



ACTED

**Rapid Assessment of Child Protection Needs of Internally Displaced
Persons in Ainkawa, Erbil
Kurdistan Region of Iraq**

August 2014

Executive Summary

On the 10th and 11th of August 2014, ACTED's Child Protection and Assessment and Monitoring teams conducted a rapid assessment of the location and needs of internally displaced children and caregivers who had recently arrived in the Ainkawa district of Erbil city. Through interviews with community focal points the following matters were observed:

- IDP girls and boys have experienced a wide variety of issues during displacement, including psychosocial distress, limited access to basic resources and a lack of a unsafe environment.
- IDP children face or are at risk of facing violent attacks.
- IDP children are at increased risk of exploitation including child labour.
- There are no available child-friendly activities for children, and children are not engaged in any activities. There are currently no recreational opportunities for children in these locations, potentially due to overcrowdedness, a lack of shade and dangerous surroundings.
- There is a high demand for the establishment of educational and recreational activities in the areas hosting the IDPs.
- There are a number of children with disabilities and/or special needs present among the IDPs and there are currently no specialized services available.

Background & Methodology

Throughout the night of August 6th 2014, thousands of families in Al Hamdaniyah District, Ninewa Governorate, fled their homes under the instruction of the Peshmerga (the armed forces of the Kurdish Regional Government) as a precaution in light of the recent escalation of the conflict. Thousands of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) entered Erbil Governorate and settled in Ainkawa, one of Erbil city's Christian neighborhoods. Most of these IDPs have found refuge in a number of public spaces, including churches, parks, and unfinished buildings.

An estimated 70 percent of the IDPs in Ainkawa are children¹, the majority of which are under 5 years old. Emergency child protection measures are critical as children are at greater risk of exploitation, violence, neglect and abuse during times of displacement. Therefore, on August 10th and 11th, ACTED's Child Protection and Assessment and Monitoring teams were mobilized to conduct a rapid assessment of the needs of IDP children and caregivers in Ainkawa, Erbil.

The locations of the assessment were determined through triangulation of information and data from UNICEF and the REACH Initiative. Focusing specifically on areas with a greater number of families most likely to remain in Ainkawa in the near future, a total of seven locations were identified. On August 10th ACTED dispatched teams to conduct interviews with Key Informants (KIs) in four locations: Mar Yousef Church, Mar Karmagh Church, Mar Shamoun Church and Park, and Um Alnoor Church. However, due to the mobile nature of the population, the families previously in Mar Karmagh Church were no longer present and ACTED was therefore unable to conduct any interviews in this location. Throughout the first day of assessment a total of 50 interviews were conducted with community focal points in the three remaining locations. On August 11th ACTED teams conducted a total of 27 interviews at three different locations: Hadabat School, Sami Abdulrahman Park and abandoned buildings on Al-Mia Street. Though an additional location, Ainkawa Camp, was subsequently

¹ Child Protection sub-Working Group, 10 August, 2014.

identified and visited, ACTED was unable to conduct any assessments there as the camp was still under development.

Location	Estimated Population	Estimated % of Children	Total interviews	Female	Male	Unknown
Mar Yousef Church	1000	40 to 60	16	9 ²	7	0
Um Alnoor Church	200	35 to 40	14	9	4	1
Mar Shamoun Church & Park	1250 ³	30	20	8	12	0
Hadabat School	280	40	16	9	7	0
Al-Mia Street	730	35	6	3	3	0
Sami Abdulrahman Park	60	35	5	2	3	0
TOTAL	3527	n/a	77	40	36	1

ACTED conducted the assessment utilizing a questionnaire (see Annex A) based on the Global Child Protection Rapid Assessment Toolkit (CPRA), and a rapid assessment conducted by Save the Children on child protection issues of IDP children in Shaqlawa, Erbil Governorate, earlier in the year, adapted to reflect the current context.

