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Project on Internal Displacement

**IMPROVING PROSPECTS FOR DURABLE SOLUTIONS FOR
IRAQI INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS AND REFUGEES**

A ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION HOSTED BY
THE BROOKINGS-LSE PROJECT ON INTERNAL DISPLACEMENT AND
THE INTERNATIONAL RESCUE COMMITTEE,
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ABOUT THE BROOKINGS-LSE PROJECT ON INTERNAL DISPLACEMENT

Since 1994, the Project on Internal Displacement at Brookings has worked to promote a more effective national, regional and international response to this global problem and to support the mandates of the Representative of the UN Secretary-General on Internally Displaced Persons, the Representative of the UN Secretary-General on the Human Rights of Internally Displaced Persons and the UN Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of Internally Displaced Persons. The Project monitors displacement problems worldwide, promotes the dissemination and application of the UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, works with governments, regional bodies, international organizations and civil society to create more effective policies and institutional arrangements for internally displaced persons (IDPs), convenes international seminars on internal displacement, and publishes major studies, articles and reports.

ABOUT THE INTERNATIONAL RESCUE COMMITTEE (IRC)

IRC responds to the world's worst humanitarian crises and helps people to survive and rebuild their lives. At work in over 40 countries and 22 U.S. cities to restore safety, dignity and hope, the IRC leads the way from harm to home. IRC has provided humanitarian aid in Iraq off and on since 2003 and today assists tens of thousands of people in 12 provinces. IRC teams rebuild and expand schools, train teachers, teach marketable skills to youth, offer targeted health, legal and psychosocial services to women, provide a range of legal assistance to returnees and displaced persons, improve water and sanitation facilities, and track forced returns at borders. In 2007, the IRC launched informal education projects and mental health support programs for Iraqi refugees in Jordan. Today, IRC's work in Jordan focuses on helping local organizations prevent and respond to violence against Iraqi refugee women.

Brookings and IRC thank the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) for providing the cover photo of this report.

Cover photo: Iraq / Mosul / A woman in front of her shelter in Al-Mushraf settlement. The settlement hosts more than 780 persons of primarily Arab origin who were displaced from Shekhan region in 2003. On their own initiative, they have settled in the neighborhood garbage dump, where they reside in makeshift shelters made of mud and garbage.

Photo credit: UNHCR / H. Caux / 21 October 2010

INTRODUCTION

Nine years since the US-led invasion of Iraq and six years since the bombing of the Al-Askari mosque in Samarra, millions of Iraqis remain displaced. Today, the Middle East is undergoing a historic transformation, the United States has ended its military operations in Iraq, and both Iraq and Syria—a key refugee hosting country—are mired in political instability. With these developments as a backdrop, the Brookings-LSE Project on Internal Displacement and the International Rescue Committee held an open and constructive discussion in February 2012 on the challenges and suggested areas for action to achieve durable solutions for Iraqi refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs).

Thirty participants from the U.S. government, United Nations agencies, and non-governmental humanitarian and development organizations met under Chatham House rules to discuss the present context of Iraqi displacement and concrete steps that key stakeholders can take to achieve durable solutions—return, local integration, or resettlement—for Iraqi refugees and IDPs.¹

The discussion shed light on a set of issues that remain central to the protracted nature of the Iraqi displacement crisis. Participants recognized the dynamic nature of displacement of Iraqis, the ongoing vulnerability and reduced coping mechanisms of many Iraqi IDPs and refugees as well as the efforts of the government of Iraq toward its displaced citizens and the plight of Iraqi refugees living in other countries. Participants agreed that long-lasting as well as short-term solutions to the protracted Iraqi refugee situation need to be analyzed in the context of other displacement situations in the region, which now includes refugees from Syria. As of March 2012, about 110,000 Iraqi refugees were registered with UNHCR in Syria. Some may be trying to stay in Syria while others are fleeing back to Iraq or other countries. At the same time, thousands of Syrians are also leaving Syria. The ongoing unrest in Syria at the time of the meeting made it difficult for participants to discuss durable solutions for Iraqis remaining there.

