

Falling Short

The Unmet Needs of Iraq's Internally Displaced

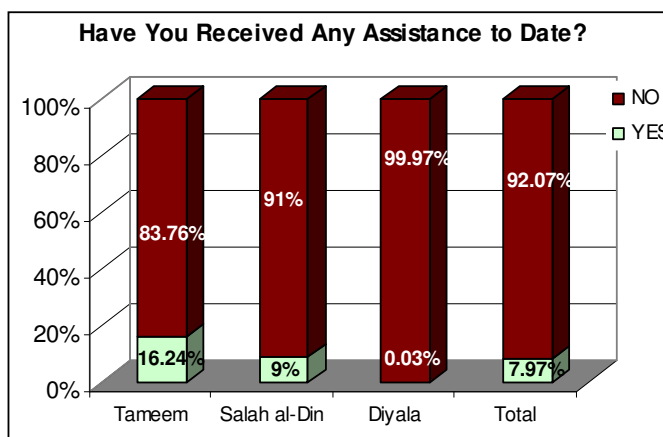
Religious, ethnic or political discrimination coupled with deteriorating security conditions continue to drive millions of Iraqis from their homes. But the flight of refugees from the country is only half the story of displacement in Iraq. More than two million Iraqis have been forced from their homes and are now seeking refuge in other cities and towns inside of Iraq. This population is facing severe shortages of food, adequate shelter, education and health care. United States support and leadership from Congress are essential to address this worsening humanitarian crisis.

Mercy Corps, in cooperation with the University of Sulaymaniyah, conducted a door-to-door needs assessment survey of 10,337 displaced families, representing nearly 46,000 individuals, living in Diyala, Tameem¹ and Salah al Din governorates, from April to August 2007. All of those surveyed were displaced between 2003 and 2007. These governorates, where insurgent attacks and sectarian violence have been regular occurrences, are where Mercy Corps has recently expanded its emergency humanitarian assistance for IDPs program. In many ways, the dynamics found in these three governorates reflect this issues facing IDPs across Iraq.

KEY FINDINGS FROM DIYALA, TAMEEM AND SALAH AL DIN GOVERNORATES

While IDP numbers in specific locations can fluctuate daily, due to fighting between the Multi-National Force (MNF) and insurgents or IDPs choosing to move again, the essential finding of this study is that there are massive unmet needs which will undoubtedly worsen without immediate action. In particular the assessment found that

- **Rates of displacement remain high.** While the rate of displacement in 2007 has slowed in comparison to its peak in 2006, the numbers are still higher than in 2005. In Diyala alone, the number of people displaced between January and July 2007 was already five times higher than the total number displaced in all of 2005.
- **Humanitarian assistance is sporadic at best.** Over 92% of families told surveyors that they had not yet received any humanitarian aid. In Diyala, only one IDP family out of nearly 4,000 reported having received assistance as of July 2007.
- **Religious and ethnic discrimination** was cited by over 60% of those surveyed as the reason for their displacement. Another 23% cited the overall deterioration in security.
- **Poor water and sanitation remain major concerns** that can lead to serious health crises such as the recent cholera outbreak. Forty-one percent of IDPs surveyed do not have access to appropriate methods of sewage disposal.
- **The food ration system is failing IDPs.** Only 15% of families received a Public Distribution System (PDS) ration in the last month.
- **Many families lack basic necessities** including 4,035 families (39%) who do not possess a kitchen stove. The majority of families (52%) do not have any kind of heater for the approaching winter. Access to fuel for heating, cooking and electricity is also a major need for IDP families.
- **Long-term needs of the displaced need attention now.** Nearly 40% of families plan to settle at their current location meaning that long-term needs of IDPs and host communities, such as access to health care and education, must be addressed without delay.

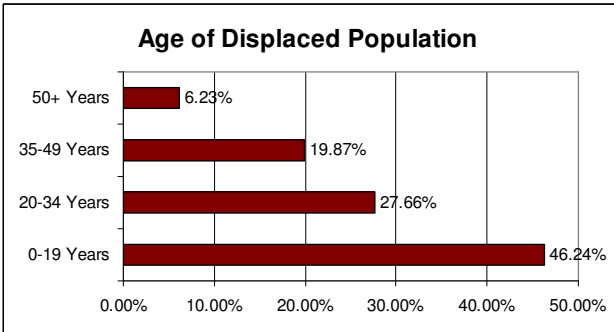


¹ Formerly Kirkuk.

