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ES/2020/04

# UNHCR Country Portfolio Evaluation: Iraq

EVALUATION REPORT  
AUGUST 2020

Conducted by Itad:  
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Published by UNHCR

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## Acknowledgements

The Evaluation Team is grateful to all those who gave generously of their time for consultations during data collection, including UNHCR staff, partner staff and beneficiaries. A special thanks to Aymen Gharaibeh, Philippa Candler, Ruben Nijs and Sateesh Nanduri for making the evaluation possible, and supporting data collection. The views expressed in this inception report are those of the authors only, and not those of UNHCR.

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Evaluation information at a glance	
<b>Title of the evaluation:</b>	UNHCR Country Portfolio Evaluation
<b>Time frame covered:</b>	2018–2019
<b>Expected duration:</b>	January to April 2020
<b>Type of evaluation:</b>	Country Portfolio Evaluation
<b>Countries covered:</b>	Iraq
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This evaluation report has been prepared by Itad. Unless expressly stated otherwise, the findings, interpretations and conclusions expressed in this evaluation report are those of the Evaluation Team, and do not necessarily represent the views of UNHCR, its partners, the United Nations or its Member States.

Commissioned by UNHCR Evaluation Service

Evaluation Quality Assurance provided by UNHCR Evaluation Service

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# Executive Summary

This evaluation covers UNHCR country operations in Iraq between 2018 and 2019, in the post-conflict transition period. The purpose of the evaluation is to examine results achieved in the areas of protection, inclusion and durable solutions, and to look at UNHCR Iraq's strategic positioning during this period. The overall goals are learning and accountability, to support and inform UNHCR Iraq's ongoing efforts in transitioning from emergency programming to interventions aimed more specifically at durable solutions. Where relevant, the evaluation seeks to highlight the main features in the operational environment that either constrain or enable efforts in the transitional period. The evaluation covers the three largest (in terms of numbers) persons of concern (PoC) groups served by the operation, i.e. refugees, internally displaced persons (IDPs) and returnees, in both federal Iraq and the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI).

## **An adverse context**

Over two years after the conclusion of military operations against Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) in Iraq, the bulk of UNHCR operations in the country remains geared to emergency, with only a fraction of activities squarely aimed at durable solutions. This is not a matter of choice or policy, but rather one of necessity: the volume of acute humanitarian needs remains significant across the country.<sup>1</sup> The "post-conflict" period has not, so far, enabled the hoped-for transition from emergency response to recovery and development programming. Political instability and armed violence in Iraq remain widespread. The beleaguered federal government has not engaged substantively in joint recovery and reconstruction planning with its UN counterparts. Public service provision remains highly erratic, with limited budget sources and inadequate capacities at the provincial and district levels. Most tellingly from a humanitarian standpoint, almost 1.4 million people in Iraq are still forcibly displaced. Many of those who have returned live in highly precarious conditions, in terms of both their physical and their economic security.

## **Limited engagement on the part of the federal government is hampering progress towards durable solutions.**

The evaluation found that the current political environment severely constrains opportunities to support the federal government in its compliance with international standards. With substantial advisory input from UNHCR, the federal Ministry of Interior (MoI) drafted a refugee law in 2018. However, the bill's adoption was stalled by political unrest, and it has not been reintroduced since. The federal government has also formally adopted a range of policy frameworks on IDPs. Despite strong advocacy by UNHCR and others, these have so far failed to gain traction. A number of *ad hoc* government decisions taken in the past year have contravened the principles laid out in this body of policies.

<sup>1</sup> Of the 5.2 million highly vulnerable people who needed protection assistance in Iraq in the aftermath of the conflict with ISIS, well over half continue to do so today. In comparison with 2018, the target caseload for protection in the 2020 Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) has declined by only 25 per cent. It now stands at slightly over 1.6 million people. Source: 2018 Humanitarian Response Plan – Iraq, Advance Executive Summary, February 2018, and Humanitarian Response Plans – Iraq, 2020 Humanitarian Programme Cycle.

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In view of securing durable solutions for IDPs, cooperation with the federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (Fed-MoLSA) is strategically key. However, adverse political conditions have so far prevented UNHCR from engaging with this ministry substantively. Fed-MoLSA has been slow to buy into technical work championed by UNHCR and aimed at providing a basis for harmonized beneficiary targeting in cash-based and ministry-led social protection programmes.

More promising is UNHCR's joint programme with the federal government to provide civil documentation to Iraq's many undocumented IDPs. This intervention fulfils an urgent need, while also improving long-term prospects for the improved security and self-reliance of IDPs. However, it has only recently begun to be mainstreamed, and still needs to be significantly scaled up to become commensurate with the scale of need.

In KRI, which hosts most of the country's refugee population, conditions are much more favourable to the compliance of local authorities with international standards, and to the roll-out of interventions geared to the inclusion of displaced groups. UNHCR has proactively sought to leverage this more favourable environment, by engaging closely with KRI authorities at both regional and governorate levels.

In KRI, as in federal Iraq, slow economic growth, limited private sector development and high unemployment are limiting opportunities for economic inclusion among displaced groups. The phasing out of livelihoods support to host communities, agreed this year by UNHCR and other UN humanitarian agencies, may make it difficult to sustain what gains have been achieved in social cohesion<sup>2</sup>.

### **Programme delivery in KRI is generally well executed.**

The evaluation found that despite severe obstacles, UNHCR's response to the emergency needs of protracted refugees in KRI had successfully met standards. There is evidence that addressing these needs is becoming increasingly difficult, given growing budget constraints.

The evaluation found that UNHCR's response to the sudden-onset influx of Syrian refugees into KRI, in October 2019, had been delivered in a timely and effective way. This is despite the fact that some participating non-governmental organizations (NGOs) reported a lack of operational clarity and direction in the early stages of the response, owing mainly to the overlapping coordination mechanisms led by UNHCR and OCHA in KRI.

<sup>2</sup> For a discussion on the meaning of social cohesion and its programming implications in contexts of forced displacement, see for example, *Social Cohesion and Forced Displacement: A desk review to inform programming and project design*, World Bank Group, June 2018.

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**In federal Iraq, the planned scale-up of UNHCR's protection activities in areas of IDP return is both needs-based and supportive of durable solutions.**

The evaluation found that, in federal Iraq, opportunities for the viable integration of IDPs in their areas of displacement are currently limited. UNHCR's assistance to this group is well planned, designed and delivered. It aims mainly to address urgent needs, which remain considerable. Rightly, given the few prospects for successful integration outcomes, UNHCR's livelihoods support to IDPs in federal Iraq is limited in scope, and is not primarily intended to enable long-term integration.

More broadly, UNHCR has successfully balanced its robust advocacy against camp closures and forced IDP returns, with a protection strategy that acknowledges the reality of returns – voluntary and otherwise – as the more likely long-term scenario for many IDPs. This strategy is centred on the scale-up of protection activities in areas of return. These activities address clear and urgent protection needs and may also contribute to a safer environment more conducive to the voluntariness of returns in the long term.

Against the backdrop of this strategy, community-based protection (CBP) has a critical role to play. CBP is a priority programme area within UNHCR Iraq operations; however, the evaluation found evidence that it is currently under-resourced.

**UNHCR's positioning on transition has earned it recognition from development actors, but has not so far led to substantive cooperation with them.**

In terms of strategic positioning, the evaluation found that UNHCR has proactively engaged with development actors, in view of exploring opportunities for partnerships in transition programming. It has also been a prominent and respected participant in related forums, such as the Priority Working Group 1 (PWG 1) of the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF).

To date, however, these engagement efforts have not led to operations-level cooperation on a larger scale. Development actors have suggested a range of specific avenues for cooperation during this evaluation; however, their generally light operational footprint appears to be a significant obstacle to programme-level partnerships with UNHCR on the ground.

Limited progress in expanding from emergency to development programming also owes to the fact that the federal government is currently largely absent from related consultations. Given that transition relies heavily on linkages between humanitarian assistance and public service delivery, most agencies interviewed for this evaluation considered the federal government a critical third party in transition planning. Its limited engagement was noted as a major obstacle to the transition process.

Notably, limited government engagement was cited as the main reason for the lack of progress so far in social protection reform, and in UNHCR's championing of a new approach to enable harmonized beneficiary targeting across humanitarian cash programmes and the federal government's social protection system.

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Most respondents viewed UNHCR's withdrawal from the co-leadership of the Cash Working Group (CWG) as natural, following its five-year tenure in the role. Subsequent discussions have since led to the appointment of the World Food Programme (WFP) as the chair of the CWG. While these steps to ensure continuity in the CWG's co-leadership are welcome, the evaluation found that cash actors lacked clarity on UNHCR's plans and future involvement in cash and social protection workstreams in Iraq, notably with regard to the maintenance of its highly significant technical contribution in the area of targeting, and its broader participation in ongoing CWG efforts to build a unified cash system.

**UNHCR's prominent role in cluster coordination gives it a firm platform for advocacy on critical protection issues; however, the processes and rationales implied in its messaging on these issues is sometimes not well understood.**

The evaluation found that UNHCR was an effective and forward-leaning actor in cluster coordination. However, several interviewees reported that it tended to prioritize its protection agenda over the protection activities of other clusters or sub-clusters. While UNHCR views its focus on its own protection agenda as part of promoting the centrality of protection, interviews conducted for this evaluation suggested that a more collegial and participative approach was advisable to ensure that protection was indeed mainstreamed across multiple clusters and areas of activity.

In its advocacy drives, UNHCR must reckon with a highly complex protection environment, as well as the United Nations' dense and equally complex architecture for humanitarian governance. Its approach to advocacy is rigorously by the book. On matters relating to IDPs, it entails a lengthy process of validation by other stakeholders involved, notably Humanitarian Country Team members. The multiple iterations in messaging inherent in this process have made it difficult for some key external stakeholders to gain a clear understanding of the final message. This is compounded by the fact that the issues at hand are technically complex. In some cases, collective messaging was also garbled by a perceived lack of alignment in the positions of UNHCR and the Resident Coordinator/Humanitarian Coordinator (RC/HC).

**Conclusions and recommendations: A need to regroup and consolidate around UNHCR's core areas of operational competence**

The current "post-conflict" landscape in Iraq is defined by two main traits: (1) the volume of urgent humanitarian needs remains high, notably in the area of protection; and (2) the feasibility of development programming continues to be very limited. In federal Iraq, where the overwhelming majority of UNHCR's target caseload is located, prospects for durable solutions continue to be remote.

Two other features of the Iraqi context are: (1) the federal government's failure so far to take on a greater share of the country's recovery burden and (2) mounting donor expectations that it should demonstrate a firmer commitment to do so. Future donor funding is contingent on greater government participation in the aid effort and may therefore decline in the current conditions.

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In this context, UNHCR should maintain its operational focus on the most urgent humanitarian needs across Iraq, and continue to consider transition support as a secondary priority. In parallel, it should maintain its highly proactive stance in advocacy, in view of securing the greater operations-level participation of development actors in transition and durable solutions.

Given the current lack of opportunities for standalone programmes geared to durable solutions in Iraq, UNHCR should aim to further develop a “solutions-sensitive” approach to its current emergency operations there; that is, an approach that addresses immediate priorities but, where possible, collaterally contributes to long-term solutions.<sup>3</sup> UNHCR has already set out on this path in areas of IDP returns, by designing protection interventions that meet urgent needs – and also foster inclusion and social cohesion over time. UNHCR Iraq can engage further on this path by investing more in CBP, using an approach similar to that adopted by it in Afghanistan. Central to this approach is the aim of building linkages between CBP and mutually supporting interventions in other sectors, at the local level. This is discussed in further detail in sections 4 and 5.3, containing the conclusions and recommendations of this report.

While good and open relations with the federal government are critical to the success of UNHCR operations in Iraq, the current environment is not favourable to workstreams aimed at aligning Iraqi law and formal policy with international standards. UNHCR’s efforts in this area should remain confined to *ad hoc* advocacy geared to the most pressing needs, as and when they arise on the ground. There is considerable evidence that formal laws and policy frameworks relating to PoC in Iraq are not currently backed by political will or enforcement capacity on the part of the relevant authorities. Work to further develop this body of laws and policies should be deprioritized until the right conditions are again present for meaningful results.

In parallel, UNHCR should prioritize – and continue to invest in – successful capacity-building workstreams with the federal government, such as that aimed at supporting immediate protection goals via improvements in the Mol’s delivery of critically needed civil documentation to IDPs.

As a humanitarian actor, UNHCR’s potential for empowering the main protagonists of transition and development in Iraq is significant. In engaging with the relevant counterparts, UNHCR should position itself in a supporting rather than a leading role. The general perception among interviewees was that its co-leadership of UNSDCF’s PWG 1 was in this spirit. With the possible deactivation of the clusters in 2021, UNHCR should aim to help build up PWG 1 as a meaningful platform for nexus coordination, and to continue to lead it in the same spirit. PWG 1 should become the key venue for UNHCR’s positioning on cash and social protection reform in Iraq, and for its continued involvement in related workstreams. In order to streamline and facilitate nexus coordination, UNHCR should explore the possibility of using PWG 1 as the main platform for consultations currently held by the Social Protection Forum. A merger of the Forum with PWG 1 should be considered, given that the platforms partly duplicate each other<sup>4</sup>.

<sup>3</sup> A “solutions-sensitive approach” aims to foster an environment conducive to durable solutions in the long term, in a context where addressing emergency needs remains the immediate, overriding priority. For example, emergency livelihoods and protection can be solutions-sensitive, by helping over time to create better conditions for voluntary IDP returns – even if returns are not the immediate goal of related activities.

<sup>4</sup> The Terms of Reference of the UNSDCF state that PWGs will be “comprised of relevant UNCT members, and relevant national partners (government, NGOs/CSOs, etc.)”. However, one UNHCR interviewee reported that currently, the government does not take part in the UNSDCF process. This source cited this as a key motive for maintaining the Social Protection Forum (SPF). Nonetheless, multiple interviewees in the evaluation stated that the government, and more specifically the federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, had stopped taking part in the SPF, which for this reason no longer convened. In these circumstances, and given that both



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For the most part, UNHCR's potential for transition support derives from its existing competences and should not call for a significant expansion of its capabilities. Possible UNHCR opportunities in transition support include the collection and provision of data to inform third-party development programming, and the early inclusion of development actors in existing UNHCR programmes, in view of their eventual handover. These opportunities are discussed in further detail in sections 4 and 5.3, containing the conclusions and recommendations of this report.

In addressing urgent needs in Iraq's context of protracted crisis, the model for Area-based Programming (A2PS) recently introduced by UNHCR Iraq has potential value. This model aims to enable multi-sector, multi-stakeholder interventions at the local level, and can provide a basis for solutions-sensitive programming. However, it was not immediately clear to the Evaluation Team how the A2PS model adds concrete value to UNHCR programme models already present on the ground. A useful comparison here may be with Afghanistan, where UNHCR's CBP programmes have fulfilled a purpose similar to A2PS, by providing a basis for multi-partner, cross-sectoral interventions at the local level. Given that UNHCR Iraq aims to scale up CBP, there would be merit in clarifying how A2PS complements – rather than duplicates – the implied programme systems and architectures. Further guidance to ensure that this new model is consistent with others being developed by other UN actors may also be helpful.

these platforms have a similar thematic focus, we recommend that UNHCR advocate for the full and thorough application of the UNSDCF ToR, rather than calling for the perpetuation of the SPF. The deactivation of the SPF would contribute to a much-needed consolidation of the overall aid coordination architecture in Iraq.

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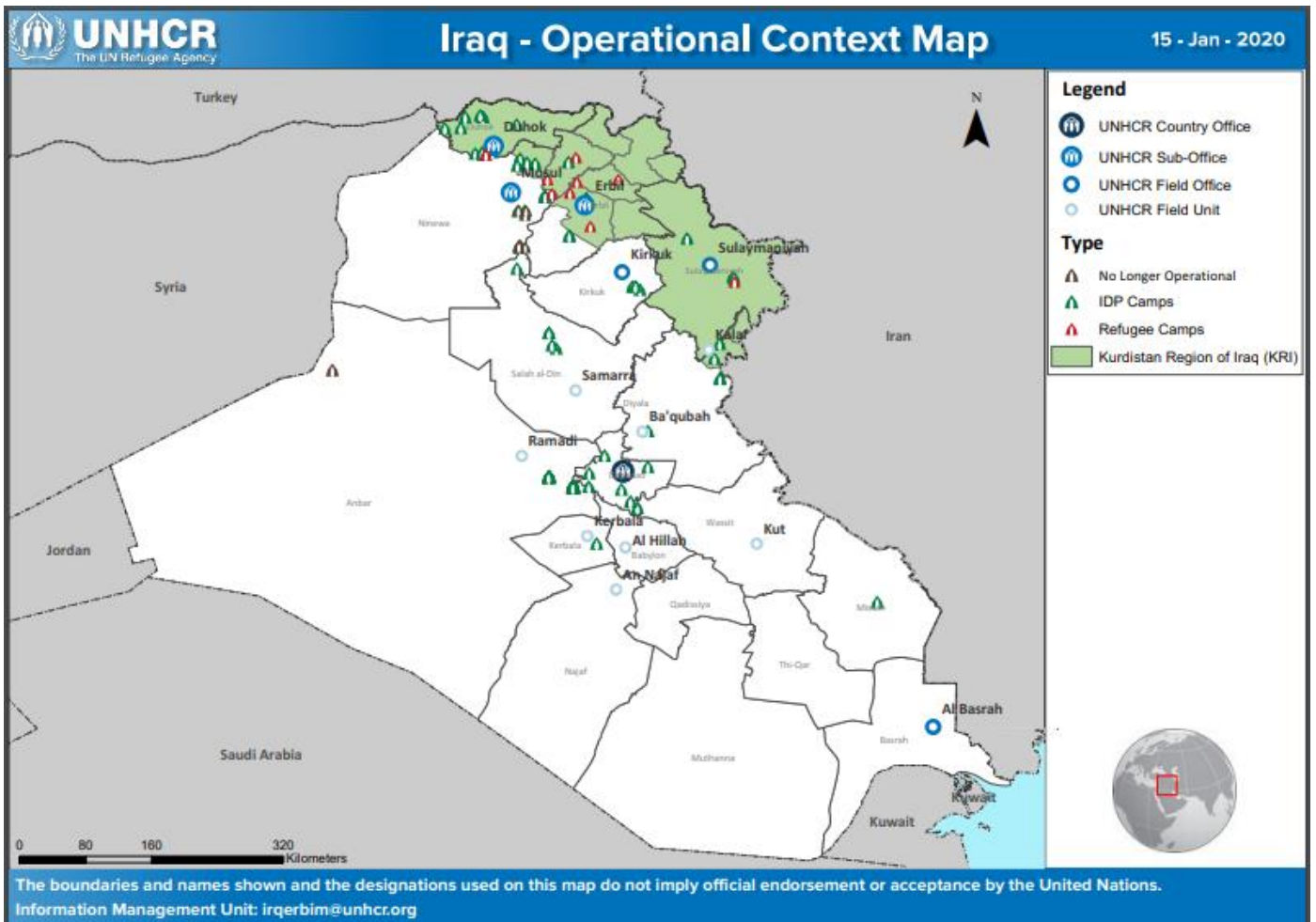
## List of abbreviations

3RP	Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan
A2PS	Area-based Programming for Protection and Solutions
AoI	Area of Inquiry
BRHA	Board of Relief and Humanitarian Affairs
CAD	Civil Affairs Directorate (MoI)
CBP	Community-Based Protection
CCCM	Camp Coordination and Camp Management
CO	Country Office [refers to UNHCR Iraq]
COP	Country Operation Plan
CRRF	Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework
CWG	Cash Working Group
DCO	United Nations Development Coordination Office
EAF	Evidence Assessment Framework
EJCC	Erbil Joint Crisis Coordination Centre
EQ	Evaluation Question
ES	Evaluation Services
ET	Evaluation Team
Fed-MoLSA	Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GCR	Global Compact on Refugees
GRCs	Governorate Returns Committees
HC	Humanitarian Coordinator
HCT	Humanitarian Country Team
HNO	Humanitarian Needs Overview
HQ	Headquarters (UNHCR)
HRP	Humanitarian Response Plan
IASC	Inter-Agency Standing Committee
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IP	Implementing Partner
ISIL	Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant
JCC	Joint Crisis Coordination Centre
JIPS	Joint IDP Profiling Service
KII	Key Informant Interview
KRI	Kurdistan Region of Iraq
KRI-Molsa	Kurdistan Region of Iraq's Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs
KRI-MoP	Kurdistan Region of Iraq's Ministry of Planning
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
MoI	Federal Ministry of Interior
MoLSA	Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs
MoMD	Ministry of Migration and Displacement
MoP	Ministry of Planning
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
MPCA	Multi-purpose Cash Assistance
MSNA	Multi-sector Needs Assessment
MYMP	Multi-year Multi-partner Protection and Solutions Strategy
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
NSC	National Security Council
OCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
OL	Operating Level
PC-MoI	Federal Permanent Committee for Refugee Affairs of the Ministry of Interior

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PMT	Proxy Means Testing
PoC	Persons of Concern
PPG	Population Planning Group
PWG	Priority Working Group
QIP	Quick Impact Project
RC	Resident Coordinator
RCM	Refugee Coordination Model
RRP	Recovery and Resilience Programme
SGBV	Sexual and Gender-based Violence
ToR	Terms of Reference
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNSDCF	United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework
VNG	Association of Netherlands Municipalities
WFP	World Food Programme

UNHCR's operational area in Iraq



UNHCR's Iraq Operation currently maintains seven office locations – Baghdad (Representation) covering a sub-office in Mosul and field offices in Kirkuk and Basra; and the sub-office in Erbil, which covers the Duhok sub-office and the field office in Sulaymaniyah. In addition, there are eight field units, which are mainly in central and southern Iraq.

