1. Executive Summary:

In response to COVID-19 pandemic, the International Rescue Committee (IRC) in Iraq conducted a Rapid Needs Assessment (RNA) in May 2020 in Kirkuk and Nineawa Governorates, in the districts of Mosul, Kirkuk, Sinjar and Hawija. The overall aim of this RNA was to exam the impact of COVID-19 on the situation of vulnerable families and their coping mechanisms, understand in the broadest way the impact of the crisis on sources of income and the labor system, discover community priorities and preferences regarding types of humanitarian aid, and confirm types of assistance currently provided by other agencies in the areas included in the assessment.

2. Methodology:

This assessment was conducted by IRC Iraq from May 21-25, 2020 via phone surveys with 278 individuals. Of the interview participants, 103 were female, and 175 were male. Detailed demographic information on survey participants is below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondents</th>
<th>Mosul</th>
<th>Kirkuk</th>
<th>Sinjar</th>
<th>Hawija</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local authority representatives</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Committee members</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heads of households</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># of Female</td>
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<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># of Male</td>
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<td>28</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>50</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>44</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Local authority representatives interviewed included 16 Mukhtars (official community leaders) from the districts assessed through this study, four representatives of the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs (MoLSA) in Mosul and Kirkuk, and six tribal leaders, in addition to the mayors of Sinjar and Hawija districts.

The Community Committee (CC) members who were interviewed included current and past IRC beneficiaries, and had both male and female members.

3. Assessment Findings:

3.1 West Mosul Assessment Findings:

3.1.1 Local authority and Community Committee Interviews

Key Informant Interviews (KIIIs) indicated that market dynamics have been vastly altered by the pandemic, with the impacts largely negative. KIIIs also indicated that unemployment rates remain high, with the majority of people who were working as daily workers reporting having lost their jobs. Survey participants also noted that finding a job is
much more difficult than it was before the curfew; the main markets in West Mosul are still only partially functional, since the Government of Iraq (GoI) mandated restrictions to reduce the spread of COVID-19 including curfews since February 2020.

The majority (87%) of KIs reported that their communities have not received services or assistance from local or international humanitarian organizations in the past three months and noted that their communities have urgent needs, especially for cash, food, and medical assistance. The remaining 13% of respondents indicated that food basket and hygiene kits been distributed during the last three months in West Mosul. This reiterates that the current response in West Mosul is far outpaced by the needs on the ground.

Respondents highlighted that many residents in their communities have practiced negative coping strategies like buying food on credit from shops during the period of COVID-19 curfews, and highlighted the urgent need for humanitarian assistance. The respondents also indicated that the wages are significantly reduced compared to those before COVID-19 curfews.

3.1.2 Household Interviews

In West Mosul, the IRC interviewed 50 heads of households during this RNA, specifically asking them about their source(s) of income and how they have been affected by COVID-19 and related lockdowns.

**Loans, Debt, and Community Support:** As shown in Figure 1, the highest percentages of those interviewed 21 households HHs (42%) indicated that they took on loans and/or debt, including utilizing store credit, to buy food items and cover other urgent expenditures. Five households HHs (10%) indicated that they got small cash amount (average of 40 USD) as support from friends and family during the period of COVID-19 lockdown as debts.

![Figure 1: Household income sources during COVID-19 in West Mosul](image-url)
Humanitarian Assistance Received: Four households (8%) reported that they received cash assistance from international humanitarian organization in west of Mosul, while other 46 HHs (92%) indicated that they have not received any services or assistance from local or international humanitarian organizations during the period of COVID-19 lockdown.

Employment: The main source of income for the most of the interviewed households 88% was temporary work/daily wages; however, as a result of COVID-19, as reported; 66% (33 HHs) indicated that they have been unable to work in the last three months due to movement restrictions. 22% of respondents (11 HHs) indicated they still had temporary work, three respondents were regular full-time employees, and an additional three ran their own small businesses. Three households reported that they were forced to send HH members under 18 to work or begging because of the lack of the source of income during COVID-19 crises.

Top Essential Needs: According to Figure 2, the vast majority of respondents 72% (36 HHs) reported that their first priority during COVID-19 pandemic is cash assistance, followed by the needs for shelter (10%), livelihoods services (8%), education (6%), and finally food items as reported by 4% of the respondents.

Households indicated that cash was their preferred assistance method, as it would enable them to buy food items and pay off accumulated debts due to COVID-19 curfews and the lack of opportunities to find jobs. None of the respondents reported that cash assistance would cause family conflict or disagreements among the community members (this was echoed in all surveyed districts).

3.2 Kirkuk Assessment Findings:

3.2.1 Local authority and Community Committee Interviews

IRC interviewed a MoLSA representative, who highlighted the huge gap in humanitarian needs in Kirkuk city due to COVID-19 lockdown; he also reported that the most affected community groups were individuals with precarious labor conditions, who are not able to work and who are not afforded social protection from the state.

The community committees (CCs) reported that the most vulnerable groups during COVID-19 crises in Kirkuk were the temporary workers on daily wages who are not able to work and often live in rental houses, as well as IDPs who have remained in Kirkuk since 2014. CCs also highlighted the needs in their communities for humanitarian assistance, especially cash, for vulnerable families who have been impacted by their inability to access sufficient food and/or cash.

