Situation Overview

Whilst movement trends in Iraq have generally remained stable since early 2018, there has been a considerable shift since August 2019 with increasing numbers of internally displaced persons (IDPs) returning to their area of origin (AoO) or being displaced for a second time, most notably in Ninewa governorate. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM)’s Emergency Displacement Tracking recorded over 9,600 households displaced or returned to non-camp locations between 29 February and 15 June 2020, 16% of which were recorded in Al Baaj district (37% for Ninewa governorate). 1,2

There have been concerns in the humanitarian and development sectoral assessments which include indicators concerning durable solutions. In addition, in light of recent movement trends, REACH and theReturns Working Group (RWG) have conducted assessments with IDPs that have left camps following or in anticipation of closures to better understand and map areas of return and secondary displacement.

Background and Methodology

To date, IOM DTM’s bi-monthly tracking of returnees and IDPs provides an overview of numbers and trends in movement and returns. Simultaneously, IOM DTM has run the Returns Index since 2018, collecting data bi-monthly to provide indicative trends in the severity of conditions conducive to return in areas of return (AoR) nationwide. Similarly, the Camp Coordination and Camp Management (CCCM) Cluster, IOM DTM, and the Returns Working Group (RWG) have conducted assessments with IDPs that have left camps following or in anticipation of closures to better understand and map areas of return and secondary displacement.

REACH Initiative (REACH) has been conducting nationwide multi-sectoral assessments which include indicators concerning durable solutions. In addition, in light of recent movement trends, REACH conducted an assessment in Markaz Al Baaj sub-district to have an immediate understanding and in-depth profiling of needs and community interrelations between remainees, returnees, and/or IDP populations. This report outlines the overall conditions to examine how and to what extent durable solutions for returnees and IDPs have or can be achieved.

Population Profile

7,123–9,061 families were reported by KIs to be residing in Markaz Al Baaj before the events in 2014.

75–80% of the pre-2014 population in the neighbourhoods or villages in Markaz Al Baaj reportedly displaced since 2014.

90–97% of the population displaced since 2014 have returned in total as reported by KIs.

IDP families are reported to reside in Markaz Al Baaj areas and neighbourhoods (not specified area of origin).

Coverage Map

The findings are based on 38 KIs interviews conducted between 16 and 23 June 2020, combining qualitative and quantitative data adapted to the context and restrictions during the COVID-19 pandemic. Purposeful sampling methods were employed to identify KIs. Findings are based on KI level data and should therefore be considered as indicative. Markaz Al Baaj sub-district was selected for the assessment as: more than 50% of host community members are reported to have returned; social cohesion severity is high; it is an AoO for IDPs in camps at risk of closure; and recent reports of dynamic population movements and movement intentions to/from this district.

Community leaders

IDPs (displaced from the area)

Returnees (more than 3 months ago)

Remainees

IDPs (displaced in the area)

Markaz Al Baaj Sub-district

12 KIs

10 KIs

5 KIs

6 KIs

5 KIs

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Recent population returns and displacement

**Recent returns**

16 of 38 KIs reported that additional families returned to Markaz Al Baaj in the six months prior to data collection. Families returned to Markaz Al Baaj. The main reasons for return, as reported by 11 KIs, were the sense of increased security and following the return of other family members. One KI also noted camp closures in the area of displacement (AoD) as a reason for recent returns.

115-160 families reportedly attempted to return to Markaz Al Baaj in the six months prior to data collection but did not succeed.

All KIs reported that the returns of families to Markaz Al Baaj had an impact on family reunification; and, increased job opportunities for the community members as reported by remainee respondents.

**Recent host community displacement**

37 of 38 KIs reported that no host community families were displaced from Markaz Al Baaj in the six months prior to data collection.

**Recent IDP arrivals**

2 of 38 KIs reported that additional IDP families have arrived to Markaz Al Baaj in the six months prior to data collection. All families reportedly arrived from different camps located in Ninewa governorate, impacting family reunification in the community.