Source: UNHCR, January 2020.

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## Timeline of major events and decisions – UNHCR Iraq Operation

<b>July 2017</b>	Prime minister announced the complete recapture of Mosul; 1 million people displaced.
<b>December 2017</b>	Prime minister declares ISIS defeated in the country.
<b>May 2018</b>	New refugee law could not be passed through Parliament due to political instability.
<b>May 2018</b>	Elections marred by fraud concerns resulting in political paralysis – several ministerial posts still vacant at year end.
<b>September 2018</b>	By the end of September, 4 million displaced people had returned home. More than 1.9 million IDPs remain displaced, 50 per cent of whom have been displaced for more than three years.
<b>July 2019</b>	Resolution passed by the Iraqi National Security Council to authorize camp closures in Ninewa and other governorates.  Resolution passed by the Iraqi National Security Council to authorize the Ministry of Interior’s registration of all refugees and asylum-seekers, aimed at giving them freedom of movement inside Iraq.
<b>October 2019–present</b>	Street protests in Baghdad lead to unrest and major political turmoil, with the resignation of the prime minister in December.
<b>January 2020–present</b>	Iranian rocket attacks on US targets in the country see US retaliation.
<b>March 2020</b>	Political turmoil continues, with the second prime minister-designate offered the opportunity to form a government after the first was unable to do so. Oil price crash, COVID-19 and drawdown of coalition troops make for very a challenging socioeconomic and political environment.

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# 1. Introduction, scope and methodology of the evaluation

## 1.1. Introduction

This report relates to an independent evaluation of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) Country Operation in Iraq for the period 2018–2019. This evaluation is part of a series of evaluations of a similar nature being undertaken in three other countries (Afghanistan, Angola and Egypt). The evaluation started with an inception phase during which the Evaluation Team (ET) undertook scoping interviews and a brief mission to the country, besides conducting preliminary desk reviews of key documents. Following these, an inception report with a detailed methodology for conducting the evaluation was produced and discussed with UNHCR Evaluation Services (ES), which managed the evaluation. The inception phase was followed by desk research to map all available evidence from secondary sources before the ET undertook remote interviews, and then a country visit to gather evidence from the field. This report brings together findings, conclusions and recommendations from the various processes of the evaluation.

## 1.2. Evaluation purpose, objectives, scope and approach

The purpose of the Country Operation evaluation is to generate timely evidence to inform UNHCR's future operational planning and strategy in Iraq. The ET therefore sees this evaluation as having a primarily learning function. The evaluation will inform decisions that strengthen partnerships and programme design in the pursuit of assistance, protection and solutions for UNHCR persons of concern (PoC) and the communities that host them. In addition, the evaluation will seek to analyse and assess the effectiveness of UNHCR's plans and activities in light of the country context, and the evolving needs of the population and the federal government of Iraq and Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI) authorities and partners.

The focus of this evaluation is squarely on the post-conflict transitional period. The end of 2017 and beginning of 2018 marked the start of the transition for Iraq and a gradual shift from open conflict against the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) towards recovery, stabilization and reconstruction. In parallel, humanitarian actors, including UNHCR, responded by refocusing their programming away from emergency-based response towards longer-term development planning and objectives.



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### 1.2.1. Evaluation objectives and scope

The objectives of the evaluation are framed around three key Areas of Inquiry (Aols) outlined in the Terms of Reference (ToR):<sup>5</sup>

- Results achieved to date and contributing factors;
- Strategic positioning and coherence;
- Future directions.

The evaluation covered all aspects of UNHCR's Country Operation in Iraq in support of UNHCR's PoC, support to the federal government/KRI authorities' capacity-building, overall coordination and leadership on areas of UNHCR's core mandate and competencies for the post-conflict period. The evaluation does not cover events post-February 2020 – particularly around UNHCR's COVID-19 response.

### 1.2.2. Primary audience

The primary audiences of the evaluation are the UNHCR Country Office (CO) in Iraq and the Regional Bureau for the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). The evaluation is designed to inform their decision-making and future programming. Other country operations working under the framework of the Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan (3RP)<sup>6</sup> may have a particular interest in the findings, conclusions and recommendations, as there could be relevant messages for other locales. Other UNHCR Bureaux and Divisions, as well as UNHCR partners in Iraq – including government, humanitarian and development actors – will serve as a secondary audience. The findings are focused squarely on the Iraq Operation; however, the secondary audience could garner overarching insight from a detailed analysis of UNHCR Iraq.

The ET undertook a detailed stakeholder analysis during the inception phase; this is attached as Annex 2.

### 1.2.3. Evaluation process

The evaluation was carried out between January and April 2020. A broad outline of the process was as follows:

- Following submission of the inception report, UNHCR ES and the Iraq CO reviewed it to ensure consensus on the evaluation purpose, use, objectives and methodology.
- A feedback session was held with the CO at the end of the country visit, at which preliminary findings were presented and discussions held to encourage learning and ownership of the evaluation findings.

<sup>5</sup> Attached as Annex 1.

<sup>6</sup> The 3RP is the regional response to support Syrian refugees, with standalone country strategies in Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, Egypt and Iraq: <http://www.3rpsyriacrisis.org/>

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## 1.2.4. Evaluation management

The evaluation was managed by UNHCR ES from Geneva. Henri van den Idsert, Senior Evaluation Officer, was the ET's point of contact and also accompanied the team on the Inception Mission. Henri gave vital practical and theoretical support during the whole evaluative process.

## 1.3. Evaluation methodology

### 1.3.1. Evaluation framework

The three broad Aols specified in the ToR (see Box 1) provided the overall framework for the evaluation. The Evaluation Questions (EQs) against each Aol are shown in Annex 3.

**Box 1: Areas of Inquiry (generic, as per the ToR)**

**Key Aol 1:** Since the post-conflict transitional period (2018), what progress has UNHCR made towards achieving intended results in the areas of inclusion, protection, advocacy and durable solutions, as set out in 3RP, the Humanitarian Response Plan, the Multi-year Multi-Partner Protection and Solutions Strategy and the Iraq Recovery and Resilience Programme? Under what conditions has UNHCR managed to achieve these results, and what were the most important contextual and operational factors contributing to or impeding achievement of these results?

**Key Aol 2:** How strategically has UNHCR been positioned within the country context, and what are the key factors driving strategic decision-making? To what extent do the strategy and Country Operation Plan (COP) have coherence and/or alignment with the work of other humanitarian/development, private sector and civil society actors within the country? How well aligned is the existing UNHCR strategy and COP with the current and/or evolving needs of the population and wider country context?

**Key Aol 3:** How can UNHCR build on results achieved to date, and further leverage UNHCR's strategic position and influence within the country and region, to optimize the potential impact of collective efforts towards protection and solutions for UNHCR PoC, and the communities that host them?

The findings of the evaluation in Section 3 are presented against the EQs and conclusions are presented against core questions under each of the Aols.

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### 1.3.2. Evaluation methods

Data collection was designed to focus on thematic areas laid out in UNHCR's Multi-year Multi-partner Protection and Solutions Strategy (MYMP). These are:

- Government compliance to international standards and related capacity-building;
- Inclusion of PoC in national systems; access to services and response to their immediate needs;
- Self-reliance, livelihoods and support of hosting areas;
- Durable solutions: integration and returns.

Time and access constraints, as detailed in Section 1.5 on limitations, did not enable the ET to cover all these areas evenly. The evaluation findings reflect this and focus on those areas where the evidence collected was robust enough to support them.

The evaluation used a mixed-methods approach combining desk research, key informant interviews (KIIs), focus group discussions (FGDs) and site observations, where possible, to collect data. Given security and access constraints, the ET had to rely significantly more on desk research and remote/in-person KIIs than site observations and FGDs. A mixture of methods enabled the ET to triangulate information and perspectives from multiple sources to ensure a comprehensive, robust and evidence-based understanding of the operations.

Based on a combination of random and purposive sampling, a total of 49 purposively selected key informants were interviewed, and 9 FGDs were held with PoC communities in camp settings. There were, however, challenges faced in collecting data from some of these stakeholders and methods used – see Section 1.5 on limitations. Table 1 presents an overview of stakeholders interviewed (Annex 4 presents the full list of all key informants and community interviewees). As discussed in Section 1.5, the number of FGDs with community interviewees was limited. Where undertaken, the ET ensured they were disaggregated by age and gender. However, this did not lead to a “lesser” weighting given to PoC perspective. Annex 5 lists secondary sources reviewed.

### 1.3.3. Validation of evaluation results

Rigorous data triangulation was undertaken to validate data gathered during the course of the evaluation via an Evidence Assessment Framework (EAF). The framework – designed in Excel for usability – allowed for the comparing and filtering of information gathered through multiple sources and methods. Where discrepancies occurred that could not be resolved, the ET did not use such data for drawing conclusions or lessons and recommendations. All data from the desk review, interview notes, group discussions and site observations, including outliers, were examined by the three members of the ET independently to check for their (i) representativeness – do the data/information represent the whole or a sizeable picture? (ii) relevance – to the questions in the evaluation matrix; and (iii) attributability – if the data convey a “state”, is it attributable to the intervention/cause being described? The team mapped all evidence emerging from the desk review, KIIs, field observations (wherever feasible) and PoC interviews – including “considering” each piece of evidence equally in terms of importance and validity.

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## 1.4. Evaluation principles and ethics

The ET was guided by internationally recognized ethical practices<sup>7</sup> and codes of conduct for evaluators, particularly in humanitarian and conflict situations. As a large portion of UNHCR's Country Operation is protection-related, the ET was mindful of relevant international legal instruments and related standards and best practice.<sup>8</sup> All data-gathering and reporting was governed by "do no harm" principles to avoid exposing people to any harm as a result of any action taken by the ET, ensuring conflict sensitivity in the planning, design and delivery of evaluation tasks. Primary data were collected only through processes that ensured that vulnerable groups were not further traumatized, put at risk of retribution or made to undergo discomfort. The ET adhered to the following protocol in all interactions with stakeholders:

- Informed consent – All participants voluntarily gave their consent to participate in any activity related to the evaluation.
- Confidentiality – All discussions with stakeholders and data provided by individuals and groups are presented and shared on a non-attribution basis.
- Respect of rights – All those involved in any evaluation process or activity were duly informed of the purpose so they could participate freely and equitably.
- Respect dignity – Interviews and data-gathering were conducted in a way that respected individuals' dignity.
- Ensure inclusivity – All voices were heard, ensuring respect to privacy and confidentiality.

The team attempted to ensure the highest-quality standards in terms of the following factors: comprehensiveness (i.e. evaluation criteria); independence and objectivity (i.e. robustness and reliability of results); conduct without influence or pressure from any organization; full autonomy of the team in conducting and reporting its findings; transparency of judgement (i.e. based on data available and previously agreed judgement criteria as per the evaluation matrix); and evidence-based (i.e. collected and triangulated from different sources, with limitations addressed).

## 1.5. Limitations

The sharply deteriorating security situation in Iraq since the beginning of 2020 had an adverse impact on the ability of the ET to collect data in country. Continuing unrest in federal Iraq, particularly in Baghdad, stopped the ET from accessing the capital. Planned visits to Mosul, Kirkuk and northern Iraq were also not conducted due to the deteriorating security situation.

As a result, on-the-ground data collection was confined to KRI. However, these adverse circumstances were constrained further in January 2020 by airstrikes near Erbil – the capital of Iraq Kurdistan. This delayed the team's planned visit there and led to the decision to start conducting KIIs remotely from the UK.

<sup>7</sup> OECD-DAC Guidance for Evaluating Humanitarian Assistance in Complex Emergencies: <https://www.oecd.org/dac/evaluation/2667294.pdf>; ALNAP Evaluation of Humanitarian Action Guide: <http://www.alnap.org/resource/23592.aspx>

<sup>8</sup> Such as, for example, the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacements, or general principles derived from the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework.

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As the security situation improved in KRI during January, the ET was able to visit this region for a shortened mission of five days only. This enabled the ET to collect data from stakeholders that otherwise could not have been reached, such as government officials and PoC. Nonetheless, during this shortened mission, opportunities for data-gathering were further undermined, as poor weather forced the ET to abandon a trip to refugee sites in the mountainous area of Duhok.

These constraints – most notably the ET’s lack of access to federal Iraq – have limited the ability of the team to gather and analyse data and evidence against Aol 1 (Results). Although the evaluation is formative in nature – with an emphasis on strategic positioning and future directions (Aols 2 and 3, respectively) – the ET’s reliance on KIIs, both remote and in-person, means there is a predominance of perception-based qualitative findings. These are, however, triangulated, and laid out in this report to be consistent with the evaluation’s ToR.

It is important to emphasize that highly constrained conditions for data-gathering have provided the Iraq evaluation with an evidence base that is distinct from that built for the other three evaluations in this series (i.e. Afghanistan, Angola and Egypt – forthcoming). Where the prime focus of these latter evaluations is on programme-level activities, the Iraq exercise relies heavily on qualitative statements collected in remote interviews and tends to focus on the more strategic dimension of UNHCR operations in Iraq.

To note, the evaluation has not examined the latest developments on the Country Operation – including COVID-19. All findings and conclusions relate to the situation as it was up to February 2020.

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## 2. UNHCR Operation in the context of Iraq

### 2.1. Iraq context and UNHCR persons of concern

The end of 2017<sup>9</sup> marked a gradual shift from Iraq's open conflict with ISIS towards the country's recovery, stabilization and reconstruction. In parallel, humanitarian actors, including UNHCR, started to recognize the need to shift gear and engage differently in the changing context to better respond to the needs of millions of conflict-affected people. Since then, international and national actors have sought to move away from a predominantly emergency-based mode of response towards longer-term recovery strategies, durable solutions and resilience-building approaches.<sup>10</sup>

The path to transition has been fraught with significant obstacles. Although the Government has established recovery and reconstruction mechanisms and frameworks,<sup>11</sup> the country has not so far managed to realize its recovery and reconstruction ambitions, or to fundamentally alter its long-standing fragility and chronic instability. Despite Iraq being an upper-middle-income country rich in natural resources and potentially capable of financing quality public services for its citizens, public expenditure on basic services<sup>12</sup> and infrastructure reconstruction<sup>13</sup> in 2018 and 2019 remained low. Also, despite the end of open hostilities in 2017, Iraq continues to host a huge number of internally displaced persons (IDPs). As of January 2020, there were 1.4 million IDPs and 4.6 million IDP returnees living across the country.<sup>14</sup> Widespread insecurity, limited efforts at national reconciliation, limited public service provision and highly constrained humanitarian access and delivery<sup>15</sup> remain among the main obstacles to their return.

In October 2019, anti-government protests erupted across the country, calling for an end to endemic corruption, an overhaul of the political system and the provision of better services and job opportunities.<sup>16</sup> The resignation of the prime minister, violent repression of demonstrators and ongoing unrest are some of the major events that have marked the end of 2019 and beginning of 2020, deepening political instability.

<sup>9</sup> Then Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al Abadi declared victory over the Islamic State in Iraq on 9 December 2017: <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/article/timeline-the-rise-spread-and-fall-the-islamic-state>

<sup>10</sup> HRP Iraq, 2019. These efforts were first embodied in the two-year Iraq Recovery and Resilience Programme (RRP), launched in 2018. More recently, the United Nations Sustainable Cooperation Development Framework (UNSDCF) 2020–2024 replaced the RRP as the main instrument to guide the transition from emergency to development programming in Iraq.

<sup>11</sup> Including the National Reconstruction and Development Framework, National Development Plan (NDP) and Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS).

<sup>12</sup> As the World Bank analysis of the country's 2019 budget noted, "the security and energy sectors still dominate budgetary allocations at the expense of education and health".

<sup>13</sup> The 2019 budget was a 45 per cent increase on the previous year, but was also heavily criticized for its "short-termism" – i.e. in terms of shoring up political support; for its lack of focus on new infrastructure and rebuilding – and in those Sunni areas devastated by the ISIS conflict; and for more than half of the spend directed towards government and public sector salaries and pensions: <https://www.cnbc.com/2019/01/30/iraqs-massive-2019-budget-still-fails-to-address-reform-needs.html>

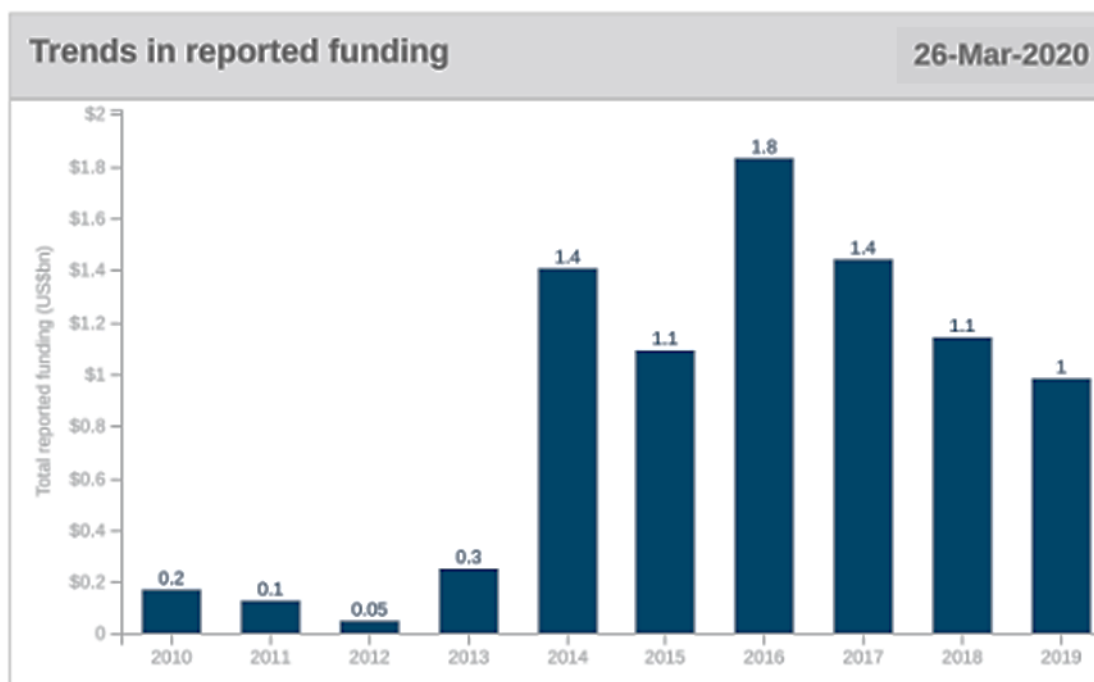
<sup>14</sup> UNHCR Iraq, January 2020.

<sup>15</sup> Indeed, humanitarian needs remain high across the country: 4.1 million people are in need, with 1.77 million people acutely in need: OCHA Humanitarian Needs Overview, Iraq: 2020: [https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/iraq\\_hno\\_2020.pdf](https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/iraq_hno_2020.pdf)

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-50595212>

Donor funding for post-ISIS Iraq<sup>17</sup> has been declining (see Figure 1), largely as a result of growing expectations among international donors that Iraq should carry a greater share of the country's humanitarian and recovery burden.

Figure 1: Trends in donor humanitarian funding in Iraq (\$ billion)\*



\* Not including FFS and 3RP funding.  
Source: UNOCHA Financial Tracking Services, March 2020.

