



# MASS COMMUNICATION ASSESSMENT OF SYRIAN REFUGEES IN CAMPS

KURDISTAN REGION OF IRAQ

ASSESSMENT REPORT

OCTOBER 2014

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### List of Acronyms

<b>FGD</b>	Focus Group Discussions
<b>KRI</b>	Kurdistan Region of Iraq
<b>MSNA</b>	Multi-Sector Needs Assessment
<b>NGO</b>	Non-Governmental Organization
<b>ODK</b>	Open Data Kit
<b>PWG</b>	Protection Working Group
<b>UNHCR</b>	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
<b>WFP</b>	World Food Programme

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## INTRODUCTION

According to the latest estimates from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), more than 209,504 Syrian refugees currently reside in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI). Around 89,590 have settled in nine camps and transit sites across the three governorates of Erbil, Duhok and Sulaymaniyah.<sup>1</sup>

It is crucial that all populations affected by the Syrian crisis, including those currently staying in the KRI are adequately informed about the services available to them and/or know how to contact aid providers in order to seek assistance, give feedback or make complaints about the quality of services. The REACH Initiative was mobilised by UNHCR to facilitate an assessment in the above three governorates of mass communication means used by Syrian refugees in camps and camp-like settings across the KRI. Overall, this assessment supports the efforts of aid actors operational in Iraq in implementing the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Commitments on Accountability to Affected Populations<sup>2</sup> (CAAP), which broadly aim at creating a system-wide culture of accountability in humanitarian contexts.

This assessment focused on the level of awareness amongst Syrian refugees in camps and camp-like settings on a range on communication topics, including information needs, languages, types of communications, as well as which media are used by the refugee populations to receive information and which mass communication channels they would like to see used more frequently. This assessment provides valuable data on which media could be used to more effectively target Syrian refugees living in camps and settlements in the KRI.

This assessment complements an initial assessment carried out by REACH in March 2014 of mass communication systems used in Domiz camp.

The previous REACH assessment found that none of the mass communication media used reached the entire population, when implemented alone.<sup>3</sup>

## METHODOLOGY

REACH Initiative prepared the mass communication assessment in collaboration with the UNHCR Mass Information Officer and in consultation with the Protection Working Groups (PWG) for the Duhok, Erbil and Sulaymaniyah governorates, as well as UNHCR Protection Unit. REACH gathered feedback from partners on the indicators to be covered in the assessment questionnaire.

Data collection took place from 1 to 18 June 2014 and covered eight refugee camps and transit sites (Akre, Arbat Transit, Basirma, Darashakran, Domiz, Domiz II, Kawergosk, and Qushtapa) across all three governorates of the KRI.

The sample sizes were set to allow for a confidence level of 95% and a margin of error at 10%.<sup>4</sup> The assessment included two modes of primary data collection – household-level interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs).<sup>5</sup> In total 729 households and 18 FGD were assessed.

Table 1: Population and sample sizes

Location	Nr. households	Sample Size
Arbat Transit	560	89
Akre	303	78
Basirma	730	86
Darashakran	1410	94
Domiz	7750	95
Domiz II	710	88
Kawergosk	1950	101
Qushtapa	960	98
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>14,373</b>	<b>729</b>

<sup>1</sup> UNHCR, [Syria Refugee Regional Response Information Portal](#), last accessed on 12/06/2014.

<sup>2</sup> IASC [Portal](#).

<sup>3</sup> REACH Initiative, Mass Communication Assessment, Domiz Camp, Duhok Governorate, Kurdistan Region of Iraq, March 2014 – [Factsheet](#).

<sup>4</sup> Gawilan refugee camp was not included in this assessment due to security issues at the time.

<sup>5</sup> Camp population figures were based on camp management's data as of 19 May 2014. All findings presented at the KRI-level have been weighted based on each camp's population figures.

## FINDINGS

This section presents the key assessment findings on mass communications used by Syrian refugees in camps across the KRI, in particular reported priority information needs; languages understood and spoken among refugees; key information channels; internet access and preferred communication means.

