugee and IDP camps, as well as non-camp areas. This situation is expected to apply across the KR-I and will have an impact in the number of hours the water pumps will be working in the camps. It is estimated that without functioning generators there will be 50 to 60 percent less water available, a situation which may have significant repercussions on the health of PoCs as summer sets in.

Assuming that the authorities will take full responsibility for out-of-camp areas, humanitarian actors will focus on camps: WASH stakeholders met to discuss ways to address the upcoming challenges. As a first step, a mass information campaign on the efficient use of water will be rolled out in all camps, with the messages being currently developed in coordination with mass communication partners (ACTED, UPP and Relief International).

ACHIEVEMENTS AND IMPACT

- Due to more stable public power supply in March, water availability in all camps in Erbil Governorate was slightly better at an average of 74 ltr/person/day for over 31,000 refugees in the four camps of the governorate (Basirma, Darashakran, Kawergosk and Qushtapa), after a reductions in water supply due to lack of power supply for water pumps in January and February.

- All Erbil refugee camps now have a completed water supply network; in these locations UNICEF continues to support the necessary routine repairs and maintenance needed to keep water networks and sanitation facilities operational.
In Al-Obaidi camp, Anbar province, ISHO is maintaining the WASH facilities in the camp. The ISHO field team completed repairs on the main water pipeline which transfers water from the local Al-Obaidi water project to the camp; the pipeline is old and worn-out in some places near the camp.

**IDENTIFIED NEEDS AND REMAINING GAPS**

- Efficient use and conservation of household water remains an area which needs strong community advocacy, not just in refugee camps but in many host communities’ locations and especially as the hotter summer season begins.

- Despite continuing overall improvements to the water supply networks, the water supply in Domiz 1, the largest refugee camp in Iraq, remains an ongoing challenge. Daily water supply, including trucking in low pressure areas of the camp, is ongoing alongside a technical assessment to ascertain causes of low pressure. Results of the assessment are expected by mid-2016.

**OVERVIEW**

The focus of the humanitarian response has changed significantly since 2012 when Syrian refugees first arrived in Iraq, especially in relation to shelter. Priorities have shifted from emergency shelter initially, to improved shelter with family latrines and showers. As the situation has stabilized, refugees were granted the right to build up in camps, at the end of 2015. As a result, concrete slabs are extended, side walls are built up and a sandwich panel roof is added to provide refugee families with a solid house-like structure. This will allow the camps to become like village settlements or suburbs, fostering the integration of refugees into the host community.

**ACTIONS AND IMPACT**

- UNHCR has improved over 80% of the 19,000 plots available in refugee camps in KR-I.

**IDENTIFIED NEEDS AND REMAINING GAPS**

- In Al-Obaidi camp, Anbar province, the camp is inaccessible for security reasons and there is a dire shortage of many NFI items, none were distributed during March and the stocks in camp warehouses are exhausted. To address this, UNHCR is exploring possibilities to facilitate ISHO buying the much needed diapers and hygiene kits on the local market in order to distribute them among the camp refugees. Also, on 14 March a strong sandstorm hit the camp causing collapse and torn many tents which will need to be urgently replaced.

**Durable Solutions**

**OVERVIEW**

The fifth anniversary of the Syrian conflict on 15 March brings to mind the need for durable solutions to the situation of those displaced as a result of the war. On 30 March, an international conference in Geneva focused on highlighting the need for States to increase their commitment to resettlement and other forms of humanitarian admission. The resettlement of Syrian refugees from Iraq began in 2013 and until 2015 the numbers per year were relatively stable at 1,000 per year. During this period only urgent cases were considered as the protection environment was relatively favourable in the KR-I, where almost all of Syrian refugees in Iraq reside. However, the protection environment has been negatively impacted by the mass influx of
internally displaced persons, and the deterioration of the economic situation in the region. As such resettlement has become a priority. In 2016 efforts are being stepped up in an attempt to resettle 3,000 Syrian refugees but this figure would need to be trebled in the following two years if Iraq was to meet the figure of 10% of total refugees resettled by 2018.

**ACHIEVEMENTS AND IMPACT**

- Resettlement departures increased with 86 persons traveling to the United Kingdom (70 persons) and Sweden (16 persons). However, fewer decisions from resettlement countries were received during the reporting period compared to previous months.

**Working in partnership**

Nine sector working groups are responding to the needs of the affected population. The Regional Refugee Resilience Plan (3RP) programme is a collaborative effort between the Government of Iraq and the Kurdistan Regional Government, 11 UN agencies and over 70 national and international NGOs with various levels of engagement (listed below), as well as the refugee and host communities, in close coordination with the donor community.

STORIES FROM THE FIELD
Born in War, Hoping for Peace

Five year-old Syrian refugee, Mohammed and his young sister, Jaylan, aged just three are playing in the front yard of their shelter in Qushtapa refugee camp, in Erbil, northern Iraq. Their dwelling is one of the neatest self-built brick houses in the camp. The tiny patio is lovingly designed with pretty plants and mint and inside. Toys decorate the living room.