Despite ongoing political instability, and against the backdrop of decreased funding opportunities, humanitarian and development actors continue to see transition and the handover of the aid effort to the government as ultimate objectives in the context of Iraq. The United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF), detailed in Section 3.2, is currently the main instrument to guide joint government and international agencies' efforts in the transition to long-term recovery and development.<sup>18</sup>

UNHCR's caseload in Iraq comprises the full spectrum of persons of concern (PoC) groups typically served by the agency: asylum-seekers, refugees, returnees, IDPs, IDP returnees, stateless people and host communities. Some of the key protection concerns shared by the three PoC groups that were the focus of this evaluation (IDPs, returnees and refugees – see also Section 1.3 on the methodology) include lack of appropriate conditions for returns, lack of legal/civil documentation and limited access to livelihood opportunities and basic services.<sup>19</sup>

Refugees living in Iraq numbered 286,949 as of January 2020. The overwhelming majority of these – 245,810 – are Syrian, and 97 per cent reside in KRI, mainly in Erbil and Duhok Governorates. Around 38 per cent are hosted in camps, with the remainder out of camp.<sup>20</sup> More detailed figures are included in the map in Figure 2. The latest sudden-

<sup>17</sup> According to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), donor funding fell from \$1.82 billion in 2016 to \$0.99 billion in 2019 – a 46 per cent decrease: <https://fts.unocha.org/countries/106/summary/2020>

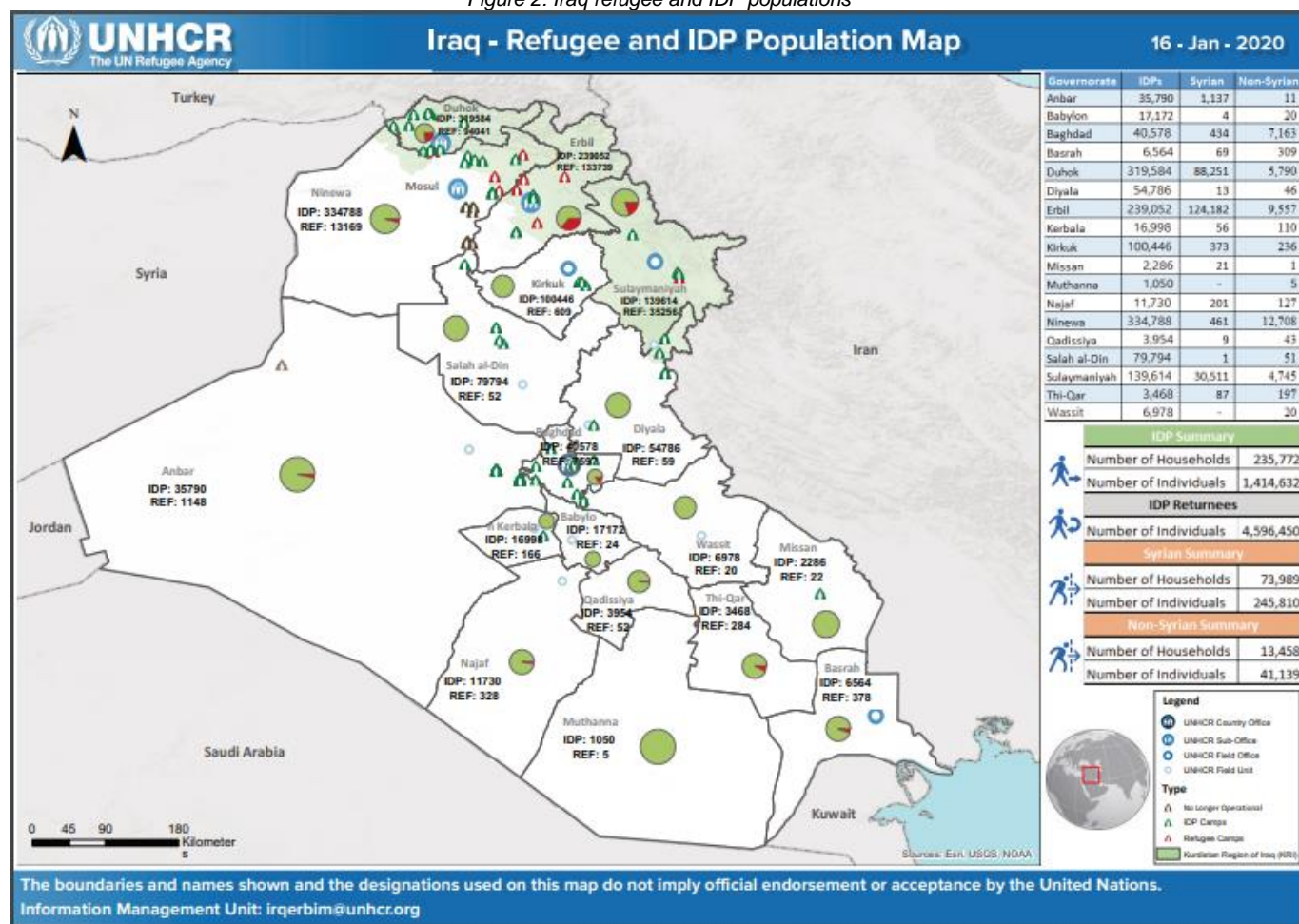
<sup>18</sup> The Iraq RRP was launched in early 2018 and preceded the UNSDCF.

<sup>19</sup> UNHCR Iraq Spotlight Series, November 2019.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

onset influx took place in October 2019, when 12,000 Syrians crossed the border as a result of renewed hostilities in north-eastern Syria. The remainder (41,234) are from Turkey and Iran and mostly reside in KRI (92 per cent), as well as Palestinians and Sudanese, based in centre and south governorates, mainly in Baghdad.<sup>21</sup>

Figure 2: Iraq refugee and IDP populations



Source: UNHCR Iraq, January 2020.

At the end of 2018, the federal government renewed long-standing efforts to close and consolidate IDP camps.<sup>22</sup> In July 2019, the Iraqi National Security Council (NSC) passed an order to authorize the closure of IDP camps in Ninewa Governorate. This was reportedly accompanied by provisions that enabled security forces to register and isolate families perceived to be affiliated with ISIS in dedicated camps, to deploy police to guard these camps and to assess and audit the work of NGOs working in these locations.<sup>23</sup> The same order was then extended to other governorates in 2019, resulting in a total of 54 camps closed or consolidated. While forced or accelerated camp closures were the main reason for this, voluntary returns do also account for the reduction of camp-based IDPs during this period. A total of 67 IDP camps remained open as at January 2020.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>21</sup> UNHCR data, January 2020.

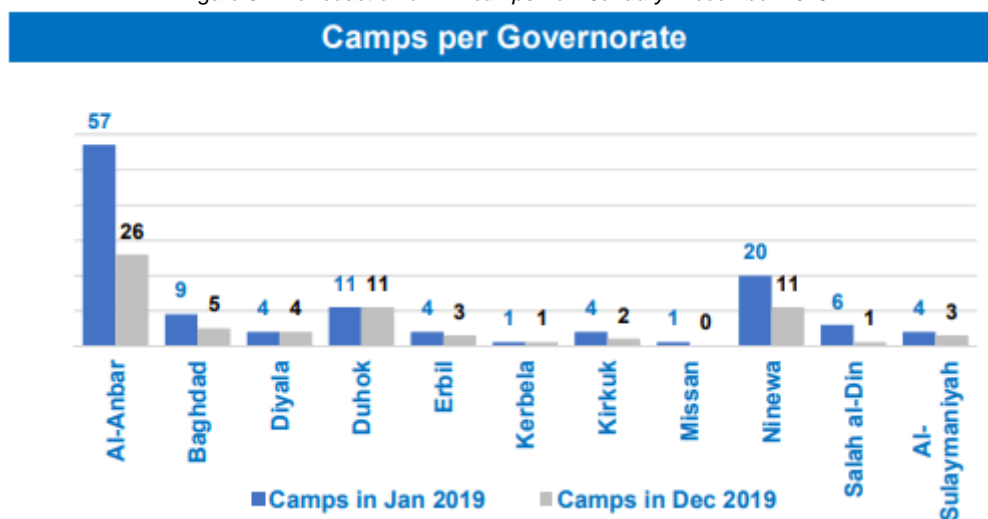
<sup>22</sup> <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/10/iraqi-security-camps-displaced-closed-181018110506430.html>

<sup>23</sup> <https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/09/04/iraqi-camps-expel-over-2000-people-seen-isis-linked>

<sup>24</sup> In terms of numbers, the most significant camp consolidations in 2019 were in Anbar Governorate, with a total of 31 sub-camps closed by the end of 2019. Anbar is a former ISIS stronghold (CCCM Cluster, Iraq: Snapshot on IDPs in Informal Camps, 2019 Summary).



Figure 3: The reduction of IDP camps from January–December 2019



Source: CCCM Cluster, Iraq: Snapshot on IDPs in Formal Camps, 2019 Summary.

A further complicating factor in the ability of IDPs to return to their areas of origin is that many lack civil documentation – an estimated 8.5 per cent of Iraq’s 1 million displaced and returnee households report that at least one of their members is missing some form of documentation.<sup>25,26</sup> The lack of documentation prevents IDPs from accessing basic social and public services, severely constrains their freedom of movement, and therefore undermines their ability to return to their areas of origin or to relocate anywhere else in the country.

IDP returnees constitute the largest vulnerable group in Iraq, with – as mentioned previously – nearly 4.6 million individuals. They are spread across eight governorates, in 38 districts and 1,956 locations. Ninewa Governorate accounts for the largest displaced population (1.8 million), followed by Anbar (1.5 million), Salah al-Din (0.7 million), Kirkuk (340,000), Diyala (230,000) and Erbil (50,000).

As with IDPs, the returnee population in Iraq is also susceptible to secondary displacement. Recent data indicates that, between March 2018 and December 2019, there were 292 locations where families had relocated after having attempted to return to their areas of origin.<sup>27</sup>

A particularly vulnerable subcategory among IDPs and returnee groups is composed of people perceived to have been affiliated with ISIS. Protection risks for this group include arbitrary arrest and detention, and conflict in areas of return or with host communities. These risks have become more acute following camp closures and the renewed displacement of IDPs formerly based in camps. The households most at risk – including large numbers of women and children – suffer discriminatory treatment and struggle, for instance, to access civil documentation and birth certificates for their children.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>25</sup> Press release, 2019, Inauguration of the First National Identification Document Centre in Ninewa Governorate, 31 October.

<sup>26</sup> UNHCR internal planning documents, 2019.

<sup>27</sup> Ninewa Governorate had 166, followed by Anbar (69), Kirkuk (21), Salah al-Din (18), Baghdad (16) and Erbil (2). Out of the total of 292 locations, 37,044 individuals are estimated to have re-displaced – with 60 per cent to out-of-camp locations and 40 per cent seeking shelter in camps (IOM DTM Returns Index, March 2020).

<sup>28</sup> UNHCR internal planning documents. The ET also heard testimony of such “challenges” during FGDs with IDPs during data collection in February 2020.

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Iraq is not a party to the 1951 Refugee Convention or its 1967 Protocol. The two legislative instruments governing refugee affairs in Iraq are the Political Refugee Law of 1971, which addresses political refugees only and does not apply to refugees who have fled because of other reasons,<sup>29</sup> and Law 21-2010, which establishes the Ministry of Migration and Displacement and provides for the delivery assistance to both refugees and IDPs. The Constitution of Iraq also prohibits refoulement in line with international human rights law.

UNHCR progress in helping the federal government to revise the Political Refugee Law of 1971 came to a stop in 2018, when political unrest prior to the elections prevented the law from being passed. Continued political instability has, since then, prevented further advances on this issue. Currently, refugees in federal Iraq face the risk of detention for illegal entry, as well as arbitrary treatment stemming from the shortcomings of the 1971 Law.<sup>30</sup> In contrast, the policy environment for refugees in KRI is more supportive and inclusive. Following the outbreak of the Syrian crisis in 2011, Kurdish authorities granted Syrian refugees the right to work, to access public health services and to enrol in the public education system.<sup>31</sup>

A memorandum of understanding (MOU) was passed between UNHCR Iraq and the Permanent Committee for Refugee Affairs of the Ministry of Interior (PC-Mol) in 2016, to strengthen the protection environment for refugees and other PoC. Under the terms of the MOU, the federal government “will provide registration and documentation to refugees, asylum-seekers and persons of concern... UNHCR will provide advice, technical and other support... to facilitate the management of refugee affairs in Iraq.”<sup>32</sup> This MOU provides the main basis for UNHCR’s bilateral cooperation with the federal government in the refugee response.

Also worth mentioning are federal government frameworks that provide for the legal protection and welfare of IDPs. Notable among these are the National Development Plan 2018–2022<sup>33</sup> and the Reconstruction and Development Framework,<sup>34</sup> both released by the federal Ministry of Planning in 2018. These documents identify IDPs as a vulnerable group and lay out a range of interventions intended to assist them, both in their displacement and in their return or resettlement. However, respondents interviewed for this evaluation generally agreed that these frameworks are aspirational and have so far had limited effect in informing government action.<sup>35</sup>

## 2.2. UNHCR’s role and operating environment (2018–2019)

As can be seen from actual expenditure (Operating Level, OL) in Figure 4, IDPs and Syrian PoC account for the majority of UNHCR’s spending in Iraq, with \$135 million and \$63 million respectively out of a total \$212 million operation budget.

<sup>29</sup> <https://www.loc.gov/law/help/refugees/legal-status-refugees.php#iraq>

<sup>30</sup> UNHCR internal planning documents, 2019.

<sup>31</sup> <https://www.loc.gov/law/help/refugees/legal-status-refugees.php#iraq>

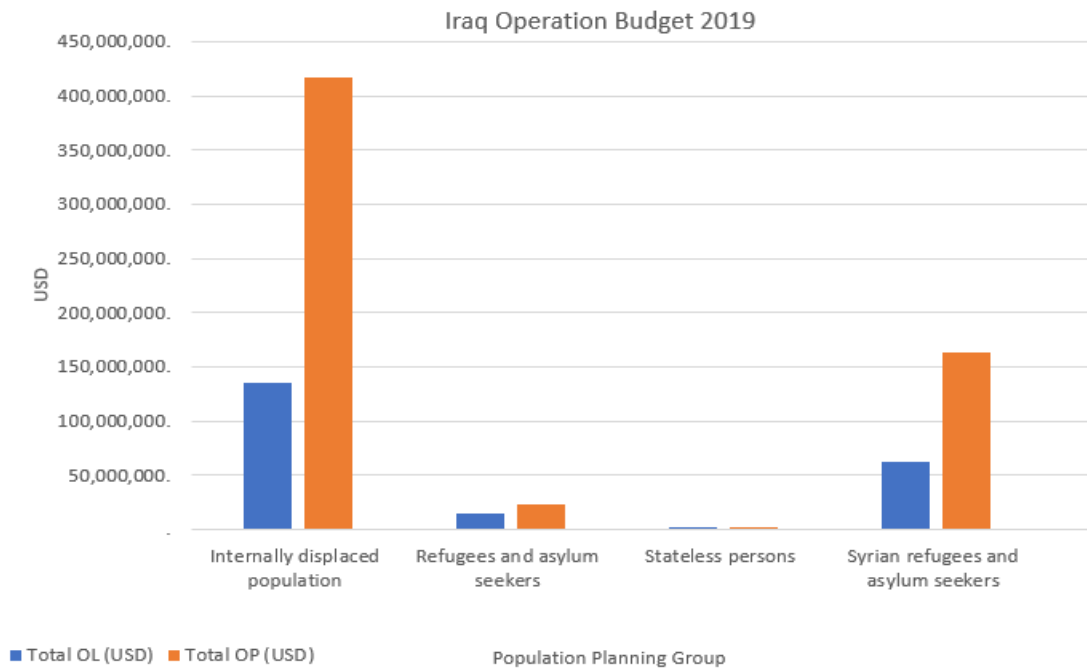
<sup>32</sup> <https://reliefweb.int/report/iraq/unhcr-ministry-interior-achieve-milestone-refugee-rights-iraq-new-memorandum-signing>

<sup>33</sup> [http://www.iraq-jccme.jp/pdf/archives/nationaldevelopmentplan2018\\_2022.pdf](http://www.iraq-jccme.jp/pdf/archives/nationaldevelopmentplan2018_2022.pdf)

<sup>34</sup> <http://www.cabinet.iq/uploads/Iraq%20Reconstruction/Iraq%20Recons%20&%20Inves.pdf>

<sup>35</sup> *Kills conducted with UNHCR and other key stakeholders, February 2020.*

Figure 4: UNHCR Iraq budget, 2019



Source: UNHCR CO.

The Iraq Operation is centred on Protection and is composed of a range of programmes to support PoC – namely, Basic Needs and Essential Services; Fair Protection Services and Documentation; Favourable Protection Environment; Security from Violence and Exploitation; Community Empowerment and Self Reliance; and Durable Solutions. By far the biggest expenditure in 2019 was on Basic Needs and Essential Services (which includes multi-purpose cash assistance) across all the Population Planning Groups (PPGs) – i.e. \$108 million out of the total \$212 million spend. This is indicative of the continuing need for humanitarian assistance among PoC in Iraq.

UNHCR has a prominent role in coordination in Iraq. Within the Cluster system administered by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and led by the Resident Coordinator/ Humanitarian Coordinator (RC/HC), UNHCR co-leads the Protection Cluster and its four sub-clusters;<sup>36</sup> namely Child Protection; Gender-based Violence; Housing, Land and Property; and Mine Action. It also co-leads the Camp Coordination and Camp Management (CCCM)<sup>37</sup> and Shelter/Non-food Items Clusters,<sup>38</sup> and co-led the Cash Working Group (CWG) until April 2020. In the Iraq-based refugee response provided under the Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan (3RP), UNHCR co-leads overall operations with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), in close consultation with the KRI Ministry of Planning (KRI-MoP). As well as overall co-leadership, UNHCR also leads the Protection, Shelter and Basic Needs sectors, as part of the sectoral coordination system laid out under the Refugee Coordination Model (RCM).

<sup>36</sup> For more information see <https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/operations/iraq/protection-cluster/documents>

<sup>37</sup> For more information see <https://cccmcluster.org/operations/iraq>

<sup>38</sup> For more information see <https://www.sheltercluster.org/response/iraq>

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Together with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the World Food Programme (WFP), UNHCR co-leads Priority Working Group (PWG) 1 of the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF), on “Achieving Social Cohesion, Protection, and Inclusion”. Alongside WFP, UNHCR is also a member of the Social Protection Forum established in 2018, and co-chaired by the federal Ministry of Planning (Fed-MoP) and the World Bank. Among other goals, the Forum aims to support the federal government in achieving the integration of displaced populations and other vulnerable groups in the national social protection system.<sup>39</sup>

In terms of government partnerships, UNHCR has close working relations with the Ministry of Interior (MoI) and the Ministry of Migration and Displacement (MoMD), at the federal level. As part of a broader initiative supported by major donors, and including the World Bank and other UN agencies, UNHCR has also sought to build a working relationship with the Fed-MoLSA, in view of facilitating social protection reform.

In KRI, UNHCR’s main counterparts include the Joint Crisis Coordination Centre (JCC) and the KRI-MoP. The Department of Health, KRI Ministry of Interior and KRI Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (KRI-MoLSA) are also notable partners, as is the General Directorate of Combating Violence against Women (DCVAW). At the governorate level in KRI, UNHCR cooperates closely with the Erbil and Sulaymaniyah JCCs, and with the Board of Relief and Humanitarian Affairs (BRHA) in Duhok.

### **Federal Iraq and the Kurdistan Region of Iraq: Two highly distinct environments for UNHCR operations**

A trait of the operating environment in Iraq is the sharp distinction between the context in federal Iraq, and that in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI). Federal Iraq is defined by widespread insecurity, political instability, and a weak central government with erratic authority over the provinces. In contrast, KRI is broadly stable, and governed by institutions widely viewed as legitimate by the local population. Where the aid community has often struggled to engage with the federal government, the Government of KRI is a more willing partner in international aid programmes.

This distinction is especially relevant in evaluating UNHCR operations, as KRI is host to almost all of Iraq’s 287,000 refugees. The context in KRI is also markedly more conducive to durable solutions, for both refugees and IDPs. As discussed in the findings below, however, this comparative advantage is partly blunted by other factors, such as the federal government’s legislative authority over refugee affairs, and the fact that the voluntary return of IDPs in KRI currently depends on improved security and conditions in areas of return outside of KRI.

### **Key policy frameworks for UNHCR in Iraq**

A number of global policy instruments are particularly relevant to UNHCR’s operations in Iraq:

- The Global Compact on Refugees (GCR) was adopted by the UN General Assembly in late 2018 and lays out a range of principles to improve global cooperation between host countries and international partners. Among its key objectives are the goal of enhancing the self-reliance of refugees by supporting their social and economic integration in areas of displacement, or areas of return or resettlement.

<sup>39</sup> UNHCR Spotlight Series, 2019, internal document.

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Although the GCR relates to refugees, its broad principles are viewed as applicable to all forcibly displaced groups, including IDPs.

- The Policy on UNHCR's Engagement in Situations of Internal Displacement, and the related Guidance Package, were introduced in September 2019. They articulate a set of prescriptions for UNHCR Country Offices in the context of IDP responses, with particular focus on coordination, programming, resource mobilization and communications.
- The 1998 Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement underpin UNHCR's IDP policy and provide guidelines for the delivery of humanitarian assistance to IDPs globally. These are applicable during internal displacement, as well during the return, resettlement or reintegration of IDPs.
- The Joint UNHCR–OCHA Note on Mixed Situations, dated April 2014, provides a framework to clarify the respective coordination roles of UNHCR and OCHA in contexts where refugees and other vulnerable groups are present.
- The Statement from the Principals of OCHA, UNHCR, WFP and UNICEF on Cash Assistance, dated December 2018, reaffirms the agencies' commitment to cash assistance as a key humanitarian response tool to crisis-affected populations. It also recognizes the need for better sector coordination and the need to support government systems to provide such assistance.

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# 3. Evaluation findings

## 3.1. Key Area of Inquiry 1: What progress has UNHCR made towards achieving intended results, and under what conditions has UNHCR managed to achieve these results?

Wherever possible, the ET has aimed to structure its assessment of UNHCR results in Iraq against the thematic headlines in its Multi-year Multi-partner Protection and Solutions Strategy (MYMP)<sup>40</sup>. Accordingly, the focus of the findings below is on:

- Government compliance with international standards and related capacity-building;
- Inclusion of PoC in national systems, access to services and response to their immediate needs;
- Self-reliance, livelihoods and support to hosting areas;
- Durable solutions: integration and returns.

### 3.1.1. Government compliance with international standards and related capacity-building

#### **Main findings**

1. Limited government engagement has affected UNHCR's ability to achieve results, particularly around state compliance with international standards, and the introduction of federal government policy in support of durable solutions.
2. Although UNHCR regards the federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (Fed-MoLSA) as a critical partner, the evaluation found that direct engagement has been severely constrained by chronic political instability. Despite this lack of engagement, UNHCR has been a lead actor in technical efforts to build linkages between humanitarian cash and social protection programmes.
3. UNHCR's civil documentation support programme, which hinges heavily on its cooperation with the federal Ministry of Interior (MoI), is a highly relevant example of constructive partnership with the federal government in Iraq. The number of IDPs reached through this programme, however, is limited in comparison with total need. There is also some evidence that the most urgent needs are not yet being prioritised.
4. Overall, the evaluation found significantly more government buy-in of capacity-building and compliance support activities in KRI than at federal level. With the exception of the federal MoI's Permanent Committee and Civil Affairs Directorate, whose uptake of UNHCR assistance has been significant, KRI government ministries were significantly more engaged than their federal counterparts in joint programmes with UNHCR.