Due to the rapid nature of the assessment and highly fluctuating population, respondents were selected on the basis of first convenience sampling and then snowball sampling. Respondents were asked to provide information representative of their community. At each site, the first point of contact was the site or community representative. From this initial convenience sampling, the ACTED teams then used a snowball sampling methodology, asking each Key Informant (KI) to refer them on to another. In order to establish a full picture of the population in each site, ACTED aimed to interview a heterogeneous selection of KIs, based on ethnic and religious background, age, and sex. 36 men and 40 women were interviewed – a total of 77 Key Informants (gender of one KI was not specified). Whenever possible, priority was given to KIs with children.

The limitations of the assessment include time restraints and the constraints of having a highly mobile population, which made it difficult to estimate precise figures and identify the Key Informants that would be considered most representative of the IDP population currently in Ainkawa.

Findings

Discussions with Key Informants focused on the following key issues: family separation; children’s psychological well-being and common issues faced by boys and girls, including forms of violence and abuse; activities that children are currently engaging in; children with disabilities or special needs; the future plans of the families.

Family Separation

Though some KIs mentioned that they knew families who had lost children during the shelling of their villages, most of them were not aware of any families that were missing children as a direct cause of movement or displacement.

² Including one 5 year old child

³ Estimated family size of 5 people

The majority of KIs did not report any families taking care of children that were not theirs. Of the six that did, one explained that it was due to the fact that the child's mother was ill. It is worth noting that, at the Hadabat School, one woman expressed that she knew of a number of families taking care of children that were not part of their family prior to displacement.

69 KIs reported not knowing of any children under the age of 18 living on their own. Of the eight that did, one explained that children currently living on their own were orphans. One case was identified in the Um Alnoor Church where a 17 year old child was taking care of his brothers and sisters due to the death of his father. In the Mar Shamoun Church and Park, two Key Informants both identified four children currently living on their own.

Children's Well-being

KIs identified a wide variety of issues related to child rights faced by boys and girls during the displacement that they considered to be of concern. They can be classified into groups as follows:

- Safety-related issues including robbery, sexual abuse, diseases, and no available safe places
- Limited access to basic resources including food, water and milk, clothes (many did not bring enough with them), WASH facilities, electricity, money, and medicine.
- Issues relating to psycho-social wellbeing including fear and isolation. These issues stem mainly from the children leaving friends and family, missing school and exams, and their fear of further displacement or being separated from their parents
- Other issues including over-crowdedness in the host areas, heat, lack of independence, boredom, and no access to the internet.

When asked to list their main concerns for children in the area, a total of 59 KIs (77% of total respondents) mentioned limited access to basic resources, with most reporting a lack of food, water, WASH facilities, clothes and medicine. In Hadabat school, for instance, three KIs explained that, due to limited access to WASH facilities, many people were taking common baths (mostly women and children) and nine mentioned that children had no access to medical services. Fear and over-crowdedness were also common themes; many mentioned the fact that some children were sleeping in the same room as adult men and women that were not from the same family. It is worth noting that exposure to sunlight was identified by 13 of the 20 people interviewed in Mar Shamoun Church and Park.

When asked about the forms of violence and abuse that children face or are at risk of facing, indicated sexual abuse, child labour, violent attack, quarrelling among each other, recruitment by armed groups (particularly for children above the age of 12), forced marriage (particularly for girls) and forced religious conversion (from Christianity to Islam), as being of primary concern. Of those that responded, a resounding majority mentioned violent attack and child labour as predominant threats.

“Currently, the parent that can find a job for his children will be very happy because of the lack of livelihood.” – Female 5 year old, Mar Yousef Church

However, over half of KIs said that children were not at risk of facing any forms of violence or abuse, this included a majority at Um Alnoor Church, Mar Shamoun Church, on Al-Mia Street and in Sami Abdulrahman Park.

Almost all KIs reported having noticed a negative change in the children's behaviour due to the displacement. Changes included unusual crying and screaming, nightmares and disturbed sleeping patterns, sadness and fear, asking too much from their parents, aconuresis⁴, aggressiveness (including violence), refusal to eat or to obey their caregivers, difficulty in forming friendships, anxiety and general psychological tiredness. Disturbed sleeping patterns, sadness and fear, unusual crying, and aggressiveness were the issues most widely mentioned. Fear and sadness were mentioned by 46 and 41 of the community focal points respectively, and unusual crying and aggressiveness were both referred to by 26 respondents.