Participants discussed a number of areas where action is needed by relevant stakeholders to support durable solutions for displaced Iraqis: (1) Both the U.S. and Iraqi governments should consider needs of IDPs in their long-term development planning for Iraq; (2) International donor governments and the UN should complement their work with the central government by supporting sub-national levels of governance; (3) IDP and refugee returnees have special needs and may require extra protection; (4) International assistance benefitting displaced Iraqis should continue as long as needs related to their displacement persist, and could be increased by expanding the number of contributing donor states; and (5) The financial contributions of the government of Iraq should be increased; its co-funding of certain USAID programs for IDPs stands out as a positive development.

¹ A durable solution is achieved when refugees or internally displaced persons no longer have any specific assistance and protection needs that are linked to their displacement and can enjoy their human rights without discrimination on account of their displacement. For refugees, “a durable solution” is defined as being secured through voluntary return to the country of origin, local integration in the country of asylum, or resettlement to a third country. Applied to IDPs, the concept refers to voluntary return to the area of origin; local integration in the area of displacement; or resettlement elsewhere in the country.

This report summarizes the themes and recommended areas for action that emerged from the meeting, and provides context and background to the issues raised. Housing, land, property and livelihood issues were the focus of the discussion on durable solutions for Iraqi IDPs. Organizers had envisaged using the time set aside for the topic of Iraqi refugees to discuss regularization of their legal status and permission to work. However, during the meeting, the discussion focused on the obstacles humanitarian aid workers had encountered in gaining access to Syrians as a result of the violence, the emerging Syrian refugee crisis, and the flight from Syria of some Iraqi refugees who had been targeted for attack.

This meeting builds on recent work undertaken by the Brookings-Bern Project on Internal Displacement on finding durable solutions for Iraqi IDPs and refugees. These issues were discussed by representatives from the governments of Iraq and other countries in the region, international organizations, non-governmental organizations and donor countries at a high-level conference that the Project convened in 2009 with support from the World Bank and other donors.² The Project also examined the government of Iraq's efforts to address internal displacement in a study entitled *From Responsibility to Response: Assessing National Approaches to Internal Displacement*, published in November 2011. The study, based on the central tenet of international law that states bear the primary responsibility for addressing internal displacement, examined national response to IDPs in fifteen of the twenty countries with the most conflict-induced IDPs.³

The roundtable also builds on the efforts by the IRC Commission on Iraqi Refugees, which was formed in 2008 to shed light on an underreported humanitarian crisis and has since traveled to the region and to resettlement sites in the United States in an effort to ensure needs of displaced Iraqis are addressed.⁴ The Commission has issued three reports investigating the situation of uprooted Iraqis in the region and those resettled in the United States: *Five Years Later: A Hidden Crisis* (2008), *Iraqi Refugees in the United States: In Dire Straits* (2009), *A Tough Road Home: Uprooted Iraqis in Jordan, Syria and Iraq* (2010).⁵

² For a summary of the conference as well as three related papers, see: Elizabeth Ferris, ed., *Resolving Iraqi Displacement: Humanitarian and Development Perspectives, 18-19 November 2009, Doha, Qatar* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings-Bern Project on Internal Displacement, April 2010), available in English and Arabic at: (www.brookings.edu/reports/2009/1119_iraqi_displacement.aspx).

³ Elizabeth Ferris, Erin Mooney and Chareen Stark, *From Responsibility to Response: Assessing National Approaches to Internal Displacement*, (Washington, D.C.: Brookings-LSE Project on Internal Displacement, November 2011) (www.brookings.edu/reports/2011/11_responsibility_response_ferris.aspx).

⁴ Commission members include Ambassador Morton Abramowitz, The Century Foundation; Susan Dentzer, The Newshour (PBS), Kathleen Newland, Migration Policy Institute, Drummond Pike, The Tides Foundation, George Rupp, IRC; Jean Kennedy Smith, former Ambassador to Ireland, Maureen White, former U.S. Representative to UNICEF, John Whitehead, former Deputy Secretary of State, James Wolfensohn, former President of the World Bank.

⁵ Available at the IRC website: www.rescue.org/node/5678

AREAS FOR ACTION THAT EMERGED FROM THE DISCUSSION

Several key themes serving as areas for action by the primary stakeholders emerged from the discussion, as examined below.