**Recent Returns and Secondary Displacements**

**Recent IDP departures**

One KI reported the displacement of IDP families to camps located in Ninewa governorate due to lack of jobs and services in Markaz Al Baaj with no impact on the community.

**Failed return movements**

235-425 families reportedly attempted to return to Markaz Al Baaj in the six months prior to data collection but did not succeed.

Reported reasons for failed returns:

- Destroyed/damaged housing in AoO: 23 KIs
- Lack of jobs: 18 KIs
- Lack of services: 15 KIs
- Resistance from community and/or local actors: 6 KIs
- Presence of jobs in AoD: 1 KI
- Unstable security: 1 KI

All KIs (23 KIs) mentioned that failed returns did not have a relevant impact on the community.
Reported barriers to return

- Destroyed/damaged housing in AoO: 28 KIs
- Lack of jobs: 19 KIs
- House is rented in AoO: 8 KIs
- Lack of services: 7 KIs
- Fear of being perceived as ISIL affiliated: 3 KIs
- Lack of documents to return: 2 KIs
- Unstable security: 1 KI
- Family has settled in AoD and prefers to stay: 1 KI

All KIs (38 KIs) reported that further returns will impact family reunification, and 37% of KIs (14 KIs) reported that it will result in increased job opportunities and humanitarian assistance.

Expected host community displacement

17 of 23 KIs reported no expected displacement of host community families from Markaz Al Baaj in the six months following data collection.

Primary Community needs

First Need | Second Need | Third Need
---|---|---
Security | 11 KIs | 0 | 0
House rehabilitation | 9 KIs | 5 KIs | 4 KIs
Livelihoods | 6 KIs | 14 KIs | 8 KIs
Electricity and water | 6 KIs | 10 KIs | 20 KIs
Healthcare | 4 KIs | 8 KIs | 2 KIs
Education | 1 KI | 1 KI | 3 KIs
Food | 1 KI | 0 | 1 KI

"After the conflict, the safety in the region has become the most important need. It affects the psychological status of a person which is the most important thing to go on opening business and any new project." - remainee female in Markaz Al Baaj

KIs reported that the primary needs for the community are: safety and security and support to rehabilitate housing. These needs take into consideration that most of the houses were reportedly destroyed or partially damaged during the military operations by ISIL, and the increased demand for housing due to the presence of IDPs from nearby areas.

The second main community needs most commonly reported were: access to livelihoods due to reported lack of jobs in the area, including the need to develop projects to support agricultural activities as reported by four KIs; and, access to electricity and water due to the reduced operation hours for governmental services, and the high cost of private generators and water trucking.

"Work is important to be able to provide for the family, develop projects, stabilize the area, and IDPs will return if projects and services are available." - remainee female in Markaz Al Baaj

Another commonly reported need was access to healthcare, considering the limited presence of specialized health facilities and hospitals in Markaz Al Baaj.
Perceptions on access to services and assistance

Access to housing and rehabilitation

All KIs (16 KIs) reported that the majority of families in the area reside in houses.

- Owned: 12 KIs
- Verbal rental agreement: 3 KIs
- Official rental agreement: 1 KI

Housing damage proportion

20%-40% of houses in Markaz Al Baaj were reportedly damaged during the events in 2014 due to military operations.

KIs reported that most of the population resides in damaged houses. Reportedly returnees, IDPs and some remainees are more likely to reside in damaged or unfinished buildings/houses. In all groups, female heads of household and elderly people reportedly are the most affected.

KIs reported that returnees and IDPs are the most likely to reside in tents. In all groups, female heads of household, elderly people and minor heads of household are the most affected.

Access to housing rehabilitation

- of KIs (4 KIs) reported that access to housing rehabilitation is unequal.

Reportedly, returnees, female heads of household, elderly people and minor heads of household have less opportunities to receive housing support.

Reported barriers to access assistance for rehabilitation

- Criteria of selection for support is too specific: 4 KIs
- Lack of financial means for rehabilitation: 4 KIs
- Less connections (wasta): 1 KI
- Rehabilitation targets specific neighbourhoods: 1 KI

Risk of Eviction

- of KIs (15 KIs) reported that there is no risk of eviction for the different population groups in Markaz Al Baaj.