PROFILE OF IRAQI IDPS TODAY

Background and Demographics

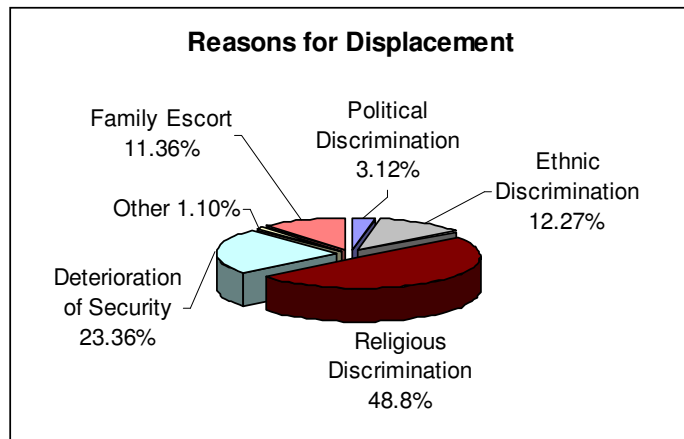
The large scale increase in displacement, amounting to 63% or all those displaced since 2003, happened after the February 2006 Samarra Mosque bombing and the subsequent sectarian violence that enveloped many parts of Iraq. While the rate of displacement has slowed in 2007 as compared to 2006, a higher percentage of families has been displaced already this year than in 2005, indicating the need for aid is still urgent.



In all three governorates, the displaced population significantly mirrors that of the host community, supporting the idea that IDPs generally settle in areas of their same ethnic and sectarian background. As an example, 99% of the IDPs and local residents in Salah al-Din are Arab and almost 100% are Sunni Muslim. The average IDP family in the three governorates has 4.5 members. Particular attention should be given to vulnerable groups such as women, children and youth² - who make up almost 73% of the surveyed population - to ensure that every community member's needs are being met appropriately.

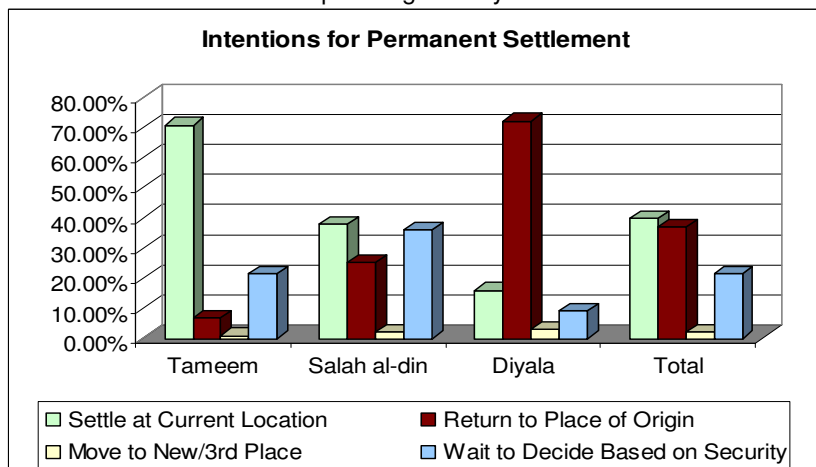
Reasons for Displacement

Nearly half (48%) of the IDPs surveyed say they relocated because of religious discrimination and another 24% left their home communities due to the overall deterioration in security. ***This discrimination and lack of security is felt very acutely by the 13% of families who have had a family member either killed or kidnapped.*** However, fleeing is never an easy decision as many must leave behind valuable assets which are then often taken by those who remain or by new families that have moved into their cities during large populations shifts. For example, 2,374 families (23%) reported losing their houses and over a tenth also lost their agricultural land, and thus their livelihood.