<sup>40</sup> The MYMP was rolled out in Iraq in 2019, and relates to thematic areas of high strategic relevance to UNHCR operations in Iraq. Although this evaluation covers an earlier period - i.e 2018-2019—the ET has structured its findings in this report in a way that is consistent with the MYMP's strategic headlines. This does not detract from their relevance to the evaluation's Terms of Reference.

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**Finding 1. Limited government engagement has affected UNHCR’s ability to achieve results, particularly around state compliance with international standards, and the introduction of federal government policy in support of durable solutions.**

Evidence gathered through interviews indicates that, while there has been some effort to update Iraqi refugee law to meet international standards, the federal government has not considered this a priority. The federal Permanent Committee for Refugee Affairs of the Ministry of Interior (PC-MoI) gratefully acknowledged UNHCR’s advisory and capacity-building support received since 2005, but recognized that little or no progress had been made to date in updating Iraq’s legal framework for the protection of refugees.<sup>41</sup> Notably, a new draft refugee law could not be adopted in 2018 due to political instability surrounding parliamentary elections in May that year.

Several other informants outside of the federal government confirmed that the adoption of the bill was currently far removed from Baghdad’s immediate priorities. They also pointed to the very high turnover of federal line ministry staff in recent months, which undermined continuity in working relations with UNHCR. One member of UNHCR’s senior management in-country mentioned that securing high-level meetings with the key MoI officials was difficult, even when this was to comply with basic protocols, such as to introduce incoming UNHCR senior staff to their MoI counterpart.

The general lack of progress on refugee law at the federal level is an obstacle to the introduction of policy in support of durable solutions for refugees. In Erbil, for example, a senior official at KRI-MoP expressed full support for the Solutions Strategy for Refugees in KRI, jointly produced by KRI-MoP and UNHCR.<sup>42</sup> However, the KRI authorities could not formally endorse the strategy as some aspects of it – notably relating to residency rights – need to be supported by appropriate federal legislation.

At the federal Ministry of Migration and Displacement (MoMD), likewise, officials interviewed indicated that results in their cooperation with UNHCR had been constrained by MoMD’s limited political clout, and by the fact that official refugee and IDP policy in Iraq is often supplanted by *ad hoc* government decisions that run counter to it. A good case in point here is the federal government’s ongoing efforts to accelerate the closure of IDP camps, discussed in further detail below. All interviewees agreed that these efforts, which gained new momentum in mid-2019, created an environment in which government compliance with international standards and best practice regarding the return of IDPs was more difficult to achieve.

Although MoMD adopted a National Policy on Displacements in 2008,<sup>43</sup> a large number of informants among the aid agencies interviewed noted that the policy had little or no traction on the ground. This is most evident in MoMD’s inability to align with, or help promote the enforcement of, the Principled Returns Framework, which was formally endorsed by the Iraqi Council of Ministers in April 2018, and reflects international best practice.<sup>44</sup> Several informants also pointed out that MoMD has remained a minor actor in cash programming. This is despite Decree No. 262 of 2008, which authorizes it to provide IDPs with cash assistance.

<sup>41</sup> This mainly consists of the 1971 Political Refugee Law, as well as Ministerial Resolution 202-2001, which gives Palestinian refugees all benefits to which Iraqi nationals are entitled, and Law 21-2010 on the establishment of the federal MoMD.

<sup>42</sup> Comprehensive Solutions Strategy for Refugees in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq 2018–2020.

<sup>43</sup> The Policy incorporates the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacements, endorsed by the UN Commission on Human Rights in 1998.

<sup>44</sup> Like the National Policy on Displacements, the Principled Returns Framework incorporates the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacements.

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In line with this, several UNHCR informants noted that their relations with MoMD were regular and amicable, but not substantive enough to offer prospects for close cooperation on legal compliance workstreams.

**Finding 2. Although UNHCR regards Fed-MoLSA as a critical partner, the evaluation found that direct engagement has been severely constrained by chronic political instability. Despite this lack of engagement, UNHCR has been a lead actor in technical efforts to build linkages between humanitarian cash and social protection programmes.**

Since 2019, UNHCR's working relations with Fed-MoLSA have mostly been indirect, through either the World Bank or other development partners. Difficulties in engaging directly with this ministry owed mainly to the prevailing political situation, and its impact on the federal public service. Despite these challenges, all UNHCR interviewees in the evaluation considered Fed-MoLSA a critical actor in UNHCR's MYMP for Iraq. This view is set in the long-term perspective of enabling the eventual transfer of UNHCR's IDP caseload to MoLSA-run social protection schemes.

Several respondents in the evaluation noted that Fed-MoLSA's engagement with actors external to the Iraqi federal government was currently very limited. What few opportunities existed for bilateral consultations were taken up primarily by the World Bank, which Fed-MoLSA viewed as its key partner in social protection.

Despite its lack of direct engagement, UNHCR has been at the forefront of technical work to design a new beneficiary targeting tool that enables some crossover between cash-based humanitarian and social protection programming.<sup>45</sup> UNHCR's prominent involvement in this workstream has been in its capacity as co-lead of the Humanitarian CWG, which has involved close cooperation with the World Bank.

Multiple informants said that Fed-MoLSA's participation in meetings and working sessions on the new targeting tool had been minimal. According to two direct participants in related discussions, the rationale for pursuing this line of work, despite Fed-MoLSA's limited engagement, was that the new targeting tool might elicit Fed-MoLSA interest once its design had been completed. It would thus provide an improved basis for future cooperation.

The new targeting tool is based on Proxy Means Testing (PMT) but uses variables specific to humanitarian caseloads. It is designed to be suitable for humanitarian cash programmes, while also being aligned with the methodology used by the World Bank and others for social protection targeting.

Independently of the technical viability of the new tool, all informants stated that Fed-MoLSA's adoption of it in 2019 came with strong reservations. It remains tentative. At the time of interviews, the general sense among interviewees was that Fed-MoLSA was intent on returning to a status-based approach to beneficiary selection.

**Finding 3. UNHCR's civil documentation support programme, which hinges heavily on its cooperation with the federal Mol, is a highly relevant example of constructive partnership with the federal government in Iraq. The number of IDPs reached through this programme, however, is limited in comparison with total need. There is also some evidence that the most urgent needs are not yet being prioritized.**

<sup>45</sup> *Multi-purpose Cash Assistance in Iraq – Vulnerability Assessment and Targeting Review, 2019.*



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UNHCR's civil documentation support programme aims to address the needs of Iraq's many undocumented IDPs, by scaling up the capacity of the federal government to issue them with the required IDs. At operational level, the programme is underpinned by UNHCR's cooperation with the MoI's Civil Affairs Directorate (CAD), through which IDs have been issued to undocumented IDPs in five governorates so far.<sup>46</sup>

This programme addresses urgent and wide-ranging needs, as lack of civil documentation severely constrains freedom of movement for IDPs and undermines their safe and voluntary return to their areas of origin. It also prevents them from accessing public services.

UNHCR's technical and material assistance to the CAD has involved the provision of stationary and office supplies, technical support for the creation of a database and the establishment of mobile CAD teams to reach IDPs in hard-to-access areas, including camps. Between April and December 2019, the establishment of mobile CAD teams enabled the delivery of ID documents to 28,000 IDPs.<sup>47</sup>

Many informants flagged this programme as one of the most critical in UNHCR's portfolio. UNHCR is in the course of expanding it further, notably by providing support to increase the number of CAD teams and to rehabilitate four more offices in Ninewa.

At the time of data collection for this evaluation, significant organizational problems were noted on the ground. In Hasansham IDP Camp, near Erbil, one informant noted that demand for civil documentation currently far outstrips the existing capacity to supply it. As mentioned in Section 2 on context, an estimated 8.5 per cent of Iraq's 1 million displaced and returnee households (at 5–6 people per household) report some form of missing documentation.<sup>48</sup>

In Hasansham, UNHCR's implementing partner (IP) was struggling to cope with the surge in demand triggered by the service newly offered by mobile CAD teams. The IP, which plays a key supporting role in the project, reported that the number of applications for civil documentation could reach 500 on the days when CAD teams visited the camp. Among the problems noted by several interviewees working for the same IP, the most critical relates to capacity constraints in data entry and management.

One informant among UNHCR's IPs pointed out that most of the programme's beneficiaries so far are IDPs who have been successfully issued with security clearances by the relevant authorities. This source expressed the view that, beyond this "low-hanging fruit" category of beneficiaries, more focus should be placed on prioritizing the most vulnerable undocumented IDPs, such as the children of suspected ISIS affiliates, for whom birth certificates cannot currently be obtained.

<sup>46</sup> Erbil, Duhok, Ninewa, Sulaymaniyah and Kirkuk.

<sup>47</sup> Iraq – UNHCR Civil Documentation for IDPs, December 2019.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*

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**Finding 4.** Overall, the evaluation found significantly more government buy-in of capacity-building and compliance support activities in KRI than at federal level. With the exception of the CAD, whose uptake of UNHCR assistance has been significant, KRI ministries are significantly more engaged than their federal counterparts in joint programmes with UNHCR.

In marked contrast with government interviewees at the federal level, KRI officials approached for this evaluation had a detailed knowledge of UNHCR's activities and mandate. Senior officials at KRI-MoP and in the KRI JCC were all supportive of UNHCR and valued their cooperation with it. One prominent KRI official qualified this assessment slightly, by stressing the importance of broad-based consultations in joint decision-making. As an example, he contrasted the design of the Sustainable Solutions Strategy for Syrian Refugees in KRI, co-created by UNHCR and KRI Government officials, with the annual 3RP drafting process. In his view, the latter was participative whereas the drafting of former was not underpinned by broad-based engagement with KRI Government actors. This, according to him, partly explained why the Strategy had failed to meet endorsement. According to a UNHCR staff, positive steps are being taken to ensure greater involvement of Government stakeholders, including exploring the drafting of an Inter-Sector Solutions Strategy for refugees in KRI to be included in the 2020-2021 3RP Response Plan in consultation with KRI authorities. to .

KRI-MoP, which co-leads inter-agency meetings in the refugee response, as well as the drafting of the Iraq section of the 3RP, described a balanced and well-structured working relationship with UNHCR. Likewise, KRI-MoLSA was highly supportive of its joint activities with UNHCR, which are geared to capacity-building and the training of social workers for child protection. One KRI-MoLSA interviewee described this working relationship as "excellent", and wished that it could extend to the federal level of government.

Relevantly, all senior KRI officials interviewed for this evaluation stressed the importance of planning and setting refugee and IDP programmes in the broader context of the region's development plans and in the upcoming drafting of the KRI Vision 2030<sup>49</sup> specifically. They also all welcomed UNHCR's advisory and material input in protection and rights compliance by KRI actors, such as that provided in the context of camp management, or in the course of high-level bilateral engagement.

In its search for durable solutions, UNHCR has actively sought to leverage the more favourable operating environment in KRI. For example, it has done so by supporting scoping work for two long-term programmes instigated by the Association of Netherlands Municipalities (VNG.) The first of these aims to transform selected refugee and IDP camps into settlements integrated in their urban surroundings. The second aims to improve public services and job prospects for both host and displaced communities in selected locations.

Although the regional government has not formally endorsed the Sustainable Solutions Strategy as discussed above, KRI Government interviewees expressed support for the principles laid out in the document. As most informants in the evaluation noted, refugees in KRI are comparatively well integrated socially and economically.

<sup>49</sup> <https://www.iq.undp.org/content/iraq/en/home/presscenter/pressreleases/2020/01/kurdistan-region-vision-of-2030-.html>

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On the other hand, all informants queried on the subject stressed that the environment was notably more constraining for IDPs in KRI. This is mainly because security concerns raised by the local government in relation to the possible affiliation of some IDPs to ISIS. The return of ethnic Arabs to disputed border areas between KRI and federal Iraq is also an unresolved issue.

Within these constraints, both UNHCR and KRI informants in the evaluation noted that IDPs did, for the most part, enjoy freedom of movement, as well as access to basic services and the local job market. This was confirmed in FGDs by IDPs themselves. Other interviewees credited UNHCR's protection and advocacy work for the fact that IDPs in KRI enjoy significantly better due process and judicial guarantees than those in federal Iraq.

### 3.1.2. Inclusion of PoC in national systems and response to their immediate needs

#### **Main findings**

5. UNHCR's response to the immediate needs of protracted refugees in KRI was largely effective over the period under review. However, growing budgetary constraints are having an impact on the scope, quality and sustainability of services provided in camps.
6. UNHCR's response to the sudden-onset influx of Syrian refugees in October 2019 was effective and timely, and was underpinned by strong coordination with KRI authorities. However, the evaluation found that downstream communication to NGO participants was adversely affected by coordination overlaps between UNHCR and OCHA.

Given the scale of UNHCR humanitarian operations in Iraq, the findings below are necessarily limited, and have been prioritized on the basis of their relevance in terms of the MYMP. Some of these findings are cross-referenced and discussed in further detail under Key Area of Inquiry 2 in Section 3.2.

**Finding 5. UNHCR's response to the immediate needs of protracted refugees in KRI was largely effective over the period under review. However, growing budgetary constraints are having an impact on the scope, quality, and sustainability of services provided in camps.**

Despite the lack of an appropriate legal framework, as described above, key informants generally viewed UNHCR's response to the protracted refugee emergency in Iraq as a successful operation. The examples most often cited for this success related to a frank and constructive relationship with KRI authorities, including on protection issues, and to proactive efforts to support the integration of refugees.

About 40 per cent of KRI's refugees are based in camps, and 60 per cent live out of camps. The refugee population in KRI generally enjoys freedom of movement, as well as access to basic services and to the local job market.

Pre-existing research suggests UNHCR's response to out-of-camp refugee needs is appropriate. Although 80 per cent of refugees living out of camps have some form of employment, income from this alone is not enough to meet

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the needs of most households.<sup>50</sup> To minimize their reliance on negative coping mechanisms, UNHCR provides the most vulnerable of them with Multi-purpose Cash Assistance (MPCA). The average number of refugee households receiving MPCA in 2019 was 800 per month.<sup>51</sup> A Multi-sector Needs Assessment (MSNA) conducted by IMPACT in December 2019 shows that 89 per cent of those who received this assistance found it useful.<sup>52</sup> The cash grants were used primarily for rent (47 per cent of the grant on average), food (27 per cent) and debt repayment (8 per cent).<sup>53</sup> In almost all cases (98 per cent), beneficiaries spent the full amount of the grant in the month that followed their receipt of it.

Refugee camps in KRI are managed by governorate authorities, under the umbrella of the JCC.<sup>54</sup> Camp managers interviewed for the evaluation reported good working relations with UNHCR and its IPs on the ground. The main defining features of this relationship were responsiveness in problem-solving and an open and inclusive approach to decision-making.

In FGDs, camp-based refugees in Erbil Governorate said that about 50 per cent of the camp's male population earned an income. Of these, about 90 per cent are daily workers. All employment is informal and it does not provide sufficient revenue to meet household needs. Some FGD participants relied on remittances from relatives; others had contracted debt.

Two events noted during the evaluation pointed to the growing operational constraints on camp management that have resulted from declining aid flows over the period under the review. The first is the introduction of targeted food security in refugee camps – assistance previously delivered on a blanket basis. The second was the suspension or phasing-out of United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) incentives to teachers, including in refugee camps. Partly as a result of this, participants in FGDs noted that the quality of education dispensed in camps had dropped significantly over the previous six months. This problem was not specific to refugee camps. In one IDP camp visited in Erbil Governorate, teaching was provided by a volunteer teacher in 3 daily shifts to 300 children each.

**Finding 6. UNHCR's response to the sudden-onset influx of Syrian refugees in October 2019 was effective and timely, and was underpinned by strong coordination with the KRI authorities. However, the evaluation found that downstream communication to NGO participants was adversely affected by coordination overlaps between UNHCR and OCHA.**

UNHCR's capacity to respond to sudden-onset cross-border influxes in Iraq was put to the test in October 2019, when almost 12,000 Syrian refugees arrived in Duhok Governorate over a period of 2 weeks.<sup>55</sup> In the first week of this emergency, border crossings averaged 1,200 per day.<sup>56</sup>

<sup>50</sup> IMPACT/UNHCR, 2019, *Multi-sector Needs Assessment (MSNA) IV of Refugees Living out of Formal Camps in the KRI, May*

<sup>51</sup> This is based on an average over three months (April–May).

<sup>52</sup> IMPACT/UNHCR, 2019, *Comprehensive Baseline, Midline and Endline Assessment of UNHCR Monthly MPCA Distributions to Out-of-camp Refugees in Iraq, First Midline Report, December*.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>54</sup> At governorate level, the agencies most actively involved are EJCC and BHRA in Duhok.

<sup>55</sup> UNHCR, *Iraq Flash Update No. 4, 26 October 2019*.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*

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External informants, including the KRI Government and two donors, agreed that UNHCR's response to this event was timely and effective. Donors were regularly updated on unfolding operations. KRI officials noted that the response was closely coordinated with the Kurdish regional government, both in Erbil and in Dohuk governorates.

Refugee registration began in a timely manner, four days after the influx began on 14 October.<sup>57</sup> By 22 October, UNHCR had dispatched core relief items to the border, and selected IPs had deployed teams to border crossing points to conduct protection monitoring. Two existing camp locations, Bardarash and Gawilan, were identified to host the newly arrived refugees. By 9 November, slightly more than 3,000 tents had been set up in both locations.<sup>58</sup>

By late January, the number of refugees crossing from north-east Syria had reached almost 20,000, but daily arrivals had declined to 46 per day on average.<sup>59</sup> The emergency was effectively over, and the response moved to a consolidation phase.

While the evaluation found that participants in the UNHCR-led response held largely positive perceptions of it, one donor reported that NGOs had felt a sense of confusion and a lack of direction in the early stages. One NGO with direct involvement in operations in Bardarash Camp shared this view, adding that NGO personnel on the ground in Duhok were often unclear whether the response was led by UNHCR or OCHA. This source added that UNHCR took time to assert its mandated leadership over the response. According to one UNHCR source who was queried on the subject, this was due mainly to the slow internal communication of UNHCR senior management at national and regional levels. By the time these internal consultations were completed, OCHA had already convened a stakeholder meeting in Duhok, at the which the ongoing refugee influx was the main item on the agenda, and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) had deployed staff along the border to monitor crossings.

The existence side-by-side of UNHCR- and OCHA-led coordination systems in the confined operational space of this response was said by the NGO source to have caused unnecessary and sometimes conflicting overlaps in information management. According to this source, this was compounded by the further involvement of IOM in border monitoring, an activity that UNHCR is mandated to conduct.

<sup>57</sup> UNHCR, *Iraq Flash Update No. 3, 22 October 2019*.

<sup>58</sup> *Inter-agency Operational Update, Iraq, 11 November 2019*.

<sup>59</sup> *Inter-agency Operational Update, Iraq, 27 January 2020*.

### 3.1.3. Self-reliance, livelihoods and support of hosting areas

#### **Main finding**

7. Owing to budgetary constraints, UNHCR assistance to host communities was curtailed in 2019 and is being further phased out in the 2020 Humanitarian Response Plan. Despite the importance of securing their active support in the integration of displaced groups, the evaluation found that some host communities in KRI continued to hold significant grievances about IDP and refugee programmes there.

When queried on the subject, UNHCR staff in the evaluation acknowledged the importance of minimizing the perception of any disparity in assistance to displaced and host communities. In 2019, however, protection and assistance support to host communities was reduced. In the 2019 Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP), the target size of the host community caseload for protection was 130,000, compared with half a million for IDPs and 370,000 for returnees.<sup>60</sup> This was the result of a collective decision taken at HCT level, and affected the entire response, not just UNHCR programmes. According to one UNHCR respondent, plans to include host community households in its 2019 Winter Cash Assistance programme were cancelled later that year.

Although host communities are identified as vulnerable in the 2020 Humanitarian Needs Overview (HNO),<sup>61</sup> budget constraints have, likewise, led the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) not to include this group among those targeted in this year's HRP.<sup>62</sup>

Owing to security and other constraints, the ET was able to conduct only one FGD with host community members, in Erbil Governorate, KRI. Although limited in scope, findings from this FGD are consistent with those of the 2020 HNO, which point to the continued vulnerability of host communities. They are also in line with the IMPACT MSNA conducted in mid-2019, which suggested declining levels of social cohesion among refugees and host communities in Erbil Governorate over time.<sup>63</sup> Relevantly, the FGD conducted for this evaluation also pointed to a situation similar to that described in KRI in prior studies by the Joint IDP Profiling Service (JIPS, 2016)<sup>64</sup> and the World Bank (2015).<sup>65</sup> In this, they suggest that vulnerabilities among host communities in KRI, and the potential for competition with displaced groups over limited aid resources, have remained largely unresolved in recent years.

The FGD for this evaluation was conducted among host community members in Kaznazan, KRI. All participants were receiving support from a local UNHCR-funded community centre, which also provides assistance to IDPs and refugees. Members of the group shared a common trait with refugees in KRI: the overwhelming majority rented their accommodation.<sup>66</sup> They complained that rents had gone up since the arrival of IDPs and refugees in the area.

<sup>60</sup> HRP Iraq 2019, January.

<sup>61</sup> In order to mitigate the impact of budget constraints on programming aimed at host communities, the Protection Cluster plans to reinforce linkages between HRP interventions and third-party social cohesion programmes, notably those conducted by stabilization actors, to further support the needs of host communities. In addition, host communities also benefit from the Cluster's legal assistance, Child Protection and SGBV activities. Sources: Interviews with UNHCR staff, and HNO Iraq, 2020, Humanitarian Programme Cycle, issued November 2019.