“They became very nervous because of the loss of their property and they always cry. They wake up suddenly and feel frightened of nightmares.”- Female, Um Alnoor Church

Child-Friendly Activities

With regards to the activities that children are currently engaged in, there was a significant divide in the answers of the KIs. Just under half reported that children were playing with other children their own age or doing a number of other activities. These included both positive activities such as sewing, playing football or playing cards and negative activities such as staying up late, “quarrelling” with each other, playing on their parent's mobile phone, “playing with rubbish,” sleeping a lot, “wasting” time, searching for food and water or just wandering around.

Conversely, just over half of the KIs said that the children did not engage in any activities. While one of the KIs explained that this was because the children had limited recreational materials and space, another explained that it was due to an unwillingness of the host community to integrate IDP children:

“the people in the society [...] refuse to see our children playing in their streets so they threaten us to be fired from the area.” – Female, Mar Yousef Church

The aforementioned quote also points to potential increased community tensions due to the recent and sudden influx. Additionally, 75 of the 77 KIs interviewed communicated that there are currently no recreational opportunities for the children. Some mentioned over-crowdedness, lack of shade and the unsuitable or dangerous surroundings as explanations for the lack of recreational space. At Mar Yousef Church, two community focal points mentioned a school next to the church where children can play.

In the absence of a school, community focal points expressed their interest in children attending the following activities:

- Educational activities: learning to write, religious teachings, viewing educational, learning languages and maths, religious films, and activities.

⁴ Lack of control of urination; urinary incontinence

- Recreational activities: playing games, sports, drawing, watching cartoons, attending recreational youth clubs, and playing on swings

Some of the respondents mentioned that the provision of such activities would not only be beneficial to the children but decrease pressure on parents facing a myriad of environmental and social stressors. A large majority of community focal points showed preference for educational activities and nine added that they wanted social and psychological support for their children. A few respondents chose not to answer the question, of which three explained that they were not stabilized enough to be thinking of children's activities, indicating the increased pressure on caregivers. Another, interviewed in the buildings on Al-Mia Street, expressed that she did not want any activities in that location. This may have been due to the fact that IDPs present in that area were particularly mobile, as many said that they were looking to move somewhere safer as soon as possible.

66 of the 77 Key Informants interviewed revealed that they would be comfortable with their child attending child friendly activities were they to be organized, though a few conditioned their answer with the specification that these activities not take place too far away. In Mar Yousef Church, Mar Shamounf Church and Park, and Hadabat School all KIs said they would definitely encourage their children to attend, though one respondent explained that it may not be easy to convince her child to go. This is potentially driven by the children's desire to be in close contact with their caregivers. In Um Alnoor Church three KIs said that they were not interested and one expressed her desire for her autistic child to be able to go to a recreational area that was adapted to his needs. In both al-Mia Street and Sami Abdulrahman Park a high number of respondents reported that they were not interested in recreational activities should these be organised, including three of the six community focal points on al-Mia Street and three of the five at Sami Abdulrahman Park. One parent interviewed on Al-Mia Street explained that he did not want to send his children because "they feel miserable and frightened."

Children with Disabilities or Special Needs

Most KIs identified children with disabilities or special needs in their communities.

- In the Mar Yousef Church estimates of children with disabilities or special needs varied widely from 2 or 3 to 100. Of those giving estimates, 100 was the most cited. The disabilities mentioned included paralysis and epilepsy.
- In the Um Alnoor Church, most KIs mentioned just one case of a child with a disability (brain atrophy). Nevertheless, one respondent explained that two of his children suffered from both physical and mental developmental delays and two others mentioned between 5 to 10 cases of children with disabilities, including children with autism and quadriplegia.
- In the Mar Shamoun Church and Park, KIs identified approximately 10 vulnerable cases, including diabetes, mental and physical disabilities, and cancer.
- In the Hadabat School, no KIs were aware of any children with disabilities or special needs in their community.
- In the Sami Abdulrahman Park one KI identified two cases of children with special needs.
- On Al-Mia street, three KIs mentioned two cases of children with disabilities (paralysis and brain atrophy) .

