

حكومة إقليم كردستان- العراق
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مركز تنسيق الازمات المشترك



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ئه‌نجومه‌نی وه‌زیران
وه‌زاره‌تی ناوخوا
ناوه‌ندی هاوبه‌شی هه‌ماهه‌نگی قه‌یرانه‌كان

Kurdistan Regional Government-Iraq
Council of Ministers
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Common Situational Picture IDPs and Syrian Refugees in Kurdistan Region of Iraq Report No. 2, March9, 2015

Since the beginning of the Syria crisis in March 2011, thousands of people have fled Syria from violence and unrest, becoming refugees in neighbouring countries. A considerable number of Syrian refugees have taken refuge in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. Furthermore, since 10th June when ISIS began its action in Iraq many thousands more from Mosul and other northern areas have fled their homes; the majority of which have come to the Kurdistan Region.

Having received one million (1, 003,300 as of December 2014) Iraqi IDPs within one year in addition to 225,000 Syrian refugees, the Kurdistan Region has by far exceeded its absorption capacity. In average more than 80,000 IDPs have entered the KRI every month. This resembles a 28% increase of the population.

And additional batch of Syrian Kurdish refugees arrived in Kurdistan from the city of Kobane. Around 30,000 individuals had come to the Kurdistan Region, transiting via Turkey, since the ISIS offences on Kobane and other Kurdish areas in Syria. Despite the recent liberation of Kobane and surrounding villages by Kurdish forces an imminent return seems unlikely due to the severe destruction of the city. It has been reported by local authorities that 85% of Kobane has been demolished caused by heavy fighting.

Once the offensive to retake Mosul and other northern areas is launched, it is expected that the number of the IDPs will increase even more. Civilians will continue to flee from war zones and seek shelter in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. A recent UN OCHA estimation in collaboration with the Erbil governorate states that the worst case scenario is that around 500,000 people can be expected to be additionally displaced only from the city and surroundings of Mosul.

As if the situation for IDPs and refugees in the Kurdistan Region was not bad enough, having fled the violence of ISIS many, especially women, children and the elderly, have faced another life threatening challenge, winter. Some 34% of IDPs are currently living in

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inadequate shelters and in under-equipped shelters including informal settlements, unfinished buildings, malls, churches, and public parks as well as shared spaces.

According to the World Health Organization WHO, many IDPs and refugees in the camps are experiencing various health challenges. Especially, such as Acute Respiratory Infections (ARI), scabies (SCB) and Acute Diarrhoea (AD) which remain the most leading causes of morbidity during the month of February with 29,904 (48%), 2920 (4%) and 1789 (3%) cases respectively from the majority of the camps. While this is most likely caused by the winter season, WHO believes that the numbers are likely to increase in the coming month posing public health risks on children and other vulnerable groups. In addition, the Kurdistan region is facing a lack of adequate medicine supplies including for the host community.

While, there is still an urgent need for the support to IDPs affected by winter, like close and fuel, the impact of the region's very hot and dry summer months have also to be taken into strong consideration.

Furthermore, there are still around 8000 individuals on Shingal Mountain (around 933 families, of which 3000 are men and the rest are women, children and elderly). After Kurdish forces established a humanitarian corridor and gained access to Mount Shingal to evacuate those who were trapped for months the mentioned group of families voluntarily decided to stay at a holey Yezidi site, which is located on the top. They rely on donations and support from local NGOs and the KRG.

The impact on host communities:

There have been a significant economic, infrastructure, social and security impacts on host communities. Meanwhile, did the humanitarian crisis happen in a context of a fiscal crisis in the Kurdistan Region caused by a 90% drop in fiscal transfers from the central government of Iraq since early 2014. The economic growth slumped within a year from 8% in 2013 to 3% in 2014. Leading to a slowdown of growth of wage incomes, profits, consumption, domestic and foreign investment in addition to KRG revenues.

Additionally, immediately after the arrival, refugees and IDPs started to compete with locals for resources such as accommodation, water, housing, food, medical services and jobs. As

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resources are scarce, such competition creates challenges for local administrations to meet the increasing demands of both local residents and refugees or IDPs.

According to the latest study on the socio-economic impact of the Syrian conflict and ISIS on the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KR-I) produced by the World Bank (WB) and KRG's Ministry of Planning (MoP) the rehabilitation, or so-called stabilization costs of the humanitarian crisis amount to US\$1.4 billion.

The current situation has had an adverse impact on local people and there is increasing concern that as jobs, the availability of accommodation, health care and other services become even more stretched, it might change the attitudes of local residents towards refugees and IDPs. While relations between refugees and host communities have been easy-going for the most part, it has come to the attention of the KRG that there have been some disturbing reports of friction or tension among the locals and the IDPs and refugees. There has been a sharp increase in antisocial behaviour and petty crime (e.g. prostitution and 'kerb-crawling', licentiousness, larceny and begging), which is at least partly attributable to IDPs and refugees being in an unfamiliar environment with strained economic resources. Finally, there is the potential security threat, where terrorists could exploit the presence of refugees and/or IDPs through intimidation. All in all, there is some fear that the Kurdistan Region's well-deserved reputation for hospitality will switch to hostility. These challenges are significant and long-term. They need international attention and intervention, and most importantly, they need a joint and combined comprehensive strategy to address them.

In summary, the challenges include:

1. Security; an existential threat from ISIS.
2. IDPs and Refugees; over a million refugees and IDPs in the Kurdistan Region
3. Financial challenge; the withholding of the KRG's constitutionally approved budget has created huge financial problems for the KRG, not least of which has been an inability to pay government employee salaries, which are now three months in arrears.

Immediate Needs

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IDPs and Refugees:

1. Health:

- Mobile health clinics and health centres need to be established
- Provision of equipment such as (medicine, medical supplies, vaccines)
- Mental health and psychological centres
- Fumigation for shelters and camps
- Provision of mobile health teams

2. WASH:

- Water for camp and non-camp IDPs and refugees
- Sanitation facilities
- Hygiene supplies
- Waste equipment and management skills
- Improving sewage drainage systems and garbage collection and disposal.

3. Winterization/Summerization:

- Building camps
- Water resistant tents, blankets and cooking equipment
- Kerosene stoves and heaters /coolers
- Distribution of kerosene for the winter
- Improving roads inside camps and shelters
- Camp administration costs

4. Education:

- Operation of existing schools (teachers' salaries, stationeries, curriculum etc.)
- Building tents and prefabricated classrooms and education spaces.
- Provision of administrative costs of schools for camp and non-camp IDPs and refugees.

Host communities:

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There is immediate need to upgrade and improve the infrastructure of the local host provinces including:

- Upgrading the capacity of the hospitals/ medical supplies
- Increasing and upgrading the clean water supply and distribution infrastructure
- Upgrading sewage drainage systems including sanitary sewage and treatment.
- Upgrading and increasing the capacity of waste management and recycling solutions, or at least garbage collection and disposal.
- Improving and upgrading the current electricity production and distribution infrastructure.
- Improving the transportation infrastructure

Finally, the IDPs and refugees need developmental projects inside the camps to provide them with jobs and opportunities to become master of their own in the future. They should run the camps, schools, health centres, municipality services, youth and recreational centres as well as training centres such as vocational training. These development projects need resources to be allocated and long term planning.

In addition, greater resources need to be allocated to the areas that are reclaimed or will be reclaimed from the ISIS to clear IEDs (Improvised Explosive Devices) and to rebuild the infrastructure in these areas as existing infrastructure has been destroyed due to the fighting.