<sup>62</sup> National Protection Cluster, HRP 2020: Guidance Note for Partners, January.

<sup>63</sup> IMPACT/UNHCR, 2019, MSNA IV of Refugees Living out of Formal Camps in the KRI, May.

<sup>64</sup> Displacement as Challenge and Opportunity – Urban Profile: Refugees, IDPs and Host Community, Erbil Governorate, KRI, April.

<sup>65</sup> World Bank, 2015, The Kurdistan Region of Iraq: Assessing the Economic and Social Impact of the Syrian Conflict and ISIS.

<sup>66</sup> Eighty-seven per cent of refugees in KRI rent their shelter (IMPACT/UNHCR, 2019, MSNA IV of Refugees Living out of Formal Camps in the KRI, May).

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Like refugees in KRI, 67 FGD host community members reported economic vulnerability as their main concern. Well-paying jobs had become harder to find since the arrival of refugees and IDPs. Most participants relied heavily on the UNHCR-funded community centre to secure daily work. Although readily available, this work did not allow them to meet household requirements, even when combined with that of other household members. Some participants in the FGD had approached the district authorities for support; they were referred to UNHCR.

Participants in the FGD said they bore no ill-will towards refugees and IDPs. Nonetheless, an amount of bitterness was expressed, as their perception was that these groups were better supported than the host community. Their grievances were directed mainly at the district and governorate authorities and, to a lesser extent, at UNHCR.

### 3.1.4. Comprehensive solutions: Integration and returns

#### **Main findings**

8. UNHCR's efforts to support IDPs in federal Iraq with options other than return, for example by supporting their social and economic integration in their areas of displacement, have been inconclusive so far. This is due primarily to an adverse operating environment.
9. Overall, UNHCR's operational capabilities in protection are substantial, widely recognized and strategically prioritized in line with durable solutions. However, the evaluation found evidence of under-resourcing in community-based protection, despite its potential to foster inclusion in hosting areas and areas of return.

**Finding 8. UNHCR's efforts to support IDPs in federal Iraq with options other than return, for example by supporting their social and economic integration in their areas of displacement, have been inconclusive so far. This is due primarily to an adverse operating environment.**

As discussed in further detail in Findings 12 and 13, UNHCR has shown strong leadership in advocacy efforts to prevent the forced or unwanted return of IDPs to their areas of origin. However, the views collected from participants in this evaluation, as well as secondary source analyses,<sup>68</sup> indicate limited progress and opportunities in providing IDPs with other options, including long-term social and economic integration in their primary or secondary areas of displacement.

Regarding the approximately 335,000 IDPs who are currently hosted in federal Iraq's 67 remaining camps,<sup>69</sup> the main assumption among interviewees was that, despite the efforts of UNHCR and others to advocate for the voluntary nature of IDP returns, government pressure will continue over the coming months for camps in Ninewa and other governorates to close down. This view is reflected in the 2020 HNO.<sup>70</sup> In these circumstances, opportunities for the integration of camp-based IDPs seem very limited.

<sup>67</sup> IMPACT/UNHCR, 2019, *MSNA IV of Refugees Living out of Formal Camps in the KRI, May*.

<sup>68</sup> See, for example, *HNO Iraq, 2020, Humanitarian Programme Cycle, issued November 2019*.

<sup>69</sup> *IOM DTM, Master List Report 114, January–February 2020*.

<sup>70</sup> *HNO Iraq, 2020, Humanitarian Programme Cycle, issued November 2019*.

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As regards the 1 million IDPs living out of camps in federal Iraq, prospects are only slightly brighter. Many of these have undergone secondary or tertiary displacements – some as a result of past camp closures – and almost 113,000 are housed in critical shelters.<sup>71</sup> For the most vulnerable among these, a series of factors make long-term integration particularly difficult. They include a lack of local livelihoods opportunities,<sup>72</sup> a lack of government capacity to implement its own pro-IDP policies, and continued obstacles to obtaining residence and security clearances.<sup>73</sup>

In 2019, UNHCR conducted three rounds of MPCA to out-of-camp IDPs, covering both federal Iraq and KRI. For federal Iraq, the average number of beneficiary households was 468 per round.<sup>74</sup> According to assessments, this assistance was useful in meeting urgent needs, including debt repayment.<sup>75</sup> However, it was not designed for, nor did it have any reported impact on, livelihoods prospects or the longer-term integration of recipient households.

Alongside protection activities including civil documentation support, Protection Cluster assistance planned for out-of-camp IDPs at the end of 2019 (in view of the 2020 HRP cycle) was tightly targeted at the most vulnerable among them.<sup>76</sup> This assistance includes cash-for-protection and a number of social cohesion interventions to be delivered via QIPs. Due mainly to budget constraints, the HCT took the decision to limit interventions aimed at this group in the 2020 and 2019 HRPs to emergency assistance only. Long-term integration, peaceful coexistence and social cohesion were seen as part of the remit of development actors.<sup>77</sup>

Three interviewees referenced the MADE51 project, a global UNHCR initiative for which a scoping exercise was conducted in Iraq in mid-2019. The project would aim to create job opportunities for IDPs (and refugees) in Iraq, by supporting handicraft cooperatives. While KRI may provide an appropriate environment for this type of intervention, it is doubtful that the current security context in federal Iraq would enable it to be mainstreamed much beyond the pilot stage. The project has not so far progressed beyond the scoping stage.

As discussed in further detail below, UNHCR engagement in multi-partner recovery programmes that might support the long-term integration of IDPs in federal Iraq remains limited so far.

<sup>71</sup> IOM DTM, *Master List Report 114, January–February 202.0*

<sup>72</sup> HNO Iraq, 2020, *Humanitarian Programme Cycle, issued November 2019.*

<sup>73</sup> For example, MoMD's 2008 National Displacement Policy, which formally asserts IDP rights to freedom of movement, social care, job opportunities, and protection against discrimination and arbitrary displacement, has so far failed to gain traction.

<sup>74</sup> Based on data published in IMPACT/UNHCR, *Post-Distribution Monitoring: UNHCR Cash Assistance to IDPs, Batch 1 Report, November 2019, and Q2 Report, December 2019.*

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>76</sup> IDPs targeted for this assistance totalled 154,000 people. Source: National Protection Cluster, *HRP 2020: Guidance Note for Partners, January.*

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*



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**Finding 9.** Overall, UNHCR’s operational capabilities in protection are substantial, widely recognized and strategically prioritized in line with durable solutions. However, in both federal Iraq and KRI, the evaluation found evidence of under-resourcing in community-based protection (CBP), despite its recognized potential to foster inclusion in hosting areas and areas of return.

The operational capabilities developed by UNHCR and the Protection Cluster to address protection needs in Iraq were described by most external respondents in this evaluation as extensive and sophisticated. In the area of protection monitoring particularly, informants were unanimous in acknowledging UNHCR’s substantial capacity.

In line with a needs-based approach, UNHCR does not formally prioritize interventions on the basis of IDP categories (i.e. in-camp, out-of-camp or returnees). However, interviewees reported UNHCR’s intention to substantially reinforce protection activities in areas of return in 2020. A comparison of targeted caseloads in the 2019 and 2020 HRPs bears this out.<sup>78</sup> This scale-up is consistent with the HNO’s assessment that returnees are, by far, the largest group in acute need in Iraq.<sup>79</sup> In terms of durable solutions, it is justified by the fact that returns are a more likely long-term scenario than integration for many IDPs in federal Iraq.

While UNHCR’s overall protection priorities in Iraq are both needs-based and strategically set, the evaluation found some evidence of an exception to this in the area of CBP. In UNHCR and UN planning documents for Iraq, frequent reference is made to CBP as a strategically key activity. The 2019 HRP mentions CBP as one of the five pillars that underpin the Protection Cluster’s response strategy. In its guidance note released ahead of the 2020 HRP, the Cluster states an intention to scale up CBP activities.<sup>80</sup> In 2019, these activities covered 24 districts in 8 governorates.<sup>81</sup> The three governorates most highly prioritized were Ninewa, Anbar and Salah al-Din, which are those with the highest number of returning IDPs to date.<sup>82</sup> The choice of these priority governorates reflects UNHCR’s awareness of the potential for CBP to mitigate protection risks among returnees, and thereby to support voluntary returns as a durable solution. Indeed, in interviews with UNHCR staff, unanimous support was expressed for the principles of inclusion and accountability that underpin CBP, and for their potential to foster social cohesion.

Nonetheless, alongside these views was the sense among UNHCR field staff that CBP was under-resourced. Two interviewees provided specific examples of instances in which CBP programmes had been scaled back or deprioritized in terms of resourcing. One interviewee described UNHCR’s CBP programme as “a box-ticking” exercise in need of more substantive thought leadership. Current interventions lacked consistency in operational direction, according to this informant. Asked to give an overview of the programme he was in charge of, one UNHCR staff member described activities that were generally less developed or sophisticated than those prescribed in UNHCR guidelines on the subject.<sup>83</sup> Activities requiring self-organization at the community level were generally limited. UNHCR staff queried on the subject pointed to adverse contextual factors in the roll-out of CBP programmes, including widespread tribal/communal tensions, which create mistrust and make community mobilization extremely

<sup>78</sup> In the 2019 HRP, returnees accounted for 37 per cent of the Protection Cluster’s 1 million target caseload. In the 2020 HRP, returnees amount to 56 per cent of the Protection Cluster’s 1.6 million target caseload.

<sup>79</sup> HNO Iraq, 2020, Humanitarian Programme Cycle, issued November 2019.

<sup>80</sup> National Protection Cluster, HRP 2020: Guidance Note for Partners, January.

<sup>81</sup> CBP Activities in Iraq – 2019 Achievements and 2020 Needs.

<sup>82</sup> OM DTM, Master List Report 113, November–December 2019.

<sup>83</sup> See, for example, UNHCR, Protection Policy Paper – Understanding Community-based Protection, Division of International Protection, 2013.

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challenging. While these conditions are certainly challenging, other agencies involved in CBP in Iraq must also grapple with them. These agencies generally view communal tensions as the very justification for CBP, not as obstacles that prevent the implementation of related activities.<sup>84</sup>

Despite the Protection Cluster's intention to scale up CBP in 2020, the budget allocated still amounts to a relatively modest 7 per cent of the total planned for the Cluster's entire protection response in Iraq.<sup>85</sup> This compares with 13 per cent on legal assistance for civil documentation and 18 per cent on general protection awareness-raising.<sup>86</sup>

One UNHCR staff member queried on the subject explained that UNHCR's approach to financial risk mitigation severely limited opportunities to partner with the type of small, grass-roots NGOs that CBP depends on. This is despite the fact that "localization", or the increased inclusion of local partners in humanitarian operations, was selected by the HCT as one of three workstreams to be prioritized in the 2019 HRP.<sup>87</sup>

<sup>84</sup> See, for example, the ICRC Durable Returns Programme in Iraq.

<sup>85</sup> National Protection Cluster, *HRP 2020: Guidance Note for Partners*, January.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>87</sup> *HRP Iraq 2019*, February.

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### 3.2. Key Area of Inquiry 2: How strategically has UNHCR positioned itself in the country context, and what are the key factors driving strategic decision-making?

#### **Main findings**

10. UNHCR's co-leadership of Priority Working Group 1 (PWG1) in the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) is valued, and has the potential to yield positive outcomes. This is despite the fact that prospects for the success of the UNSDCF as a whole are limited under the current circumstances.
11. In its advocacy and messaging over specific protection issues, UNHCR is widely recognized for its technical expertise and its use of solid evidence to support its positions. However, the evaluation found that stakeholders did not always fully understand the rationales that underpin UNHCR messaging. This, as well as a perceived lack of alignment in messaging between UNHCR and the HC/RC, can limit the impact of its advocacy work.
12. At field level, UNHCR is widely recognized as a determined leader in advocacy and engagement with governorate authorities. There is some evidence that this key strength is further optimized when senior management support is available.
13. In the pursuit of durable solutions, UNHCR consults on a routine basis with a wide range of development actors in Iraq. However, substantive bilateral engagement is mostly confined to the World Bank and UNDP. In the case of these two actors, the evaluation found that UNHCR engagement has so far not yet led to actual co-programming.
14. UNHCR's participation in the CWG and the Social Protection Forum have yielded dividends at the technical level. However, progress on the technical side has so far not driven substantive change in social protection reform.
15. Following UNHCR's withdrawal from the co-leadership of the CWG, cash actors in Iraq were unsure of UNHCR's intentions regarding the mainstreaming of a common cash system in the response.
16. As a conceptual model, Area-based Programming for Protection and Solutions (A2PS) has potential benefits, and has been well received by UNHCR staff. However, the evaluation could not find evidence of how it measurably complements, or adds value to, programme delivery models already in place on the ground.

**Finding 10. UNHCR's co-leadership of PWG1 in the UNSDCF is valued, and has the potential to yield positive outcomes. This is despite the fact that prospects for the success of the UNSDCF as a whole are limited under the current circumstances.**

The UNSDCF is driven by four thematic PWGs composed of the relevant UN agencies and national partners. UNHCR co-leads PWG 1, which focuses on Achieving Social Cohesion, Protection and Inclusion. Furthermore, through UNHCR engagement in the PWGs, some linkages – albeit superficial as discussed in the following paragraph- have also been established between the UNSDCF and development actors on the one hand and UNHCR and the refugee coordination mechanism, the 3RP, on the other. In interviews, all PWG members credited UNHCR for its role as a convener, facilitator and authoritative participant. Several noted that UNHCR had directly contributed to the quality, constructiveness and relevance of discussions held during working sessions.

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In Iraq, the UNSDCF has had a difficult start. The Common Country Analysis (CCA), which was meant to inform the design of the Framework, was recently re-drafted at the request of the United Nations Development Coordination Office (DCO), which oversees the process, and the current draft is now seen as a living document which will be regularly updated. The first draft of the Framework itself was viewed by most interviewees in the evaluation as weak, and far removed from the local operating environment. In addition, several UNHCR respondents in the evaluation indicated that attention to refugee issues in the UNSDCF was largely limited to passing references in the process, such as the CCA, rather than to more meaningfully driving strategic and operational collaboration between UNHCR, the 3RP and development actors around refugee response, inclusion and integration under the UNSDCF umbrella.

Future prospects for the UNSDCF in Iraq are uncertain. According to all interviewees queried on the subject, the Framework is destined to produce poor results overall, as the necessary participation and endorsement of the relevant federal line ministries has so far not been forthcoming.

Despite these severe limitations, many interviewees saw PWGs as filling a real gap in the United Nations' coordination architecture in Iraq. As standalone platforms, the PWGs were seen as out of the fray of day-to-day operations, and thought to enable more strategic and forward-looking discussions than those typically held at cluster or inter-cluster level. In anticipation of the possible deactivation of the clusters in 2021, in particular, PWGs were viewed as potentially well suited platforms for advancing humanitarian-development nexus debates, and in turn facilitate UN-wide consultations on transitioning from emergency to development programming. For UNHCR specifically, PWGs might hold potential for fostering much-needed dialogue and collaboration between UNHCR and development actors around refugee and other PoCs response, integration and inclusion. As discussed below, however, the limited operational footprint of development actors on the ground is among the key challenges to meaningfully advancing this cooperation. In this context, UNHCR's continued co-leadership of PWG 1 was welcomed by all group members approached on the subject.

**Finding 11. In its advocacy and messaging over specific protection issues, UNHCR is widely recognized for its technical expertise, and its use of solid evidence to support its positions. However, the evaluation found that stakeholders did not always fully understand the rationales that underpin UNHCR messaging. This, as well as a perceived lack of alignment in messaging between UNHCR and the HC/RC, can limit the impact of its advocacy work.**

While the quality of UNHCR's technical support to the clusters was widely recognized, its role in mounting and leading HCT-wide advocacy efforts was seen as less conclusive. Two examples are worth mentioning here. One is UNHCR's response to the Government's drive to close IDP camps in Ninewa in the second half of 2019. Another is its attempt to build a unified HCT position on the status of al-Karama Camp, in Salah al-Din, over the same period.

The messaging initially recommended by UNHCR and the Protection Cluster on camp closures and IDP returns involved relatively strong language, including use of the term "forced returns". Following HCT discussions, however, UNHCR eventually deferred to the HC/RC's preference for milder language. All the while, it continued to engage with HCT members, notably by developing an agreed terminology on returns, as well as decision-support tools to assist in the classification of voluntary and coerced or forced returns (see below).

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Since the RC/HC leads the IDP response, UNHCR's role was confined to advocacy, and the provision of expert opinion to the HCT. But several stakeholders interviewed were unfamiliar with the HCT's decision-making processes, and unclear about the reasons why UNHCR had deferred to the RC/HC with such apparent readiness. About half felt that, in this particular case, UNHCR should have persevered in securing broad-based support for its comparatively more firm opinion on the matter. One of them, a donor, was critical of the fact that NGOs in the Protection Cluster, having rallied around the more robust position initially advocated by UNHCR, were then left to support it on their own.

Broadly the same dynamic was observed in UNHCR's advocacy around al-Karama Camp. In October 2019, UNHCR alerted the RC/HC and the HCT to severe restrictions of movement on the camp's population, which is mainly composed of women and children with perceived affiliations with ISIS. In response, the RC/HC authorized an inter-agency mission to al-Karama, to inform a formal HCT position on the issue. However, this mission could not take place until three months later, in late January 2020, owing to security and access constraints. In the intervening period, the perception consolidated among many stakeholders that UNHCR was advocating for the suspension of humanitarian aid to al-Karama, on the grounds that it did not qualify as an IDP camp.<sup>88</sup>

Contrary to this firm stance, the report on the Inter-cluster Mission to al-Karama, submitted for approval in February 2020, recommended that humanitarian aid to the camp continue. In this case, again, several interviewees in the evaluation expressed the view that messaging on al-Karama had lacked consistency, and that UNHCR, as Protection Cluster lead, should have been more clear and assertive in its recommendation of an advocacy line.

UNHCR protection staff queried on the subject pointed out that UNHCR has no formal mandate or final word of say on advocacy lines relating to IDPs. Decisions are taken collegially at HCT level, with final authority vested in the RC/HC. Had UNHCR maintained any of its original postures on either camp closure or al-Karama, the risk of a public rift within the HCT might have arisen. This might have undermined its collective influence in Iraq. While in these cases, the decision to defer to the HCT and the RC/HC was therefore right, the evidence indicates that it was not well understood by a significant number of stakeholders.

This is despite the fact that the Cluster's advocacy positions are generally supported by robust and ample evidence, which is systematically gathered and rigorously analysed. Some of the most notable examples of this work are the Protection Cluster's periodically updated dashboard on camp departures,<sup>89</sup> as well as the Incident Tracking Matrix for IDP camps that it co-designed with the CCCM Cluster.<sup>90</sup> In terms of analysis, the decision support tool jointly produced by the Protection, CCCM and Shelter/Non-food Item Clusters to assess IDP returns deserves mention, as do other tools used to guide recommendations made to the Inter-Cluster Coordination Group on al-Karama.<sup>91</sup>

<sup>88</sup> According to two sources approached in follow-up interviews, UNHCR's position was in fact not fully formed at this early point in discussions. Although UNHCR did put forward the option of suspending or curtailing assistance to al-Karama Camp, this fell short of a formal recommendation, according to these sources. The thrust of UNHCR's message on al-Karama was that a clear and unified HCT position was urgently needed on aid delivery to the camp. This was especially true as an extension of the camp was envisaged by the authorities at the time, and it raised the question of whether UN actors should assist in it.

<sup>89</sup> Camp Departure Follow-up Survey – Analysis of the Main Protection Concerns, last updated November 2019.

<sup>90</sup> Civilian Character of Camps – Incident Tracking Matrix, 2019 Final Report.

<sup>91</sup> Report on Inter-Cluster Mission to al-Karama with Recommendations Based on the Application of the Common Framework and Do No Harm guidance tool, Final Draft for ICCG Endorsement, February 2020.

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The analytical rigour on display in the above documents may be gained from being supported by a more forward-leaning approach to stakeholder engagement in Baghdad, aimed at securing continued stakeholder understanding and buy-in of UNHCR's messaging on al-Karama, even as this messaging evolved over time. Tellingly, one donor who sits on the HCT stated that, three months after the onset of discussions, they were still unsure what the crux of the issue was on al-Karama. At the time of the interview for the evaluation (late January), this donor expressed relief that UNHCR planned to hold a donor briefing on al-Karama.

**Finding 12. At field level, UNHCR is widely recognized as a determined leader in advocacy and engagement on issues related to IDPs and refugees with governorate authorities. There is some evidence that this key strength is further optimized when senior management support is available .**

At field level, external stakeholders generally saw UNHCR's advocacy with governorate authorities as resolute and forward-leaning. In the case of field office engagement with the local authorities in Duhok, Erbil and Mosul, relations were typically viewed as frank and constructive. In the context of camp consolidation in Ninewa, notably, several interviewees felt the Mosul field office's engagement with governorate authorities had been decisive in obtaining the six-month postponement of the closure of Salamiyah and Hamam al-Alil IDP Camps, in view of better preparing for the relocation of their residents.

One member of UNHCR's field staff who had been present in Iraq in the final weeks of the Mosul response (2016–2017) mentioned that field-based advocacy work at that time was agile and highly responsive, and involved the Country Representative being on standby for visits to the field on short notice, to support field offices in their ad hoc engagement with local authorities. The same staff member said that coordination between field staff and senior management on rapid response advocacy interventions was still very good, but viewed this earlier period as a high point in office-wide teamwork in this area.