All community focal points reported that there were currently no services provided for children with disabilities.

Future intentions

With regards to the future intentions of the people interviewed a wide variety of answers were given. A majority said they were going to travel onwards again as they did not feel safe and many expressed interest in going abroad. Of those interviewed on Al-Mia Street and in the Sami Abdulrahman Park all said that they were going to move to a safer space, five of whom mentioned the Bahrka Camp. In other locations many said that they intended to stay put until the end of the conflict, though some mentioned that bad conditions, including limited access to basic resources or unavailable (educational) facilities, would cause them to leave. Finally, a few said that they were going to return home, one of which explained that she had no choice because she was running out of money. It is worth noting that many of the respondents mentioned needing medicine and safer places to live.

Recommendations

Based on the findings discussed above, the following actions are recommended:

- Provision of emergency psychosocial support through recreational activities in Child and Youth Friendly Spaces. It appears that there is a high demand for the arrangement of child friendly activities at the temporary areas assessed in Ainkawa. These activities would allow the children a safe space to play, learn and socialize, but would also help reduce the level of stress and pressure felt by their caregivers. Priority should be given to a community-based approach.
- Provision of medicine and/or transportation to health facilities in Erbil
- Specialised services for children with disabilities.
- In the event that families remain in these locations, provision of case management services to particularly vulnerable children
- Provision of safe and adequate shelter and potentially cash assistance
- Awareness raising on child rights, and support for parents and caregivers to care for children in the current environment (including hygiene awareness)
- Education for children and youth
- Further assessments to understand community tensions and interventions to increase social cohesion

Annex

Annex A: Assessment Questions

Please note questions are based on the CP Global CPRA questionnaire.

1. What is the approximate population of the site? What is the estimated percentage of children? (ask to Focal Point)

2. Are there families who are missing any of their children because of the displacement/movement? If yes, what are the main causes of separation?
هل هناك اي عائلات قد فقدت ابنائها بسبب النزوح؟
 - a. In your opinion are there more boys or girls that have been separated?
3. Are there families taking care of children that were not part of their family before the displacement?
هل هناك اي عائلة كانت تعتني باطفال ليسوا من افراد عائلتهم قبل النزوح؟
4. Are there any people who are under the age of 18 living on their own, taking care of children?
اي اشخاص دون الثامنة عشر يعيشون بمفردهم او يعتنون باطفال اخرين؟ هل هناك
5. What are the main issues that boys and girls are facing/raising during this displacement?
ما هي القضايا الرئيسية التي يواجهها الصبيان/الفتيات خلال فترة النزوح؟
6. What forms of violence or abuse do children (boys and girls) face or are at risk of (recruitment, child labor, forced marriage, sexual abuse, violent attacks etc)?
7. Have you noticed any changes in children's behavior since moving here? If yes, what kind of behavior changes?
Ex: Unusual crying and screaming, Violence against younger children, more aggressive, committing crimes, less willing to help parents/siblings, sadness, nightmares or not being able to sleep, disrespectful behavior in the family.
8. What activities are children in engaged in here? What is a child's typical day been like?
ما هي النشاطات التي يقوم بها الاطفال خلال هذه الفترة من النزوح؟
(صف الاحداث التي يمر بها الطفل في يوم عادي)
9. Are there opportunities for play or recreation for children? Please give details
هل هناك فرص للعب او الترفيه للاطفال؟ يرجى اعطاء تفاصيل
10. Are there children with disabilities or special needs?
 - a. If yes, can you estimate how many and what the disabilities are.

11. Are there any services for children with disabilities and special needs?

12. In the absence of school, what activities do you prefer for children?

في ظل غياب المدارس, ما هي النشاطات التي تفضلها للاطفال ؟

13. If Child Friendly activities (including recreational activities) were to start here, would you be comfortable with your children attending? Would you want to attend with your child?

14. What is your future plan/intention (next month) (return immediately, move to another location (where), stay here until there is peace)

ما هي خطتك/نيتك المستقبلية (خلال الثلاث اشهر القادمة) (العودة فورا , الانتقال الى موقع اخر "الى اين" , البقاء هنا حتى يعم السلام هناك)