Support local solutions

Given the scale and nature of displacement, it is important for international actors to continue to build the capacity of the government of Iraq, including through the provision of technical assistance to ministries and other government agencies, particularly at the sub-national level. This assistance is necessary to address the needs of the internally displaced, returnees and other vulnerable populations, especially in resolving housing, land and property issues and ensuring access to public services and employment.

On the whole, roundtable participants agreed that while projects and policies addressing displacement in Baghdad are needed, support to the central government should be complemented by sub-national programs, strategies and policies, particularly at the governorate level. Government ownership at both local and national levels is key to meeting the needs of Iraqis. The central government should ensure that local governments have the resources—including budgetary flexibility and adequate capacity—required for addressing displacement. Special efforts should be made to ensure that line ministries take on responsibility for issues related to IDPs under leadership from Baghdad.

At the same time, participants recognized that a one-size-fits-all approach for all of Iraq would not be conducive to bringing about durable solutions. Sub-national approaches, policies and programs must take into consideration the resources of governorates, political constraints, and the specific protection and development needs and concerns of different groups of IDPs and returnees. These needs and concerns vary among different populations, including: returnees from other parts of the country or from other countries; those displaced in urban or rural areas; displaced women, children, youth and minorities; those caught up in territorial disputes over access to land and services; and host communities whose resources are strained from supporting IDPs and returnees.

Address housing, land and property issues

Participants stressed that it is imperative to find housing and shelter solutions for Iraqis, including IDPs and returnees, particularly in Baghdad. The majority of the 1.3 to 1.6 million post-2006 IDPs originate from the capital, where violence triggered most of the internal and external displacement, and it hosts an estimated 40 percent of these IDPs.⁶ In light of these

⁶ According to UNHCR estimates, there are over 1.3 million IDPs in Iraq displaced since 2006; IOM estimates are a bit higher, at over 1.6 million. IOM also estimates that over 1,090,000 people had been displaced prior to 2006. For UNHCR figures, see: UNHCR, *UNHCR Iraq Operation Monthly Statistical Update on Return – January 2012i* (<http://reliefweb.int/node/480435>). For IOM figures, see IOM, *Review of Displacement and Return in Iraq*, February 2011 (www.iomiraq.net).

dynamics and of the plight of other vulnerable populations in Baghdad, participants recognized the need for a comprehensive urban renewal and development strategy for the capital. Such a strategy would not focus only on the displaced but also on other vulnerable populations. Over 50 percent of the population in informal settlements in Baghdad is not internally displaced, suggesting that the need for improved living standards is not a problem pertaining only to IDPs. A significant obstacle to resolving housing, land and property issues is that Iraq's land management institutions are very bureaucratic, and subject to corrupt practices including in the allocation of land for housing.

Internally displaced and returning Iraqis need better access to land which is complicated by lengthy and unresolved property disputes. By establishing the Commission of Real Property Disputes (CRRPD), the Iraqi government has taken an important step to address some of the land and property violations that occurred during the Ba'ath Party era. Nonetheless, considerable challenges remain. Out of some 170,000 claims, only 60,000 claims have been resolved to date.⁷ In addition, rule of law remains weak in Iraq and the CRRPD may not be able to enforce its decisions. However, the commission is only mandated to address claims for property seized or confiscated under the former regime. The current government of Iraq must therefore find other ways to redress instances of property destroyed or damaged during the former regime. Another concern is that a system has not been established to deal with property disputes that have arisen after the fall of the Saddam Hussein regime.

In contrast to older housing, land and property issues, more recent property disputes have arisen from the power vacuum after the fall of the Hussein regime in 2003, and the 2006-2007 period of sectarian violence. Hence, post-2003 property disputes involve displaced persons, squatters, armed groups, property looting and destruction, fraudulent sales by individuals, the occupation of public buildings, as well as the establishment of informal settlements. However, limited data—on IDP land and property, compiled by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and Iraqi authorities and other national and international actors—are available on the scope of these land and property issues. Helping Iraqi IDPs and refugees to achieve durable solutions requires a concentrated effort by the government of Iraq and other key stakeholders to resolve post-2003 land and property issues.⁸

Another concern raised during the discussion was the Iraqi government's decision in January 2012 to dissolve the agricultural contracts of an estimated 4,000 Arab families living in Kirkuk. This population, which has no political support in Baghdad at present, was moved there during the former regime's "Arabization" policy to assert Arab control over the north, at the same time that Kurds, Turkmen and others were forcibly expelled from the region. These Arab families in Kirkuk are supposed to receive compensation and land in their area of origin. However, a key question arises given that they have been displaced for so long—do they still have an area of origin? Matters are further complicated by the fact that this population does not wish to leave; their forceful eviction without compensation poses the risk of an increase in violence in the area.