**Finding 13. In the pursuit of durable solutions, UNHCR consults on a routine basis with a wide range of development actors in Iraq. However, substantive bilateral engagement is mostly confined to the World Bank and UNDP. In the case of these two actors, the evaluation found that UNHCR engagement has so far not yet led to actual co-programming.**

Apart from a proposal that UNHCR and UNDP are jointly working on for the Kuwaiti Fund, the evaluation could find no example of current or planned joint programmes between UNHCR and a development actor. This is despite the growing donor demand for such programmes, to assist in expanding from emergency to recovery and development programming. The evaluation found that the two development actors with which UNHCR interacts the most, outside of cluster co-leadership, were UNDP and the World Bank.

Regarding UNDP, consultations with UNHCR at programme level have focused mainly on shelter, where steps have been taken to coordinate activities by both agencies. UNDP, as well as other development actors, sits on Shelter Cluster meetings.

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Beyond this, interviewees identified a range of opportunities for potentially closer working relations in transitioning to recovery and development. One was civil documentation support, where UNDP's involvement may provide UNHCR with an exit pathway. Another was social protection in KRI, where UNDP is already active, and took steps to introduce KRI-MoLSA to the new targeting system co-created by UNHCR. UNDP has recently signed an MOU with KRI-MoP for the drafting of Vision 2030, KRI's long-term development plan. According to a senior KRI-MoP official, this may present an opportunity for UNHCR to introduce a durable solutions element in the plan. With the goal of fostering a common outlook on solutions, another KRI Government interviewee expressed the hope that UNDP might effectively co-lead the drafting process for the resilience component of the Iraq chapter of 3RP. So far, according to this and other respondents in the evaluation, UNDP's co-leadership role is nominal, and does not entail its attendance in 3RP working sessions.

In the case of the World Bank, programme-level cooperation with UNHCR has essentially focused on the new targeting system they co-designed for cash programming and social protection. World Bank interviewees underscored their heavy reliance on UNHCR data for vulnerability assessments, notably in the context of the Displacement Matrix which the World Bank is developing. Given the limited presence of development agencies on the ground, they pointed out that data-gathering was one critical area where UNHCR could support them further. According to interviewees, opportunities for this have been discussed, notably with a view to joint research and policy analysis. However, these talks have so far not led to specific actions. The World Bank and UNHCR are both members of the Social Protection Forum, where other potential avenues for cooperation have been discussed (see Finding 14).

**Finding 14. UNHCR's participation in the CWG and the Social Protection Forum have yielded dividends at the technical level. However, progress on the technical side has so far not enabled substantive change in social protection reform.**

CWG members interviewed for this evaluation were appreciative of UNHCR's tenure as co-lead of the Group over the past five years. In that time, the CWG has made good progress in harmonizing cash programming processes, including assessments and post-distribution monitoring. With significant technical input and championing from UNHCR, it has also been instrumental in designing the new targeting tool mentioned above.<sup>92</sup>

While this new methodology has now been officially adopted, the evaluation found that many stakeholders continue to have reservations about it. Aside from a lack of buy-in from Fed-MoLSA, the new tool has garnered limited support within the CWG. Two members of the Group indicated that they had not been consulted on its design, and had been reluctant to endorse it. Outside of the CWG, some UN agencies expressed interest in the targeting workstream, but remained sceptical of the targeting tool in its current form. One UN interviewee stated a preference for a conventional PMT approach to targeting. Others pointed out that the new tool would enable only about 5 per cent of the IDP population to qualify for social protection support, and questioned its usefulness on this basis. In summary, the general sense that emerged from these interviews was that broad-based support of the tool was not yet present, and required further consultations with partners.

<sup>92</sup> MPCA & Vulnerability Assessment: Combined 2020 Guidelines, CWG, January 2020.

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Alongside these developments, the Social Protection Forum, which is the other main coordination platform for this sector, has also had setbacks. As well as UNHCR, the Forum is attended by the World Bank and WFP, and is meant to provide a venue for joint policy consultations with Fed-MoLSA. As noted earlier, however, the current political climate has led Fed-MoLSA to step back from active engagement with UN and other aid actors. According to one interviewee, it virtually stopped attending Social Protection Forum meetings after a new government was formed in October 2018. Several interviewees, including two cash experts, agreed that in the current conditions, efforts towards the further integration of humanitarian cash programming and Government-led social protection in Iraq appear stalled.

**Finding 15. Following UNHCR’s withdrawal from the co-leadership of the CWG, cash actors in Iraq were unsure of UNHCR’s intentions regarding the mainstreaming of a common cash system in the response.**

In 2019, UNHCR took the decision to withdraw from the co-leadership of the CWG. Senior management in country justified this on the grounds that the role was difficult to resource and expensive to fund. UNHCR had been in this role for five years, and there was general agreement among interviewees that the time had come for it to pass the role on.

Several respondents in the evaluation stated UNHCR’s intention to stay substantively engaged in cash programming and reform at a technical level. However, this continued commitment is framed in the context of a new working premise adopted for 2020, whereby UNHCR now views MPCA as a protection activity, to be budgeted for as an integral part of its protection programme. This could entail a shift in focus from multi-purpose cash to cash-for-protection, involving distinct assessment and targeting approaches more tightly aligned with UNHCR’s specific mandate and core area of activity. This new working premise had only been recently introduced at the time of the evaluation, and several interviewees expressed uncertainty as to what it might imply in terms of UNHCR’s strategic positioning and coordination with other key UN cash actors, or in terms of their collective commitment to continue working together towards a unified approach to cash programming.<sup>93</sup>

**Finding 16. As a conceptual model, the Area-based Programming for Protection and Solutions (A2PS) has potential benefits, and has been well received by UNHCR staff. However, the evaluation could not find evidence of how it measurably complements, or adds value to, programme delivery models already in place on the ground.**

UNHCR has recently released internal guidelines on A2PS.<sup>94</sup> These guidelines incorporate the broad principles set out in the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF), such as inclusion, participation, the leveraging of local resources and the provision of support to host communities and local systems. Among other functions, the guidelines aim to facilitate localized cooperation with key stakeholders, including local authorities, local communities including hosts, returnees and displaced groups, and locally active development actors.

<sup>93</sup> *Statement from the Principals of OCHA, UNHCR, WFP and UNICEF on Cash Assistance, 5 December 2018.*

<sup>94</sup> *UNHCR Iraq Operational Guidelines – Area-based Programming for Protection and Solutions (A2PS), January 2020.*



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However, the evaluation found that UNHCR's operational arrangements in place on the ground in Iraq already provide a strong basis for cooperation and cross-sector integration, with a view to broadening local inclusion and participation. It was unable to get clarity, either from the guidelines or from interviewees, on what A2PS will add to these existing arrangements.

Notably, community-based protection (CBP) provides considerable potential for localized cooperation and integration, as demonstrated in Afghanistan. Given plans to scale up CBP in Iraq, the parallel introduction of A2PS seemed to come with a potential for duplication, rather than complementarity. Similarly, Quick Impact Projects (QIPs) share with A2PS the goal of fostering localized inclusion and participation. UNHCR staff queried on the subject were unsure whether QIPs would now be rolled into the A2PS model or take place alongside it.

Likewise, the ET was unable to get clarity on how A2PS would add to or complement other models being experimented with by other agencies. A concern here is that engagement with local governments at governorate level is particularly challenging for all aid actors, and therefore calls for concerted approaches to minimize the risk of zero-sum games between agencies vying for access to local authorities. In principle, the Governorate Returns Committees (GRCs), set up in 2018 at OCHA's instigation, are currently the main platforms for engagement between provincial governments and the aid community in Iraq. IOM has recently received donor funding to support GRCs, which have often struggled to establish themselves in their intended role. It is not clear from the current guidelines how A2PS will add to, rather than detract from, efforts to assert GRCs as platforms for inclusion and participation at the local level.

During the evaluation, senior UNHCR staff acknowledged that further work on the guidelines needed to be done to ensure that A2PS can add measurable value at field level. While field office staff were supportive of the broad approach laid out in the guidelines, one informant said that the usefulness of A2PS would ultimately depend on the budget attached to it. The expectation there was that A2PS should not just be a conceptual model, but should rather provide concrete programme-level benefits, geared to achieving measurable performance and efficiency gains on the ground.

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## 4. Conclusions of the evaluation

**Conclusion 1. In federal Iraq, the operating environment is currently not conducive to durable solutions. In KRI, a more favourable environment has allowed UNHCR to achieve better outcomes for both refugees and, to a lesser extent, IDPs.**

In federal Iraq, insecurity and a lack of government participation in joint planning with the United Nations are significant obstacles to recovery, and to transition from emergency to development programming. Continued political instability has constrained UNHCR opportunities to engage with the federal government on international compliance, and to pursue durable solutions based on the inclusion of IDPs and returnees in national systems. Despite UNHCR efforts, the federal government did not pass the May 2018 bill on refugees, and no little progress has been made in Fed-MoLSA's mainstreaming of targeting methodology for common use in MPCA and social protection.

In KRI, the more forward-leaning posture of the regional government has allowed better progress on compliance, and on the lasting integration of IDPs and refugees. This is true even though the KRI Government has not formally approved the Sustainable Solutions Strategy for Syrian Refugees in KRI. While progress towards inclusion has been limited on the whole, UNHCR's civil documentation support programme is one notable exception. The programme currently addresses only a small fraction of total needs but shows real promise of being taken to scale over time.

**Conclusion 2. The economic inclusion of IDPs and refugees in areas of displacement and areas of return is hampered by adverse macroeconomic conditions, which UNHCR alone cannot address.**

In KRI, as in the rest of Iraq, slow economic growth and the real possibility of recession are severely limiting prospects for jobs and livelihoods among PoC. UNHCR's assistance to IDPs across Iraq, and to refugees in KRI, aims mainly to address urgent needs, and is not designed with the primary aim of supporting livelihoods or economic integration. The evaluation found that this support generally fulfils its intended purpose. However, it does not address the longer-term vulnerabilities facing IDPs and refugees. In both federal Iraq and KRI, social cohesion remains weak. Interventions in support of hosting communities and of areas of return are insufficient. The scale and range of needs in this area are well beyond UNHCR's capacity or core areas of competence, and therefore call for partnerships with development actors.

**Conclusion 3. UNHCR's response to the immediate needs of IDPs and refugees has been effectively targeted, designed and delivered.**

Despite complex coordination architectures for mixed situations (see below), and reports of a lack of direction in the early stages, UNHCR's response to the latest Syrian refugee influx into KRI was timely and effective. In federal Iraq, recent assessments show that MPCA received by the most vulnerable IDPs does help them meet their most critical needs, and refrain from negative coping mechanisms. The same is true of MPCA received by refugees in KRI. The evaluation could not gain access to IDP camps in federal Iraq. On the basis of limited evidence gathered during visits to refugee and IDP camps in KRI, as well as FGDs conducted in these locations, the evaluation draws the conclusion

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that these camps and their management meet minimal standards. However, shortfalls in funding are having an impact on service delivery, notably in the area of education.

**Conclusion 4. UNHCR’s protection interventions have been both strategic and responsive to a highly fluid context, but community-based protection should be revitalized and given better support.**

Alongside features in the context that undermine durable solutions, continued sectarian and communal tensions at governorate level are putting many IDPs and returnees at immediate risk. Notably, the authorities’ ill-planned and premature closure of camps hosting IDPs perceived to be affiliated with ISIS – among them many women and children – has accelerated over the period under review. This has required close and ongoing protection monitoring by UNHCR across a vast territory, where humanitarian access is often difficult. Its performance in this area, and the resulting evidence in support of advocacy efforts, has been strong.

In a context where transition can often be supported only in an indirect way, some UNHCR activities carried out in an emergency setting can also provide a basis for durable solutions. Notably, this is the case for UNHCR’s civil documentation programme, which facilitates livelihoods and inclusion in national systems, as well as providing IDPs with freedom of movement and improved security to return to their areas of origin, or settle elsewhere in the country.

The evaluation found that UNHCR is aware of the potential for CBP to yield similar dividends in terms of solutions, by fostering inclusion and social cohesion in hosting areas and areas of return. However, the evaluation also found that CBP was not given the same attention, in terms of funding, resourcing and senior management championing, as its flagship civil documentation programme. Although UNHCR plans to scale up CBP in 2020, its budget for this remains comparatively limited.

**Conclusion 5. UNHCR’s role in coordination has been largely positive, but relevant lessons can be learnt and applied for the better coexistence of UNHCR- and OCHA-led coordination systems in mixed situations.**

UNHCR’s role in coordination goes well beyond the 3RP refugee coordination in KRI, extending to three clusters through which assistance is provided to IDPs. Of the latter, the Protection Cluster is the largest, and the one whose co-leadership takes up most of UNHCR’s time, expertise and resources. The criticism that some interviewees voiced regarding UNHCR’s cluster leadership style, and its “territorial” approach to coordination, needs to be weighed against the confusion reported by other informants in the United Nations’ response to the sudden spike that occurred in the number of refugee crossings from Syria in October 2019.

In part, this confusion was caused by the overlap between the OCHA-led cluster system and the UNHCR-led Refugee Coordination Model (RCM). This was characterized by a situation in which cluster and sector lead roles were typically filled by the same double-hatted individuals. Although UNHCR had a clear mandate to lead the refugee response through the RCM, this overlap seems to have made it difficult for some NGOs to discern the boundaries between both coordination systems, and their implications in terms of operational governance and leadership. In this context, UNHCR’s reported territoriality may have helped bring clarity to complex coordination architectures. Regarding

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reports that UNHCR tends to prioritize its protection agenda over the related agenda of other clusters and sub-clusters, this should be followed up with appropriate actions (see recommendations in Section 5.3).

**Conclusion 6. UNHCR's advocacy drives on camp closures and al-Karama was supported by robust evidence and underpinned by broad-based consultations. However, the clarity of its messaging on these issues was undermined by successive iterations over extended periods, and the perception of a lack of alignment between UNHCR and the RC/HC.**

In the area of advocacy, the perception of a lack of alignment between some of the positions advocated by UNHCR and those eventually validated by the HC/RC made it difficult for some stakeholders to understand what the final message was, and where they should stand in the debate. In the case of al-Karama Camp, the process of formulating a joint advocacy message at HCT level was protracted and iterative. This affected the overall clarity of UNHCR's posture. Despite these problems, all interviewees agreed that deliberations on al-Karama had been useful to inform the HCT's position on another camp (the al-Amala Camp in Ninewa), which shares similar features.

The principles that underpin the formulation of advocacy messages at HCT level are not clear to some participants. The evaluation found that some stakeholders held expectations of a clearer and firmer stance on the part of UNHCR, even though it has no exclusive mandate relating to IDPs.

At governorate level, UNHCR's advocacy efforts over the period under review have been well received and impactful in many cases, notably as regards the attempt by the humanitarian community to slow the pace of camp closures in Ninewa in the second half of 2019. UNHCR advocacy aimed at governorate authorities seems more likely to succeed when it is backed by the direct intervention on the ground of senior management, as and when required.

**Conclusion 7. UNHCR's positioning on cash programming and social protection reform evolved over the second half of 2019. Following its withdrawal from the CWG, its commitment to a unified cash system across the response has become less clear to external stakeholders.**

In terms of engagement with development actors, UNHCR has had a presence in all the relevant forums, including PWG 1, the Social Protection Forum and the CWG. Its withdrawal from the co-leadership of the CWG has caused concern among some stakeholders about the continuity of current workstreams, notably that which relates to the further development and broader adoption of the new targeting tool designed with UNHCR support.

More broadly, UNHCR's recent decision to incorporate MPCA in its protection programme raises questions about its use and support of shared cash platforms, and its continued participation in efforts to harmonize cash-based processes across the UN system. These efforts remain highly relevant, even as the possibility of building linkages with government-led social protection now appears remote. Aside from cash and social protection reform, other avenues for transition can benefit from closer UNHCR cooperation with development actors, notably the World Bank and UNDP.

**Conclusion 8. UNHCR's guidelines on A2PS lack clarity on how this model complements, and adds value to, operational approaches and arrangements already in use on the ground.**

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In their current form, the A2PS guidelines provide a useful digest of the broad principles laid out in key frameworks of reference, including the GCR and the Strategic Directions. However, they lack clarity on how A2PS should aim to complement – and add value to – existing UNHCR programme strands and modalities that are already conducive to the deployment of these frameworks, such as CBP and QIPs.

A stated aim of A2PS is to provide a platform for the local participation of government and civil actors in common activities aimed, in part, at fostering local-level inclusion. It would therefore be helpful if the guidelines provided an indication of how A2PS should position itself in relation to platforms rolled out for the same purpose by other agencies. Notable among these is IOM, which heads the Durable Solutions Working Group, and Mercy Corps, which chairs the Peacebuilding Working Group. These groups and their programmes rely heavily on GRCs for access to, and joint planning with, governorate authorities. The same is likely to be true of A2PS, and a concerted approach is therefore advisable. At HCT and United Nations Country Team (UNCT) level, discussions have already begun on how to restructure and streamline these various coordination platforms.

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# 5. Looking forward: summing up, recommendations<sup>95</sup>

## 5.1. Country context

In the current context, UNHCR in Iraq has had to juggle tensions between two opposed strands of priority. On the one hand, the dominant post-conflict narrative has pushed it to actively explore avenues for durable solutions, and to seek ways of transitioning out of emergency operations. On the other hand, emergency humanitarian needs in Iraq do, objectively, remain substantial and widespread.

The findings of this evaluation converge towards one central observation: The current environment in Iraq presents very limited opportunities for durable solutions. Among the many constraints to UNHCR's transition from emergency programming to more long-term interventions in support of the return or integration of IDPs and refugees in Iraq, the points that follow were the most often cited in interviews.

### **Continued sectarian and communal tensions at the local level.**

Although major hostilities with ISIS ended in late 2017, sectarian and communal tensions remain pervasive in Iraq. In the most recent intention survey, 62 per cent of IDPs in camps stated that better safety and security was needed for them to return to their areas of origin.<sup>96</sup>

The evaluation found that sectarian dynamics continued to undermine inclusion, and constrained access to basic services provided by both government and aid actors. For example, although progress achieved through UNHCR's civil documentation support programme was widely acknowledged, many interviewees stated that obtaining documentation remained very difficult for a lot of IDPs, due primarily to their perceived affiliations with ISIS. According to these sources, affiliation was often suspected on no grounds other than the place of origin of the IDPs concerned.

Several respondents pointed out that aid delivery at the communal level was often complicated by tribal or sectarian factors. Local civil society organizations face considerable pressure to integrate clan-based patronage networks, or to prioritize their caseloads and activities along sectarian lines. This seriously limits –but does not preclude – the possibility for international aid actors to engage in local partnerships.

<sup>95</sup> *AoI 3: How can UNHCR build on results achieved to date, and further leverage UNHCR's strategic position and influence within the country and region, to optimize the potential impact of collective efforts towards protection and solutions for UNHCR PoC, and the communities that host them?*

<sup>96</sup> *Movement intentions in IDP camps, Iraq, REACH/CCCM Cluster, April 2020.*

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In terms of security and access, constraints on the ground remain significant. In the first quarter of 2020, an average of 71 cases of restricted humanitarian access were reported per month.<sup>97</sup> Although most of these involved administrative impediments to access,<sup>98</sup> lack of security and the absence of the rule of law are continued concerns. In 2019, for example, a total of 421 rights violations were reported in combination with the presence of armed actors in IDPs camps.<sup>99</sup>

### **A lack of government engagement in transition and recovery.**

There was unanimous agreement among interviewees that the federal government's lack of active engagement in recovery planning was a substantial obstacle to transition. As noted above, a range of formal policies, most notably those spelled out in the Principled Returns Framework,<sup>100</sup> were nominally endorsed by the federal government, yet were subsequently contravened in government decisions at both federal and local levels. Several interviewees noted that the federal government does not consider its compliance to international standards as one of its immediate priorities.

According to several informants, federal line ministries have not proactively engaged in the design of the UNSDCF, or in working-level consultations aimed at building capabilities for the inclusion of IDPs in national systems, most notably social protection.

More broadly, some informants noted that the federal government appeared to have changed course in late 2018, and to deprioritize policies aimed at reconciliation and the political inclusion of Iraq's large Sunni minority, which includes most of the country's IDPs.

At governorate level, notably in Ninewa, informants described a political context largely disconnected from federal-level policy orientations, and dominated by patronage. Humanitarian access to senior-level decision makers was difficult and shambolic. The effectiveness of Governorate Returns Committees (GRCs) as platforms to enable aid actors to engage with local governments, and to assist in the principled and orderly return of IDPs, was generally viewed as very limited.

### **Low levels of government spending on transition and basic services.**

As an upper-middle-income country, Iraq has faced growing expectations from donors that it should share more of the financial burden involved in its recovery, and the emergency needs of its population. However, the level of public spending on reconstruction and public service provision remains low.<sup>101</sup> This is unlikely to improve as an expected drop in oil revenue will likely slow growth and prolong the government deficit to 2021.<sup>102</sup> In line with the gradual

<sup>97</sup> Based on the number of monthly incidents in February and March 2020. Source: Iraq – Humanitarian Access Snapshot, OCHA, February and March 2020.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

<sup>99</sup> *Civilian Character of Camps – Incident Tracking Matrix, Protection and CCCM Cluster, 2019.*

<sup>100</sup> *The Principled Returns Framework was endorsed by the Iraqi Council of Ministers in April 2018.*

<sup>101</sup> *Iraq Economic Update – October 2019, World Bank.*

<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

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disengagement of donors since the cessation of hostilities in late 2017, humanitarian funding to Iraq<sup>103</sup> has sharply declined over the past four years, from \$1.8 billion in 2016 to £1 billion in 2019.<sup>104</sup> This downward trend is set to continue, according to interviewees.