“We had a family house [in Syria] which felt like heaven. I try to make this here as much like home as we can”, said Mohammed’s father, 29 year old Amer Hawaz Kheno. The family fled from their home in Damascus and arrived at the camp when it first opened in August 2013. “The armed conflict came closer and closer to us,” and Amer tells of his fear that he would soon be forcibly conscripted – either by the army or extremist groups – so the family decided to leave their home in Damascus, where they lived with his parents.

His wife, Sherine, remembers better times back home. “Life was so much better than here. The environment now is difficult. There is not much greenery or clean air and the children get sick a lot”, she said.

She dreams of a brighter future. “I want my children to finish their studies and be something in life. I insist on that. Both my husband and I didn't finish school in Syria and face challenges because we are not well-educated. My children will both go to school and I hope they have an easier life”.

Mohammed has already started going to kindergarten. He says his favourite subjects are religious studies and maths, and one day he wants to become an engineer.

Amer once worked in painting houses in Syria. He managed to get work when the family first moved to Qushtapa, but this has recently dried up “I haven't had any work in the last four months”, he said. “The economy is very bad and I am borrowing money from my brothers to support my family”.

As for the future, Amer says he cannot see the family remaining in the camp for many more years. He has tried to leave several times for Europe, but said smugglers are demanding high fees that he cannot pay. “It’s too high risk!” interrupts Sherine, saying she is frightened at the prospect of her family embarking on a perilous journey.

“Yes, it’s not the right way”, conceded Amer, “but we have little other choice. “I just feel we are waiting. Our life is like a watch that has stopped. It's not working now! Our lives are on hold”

By Caroline Gluck
FINANCIAL INFORMATION

Agencies are very grateful for the financial support provided by donors who have contributed to their activities with unearmarked and broadly earmarked funds as well as for those who have contributed directly to the Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan (3RP) in 2015 and so far in 2016:

- Australia
- Canada
- CERF
- Denmark
- European Union
- Finland
- France
- Germany
- IKEA Foundation
- Italy
- Japan
- Kuwait
- Netherlands
- Norway
- Private Donors
- Romania
- Spain
- Sweden
- Switzerland
- The Big Heart Foundation
- United Kingdom
- United States of America

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AOG  Armed opposition group
ANC  Antenatal care
BIA/BID  Best Interests Assessment/Best Interests Determination
CRI  Core Relief Items (formerly known as non-food items/NFIs)
DDM  Department of Displacement and Migration
DoE  Department of Education
DoH  Department of Health
DVAW  Directorate for Combating Violence Against Women
EVI  Extremely Vulnerable Individual
HH  Households
IDP  Internally displaced people
ISHO  Iraqi Salvation Humanitarian Organisation
KDP  Kurdistan Democratic Party
KR-I  Kurdistan Region of Iraq
MoDM  Ministry of Migration and Displacement
MoE  Ministry of Education
PARC  Protection Assistance Reintegration Centre
PHC  Primary Health Care
RSD  Refugee status determination
SGBV  Sexual and gender-based violence
SWG  Sector Working Group
UASC  Unaccompanied and separated children
WASH  Water, sanitation and hygiene
ANNEXES

Syrian Refugees in Iraq

As of 31-Mar-2016

UNHCR Operations in Iraq

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United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) – www.unhcr.org

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Links:
For information on the Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan (3RP) please click on http://www.3rpsyriacrisis.org/.
Announcements of all sector meetings along with respective agendas and minutes, and other information reporting sector-wide progress such as 3Ws, dashboards and camp profiles, are available on the inter-agency information sharing portal at http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/regional.php
For more information on the work of UNHCR and our partners in Iraq, please follow us on Twitter at @UNHCRiraq and on Facebook at UNHCRinIraq
Inter-Agency Operational Update – 99 Iraq

UNHCR Registration Trends for Syrian Persons of Concern
31 Mar 2016

Registration Unit | Total Persons of Concern | Individuals | Households
--- | --- | --- | ---
| | | | |
UNHCR | | | |

Registration Trend

This profile is based on **246,123** presently registered individuals.

Age and Gender Breakdown

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<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
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<td>0-4 Years</td>
<td>1.25%</td>
<td>1.30%</td>
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<tr>
<td>5-11 Years</td>
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<td>12-17 Years</td>
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<td>18-39 Years</td>
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<td>40+ Years</td>
<td>61.1%</td>
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Place of Origin

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<th>Governorate</th>
<th>Individuals</th>
<th>Households</th>
<th>% Total</th>
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<td>Duhok</td>
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<tr>
<td>Erbil</td>
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<td>Sulaymaniyah</td>
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<td>Kirkuk</td>
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<td>Baghdad</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>475</td>
<td>0.56%</td>
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<td><strong>Total Iraq</strong></td>
<td><strong>246,123</strong></td>
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<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
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Camp and non-camp population comparison

From 16 June 2014, as Al-Obaidi Camp became inaccessible to UN agencies and other humanitarian staff, the camp registered population figure is not updated.