### Priority Information Needs

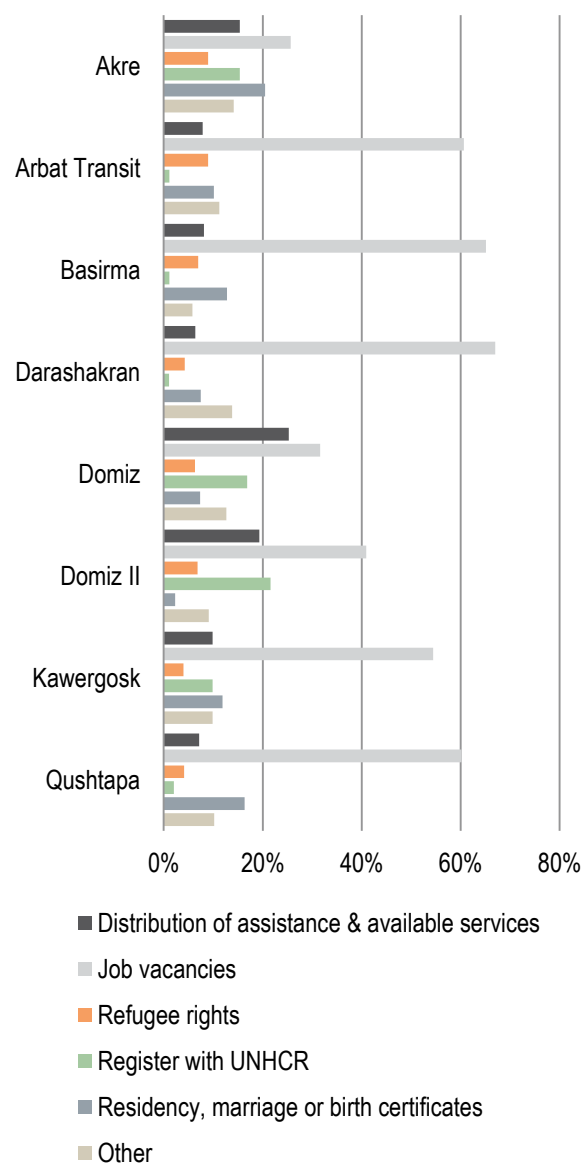
**Information about job vacancies was the most reported information gap** in each camp across the KRI, stated by between 26% respondents in Akre and 67% in Darashakran.

Currently humanitarian agencies typically provide information through posters on information boards, visit tents and hand out pamphlets. However, it appears that there is little forum for bilateral engagement where refugees can request specific information.

According to FGDs, not all camp residents know how to contact aid providers or receive assistance and services when needed; knowledge was stronger in Darashakran but especially poor in Arbat, Basirma and Qushtapa camps. Participants perceived that they often requested information from NGOs but seldom received a response.

Interestingly, participants in Domiz II explained that they often resort to their speaking with their *mukhtar* (community or sector lead) who in turn contacts aid providers for them. In comparison, refugees in Darashakran and Kawergosk knew how to contact employees of various NGOs active in their camp.

Figure 1: The first most important information that refugee households would want to know about



Commonly cited second most important types of information that refugee households would like to know about included job vacancies, the distribution of humanitarian assistance, and refugee rights. Few households reported a third information need. Syrian households in Domiz camp may have a lower need for information about job opportunities as 99% of them have been granted residency for the KRI and consequently have easier access to employment.

Nonetheless, the need for information on accessing residency was important among Syrian households staying in Akre which has been set up as a transit site without residency offices.<sup>6</sup>

**Overall, women in Erbil and Sulaymaniyah camps were better informed than men about how to find information on assistance and services,** as well as services for persons with disabilities. This may be linked to the higher number of activities in camps targeting women than men, such as women’s centres and listening centres.

**FGDs claimed that all refugees know how to register their children for school,** and in most camps (apart from Arbat and Akre) residents know how to report violence, insecurity or crime (by contacting camp security of the camp, the head of the camp, or the *asayish* – Kurdish police). **Almost all participants knew how to renew their residency cards.**

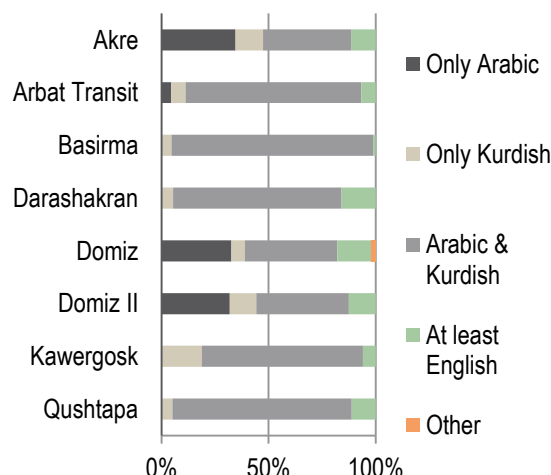
### Languages spoken by Syrian refugees

A large majority of camp residents in Erbil and Sulaymaniyah governorates reported speaking both Arabic and Kurdish; between 94% in Basirma and 75% in Kawergosk.