## 5.2. Overall conclusions

### **In the adverse operating environment, UNHCR's search for durable solutions has had limited results.**

In its search for durable solutions, UNHCR has sought to draw optimal advantage of what few opportunities exist at federal level, and in the more favourable context in KRI. It has also contributed actively to work on building programme pathways between humanitarian cash programming and government-led social protection. With the exception of some notable successes in KRI, these efforts have been constrained by a highly adverse environment. On the whole, and despite the Country Office's best efforts, results so far have been mixed or incomplete.

In looking beyond emergency needs in Iraq, UNHCR has faced a choice between stretching its core area of competence to include recovery and development interventions, or partnering with development actors in joint programmes. Following some testing of these options, the continued scale of emergency needs has led UNHCR to generally maintain its focus on these, and to explore opportunities for transition via the partnership option. This avenue has so far not led to notable results, owing in part to the light operational footprint of development agencies on the ground.

### **UNHCR's engagement with development actors has not yet provided a basis for real partnership.**

In interviews, UNHCR and its development counterparts agreed that some complementarity existed between them, and should be drawn on to support transition. However, concrete ways of doing so remain elusive to all actors involved. There were indications in the evaluation that development actors in Iraq lacked either the financial resources or the physical presence on the ground for fully fledged co-programming with UNHCR, or for operations-level cooperation on an equal footing.

Critically, development agencies in Iraq aim primarily to work with, and to deliver through, government counterparts. As illustrated by the difficulties encountered in the design of the UNSDCF, the absence of government actors from this development coordination platform, and the lack of bilateral consultations on a way forward, has caused the virtual shutdown of any measurable progress towards recovery and development. In addition, development agencies, including UNDP, have had little active involvement the design and implementation of the 3RP's Iraq chapter<sup>105</sup>.

### **UNHCR's solutions-sensitive approach to emergency programming has enabled it to make the best of adverse conditions.**

<sup>103</sup> Not including the 3RP.

<sup>104</sup> Financial Tracking Service, OCHA.

<sup>105</sup> <https://www.undp.org/content/dam/undp/library/Sustainable%20Development/Migration%20and%20displacement/3RP%20Policy%20Brief%20final.pdf>



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In Iraq's difficult context, UNHCR has leveraged its response to emergency needs by engaging in urgent programmes that can potentially yield dividends in terms of durable solutions. Notably, this is the case for its civil documentation support programme, which addresses immediate needs while also contributing to the long-term welfare and security of many IDPs. Similarly, UNHCR's reinforcement of its protection activities in areas of IDP return, which is planned for 2020, addresses an urgent priority, while also potentially providing a basis for lasting outcomes in inclusion and social cohesion. The evaluation found that there was untapped potential to further leverage current programmes in a durable solutions perspective, notably in the area of CBP.

**UNHCR's approach to advocacy and cluster coordination has been robust and forward-leaning.**

With its co-leadership of three clusters and its leadership of the refugee response, UNHCR is a prominent and influential actor in coordination. Although some interviewees in the evaluation found that its leadership style is overly directive, this is justified by the need to maintain clarity on the roles of key actors in Iraq's crowded and complex humanitarian ecosystem. As noted above, this clarity is undermined by the overlap between the cluster system and the refugee coordination model, with sub-cluster and sector leads double-hatting in field-level positions.

In the area of advocacy and engagement, UNHCR has been vocal and forward-leaning. However, the delays and iterations involved in broad-based consultations at HCT level have made it difficult for some stakeholders to grasp the crux of its messaging on often complex issues. A challenge in this area has been to achieve consonance in messaging with the RC/HC. The principles that govern collective messaging at HCT level are unclear to some of UNHCR's interlocutors and have caused them to question the consistency of UNHCR's advocacy lines.

**Looking ahead: a need to regroup and consolidate around achievements to date.**

Barriers to durable solutions in Iraq are rooted in the social, political and economic environment. Removing these requires substantive actions by government and development actors. Until these actions are taken and can lead to an environment more conducive to transition, UNHCR Iraq should continue to focus on interventions that tightly prioritize the most urgent humanitarian needs of PoC, within the remit of its mandate and core areas of competence.

Beyond the application of solutions-sensitive approaches to emergency programming, as currently practised, UNHCR support to transition should be viewed as a secondary priority. Related activities should aim to support and foster a lead role for development actors in transition, with a particular emphasis on facilitating their presence and expansion in hosting areas and areas of return. The recommendations below should be viewed from this perspective.

## 5.3. Recommendations

Recommendation and sub-recommendations	Targeted at:	Level of priority:
<p><b>1. In federal Iraq, UNHCR’s cooperation with the federal government should be confined to addressing immediate protection priorities. Non-operational workstreams, such as those relating to the passage of a new refugee law or to the development of formal policy frameworks, should be deprioritized until conditions are again present for meaningful results to be achieved in these areas. In KRI, UNHCR should seize opportunities for incremental steps towards better compliance and aim to secure the more active involvement of development actors in transition.</b></p>	CO	High
<p>1.1 Focus engagement with the federal government on operational capacity-building with CAD and PC-Mol. Prioritize the maintenance and possible expansion of UNHCR’s civil documentation support programme. Deprioritize non-operational cooperation workstreams at federal level.</p>	CO	High
<p>1.2 Consider involving UNDP in UNHCR’s civil documentation support programme, to help take it to scale and to lay the grounds for an exit strategy.</p>	CO	High
<p>1.3 In KRI, seize the opportunity of the recently signed UNDP/MoP MOU on the drafting of KRI’s Vision 2030 to introduce a durable solutions dimension in this policy document.</p>	CO	High
<p>1.4 Approach UNDP to obtain its effective participation in the co-leadership of the 3RP for Iraq.</p>	CO	High
<p><b>2. Opening up avenues for economic integration is outside of UNHCR’s core area of competence and should be pursued through partnerships with selected development actors.</b></p>	CO	High
<p>2.1 Deprioritize current operational activities in livelihoods and economic integration programme strands. MADE51 and any similar project should not be progressed beyond their current scoping stage. In parallel, continue to advocate for the more proactive involvement of development actors in the areas of livelihoods and economic integration.</p>	CO	High
<p>2.2 With the World Bank and UNDP, identify specific areas where jointly commissioned research may serve to inform future programming in the area of economic inclusion, when conditions allow. This could include but is not limited to market systems development.</p>	CO	Low
<p>2.3 With the World Bank, explore the possibility of expanded cooperation in data collection, drawing on UNHCR’s extensive field presence, and aimed at assisting in Bank assessments and project design. This should include an appraisal of data-</p>	CO	Medium

gathering capabilities potentially needed to support World Bank work, outside of those routinely used in existing UNHCR programmes.		
<b>3. Community-based protection (CBP) should be revitalized and given better support.</b>	Various	High
3.1 Engage with UNHCR's Afghanistan CO and explore whether CBP implementation models and approaches are replicable in the Iraqi context.	CO	Medium
3.2 Assign a senior management member to champion CBP among UNHCR staff and help revitalize this programme strand.	CO	High
3.3 With the support of HQ-based specialists on the subject, convene one or more ICCG workshops on CBP in Iraq, to share lessons learnt and identify those elements of best practice that are of particular relevance in the Iraqi context.	CO, Regional Bureau	Medium
3.4 Articulate programme-level guidelines on how to reconcile CBP programme strands with the A2PS model of delivery.	CO	Medium
3.5 Promote an out-of-the box approach to CBP: invite selected agencies, including stabilization actors engaged in peace-building, to explore and identify possible linkages between CBP, social cohesion and elements of customary law relating to restorative justice.	CO	Medium
3.6 Commission research to help inform and contextualize CBP programmes in Iraq.	CO, Regional Bureau	Low
<b>4. UNHCR's role in coordination has been largely positive, but relevant lessons can be learnt and applied.</b>	CO	Medium
4.1 With OCHA, identify specific ways to improve the joint application of the 2014 UNHCR–OCHA Note on Mixed Situations in the context of Iraq and, more specifically, in KRI. <sup>106</sup>	CO	Medium
4.2 With OCHA, conduct an information session for NGOs and other aid actors present in KRI, to acquaint them with the Note on Mixed Situations, and gather their views on what practical obstacles might have hampered its application in the October 2019 refugee response.	CO	Medium
4.3 Convene an informal away-day with UNHCR's cluster and sub-cluster co-leads, to review joint work processes across the relevant clusters, gather feedback on UNHCR's performance in coordination, and agree ways to address any issues raised.	CO	Medium

<sup>106</sup> Joint UNHCR–OCHA Note on Mixed Situations, 24 April 2014.

<b>5. UNHCR should complement its technical expertise in protection with a more consultative approach to the formulation of related advocacy messages.</b>	CO	High
5.1 Alongside continued adherence to the principles that govern the formulation and adoption of HCT-level advocacy messages, develop a more informal approach to consulting with relevant stakeholders, aiming to keep selected stakeholders, including donors, better apprised of changes and developments during the often protracted process of formulating HCT-level advocacy lines.	CO	High
5.2 Ensure that UNHCR's lead advisory role in the formulation of HCT-level advocacy messages, particularly those relating to IDPs, is known and clearly understood by all relevant stakeholders.	CO	High
<b>6. UNHCR's position on cash programming and social protection reform should be clarified. To maximize impact, its engagement on these should take place in a single, consolidated coordination forum.</b>	CO	High
6.1 Draft a position paper for external circulation on UNHCR's approach to MPCA as a protection tool and the implications of this in terms of UNHCR's participation in system-wide cash reform in Iraq.	CO	High
6.2 Through the position paper, reassert UNHCR's commitment to a common cash system, as per the December 2018 joint statement from IASC Principals on cash assistance. <sup>107</sup> Also, confirm the continuing involvement of UNHCR in current cash workstreams driven by the CWG.	CO	High
6.3 Given the lack of Fed-MoLSA engagement in the Social Protection Forum, deprioritize UNHCR's participation in it. Ask other members of the Forum to consider its deactivation, and the consolidation of its agenda with that of PWG 1. In parallel, promote Fed-MoLSA's more active engagement in the UNSDCF process.	CO	Medium
6.4 As co-lead of PWG 1, consult with other co-leads on ways to develop this Working Group into a highly participative forum whose agenda is consistent with, but not limited to, the UNSDCF.	CO	High
6.5 Seize all opportunities to instil more momentum in consultations in PWG 1. Adopt a dynamic approach to PWG 1 co-chairing: occasionally invite selected external participants in plenary sessions to test and challenge group consensus.	CO	Medium
<b>7. Refine the A2PS guidelines to provide more clarity on how to apply them at programme level, in the context of existing operations. In developing A2PS further, consult with actors working on similar models.</b>	CO	Medium

<sup>107</sup> Statement from the Principals of OCHA, UNHCR, WFP and UNICEF on Cash Assistance, 5 December 2018.

7.1 Convene a validation workshop on A2PS for UNHCR administrative and programme management staff. The aim would be to help frame the A2PS model in programme terms, and to derive a clear picture of the implied practical steps in terms of project appraisal, design, budgeting, roll-out and process compliance.	CO	High
7.2 Engage with IOM to ensure optimal complementarity between A2PS and the approaches being developed by the Durable Solutions Working Group. In particular, consult with IOM on its recently launched programme to reinforce the GRCs at governorate level, in view of ensuring optimal complementarity with A2PS efforts to engage with local authorities.	CO	Medium
7.3 Engage with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) to determine whether its Durable Returns Programme (DRP) can produce lessons applicable in the operationalization of the A2PS model.	CO	Medium

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# Annexes

## Annex 1: Iraq Country Operation evaluation ToR

### Context

Iraq has endured three gulf wars (1980–1988, 1990 and 2003–2011) as well as long-term economic sanctions that created a divided and conflict-torn state, characterized by a complex polarization of ethnic and political identities.<sup>108</sup> The invasion of Iraq led by a US coalition in 2003 and subsequent overthrowing of the Government of Saddam Hussein triggered a Sunni-led insurgency opposing the coalition and post-2003 Iraqi Government that lasted until 2006. The situation then deteriorated into sectarian violence (civil war) that lasted till 2008, characterized by intercommunal violence between Iraqi Sunni and Shia factions. Although sectarian violence subsided after 2009 with the gradual and complete withdrawal of US troops by 2011, Sunni-led insurgencies intensified violence by 2013, leading to another full-fledged sectarian war. By the end of 2014, the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) had begun to emerge and establish itself in the north of the country. The fight against ISIS began in 2016, with an international coalition, the Iraqi national army, Kurdish forces, Sunni tribesmen, and Shia militia on the ground. By 2010, UNHCR estimated that there were around 1.6 million Iraqi refugees<sup>109</sup> and 1.5 million internally displaced persons (IDPs)<sup>110</sup> as a result of the conflict. Owing to the expansion of ISIL in 2014, the number of internally displaced Iraqis had risen from 1.7 million to 4.1 million by 2016,<sup>111</sup> while the influx of Syrian refugees to Iraq was estimated at 250,000.<sup>112</sup>

By 2018, the internal conflict in Iraq had subsided, creating a more conducive environment for humanitarian access and a gradual transition from an emergency response to a longer-term development approach. However, the vulnerability of non-camp refugee populations resulting from prolonged displacement has been compounded by internal displacement in the country, further straining the municipal and humanitarian aid services, on which the majority of the population rely. According to the multi-sector needs assessment (MSNA) conducted in the last quarter of 2018, over three quarters of refugee households residing out of camp rely on borrowing money to cover their basic needs, such as food, household items and health-related costs. Priority needs of refugees differ across governorates. Economic vulnerability lies at the core of protection concerns for refugee households, with basic needs normally increasing during winter months when families' resources are reduced due to seasonal decreases in job opportunities. UNHCR will continue to provide cash assistance through mobile money, rather than distribute in-kind. In 2020, cash-based assistance will aim to support the most vulnerable refugees to meet their basic needs, improve their living conditions and their emotional and social well-being, and thus, contribute to the overall protection environment for refugees in Iraq.

<sup>108</sup> Peace Insights (2017), online available at: <https://www.peaceinsight.org/conflicts/iraq/>

<sup>109</sup> UNHCR Global Trends (2010), online available: <https://www.unhcr.org/4dfa11499.pdf>

<sup>110</sup> UNHCR Iraq Factsheet (December 2010), online available at: <https://reliefweb.int/report/iraq/unhcr-iraq-factsheet-december-2010>

<sup>111</sup> UNHCR Iraq Factsheet (November 2016), online available at: <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/UNHCR-Iraq%20Factsheet%20November%202016.pdf>

<sup>112</sup> UNHCR Country Operation Plan (2016).

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The country also underwent a number of important political and socioeconomic events in 2018 which have directly affected the IDP situation. Federal parliamentary elections – although marred with concerns over fraud – and national reconciliation efforts, together with greater humanitarian efforts have seen the return of some 4 million IDPs. A large number of IDPs (1.4 million) still remain displaced,<sup>113</sup> while the security situation in Iraq remains volatile and extremist groups continue to launch asymmetric attacks aimed at destabilization. IDPs returning to their places of origin continue to face secondary displacement due to insecurity, lack of services, livelihoods and shelter. Coupled with protection concerns, including restricted freedom of movement and denial of the right to return, arbitrary detention and family separations, restricted access to safety nets, confiscation of documents, forced encampment, evictions, and increased risk of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV). As of 31 December 2018, Iraq hosts 297,067 refugees and asylum-seekers, including 252,256 Syrians, 21,342 Turks, 8,086 Palestinians, 13,628 Iranians, 907 Sudanese and 578 of other nationalities. The protection situation for each of these refugee groups is influenced by a range of factors including their nationality, ethnicity, date and way of entry into Iraq and where they reside.<sup>114</sup> With the crisis in Syria still unsettled and hopes for peace not yet realized, it is expected that the Syrian refugee crisis will continue to command regional attention in 2020. In October 2019, more than 12,000 Syrian Refugees fled to KRI in search of safety. UNHCR, together with partners, continues to provide life-saving assistance in a KRI Government-led response in the north-east region. Should the situation inside Syria improve, return of Syrian refugees from countries throughout the region will be a priority.

In 2019, UNHCR developed a Multi-year Multi-partner Protection and Solutions Strategy (2019–2021) that builds upon the Comprehensive Solutions Strategy for Syrian Refugees in KRI as well as the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR), the KRI Shelter and Settlement Strategy, the Iraq Recovery and Resilience Programme (RRP), and seeks to increasingly integrate UNHCR's persons of concern (PoC) into national and regional development and reconstruction programmes. The MYMP focuses primarily on inclusion possibilities, and UNHCR will continue to pursue this strategy in 2020 given the limited intention for return. In addition, as part of Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan (3RP), UNHCR has developed a regional strategy for return, in case conditions in Syria permit larger-scale voluntary return. The 3RP is a collaborative effort between the Government of Iraq and the Kurdistan Regional Government, 9 UN agencies, and 12 national and international NGOs, as well as the refugee and host communities. The response is implemented under the overall leadership of the Government of Iraq, the Kurdistan Regional Government, and UN agencies, in close coordination with the donor community. UNHCR and UNDP will continue to lead the coordination of the integrated response to the Syrian refugee programme by co-chairing, with the Ministry of Planning (MoP), regular inter-sector working group meetings. Since 99 per cent of the Syrian refugee population is in KRI, the refugee coordination structure exists only at KRI level and is not replicated nationally. In September 2019, UNHCR released a revised policy for engagement in situations of internal displacement (UNHCR/HCP/2019/1). The evaluation will utilize these global policies, and regional/national strategies, to assess coherence and inform future programming in Iraq and KRI.

As the lead UN agency for Protection, UNHCR will reinforce coordination mechanisms among protection partners, advocate for increased funding for protection and rule of law interventions (particularly with regard to strengthening national systems), and continue to focus on mainstreaming protection (including child protection and SGBV) in the

<sup>113</sup> UNHCR Country Operation Plan (2020).

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*

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humanitarian and development responses. Capacity-building on protection, including Child Protection, Sexual and Gender-based Violence and Protection against Sexual Exploitation and Abuse, and community-based complaints mechanisms, will be a key component of UNHCR's strategy to strengthen national protection systems and national actors, and to strengthen the protection component of assistance programmes, including the transition to include IDPs within the social protection system in Iraq. UNHCR will capitalize on its comparative advantage and aim to achieve collective outcomes with development actors (including towards achieving SDGs 1, 4, 5 and 16), including its ongoing engagement with UNICEF and UNFPA on protection issues; collaboration with various government ministries on social protection (MoLSA, MoMD, Mol and MoP); documentation and legal assistance; and operational partnerships with the World Bank, UN agencies and the private sector (Chamber of Commerce and Industry) on reintegration. Partnerships with other line ministries (e.g. Ministry of Housing and Construction, Ministry of Trade, etc.) and civil society organizations will be sought to further reinforce the reintegration framework. To ensure a coordinated and complementary approach, UNHCR will maintain an active involvement in the Government's agenda via established mechanisms and frameworks such as the National Reconstruction and Development Framework (2018–2027), UN Country Team, UNDAF, the National Development Plan (NDP) and Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS). UNHCR will also seek to strengthen partnerships with civil society organizations, particularly with regard to developing support for greater inclusion of refugees and stateless persons into national systems and services. UNHCR Iraq will continue to seek leverage on the work of the MENA Civil Society Network in this regard, including with respect to greater engagement of academics and research institutes.

UNHCR advocacy efforts for the last several years resulted in a new draft refugee law prepared by the Ministry of Interior (Mol), although it stalled as a result of the dissolution of Parliament in the lead-up to the May 2018 elections. The intention is to develop an asylum legal framework in Iraq in line with the international standards for refugee protection, notwithstanding the fact that Iraq is not a signatory to the 1951 Convention. So far, the protection of refugees in Iraq is governed by the 1971 Political Refugee Act, whereby granting refugee status is the responsibility of the Permanent Committee for Refugee Affairs of the Ministry of Interior (PC-Mol). UNHCR will continue to provide legal counselling and assistance to Syrian refugees, with a particular focus on those in detention. Unless the refugee law is passed, refugees who move to the Centre are likely to continue being forcibly relocated to KRI, because their residency permits issued by the KRG are not recognized outside of KRI. In 2020, in line with the Comprehensive Solutions Strategy, UNHCR will step up its advocacy and individual support to PoC in regard to legal barriers for access to work, education and skills training, and housing as necessary pre-requisites for integration. To increase effectiveness of legal assistance/remedies, UNHCR intends to strengthen its cooperation with other UN agencies, and within the 3RP Protection Sector Partners.

Considering the presence of PoC in different locations throughout the country, UNHCR anticipates the maintenance of 7 office locations with Baghdad (Representation) covering Kirkuk, Mosul and Basra. While the Coordinator's Office in Erbil will cover Duhok and Sulaymaniyah. In addition, there are 8 Field Units: Baqubah (Diyala), Ramadi (Anbar), Samarra (Sala al-Din), Hilla (Babel), Kalar (Khanaqin), Najaf, Kut, and Karbala. While Kalar (Khanaqin) Field Unit is no longer active as of 1 January 2019, nonetheless UNHCR Iraq will maintain a temporary presence for support in Al Qaim. In 2019, UNHCR's operations are foreseen to continue as per the projected Country Operation Plan (COP), as well as increased projects aimed at transitioning from emergency to development. UNHCR will continue to strengthen its registration capacity as it took over the registration of refugees from partners in 2019 as part of its risk



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mitigating measure. In light of this, UNHCR will increase its staffing capacity to conduct continuous registration through registration centres and mobile registration missions for refugees. As part of this strategy, UNHCR will also support strengthening the PC-Mol's capacity to register asylum-seekers and refugees. In 2019, UNHCR Iraq began the roll-out of *proGres v4* with support from the MENA Protection Service. This new registration system is expected to improve the quality of registration and data collection, and will form a more reliable platform for targeting protection and assistance interventions to the most vulnerable refugees, while supporting the identification of comprehensive solutions.

