

IOM Press Briefing Notes
Tuesday 15 September 2009
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IRAQ – Work, Shelter and Food Top Needs of Internally Displaced – Shelter, food and employment remain the most pressing needs of most of the 1.6 million people forced to flee their homes three and half years since the 2006 bombing of the Samarra mosque in Iraq that triggered one of the worst displacement crisis in recent times.

Releasing its bi-annual profiles of internal displacement throughout Iraq's 18 governorates today, IOM has found that across the board, the three issues remain the most common concerns of nearly 224,000 internally displaced (IDP) families that it has assessed so far.

IDP families in Diyala and Baghdad - where 58% and 60% respectively are without a source of income - are in a relatively comfortable situation compared to displaced families elsewhere. Unemployment figures among IDP families are significantly higher in the other governorates with those in Kirkuk (99%), Qadissiya (97%), Basrah (94%) and Wassit (89.4%) the worst affected.

In Anbar, IOM monitors report increasing numbers of children leaving school to help support their families through begging, petty trade or doing the odd job.

The lack of income and continuously rising rents have meant that for more than half of the assessed IDP families, the fear of losing what roof they have over their heads is constant and consuming.

IOM's governorate profiles highlight the particularly difficult situation that female headed IDP households are in, unable usually to advocate for themselves and their children. In Baghdad, more than 90% of female-headed households are unemployed.

On average, one in ten IDP families in Iraq is headed by a woman but some governorates have significantly higher averages. In Qadissiya, where the average of female headed families is 18%, one district has nearly 40% of IDP families led by a woman while in Diyala, monitors cite an area where nearly a quarter of the IDP families are female-headed, all dependent on charity to survive.

Food has consequently become a key need. Although the public distribution system (PDS) which provides food and fuel rations to Iraqis is reaching many IDP families, it is not reaching the great majority of those in governorates such as Erbil, Sulaymaniyah, Dahuk and Basrah. In others, although some distributions are occurring, it is erratic. In Ninewa, 79.1% of IDP families receive food irregularly while in Qadissiya, the figure is nearly 53%.

Anecdotal reports from monitors suggest that IDP women are particularly vulnerable to becoming involved in prostitution and trafficking as a result.

Water too is emerging as a growing issue. In Muthana, more than half the displaced get their water from rivers, lakes or streams, posing a major health risk. The lack of access to clean water and the ensuing health problems was also highlighted in other governorates such as Anbar and Kirkuk, where the problem is exacerbated by distances to nearest health facilities.

However, drought has also become the cause of displacement rather than violence in areas such as Ninewa and Salah al-din.

The profiles also reveal a highly youthful IDP population. With at least half of the IDP population under 18 years of age, providing education has become a major challenge either due to ageing or damaged school facilities or because of overcrowding. In some areas, such as a village in Babylon, one school for 400 pupils has now 700 children, forcing the school to run three shifts a day.

Although the IOM governorate profiles focus on the situation of the displaced, it also identifies the priority needs of the more than 55,000 families assessed by the Organization who have returned to their former home governorates, towns or villages. With most of the returnees going back to Baghdad, Diyala, Anbar, Kirkuk and Ninewa, their concerns are not dissimilar to those still displaced. Food, non-food items, fuel, shelter and employment are the main short and long-term needs as many returnees have come home to find their homes destroyed or taken over by others and are without a livelihood. Their situation has highlighted the need for durable solutions to be found, especially as many IDPs say they want to return home.

The profiles reveal that despite improved security in most places in Iraq, without work, their own home, schooling for children, access to water, electricity and health care, life for the vast majority of Iraq's internally displaced and for those returning home continues to be a bitter struggle.

To access the profiles, please go to:
http://www.iom-iraq.net/library.html#IDP_09_reports

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