Access to basic services

- of KIs (3 KIs) reported unequal access to basic services for returnees, IDPs and some remainees, mainly affecting female heads of household, elderly and people with less connections (wasta).

Barriers to access basic services

It was equally reported that less access to basic services is related to:
- Criteria of selection for support is too specific;
- Assistance targets specific neighbourhoods;
- Less connections (wasta); and,
- Lack of financial means to access services.

Access to public services

- of KIs (14 KIs) reported equal access to public services such as education and healthcare. In addition, all KIs reported that boys and girls (between 5 and 15 years old) can access public education.

However, one KI reported that returnees and female heads of household have less access to public services. The main reasons were equally highlighted as less connections or wasta to access the services, the lack of financial means to cover the costs of services and the specificity of the selection criteria for the provision of some services.

Access to livelihoods

- of KIs (6 KIs) reported unequal access to livelihoods services.

Returnees and IDPs reportedly have less access to livelihoods, but female heads of household and minor heads of household in all groups are the most affected.

Reported barriers to access livelihoods

- Less connections (wasta): 6 KIs
- Criteria of selection for support is too specific: 3 KIs
- Services target specific neighbourhoods: 2 KIs
- Lack of financial means to provide assets: 2 KIs
- Tribal discrimination: 1 KI

Access to justice

All KIs (16 KIs) reported that access to justice is equal for all population.

Two KIs reported that the civil status department and the irrigation department (under the Iraqi Ministry of Water Resources) in Markaz Al Baaj are closed due to damage to the building and lack of funding for operations and rehabilitation.

One KI reported that for IDPs in Markaz Al Baaj it is difficult to obtain a passport as they often cannot afford the cost for the process or the transportation due to limited access to resources.

Access to humanitarian aid

- of KIs (5 KIs) reported presence of NGOs in Markaz Al Baaj.

82% of KIs (13 KIs) reported that access to assistance is a factor to encourage return, and the most needed activities or projects in Markaz Al Baaj are: Housing rehabilitation, Livelihoods, Psychosocial support, Water, sanitation and hygiene (WaSH).

One KI reported that returnees, IDPs and female heads of household are less involved in activities or projects by NGOs.
Two KIs reported that some families in the community *still have sons in displacement*. It was equally reported that the reasons for remaining displaced were related to *fear from the past events in 2014 and the current security situation; lack of adequate funds to return; and, access to employment in the AoD.*

### Governance and influencing bodies

All KIs (12 KIs) reported that *mukhtars* and local authorities are the *most influential bodies* with regards to governance, followed by the tribal leaders.

No changes in the levels of influence of groups were reported in the six months prior to data collection.

All KIs (12 KIs) reported that there has been *no appointment of new local authorities* in the six months prior to data collection.

### Safety and security

All KIs (16 KIs) reported that *there has been no specific appointment of local authorities* in the six months prior to data collection.

Community members trust the police and the Iraqi armed forces contributors positively to a feeling of safety. In addition, it was generally recognized that security forces are effective in resolving disputes within the community and between different villages.

### Freedom of movement

All KIs (16 KIs) reported that *females and males can freely move* at night or during the day.

### Community relations and co-existence

94% of KIs (15 KIs) reported that community members trust each other. All KIs reported that there are no specific population groups which are not welcome by the majority of the community in the area.

However, three KIs (the majority returnees to Markaz Al Baaj) reported that they do not interact with other groups in the community.

### Community disputes

Two KIs reported that disputes took place within the neighborhoods in the six months prior to data collection due to the *return of some families and housing issues*.

It is expected that disputes will decrease considering:

- Intervention of local authorities: 2 KIs
- Integration/re-integration in the community: 2 KIs
- Work relationships: 1 KI

No disputes were reported between villages or towns in Markaz Al Baaj and no change is expected in this regards in the six months following data collection.

### Contamination of housing, land and property

No contaminated land was reported in the area.