The largest proportions of households that cited only being able to speak Arabic resided in Duhok camps (between 35% and 32%). A larger proportion of households that came from Damascus and rural Damascus resided in Duhok camps, which may explain the larger proportion of Arabic speakers.<sup>7</sup>

Nineteen percent of assessed Syrian refugee households in Kawergosk and 12% in Domiz II spoke only Kurdish. At least 10% of the households in all camps apart from Basirma, Arbat Transit and Kawergosk, reported that at least one a household member was able to communicate in English.

Figure 2: Languages understood by households



### Information channels

Although FGDs corroborated that refugees do not have many sources of information in the camp, **participants indicated that they generally feel that they know about developments in their camp.**

Overwhelmingly (84% across the KRI), **households reported face to face communications as their primary method of receiving public information** directed at camp residents. Similarly FGDs highlighted neighbours, *Mukhtars*, section managers, NGO staff and word of mouth as their key sources of information. Households in Kawergosk (35%) and Basirma (33%) reportedly relied on this type of information channels most often, on all seven days prior to the assessment. Comparatively 41% in Domiz II and 36% in Domiz had not received information in this manner at all in the week leading up to the assessment. FGDs showed that women gather information from neighbours slightly more often than men.

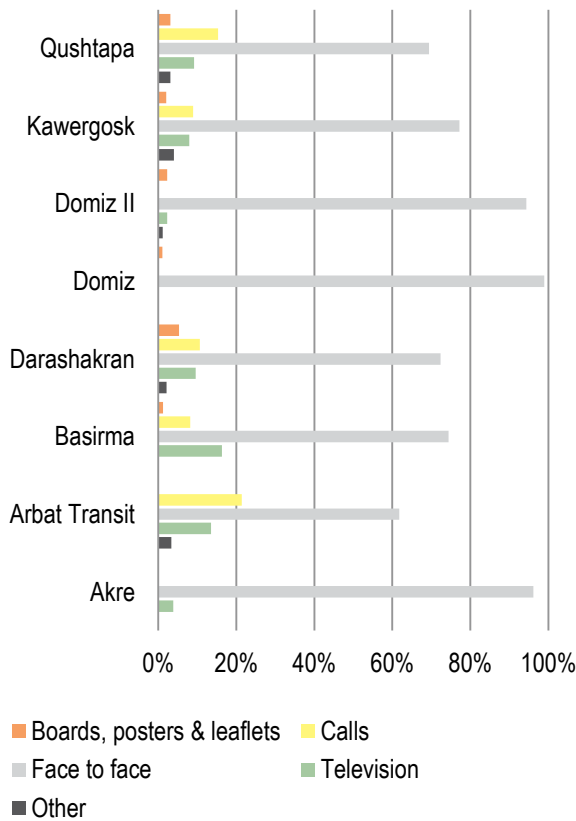
**The use of phone calls and television were also popular primary types of communication.** Primarily refugees call other family members living elsewhere and friends. All refugee households who reported receiving information primarily via phone calls did so for at least two days during the week prior to the assessment.

<sup>6</sup> REACH Initiative, MSNA of Syrian Refugees in Camps in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (July 2014), p.14.

<sup>7</sup> REACH Initiative, Intentions Assessment of Syrian Refugees in Camps, (October 2014), p.12.

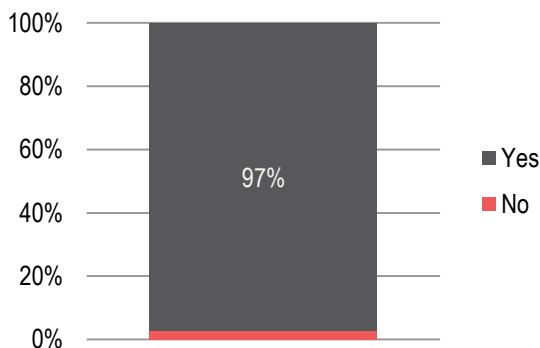


Figure 3: Primary types of communication used to get public information



In turn, more than 90% of households in almost all the camps watch television. Darashakran featured the highest proportion (44%) of households primarily receiving information from television every day in the week previous to the assessment. However, no households resident in Duhok camps reported watching television as a *primary* communication type.