⁷ See further, Peter Van der Auweraert, "Land and Property Issues in Iraq: Present Challenges and Future Solutions—Discussion Points," in Elizabeth Ferris, ed., *Resolving Iraqi Displacement: Humanitarian and Development Perspectives, 18-19 November 2009, Doha, Qatar*, April 2010.

⁸ See further, Peter Van der Auweraert, "Land and Property Issues in Iraq: Present Challenges and Future Solutions—Discussion Points."

Improve access to public services and economic opportunities in Iraq

Many of Iraq's 1.3 to 1.6 million IDPs displaced since 2006 have problems securing employment, sufficient food and water, and adequate shelter and education. According to the latest available data from the International Organization for Migration (IOM), a large majority of IDP families cited employment (75 percent) as their top need, followed by shelter (48 percent) and food (47 percent). Access to water, legal assistance, health and education are other high priorities reported by IDPs.⁹ It is important to note that these needs vary by region as well as by length of displacement, among other characteristics such as gender, including whether or not families are headed by a woman, and whether IDPs are ethnic or religious minorities.¹⁰

In comparison to an unemployment rate of over 70 percent among IDPs, the most recent official unemployment rate for Iraq as a whole was 15.3 percent in 2008. However, unofficial estimates made in 2011 as well as formal government statements that year suggest that today some 30 percent of the working-age population in Iraqi is jobless.¹¹ IDPs in the Kurdistan Region, where employment is considerably lower than regions throughout Iraq, face difficulties in securing jobs due to the language barrier, as most do not speak Kurdish.¹² The incidence of unemployment among IDPs affects their ability to secure myriad other basic rights, such as shelter, health care and education.

Displaced Iraqis are left in a state of limbo. While conditions in displacement prevent sustainable integration, conditions in the areas of origin impede sustainable return. Meanwhile, IDPs receive dwindling support from host communities, whose resources have become strained and who may see IDPs as competition for jobs. IDPs (and refugees) cannot return to their homes because of various factors, including insecurity, fear of being targeted, or the lack of public services and jobs, in their areas of origin.¹³ Because of these dangerous or difficult conditions or because of their success in integrating in host communities, local integration is increasingly preferred by IDPs over return or resettlement in a third location. For example, 25 percent of IOM-assessed IDPs expressed a desire to integrate in their area of displacement in 2006, compared to 44

⁹ IOM, *Review of Displacement and Return in Iraq*, February 2011.

¹⁰ Full analysis is beyond the scope of this paper. See further, IOM, *Review of Displacement and Return in Iraq*, February 2011; IOM, *Special Focus Report on Female Headed Households*, October 2011 (<http://reliefweb.int/node/452313>); Inter-Agency Information and Analysis Unit, *Women in Iraq Fact sheet*, March 2012 (www.iauiraq.org); IOM, *IOM Needs Assessments—Update: Displacement of Christians to the North of Iraq*, 31 January 2012 (<http://reliefweb.int/node/474687>); and IOM, *IOM Needs Assessments: Displacement of Christians to the North of Iraq*, 31 January 2011 (www.iom-iraq.net), which includes IOM's 2010 report on this topic.

¹¹ For displaced persons unemployment figures, see IDMC, "Iraq: IDPs and their prospects for durable solutions," Briefing paper presented at the UNHCR annual consultations with non-governmental organizations, 28 – 30 June 2011, Geneva (www.internal-displacement.org). For national figures, see further: Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction, *Quarterly Report and Semiannual Report to the United States Congress*, p. 82 (www.sigir.mil/publications/quarterlyreports/index.html).

¹² UN Human Rights Council, *Report of the Representative of the Secretary-General on the human rights of internally displaced persons, Walter Kälin—Addendum: Visit to Iraq*, 16 February 2011, A/HRC/16/43/Add.1 (http://ap.ohchr.org/documents/dpage_e.aspx?m=71).