### **Purpose and Objectives of the evaluation**

The main purpose of this evaluation is to generate timely evidence to inform UNHCR's future operational planning and strategy in Iraq, including the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI). The evaluation will provide a detailed understanding of the programmatic challenges and complexities facing UNHCR amidst the protracted and evolving nature of the Syrian refugee crisis,<sup>115</sup> as well as the post-conflict transition in Iraq.

The evaluation will utilize relevant global and corporate policies, as well as regional and country-specific strategies to determine where the operation is making significant progress, and where the operation needs to adjust or pivot its approach.<sup>116</sup> The evaluation will help inform decisions that strengthen programme design, emergency response planning, coordination, and partnerships in the pursuit of inclusive social protection and solutions for UNHCR PoC and the communities that host them. In addition to this, the evaluation will seek to analyse the challenges UNHCR's operation is facing in establishing linkages and synergies along the humanitarian–development nexus, and how it can ensure a relevant, appropriate, coherent and effective response to the evolving needs of the population, the federal and Kurdistan Regional Government, and UNHCR partners. In highlighting lessons learnt at the operational level, recommendations from the evaluation should be practical, feasible, and forward-looking in their orientation.

The primary audience for these evaluations is the UNHCR Country Office in Iraq and the MENA Regional Bureau. Other UNHCR divisions, as well as UNHCR partners – including government, humanitarian and development actors – will serve as a secondary audience.

### **Evaluation approach**

Further details on the evaluation approach, deliverable timetables, consultant qualifications, and selection criteria are outlined in the generic ToR, to which this document is an annex. The evaluation approach in Iraq has been tailored to meet the strategic objectives of the Country Office, and is expected to deploy a formative lens through which evidence-based decisions can be made at the programmatic and operational level.

<sup>115</sup> On 1 November the High Commissioner declared a Level 2 emergency in Iraq in response to the influx of refugees from Syria, as a result of Operation peace Spring in Northeast Syria.

<sup>116</sup> In addition to the relevant policies and strategy documents mentioned in paragraph 4 of this annex, the analysis should also include UNHCR's recently published policy on engagement in situations of internal displacement (UNHCR/HCP/2019/1).

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## Scope and methods

The evaluation scope – relating to population, time frame and locations – is as follows:

- The evaluation will gather evidence from the operation over the course of the last two years (2018–2019), with particular emphasis on organizational performance and positioning in relation to refugee protection and durable solutions, IDP and refugee emergency responses, coordination and partnerships, advocacy and capacity-building, and linkages in the humanitarian–development nexus during the post-conflict transitional period. The timeline will be further refined in consultation with the UNHCR Country Office during the inception mission.<sup>117</sup>
- The evaluation will employ mixed methods (qualitative, quantitative and participatory) and a number of data collection tools. Information will be derived from primary and secondary sources, including a desk review of relevant stakeholder documents, a household survey of the affected populations, FGDs with affected communities, and key informant interviews with national/local staff, staff of partnering organizations (humanitarian and development), as well as local/regional/national authorities. Primary data collection will depend on security permissions and should involve in-camp and out-of-camp visits in one or more field locations that are of interest to the operation and evaluation.
- Exact data collection locations will be confirmed in consultation with the Country Office during inception. Persons of concern for the UNHCR operation in Iraq are defined as refugees, returnees, IDPs and stateless persons.
- During the inception phase the evaluation team will propose a detailed methodology to address key questions and further refine the scope of these questions, as well as assess their evaluability in consultation with the UNHCR Country Office in Iraq.

## Key Evaluation Questions (KEQs)

The generic ToR for the country operation evaluation lays out three key areas of inquiry, outlined below. Specific sub-areas of inquiry for Iraq have been detailed under each of the overarching generic ones. The analysis needed to answer them is likely to touch on other possible sub-areas and may be further refined or narrowed down during the evaluation inception phase.

**Key Areas of Inquiry 1 (generic):** Since the post-conflict transitional period (2018), what progress has UNHCR made towards achieving intended results in the areas of inclusion, protection, advocacy, and durable solutions, as set out in the 3RP, HRP, Multi-year Multi-partner Protection and Solution Strategy and the Iraq Recovery and Resilience Programme (RRP)? Under which conditions has UNHCR managed to achieve these results, and what were the most important contextual and operational factors contributing to or impeding achievement of these results?  
*Sub-area of Inquiry 1.1 (country specific):* What intended/unintended outcomes/impact have UNHCR-supported programmes had on PoC since 2018, and what evolving needs of PoC (and partners) does the organization need to take into consideration in its immediate, intermediate and long-term plans?

<sup>117</sup> If needed, secondary data sources can be used to depict the changing context in Iraq (2016–2018) and how this has affected UNHCR's operation over time. Primary data collection will focus on the post-conflict transition (2018–2019).

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*Sub-areas of Inquiry 1.2 (country specific): What key challenges/barriers does the operation face in promoting inclusion, protection and durable solutions to PoC in KRI, and how relevant and appropriate is the current approach to the evolving needs of PoC?*

**Key Areas of Inquiry 2 (generic):** How strategically has UNHCR been positioned within the country context, and what are the key factors driving strategic decision-making? To what extent do the strategy and Country Operation Plan have coherence and/or alignment with the work of other humanitarian/development actors, the private sector and civil society actors within the country? How well aligned is the existing UNHCR strategy and Country Operation Plan to the current and/or evolving needs of the population and wider country context?

*Sub-areas of Inquiry 2.1 (country specific): What role has UNHCR adopted in the various coordination mechanisms it engages in with partners, and what progress has this had towards advancing UNHCR's protection and durable solution strategy within Iraq, including KRI in the post-conflict period?*

**Key Areas of Inquiry 3 (generic):** How can UNHCR build on results achieved to date, and further leverage its strategic position and influence within the country and region, to optimize the potential impact of collective efforts towards protection and solutions for UNHCR PoC, and the communities that host them?

*Sub-areas of inquiry 3.1 (country specific): Which key areas of the operation/programmes need to be strengthened in order to improve the relevance, appropriateness and effectiveness of results achieved in support of PoC in the future?*

*Sub-area of inquiry 3.2 (country specific): What steps can UNHCR take to strengthen the promotion of social protection networks, and how can UNHCR effectively integrate and align these efforts to national development and assistance frameworks in Iraq?*

*Sub-area Inquiry 3.3 (country specific): In which programmatic and/or operational areas can UNHCR begin exploring responsible and sustainable exit and handover strategies to its partners, and what capacity-building investments/strategies will UNHCR need to adopt to ensure this process is successful?*

## **Evaluation timeline and deliverables**

The evaluation contract was finalized in April 2019 and will be managed following the timeline tabled in the generic ToR. Exact dates for the inception workshop and possible scoping mission will be refined in consultation with the Country Office during inception. It is anticipated that the inception mission will take place in December 2019, followed by data collection in January 2020.

Key evaluation deliverables are further summarized in bullet points below:

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- Inception report;
  - Data collection toolkit (including questionnaires, interview guides, FGD guides, and data monitoring methods) and details on the analytical framework;
  - Final evaluation report including recommendations and executive summary (30–40 pages excluding annexes).

## Annex 2: Stakeholder analysis

Stakeholder(s)	Role/nature of stakeholders and interest in evaluation	Level of interest in evaluation
UNHCR Iraq Country Operation	As the subject of the evaluation, the Iraq Country Operation is the primary audience and the primary stakeholder.	Direct, Very High
PoC in Iraq	PoC relying on UNHCR Iraq for assistance, protection and durable solutions are the ultimate stakeholders for this evaluation, and the evaluation included FGDs with a range of male and female PoC in selected areas of Iraq to ensure their opinions, views and experiences were included in data collection and analysis.	Direct, High
UNHCR MENA Regional Bureau	The Regional Bureau acts as a bridge between the Country Operation and HQ, and regional specialists provide technical support for quality assurance and backstopping. The Bureau therefore has an immediate and high interest in the evaluation to inform decision-making, quality assurance, learning, reporting and accountability.	Direct, High
UNHCR HQ	Directors and senior executives of UNHCR (of divisions such as the Department of International Protection, the Division of Resilience and Solutions, the Cash-Based Interventions Unit and the Strategic Planning and Budgeting Unit) are among the main stakeholders of the evaluation. They are responsible for accountability to the Board and to donors and have an interest in learning from the evaluation to inform decision-making and strengthen programming.	Direct, Medium
UNHCR IPs in Iraq	UNHCR IPs in Iraq will contribute to the evaluation as key informants and through the provision of information, evidence and data with regard to UNHCR operational response. Partners will also have an interest in the findings, conclusions and recommendations from the evaluation as it will ultimately directly affect their refugee response programming.	Direct, Medium
Government of Iraq (federal and KRI)	The Government of Iraq, including various line ministries and bodies such as PC-MoI, the Directorate for Combating Violence against Women, MoLSA, MoMD, MoP and the Joint Coordination and Monitoring Centre at central level; and MoI, MoP, the Directorate for Combating Violence against Women, MoLSA, MoMD and JCC at KRI level, has a direct interest in the findings, conclusions and recommendations of the evaluation.	Indirect, Medium

<b>Stakeholder(s)</b>	<b>Role/nature of stakeholders and interest in evaluation</b>	<b>Level of interest in evaluation</b>
Other UN agencies	In the current post-conflict transitional period, where humanitarian agencies are moving away from an emergency mode of response towards longer-term recovery strategies and durable solutions, the Country Operation is increasingly focused on enhancing partnerships and collaboration with other UN agencies. UN agencies, both those with complementary humanitarian mandates and those with development mandates, may be interested in learning from this evaluation.	Indirect, Low
Key donors	Donors funding initiatives to respond to ongoing humanitarian needs as well as those who are supporting transitional and recovery activities may be interested in learning from the evaluation on particular aspects of the operational response.	Indirect, Low
Development partners	In the current post-conflict transitional period, there is a strong focus on enhancing coordination and linkages across the humanitarian–development nexus. Therefore, a range of development partners, such as the World Bank and the International Finance Corporation, may have an interest in evaluation findings related to working across the development–humanitarian nexus.	Indirect, Low

## Annex 3: Evaluation matrix

How EQs relate to OECD/DAC criteria (included in brackets)

Evaluation questions	Judgement/performance criteria	Data sources	Data collection methods
<p><b>EQ 1.1</b> What results (intended and unintended outputs/outcomes) has UNHCR achieved since 2018 in the two streams of work: (1) Policy and enabling environment, and (2) Operational response? (Effectiveness)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Per cent of key targets for different PoC groups as set out in Country Operation Plans (COPs) planned vs. achieved</li> <li>• Evidence of results as set out in 3RP, HRP, MYMP, achieved for different PoC groups against planned targets</li> <li>• Evidence of changes in government and other stakeholders' decisions as a result of UNHCR advocacy</li> </ul>	<p>COPs, 3RP, HRP, MYMP</p>	<p>Literature review, FGDs, KIIs</p>

Evaluation questions	Judgement/performance criteria	Data sources	Data collection methods
<p><b>EQ 1.2</b> What key contextual and operational factors have contributed to or hindered results for PoC in these areas? (Effectiveness)</p>	<p>Identifiable influencing factors with reference to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Protection environment</li> <li>• Access and security</li> <li>• Political and administrative (KRI–federal government split) situation</li> <li>• Willingness and capacity of KRI and federal government actors to take over, work jointly with UNHCR in the transition</li> <li>• Willingness and capacity of international development actors to take over, work jointly with UNHCR in the transition</li> <li>• Resourcing situation and donors' strategies</li> <li>• Effects of funding (volume, earmarking, length) on strategic positioning, decision-making and planning</li> <li>• Implementation capacity</li> <li>• Evidence of measures taken to address or mitigate challenges above and of taking advantage of possible opportunities</li> </ul>	<p>HRP, 3RPs, COPs</p>	<p>Literature review, FGDs, KIs</p>
<p><b>EQ 1.3</b> What needs do PoC have in this context and how are they expected to evolve in 2020 and beyond? (Relevance and Appropriateness)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evidence of current needs of Syrian refugees, IDPs and returnees and indication of how they are expected to evolve in 2020 and beyond</li> </ul>	<p>Syrian Refugees' Perceptions and Intentions to Return UNHCR Surveys; UNHCR/WFP Joint Vulnerability Assessment; other available assessments</p>	<p>Literature review, FGDs, KIs, perceptions survey</p>



Evaluation questions	Judgement/performance criteria	Data sources	Data collection methods
<p><b>EQ 2.1</b> How has UNHCR positioned itself within the complex Iraqi context and transitional period over the past two years (2018–2019)? (Relevance and Appropriateness)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Evidence and perceptions of UNHCR staff and other stakeholders of UNHCR strategic positioning in the Iraqi context and in the transitional period</li> </ul>		Literature review, KIIs, perceptions survey
<p><b>EQ 2.2</b> What contextual and operational factors are driving and/or affecting UNHCR strategic positioning and role in coordination mechanisms? (Relevance and Coherence)</p>	Identifiable influencing factors with reference to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>See EQ 1.2</li> </ul>		KIIs, perceptions survey
<p><b>EQ 2.3</b> What role has UNHCR played in key coordination mechanisms (cluster and sector coordination; inter-cluster working groups; RRP; Social Protection Forum; others)? (Coherence)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Evidence and perceptions of UNHCR staff and other stakeholders of UNHCR role in coordination mechanisms</li> <li>Evidence of use and applicability of the 2014 Joint UNHCR–OCHA Note on Mixed Situations: Coordination in Practice’</li> </ul>		Literature review, KIIs, perceptions survey

Evaluation questions	Judgement/performance criteria	Data sources	Data collection methods
<p><b>EQ 2.4</b> To what extent is UNHCR strategic positioning and role in coordination mechanisms contributing to address the immediate, intermediate and long-term needs of PoC and enabling the transition towards durable solutions? (Relevance and Coherence)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Evidence of strategic positioning and role in coordination mechanisms leveraging UNHCR strengths and contributing to responding to PoC's needs and enabling the transition towards durable solutions</li> </ul>		KIIs, perceptions survey
<p><b>EQ 2.5</b> To what extent is UNHCR integrating and aligning its efforts with national development and assistance frameworks, including around support to national social protection systems? (Coherence)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Evidence of UNHCR work alignment with appropriate national policies/frameworks</li> <li>Positive/negative perceptions on alignment</li> <li>Reported and documented evidence of partnerships, coordination, joint assessments, etc. with relevant ministries, including on social protection</li> <li>Reported and documented evidence of partnerships, coordination with development actors, including with World Bank, UNICEF and others on social protection</li> </ul>	<p>National Development Plan (2018–2022), Reconstruction and Development Framework (2018–2027), KRI Vision 2020, UNSDCF (2020–2024); 2018 Mission of UNHCR Senior Solutions Officer (Andrew Mitchell) to Iraq documents</p>	<p>Literature review, KIIs, perceptions survey</p>

Evaluation questions	Judgement/performance criteria	Data sources	Data collection methods
<p><b>EQ 2.6</b> How useful are the many existing policies, strategies, plans and frameworks in addressing the needs of PoC and enabling the transition towards durable solutions? (Relevance and Coherence)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Extent to which existing policies, strategies, plans and frameworks provide useful guidance for addressing the evolving needs of PoC</li> <li>• Extent to which existing policies, strategies, plans and frameworks provide useful guidance for enabling the transition towards durable solutions</li> <li>• Evidence of appropriate use and relevance of global and corporate policies to the Iraq transitional context</li> </ul>	<p>MYMP (2019–2021), Iraq (RRP), HRP, Comprehensive Solutions Strategy for Syrian Refugees in KRI, 3RP, UNHCR Global Policy on Engagement in Situations of Internal Displacement (UNHCR/HCP/2019/1), GCR and others</p>	<p>Literature review, KIIs, perceptions survey</p>
<p><b>EQ 3.1</b> Which areas of the operation – durable solutions, inclusion, advocacy and operational response – can be strengthened, revised or changed to improve the relevance, appropriateness and effectiveness of UNHCR work to respond to the needs of PoC currently and in the medium-to-long term?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evidence of successful approaches, good practice and weaknesses around durable solutions, inclusion, advocacy and operational response</li> </ul>		<p>KIIs, perceptions survey</p>

Evaluation questions	Judgement/performance criteria	Data sources	Data collection methods
<p><b>EQ 3.2</b> How can UNHCR more effectively integrate and align its efforts with national development and assistance frameworks in Iraq? And in support to national social protection systems specifically, to improve protection outcomes?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Evidence of successful approaches, good practice and weaknesses in terms of partnership and alignment</li> </ul>		<p>KIIs, perceptions survey</p>
<p><b>EQ 3.3</b> Which areas of the operation offer greater/lesser potential for responsible and sustainable exit and handover strategies to UNHCR partners (government, national and international)?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Evidence of areas of operations that could be explored for exit and handover</li> <li>Evidence of areas of operations that do not lend themselves to exit and handover</li> <li>Evidence of strengths, willingness, capacities and resources of national and/or international actors in taking over UNHCR programmes or functions</li> <li>Perceptions on whether UNHCR should develop new expertise beyond its protection mandate or whether it should enter new partnerships with relevant development actors</li> </ul>		<p>KIIs, perceptions survey</p>
<p><b>EQ 3.4</b> What capacity-building and other steps/investments are needed to better ensure successful exit and handover in the areas identified in EQ 3.3?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Perceptions of investments and resources needed (type, length, other) to ensure handover in the areas of the operation identified above is successful (effective, sustainable)</li> </ul>		<p>KIIs, perceptions survey</p>

## Annex 4: Key informants

### Interviewees

Organization	Location	Title
UNHCR	Amman	Former UNHCR Country Representative
UNHCR	Erbil	CCCM Sub-Cluster Coordinator
UNHCR	Baghdad	Field Officer
UNHCR	Baghdad	UNHCR Risk Advisor
UNHCR	Erbil	CBI Analyst
UNHCR	Kabul	Senior Transition Officer UNHCR
UNHCR	Erbil	Shelter and NFI Cluster Coordinator
UNHCR	Erbil	CWG Coordinator
UNHCR	Duhok	Head of Office UNHCR
UNHCR	Erbil	Solutions Officer
UNHCR	Erbil	CBI Analyst
UNHCR	Erbil	Protection Officers
UNHCR	Erbil	Senior Management Team Member
UNHCR	Baghdad	Deputy Representative
UNHCR	Erbil	Associate Protection Officer
UNHCR	Erbil	Protection Officer
UNDP	Baghdad	Deputy Representative
UNFPA	Erbil	Deputy Representative
UN-OCHA	Baghdad	Head of Reporting
UNICEF	Erbil	Deputy Representative
UN-HCRC	Baghdad	Senior Advisor
UN-OCHA	Baghdad	Director General
UN-HLP	Baghdad	Sub-Cluster Coordinator
ICRC	Baghdad	Protection Coordinator
PRM/USAID	Baghdad	Senior Coordinator of Refugee and IDP Affairs Office
GIZ	Baghdad	Livelihoods Coordinator
ECHO	Erbil	Head of Mission
DFID	Baghdad	Humanitarian Adviser
WB	Beirut	Senior Social Development Specialist
WB	Beirut	Senior Protection Specialist
WFP	Baghdad	Deputy Country Director
IOM	Baghdad	Head of Return and Recovery Unit
IOM	Baghdad	Chief of Mission
IOM	Baghdad	Liaison Officer
MoMD	Baghdad	TBC
PC-MoI	Baghdad	Director General Office
KRI-MoP	Erbil	Director General Coordination and Cooperation Unit

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<b>Organization</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Title</b>
JCC-KRI	Erbil	Executive Director
KRI-MoLSA	Erbil	Youth Directorate
KRI-MoLSA	Erbil	Director of Research and Training
KRI-MoLSA	Erbil	Social Researcher on Family Protection
NRC	Erbil	Head of Programmes
Mercy Corps	Erbil	Cash Advisor
SWEDO	Erbil	Camp Management
BZF	Erbil	Camp Management

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### **Community interviews and group discussions**

<b>Gender</b>	<b>Group</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Description</b>
Male	Refugees	Kaznazan	Out-of-camp Syrian refugees
Male	IDPs	Kaznazan	Out-of-camp IDPs
Female	IDPs	Kaznazan	Out-of-camp IDPs
Mixed	Host community	Kaznazan	Host community members
Male	IDPs	Hasansham	Camp-based IDPs
Female	IDPs	Hasansham	Camp-based IDPs
Male	Refugees	Qushtapa	Camp-based Syrian refugees
Female	Refugees	Qushatapa	Camp-based Syrian refugees
Male	IDPs	Baharka	Camp-based IDPs
Female	IDPs	Baharka	Camp-based IDPs

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22. OCHA. Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, 2004.
23. UNHCR. Vulnerability Assessment and Targeting Review, Multipurpose Cash Assistance, Iraq, 2019.
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30. UNHCR. Community Based Protection Activities in Iraq – 2019 Achievements & 2020 Needs, 2020.
  31. IOM. Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM), Master List Report 113, 2019.
  32. UNHCR. Civilian Character of Camps Incident Tracking Matrix, 2019 Final Report, 2020.
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  34. UNHCR. Joint UNHCR–OCHA Note on Mixed Situations Coordination in Practice, 2014.



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