Figure 4: Access to television



<sup>8</sup> Primary communication is the type of communication used as a first resort, while secondary communication is that used when the primary is

FGDs illustrated that most refugees watch the news channel *Rudaw* (Kurdish Regional Government news channel), as well as *Zagros TV* and *Gali Kurdistan*, because the content can focus on refugees in the KRI. Many households also watch *Al-Arabiya* and *Al Jazeera* channels for news about Syria. It was stressed that these channels are useful because the presenters use the same dialect as many refugees in camp, *Krmanji*.

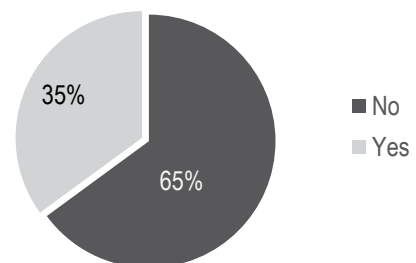
Otherwise, text messaging usually referred as Short Message Services (SMS) through mobile phones, radio, newspapers, magazines, loudspeakers and Facebook accounted for only 2% of respondents' primary forms of communication.

64% of refugee households also reported secondary types of communication.<sup>8</sup> Phone calls were most frequently cited (except in Arbat transit site). Boards, posters and leaflets were also commonly cited as secondary modes of communication, both in FGD and the household-level survey; for example by as many as 23% of households in Basirma. Notably, the **Duhok camps had a consistently lower proportion of households reporting the use of several types of communication.**

### Internet Access

The majority (65%) of households across the KRI reported having no internet access. The highest proportion of households with internet access was reported in Darashakran (42%) and the lowest in Basirma (21%).

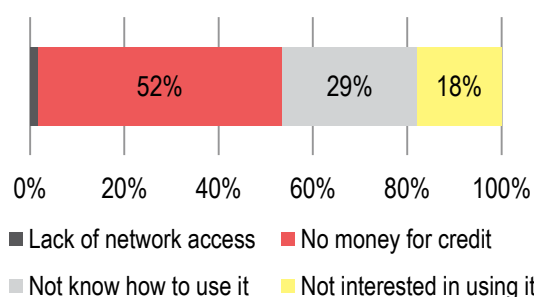
Figure 5: Internet access across the KRI



either unavailable or exhausted. The second can be used in addition or in conjunction with the primary, but the primary is the preferred source.

When asked reasons for not using the internet, 50% of respondents explained that they lacked money for internet credit. 10% of households in Darashakran and Qushtapa cited a lack of network access. Moreover, of those not using the internet 44% of households in Domiz and Domiz II reported that they did not know how to use it. FGD emphasized that it is especially difficult for persons with disabilities to access the internet.

Figure 6: Reasons for not using internet



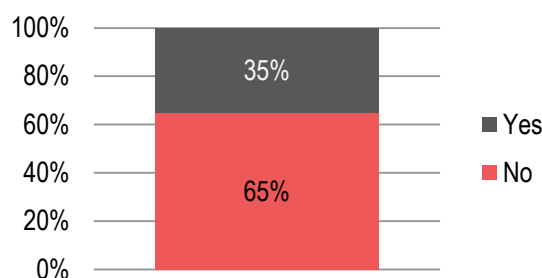
However, findings from FGDs revealed a common perception that most refugee households are able to regularly access the internet through cell phones or portable USB internet devices, such as those provided by the KRI-based telecommunication company Reber World. From the discussions it appeared that few households own mobile computers. Most users access the internet in order to stay in touch with relatives abroad and to read the news. In general, men reported using internet more than women.

**A majority of respondents stated that they would like to receive more online information targeting refugees in camps.** They specifically asked for online information about job opportunities, humanitarian assistance and refugee rights.

### Preferred Communication Means

Between 10% and 40% of assessed households in all the camps reported that they would prefer using a different channel of communication to access information, while the remaining households seemed to be satisfied with their primary mean of getting of getting information and would not change it.

Figure 7: Households that would prefer a different form of communication



Many Syrian refugee households in Duhok camps who did not already list using phone calls reported that they would prefer to use calls if they could choose another type of communication.