¹³ IOM, *Review of Displacement and Return in Iraq*, February 2011; UN Human Rights Council, *Report of the Representative of the Secretary-General on the human rights of internally displaced persons, Walter Kälin—Addendum: Visit to Iraq*, 16 February 2011.

percent in 2011.¹⁴ Some IDP families displaced since 2006 and assessed by IOM have successfully integrated into their host communities. But the longer IDPs remain displaced, the more difficult it becomes to achieve integration and engineer lasting solutions to their plight.

Returnee families face differing needs in comparison with IDPs. Returnees assessed by IOM monitors cite food (67 percent), water (44 percent), and health (42 percent) as their most pressing needs.¹⁵ Returning Iraqis can also be vulnerable to threats and attacks. UNHCR has reported explosions, harassment, military operations and kidnapping occurring in the areas where refugees return. According to a 2010 UNHCR survey, 61 percent of returning refugees regretted returning to Iraq, with the majority citing insecurity and personal safety concerns. Around 77 percent of those who returned to the Karkh and Resafa districts of Baghdad said that general insecurity or fear of direct persecution prevented them from returning to their original place of residence.¹⁶

In addition to the above issues, water scarcity is a concern for IDPs, returnees and host communities. IOM assessments have found that it can result in secondary, tertiary or multiple displacement and has a particularly negative impact on the livelihoods of people in rural communities. Recognizing the role of drought in causing displacement in Iraq and noting the government's focus on displacement due to conflict, the Representative of the UN Secretary-General on the Human Rights of IDPs urged the government of Iraq "to include non-conflict IDPs in a future national strategy on displacement as well as in future legislative, emergency preparedness and risk reduction initiatives" following his visit to Iraq in 2010.¹⁷

Roundtable participants did not discuss the above issues in depth, but did examine some of the lessons learned from return initiatives undertaken by the Iraqi government. For example, after the government of Iraq increased the amount of the grant it extends to returning families—from 1 million Iraqi dinars (approximately \$850) to 4 million Iraqi dinars (approximately \$3,400)—in June 2011, an influx of Iraqis "returned." By accepting these grants, however, recipients became ineligible for any of the humanitarian assistance given to IDPs and refugees.¹⁸ There is inadequate data as to whether those who claimed the grants were able to rebuild their lives in Iraq. Some participants noted that the Diyala Return and Integration Initiative, a joint UN and government of Iraq project, proved that engagement at the highest levels—the prime minister—and a comprehensive and unified approach by the key stakeholders are necessary and effective. However, any gains made in the number of returns of refugees and IDPs are subject to the volatility of the security situation. Furthermore, in planning and implementing such initiatives,

¹⁴ Intentions vary by governorate. See further, IOM, *Review of Displacement and Return in Iraq*, February 2011, p. 18.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ UNHCR, "UNHCR poll: Iraqi refugees regret returning to Iraq, amid insecurity," Briefing Notes, 19 October 2010 (www.unhcr.org/4cbd6c9c9.html).

¹⁷ UN Human Rights Council, *Report of the Representative of the Secretary-General on the human rights of internally displaced persons, Walter Kälin—Addendum: Visit to Iraq*, 16 February 2011. See further, IOM, *Review of Displacement and Return in Iraq*, February 2011; Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction, *Quarterly and Semi-annual Report to the United States Congress*, 30 January 2011 (www.sigir.mil/publications/quarterlyreports/index.html); and IOM, *IOM-Iraq Displacement Reports Special Focus - Water Scarcity*, September 2010 (<http://reliefweb.int/node/376514>).

¹⁸ Returnees who accept the return stipend do not become ineligible for certain assistance, such as livelihoods support or vocational training, provided through NGO partners and the ICRC.

participants stressed that it is important to ensure that communities have access to water supplies, other infrastructure and public services as well as employment opportunities.

Improve the collection and management of data on displaced populations

Participants noted the progress made over the years since the establishment of the Ministry of Migration and Displacement (MoMD, formerly the Ministry of Displacement and Migration), including the collection and management of data on IDPs displaced since 2006 undertaken in partnership with IOM and International Medical Corps. Despite serious gaps, these data sets are critical for designing and implementing effective programs, policies and strategies aiming to secure durable solutions for the displaced and returnees. The U.S. government is working to collect data and to verify the accuracy of existing data through field monitors working with implementing partners.