Intentions for Resettlement

Among the three governorates, the greatest disparity in survey results appeared in attitudes about resettlement. Across the board, security conditions are a critical factor in families' choices about movement and may shift as the conflict and actors in Iraq evolve. While the number of IDPs planning to stay in their current location is highest in Tameem, a fact probably due to the high number of Kurds who want to be part of the impending vote on whether the governorate will become part of the Kurdish Regional Government, over 40% of all IDPs surveyed plan to stay in their current location and another 20% are waiting until security improves to decide. Due to these circumstances, more attention must be paid to the medium and long-term needs of IDP families and host populations, such as access to employment, education and health services.



² Youth in this context refers to people under the age of 20.

SNAPSHOT OF IRAQI IDP CONDITIONS BY SECTOR



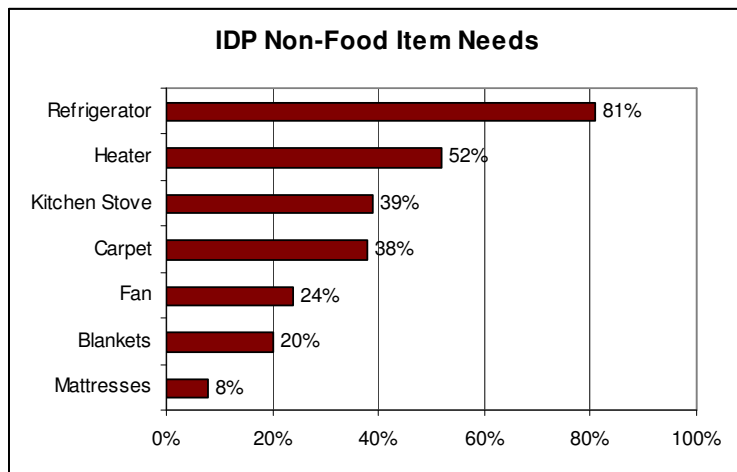
Housing and Services: Housing is always a critical issue for IDPs around the world, and Iraq is no exception. The most vulnerable are the 8% of families that live in makeshift or abandoned dwellings. Rapid IDP movement also shows the vulnerability of infrastructure and with 85% of those surveyed residing in urban areas, there is increased pressure on public power, water and sewage systems without increased investment in expanding the infrastructure. **Nearly 40% of IDPs surveyed reported they do not have access to adequate sewage systems.** While the number of IDPs with access to the municipal electric network mirrors the number of IDPs living in urban areas, these networks are still unable to consistently meet the demand for electricity. Only 9% of IDP families have a generator for backup power and fuel shortages and increasing black market prices for fuel make supplying the generator difficult.

Health: As evidenced by the recent cholera outbreak in North and Central Iraq, the major health threats facing IDPs are due to inadequate sanitation, a situation that is only exacerbated by limited access to health care. Of those surveyed, **nearly 60% are unaware of where to find the nearest public clinic**, which are free of charge. Private hospitals or clinics, though sometimes closer, are often expensive, leaving many IDP families with few or no options to access health care.³

Education: Displacement nearly always interrupts education and with half the IDP population surveyed under the age of 20, the long-term effects of this interruption will have far reaching implications for all sectors of society. In addition, 13.4% of persons over the age of 10 are either illiterate or have not earned a primary school certificate. Informal and non-formal education such as literacy training will be important if this group is to contribute to the recovery of their society in their current locations or upon return.

Employment and Livelihoods: **A large proportion of IDPs 15 years or older, 38%, are unemployed.**⁴ The majority of IDP households make less than 150,000 Iraqi Dinars (roughly \$120 USD) per month, and while the typical IDP household income is not much lower than the average salary in Iraq,⁵ IDPs are less likely to have steady employment or more than one person employed per household. As the cost of housing, food, fuel and other necessary items rapidly increases, IDP families are depleting their savings to help make ends meet, increasing their vulnerability

The lack of adequate incomes for IDP families can be seen in the large number of families that do not possess basic household items. If the trend continues, a considerable deterioration in living standards is expected and food insecurity is likely to rise. Only 15% of families received a PDS ration in the last month and **the large majority cannot remember when they last received a PDS food ration.**⁶ As the chart indicates, the number of families without the basic items necessary to keep and cook food, let alone to manage the extreme temperatures of Iraq, is staggering.