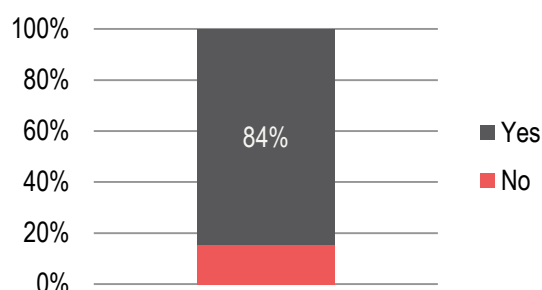
In regards to written means of communication, 25% of Syrian households in Arbat transit site were not already using boards and posters but would prefer to use these more often in order to access information.

Oral mass communication using loudspeakers was often preferred as an additional method of communication in Erbil governorate.

Other methods suggested by the household-level survey, such as text messaging though mobiles phones, Facebook, and other internet sources accounted for 13% across the KRI.

**90% of households across the KRI have reported that they would be interested in a radio programme tailored to refugees.**

Figure 8: Households that would be interested in a radio programme for refugees



Households would like to listen to a news-style programme, about events and developments in their camp, as well as the overall refugee situation in the KRI and updates on Syria.

Good practices from other emergency contexts could be adapted to the context of camps in the KRI. For instance, regular radio talk-shows hosted by the Danish Refugee Council have proved popular and an effective way of communicating with beneficiaries in Uganda.<sup>9</sup> Other examples include BBC Media Action, Internews and UNESCO in Jordan.<sup>10</sup>

## CONCLUSION

Mass communications in camps is vital to ensure that services are received in a timely and appropriate fashion, and so that beneficiaries can provide feedback or – as needed – make complaints, in order to keep improving the quality of assistance and services provided by aid actors. In order to better inform humanitarian mass communications in Syrian refugee camps across the KRI, REACH has identified the following suggested priority interventions in collaboration with the UNHCR:

- **Share more information on employment opportunities, provision of aid and refugee rights.** Although overall both household-level survey respondents and FGD participants felt well-informed about developments in their camp, when asked about specifics it became clear that significant information gaps still exist.
- **Ensure information shared with Syrian refugee populations is available in Kurdish and Arabic** in each camp across the KRI, with more emphasis on Arabic in the Duhok camps and Kurdish in the remaining camps.
- **Strengthen coordination and collaboration between refugee community leaders and aid workers.** According to this assessment, word of mouth and face to face conversations were the most frequently used methods of communication in camps. The majority of households in camps in all three governorates seemed satisfied with their primary method of communication and would not change it.

Subsequently, humanitarian actors could better communicate with refugees living in camps across the KRI by utilizing pre-existing relationships between residents and their *Mukhtars* and/or sector leads. Future mass communication campaigns could therefore build off community mobilization campaigns.

- **Consider establishing a radio programme for refugees.** As many as 90% of households across the KRI both reported using television and being interested in a tailored humanitarian radio programme.
- **Consider increasing the support for provision of internet in camps.** Currently internet use is relatively low across the Syrian refugee camps in the KRI compared to other forms of communication, largely due to the high cost of credit and poor signal. Still, the majority of respondents were interested in receiving more online information. Therefore, increasing the provision of internet in camps would directly facilitate refugee's ability to access their preferred news and media sources online. Moreover, as those who did not know how to use the internet indicated that they would like to learn, the possibility of hosting capacity-building training workshops for internet usage in camps could be explored.

**Cover picture:** Kawergosk Camp in the KRI by Samantha Robinson / [Awareness and Prevent Through Art](#)

### About REACH

REACH facilitates the development of information tools and products that enhance the capacity of aid actors to make evidence-based decisions in emergency, recovery and development contexts. All REACH activities are conducted through inter-agency aid coordination mechanisms. For more information, you can write to: [iraq@reach-initiative.org](mailto:iraq@reach-initiative.org) or [geneva@reach-initiative.org](mailto:geneva@reach-initiative.org). Visit [www.reach-initiative.org](http://www.reach-initiative.org) and follow us @REACH\_info.

<sup>9</sup> Danish Refugee Council, DRC-DDG/Quarterly Newsletter, #3/1<sup>st</sup> Quarter (2013), p.2.

<sup>10</sup> BBC [Media Action](#); [Internews](#); UNESCO, [Communication Information](#).