Some participants discussed the need for further efforts to address the needs of female-headed households, which, particularly if displaced, are among the most vulnerable. Female-headed households are difficult to reach and more efforts are needed to identify, assess and respond to their needs and protection concerns. Nearly one in 10 households is headed by a woman, corresponding to approximately 450,000 households.¹⁹ Women in these situations tend to lack gainful employment and children are more likely to leave school to help support their families. Outside of school, they are vulnerable to abuse and exploitation. Organizations such as IOM and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) provide targeted assistance to female-headed households. For example, IOM provides or links women to legal and medical assistance, psychosocial services, education and vocational training throughout Iraq's 18 governorates. It also monitors and reports on their protection and assistance concerns.²⁰

Continue funding to address needs of displaced Iraqis

Since 2008, the generous support from the U.S. government has provided basic, lifesaving assistance to uprooted Iraqis, provided aid to countries willing to host Iraqi refugees and supported efforts by UNHCR and non-governmental partners to aid the displaced, both inside and outside Iraq. The U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (State/PRM) and USAID's Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (USAID/OFDA) contributed over \$1.4 billion in assistance to Iraqi refugees and IDPs between Fiscal Years 2008 and 2011.

In addition to humanitarian funding, the U.S. government has resettled over 60,000 Iraqi refugees in the United States, has used diplomatic tools to support Iraqi refugees in the region and has appointed senior U.S. government officials to coordinate the U.S. response to the Iraqi

¹⁹ Inter-Agency Information and Analysis Unit, *Women in Iraq Fact sheet*, March 2012.

²⁰ See further, IOM, *Special Focus Report on Female Headed Households*, October 2011. IOM also serves and monitors female-headed host community households, who also have protection and assistance concerns but who fare better in terms of needs as compared to IDPs and returnees. On the vulnerabilities of female-headed households, see also: UN Human Rights Council, *Report of the Representative of the Secretary-General on the human rights of internally displaced persons, Walter Kälin—Addendum: Visit to Iraq*, 16 February 2011.

refugee crisis. Since 2010, the U.S. government strategy to displaced Iraqis has also sought to ensure that U.S. bilateral programs, administered by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), benefit IDPs and refugees to the greatest extent possible.

Assistance to Iraqi refugees and internally displaced persons will continue to be needed and the U.S. government has encouraged other donors to join the effort. There has been a notable lack of contributions from other donor states to address the needs of displaced Iraqis. Both the U.S. government and UNHCR have made repeated attempts to ask other governments and regional organizations to contribute more, but with little success. In 2010, the European Commission was, in fact, the second largest donor after the U.S. to UNHCR's funding appeal for assistance to displaced Iraqis. However, the Commission's contribution to the appeal totaled only \$10.9 million. The U.S. contributed far more (\$204.5 million) to the effort. The main reason for this disparity is that many donor governments believe the U.S. government should bear the chief responsibility for addressing the humanitarian needs of Iraqi refugees and IDPs because of its role in the war in Iraq. Non-governmental organizations have also long argued for a "special responsibility" of the U.S. to support displaced Iraqis for the same reason. Durable solutions for Iraqi refugees and IDPs, however, are unlikely to be achieved without greater financial commitment from other countries.

Despite significant U.S. government contributions, the response does not match the scale of the problem. Securing permanent housing in line with international standards alone will require more robust support. The government of Iraq has made slow, yet important, progress in allocating resources for its displaced citizens. For example, the Iraqi government co-funds certain USAID projects that also benefit IDPs. However, this progress requires sustained encouragement and support from the international community.