³ Over 6% of the individuals surveyed have severe health problems, including disabilities inflicted by weapons, war, chemicals or torture, or chronic illnesses such as diabetes, high blood pressure, heart, stomach or other diseases.

⁴ In addition to the "employed" and "unemployed", the rest of the population includes retired persons, students, and those who do not wish to work outside the home.

⁵ The average Iraqi family income is between 150,000 and 180,000 Iraqi Dinars.

⁶ The Public Distribution System (PDS) was established in 1995 under the UN Oil-for-Food program. Through PDS, every Iraqi family was eligible to receive monthly food rations. Since the 2003, the system has greatly deteriorated, particularly for IDPs since citizens are only eligible to receive the rations in their home governorates.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO CONGRESS AND OTHER POLICY LEADERS

The United States should take a leadership role in responding to the Iraqi displacement crisis by:

- 1. Doubling funding in FY 2008 for Iraq in the International Disaster and Famine Assistance (IDFA) account.** The NGO associations InterAction and Refugee Council – USA, which combined represent over 185 US based humanitarian and development organizations, have recommended that at least \$130 million dollars be appropriated in a 2008 Global War on Terror Supplemental to begin to address this crisis.
 - This figure amounts to a doubling of the US funding spent on the crisis in 2006 - when the majority of IDPs fled their home - most of whom report they are still awaiting any assistance.
 - This amount would begin to address the immediate needs of the displaced and other extremely vulnerable people by providing food, clean water and essential non-food items such as blankets and heaters or stoves, as well as start to tackle longer term needs such as improving access to education, health care and sanitation and sewage systems.
- 2. Developing a regional strategy that recognizes the extended nature of the Iraqi displacement crisis and plans for addressing the longer term needs associated with this crisis.** Any strategy should detail the interagency USG response in Iraq and in neighboring countries with significant Iraqi refugee populations, including Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, Egypt and elsewhere.
- 3. Capitalizing on US leadership by mobilizing the international community to respond through a coordinated approach** with the full range of development actors, including other donor and refugee receiving governments, United Nations agencies and international non-governmental organizations.
- 4. Continuing to strengthen relevant Iraqi government Ministries** including the Ministry of Migration and Displacement, the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Trade to be better able to respond to evolving IDP needs, including:
 - strengthening the Public Distribution System (PDS) so that citizens can register to receive food rations in any location inside the country, regardless of IDP status, and
 - improving and expanding water, sewage, sanitation and health systems in order to manage the IDP influx and avert major health crises.
- 5. Supporting community-led approaches to recovery and development**, so that the necessary conditions exist for IDPs to return to their places of origin or reestablish their lives in their current location, as well as for host communities to be able to accommodate new populations as necessary. Mercy Corps has learned through its experience in conflict and post-conflict transitional contexts around the world that sustainability depends on transparent, accountable and participatory approaches that invite citizens to engage in decision-making processes. Congress and the US Government should seek funds to implement programs to achieve these goals.

Mercy Corps works amid disasters, conflicts, chronic poverty and instability to unleash the potential of people who can win against nearly impossible odds. Since 1979, Mercy Corps has provided more than \$1 billion in assistance to people in 94 nations.

Since 2003, Mercy Corps has worked to directly engage Iraqis in the rebuilding and renewal of their country. A seasoned staff of 190 Iraqis is responsible for the day-to-day program operations, with 15 expatriate staff members providing oversight and technical support. Village by village, community by community, Mercy Corps is helping Iraqis to restore hope and take charge of their future. The success of Mercy Corps' Iraq program, as well as the security of staff and program sites, depends on the acceptance and good will of local communities and leaders. Thanks to a continuous effort to create understanding of and community investment in its programming, Mercy Corps' work has been highly successful, enabling programs to keep running even through very turbulent times.

For more information on this report and how Mercy Corps is responding to the Iraqi displacement crisis, please contact Emily Gish at egish@dc.mercycorps.org or 202-463-7384 ext 119.



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