It is important to continue financial support for displaced Iraqis for a number of reasons:

- **Human Need.** Most refugees and IDPs still rely on humanitarian assistance to make ends meet. Displaced Iraqis have largely settled in urban areas, face an increase in the cost of living throughout the region in 2011, have seen their savings dwindle or depleted after years of displacement, and have little access to formal sector jobs which would allow them to become self-sufficient.
- **Regional Volatility.** Given the instability in both Iraq and Syria, and the resulting displacement of and hardships faced by both Iraqis and Syrians, maintaining funding levels is important in FY 2013. As of March 2012, Syria still hosts an estimated 110,000 Iraqi refugees. Over 40,000 Syrians have fled to neighboring states since the outbreak of violence in 2011. Thousands of Iraqi refugees in Syria have either left to seek refuge in neighboring countries or have prematurely returned to Iraq. The devaluation of the Syrian pound has led to rising prices for basic goods, which has also placed a strain on Iraqi refugees trying to remain in Syria.
- **Achievement of Durable Solutions.** Continued funding is crucial to achieving durable solutions and ensuring that gains made to date are not lost, particularly in light of instability in Iraq and turmoil in the region. Host countries need continued support to

provide services such as medical assistance and education, especially as they are hosting increasing numbers of Syrian refugees. IDPs and returnees need continued support to gain access to land, public services and jobs.

- **International Solidarity.** Continued financial assistance provided to countries hosting refugees demonstrates a unified humanitarian response which will allow the governments of Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey to continue to host the growing number of displaced persons who cross their borders.

Continue efforts to include IDPs in USAID programs in Iraq

In addition to assistance funded by State/PRM in Iraq, the U.S. government has taken steps to ensure that Iraqi IDPs benefit from U.S. bilateral programs. State/PRM and USAID have adopted an “integrated approach” to their assistance in Iraq that is focused on the most vulnerable populations and is meant to support a transition from humanitarian relief to development.²¹ Ambassador Peter Bodde, a senior official at the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad, is charged with overseeing the integration.²² USAID plans to launch the Iraqi Vulnerable Group Support (IVGS) initiative to focus specifically on work with IDPs. USAID also recently sent a team to Iraq who met with non-governmental organizations and IDP focus groups. This was done to inform USAID’s strategy for addressing the needs of IDPs.

This effort is a very welcome initiative. Successful inclusion of IDPs in USAID programs would help ensure efficient use of limited funds, promote a whole of government approach and further the common goal of a stable Iraq. Inside Iraq, IDPs would be assisted at the same time as communities hosting them. USAID is encouraged to continue to include IDPs within the scope of its programs and to establish indicators to track progress. These efforts should complement existing State/PRM-funded initiatives so as to fully cover the needs of populations served by PRM and USAID.

CONCLUSION

Many Iraqis are weary of sectarian violence and are eager to rebuild their country and restart their lives. Their hopes for a peaceful future, however, are threatened by political instability and continued insecurity in parts of the country. One positive sign is the government of Iraq’s increasing commitment to assisting IDPs and refugees.

²¹ See Appendix 2, U.S. Department of State, *United States Government Support for Iraqi Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), Returns, and Local Integration Strategy Document*, 30 September 2011(www.state.gov/j/prm/releases/releases/2011/181070.htm)

²² Ambassador Bodde is the Assistant Chief of Mission for Assistance Transition in Iraq and Coordinator for Minority Issues.

The deadly violence in Syria renders Iraqis still living there more vulnerable than ever before. Although a massive outflow of Iraqis from Syria has thus far not taken place, participants mentioned that internal displacement within Syria is creating tension between Iraqi refugees and displaced Syrians as they compete for diminishing resources. Additionally, the resettlement of Iraqis from Syria to United States is stalled due to lack of access for official interviews and long wait times for the approval of applications, causing increased levels of anxiety among Iraqis. Iraqi and Syrian displacement should not be viewed as two completely distinct phenomena; the interrelations between these two situations should inform the development of a comprehensive approach to displacement in the region.

The roundtable brought to light a number of ways of addressing the needs of displaced Iraqis which have heretofore received little attention. This includes greater emphasis on local solutions and, where applicable, tackling the problems of the displaced as part of broader plans for urban renewal rather than as an isolated humanitarian need.

While the international community should continue to support Iraqi displaced, ultimately the most effective solutions lie with Iraq and the governments in the region. In countries already strapped for resources, solutions depend on their political will, capacity and generosity. Iraq and Jordan have both made recent attempts to increase their support for displaced Iraqis which should be supported and expanded. The U.S. government should remain committed to protecting and expanding the operational reach of humanitarian actors in the region who are vital to the delivery of assistance to the displaced.

The central conclusion of this roundtable discussion echoes previous reports, policy briefs, and recommendations produced on Iraq stating that the need for assistance remains and that ongoing political attention and funding are indispensable.