The respondents indicated that movement restrictions within Kirkuk city and its surrounding areas, or between Kirkuk and other governorates, have created a negative impact on trade and small businesses within the city. Traders or small business owners have fired their employees, as a result of decreased demand in their shops, which has increased unemployment rates in the city.
3.2.2 Household Interviews

In Kirkuk city, the IRC included 50 heads of households in this rapid needs assessment whose sources of income have been affected by COVID-19 lockdown.

**Loans/Debt and Community Support:** The highest percentage of interviewed households 20 HHs (40%) had received loans and/or had incurred debt, including store credit, to buy food items and other basic needs; 11 HHs (22%) indicated that they received small cash amounts and food items assistance from the community, friends and family during the period of COVID-19 lockdown.

**Figure 3: Household income sources during COVID-19 pandemic in Kirkuk city**

![Figure 3: Household income sources during COVID-19 pandemic in Kirkuk city](image)

**Humanitarian Assistance:** Three households (6%) reported that they received cash assistance from international humanitarian organizations, and two additional households (4%) indicated that they received food baskets from a local NGO during the period of COVID-19 lockdown. The remaining 90% did not receive any additional assistance during this period.

**Employment:** Compared to other three districts included in this RNA, Kirkuk city showed the highest percentage of households that were unable to work during COVID-19 (88%). This is likely due to the fact that Kirkuk city implemented a full curfew earlier than other districts, as well as COVID-related movement restrictions having a particularly significant effect. Travel between Kirkuk and KRI for daily or temporary work was very common and previously represented a significant portion of employment for Kirkuk citizens, so movement restrictions have affected a large number of households. Only two HHS indicated that their temporary employment was not affected by the lockdown, and two additional households were still able to run their own businesses. Eight families reported that they coped with this inability to work by turning to begging (four HHs) and child labor (four HHs).
**Top Essential Needs:** Similar to the three other districts included in this RNA, the majority of HHs interviewed in Kirkuk city (80%) indicated that their most urgent need was cash assistance. 10% reported that their first priority was education for their children, followed by 4% each mentioning food and livelihoods. One head of household (2%) indicated the first priority was healthcare.

![Figure 4: Top priorities during COVID-19 lockdown for Kirkuk city](image)

3.3 Sinjar Assessment Findings:

3.3.1 Local Authority and Community Committee Interviews

The Mayor of Sinjar reported that prior to COVID-19, humanitarian services and assistances were the main source of income in the city. Other common sources for returnees following the end of the ISIS conflict in Sinjar included small businesses, trading, livestock, and agriculture sectors. However, as a result of restrictions enforced to reduce the spread of COVID-19, most people in Sinjar city have begun using negative coping strategies to buy food. The Mayor also noted that the city has not received any assistance from the government or international NGOs, except some food baskets from a local NGO.

Key informants echoed this, reporting that movement restrictions due to COVID-19 have increased suffering of Sinjar city residents and have caused deliver of international humanitarian assistance to be paused.

Mukhtars and CC members interviewed reported that the majority people in Sinjar city did not have income sources to meet their basic needs, including food and healthcare. Kls also indicated that their communities practiced negative coping strategies to buy food on credit from shops, and that these shops have also been affected during COVID-19 curfews and face shorter operating hours and cash flow challenges.

CCs also reported that the most vulnerable groups during COVID-19 crises in Sinjar were female-headed houses, households with members with disabilities, families with low net income, and the elderly; all of whom have been impacted by their inability to access sufficient food and/or cash.

3.3.2 Household Interviews

The IRC interviewed 50 Households (HHs) in Sinjar city center, with findings as follows:

**Loans/Debt and Community Support:** As shown in Figure 5, the main source of income for interviewed households was loans and debt, including store credit as reported by 19 HHs (38%), indicating that households practiced negative coping strategies to buy food on credit or through borrowed money from relatives and friends. 10 HHs (20%) indicated that they had received cash assistance from the community, friends and family for the last three months.
Humanitarian Assistance Received: The majority (96%) of the respondents reported that they have not received any service or assistance from local or international humanitarian organizations. Only 2 HHs (4%) reported that they received food baskets from a local NGO during the period of COVID-19 lockdown.

Employment: 31 HHs (62%) interviewed reported that a household member had lost their job in the last three months, due to COVID-19 movement restrictions. Eight HHs (16%) indicated that they still work on daily wages, four HHs (8%) worked in agriculture, three (6%) ran small businesses, and two HHs (4%) indicated they were regular employees. Two HHs reported they sent a household member under the age of 18 to work because there were no alternative sources of income.

Top Essential Needs: Most of HHs interviewed in Sinjar city (78%) highlighted that their first priority was cash assistance; healthcare was the second priority of Sinjar residents, reported by 5 HHs (10%) of respondents; food items was reported by 3 respondents; livelihoods reported by 2 HHs; and one HH reported the top priority was access to education for children.

Families are coping with economic challenges by reducing meals (32%); borrowing money (38%); selling items from their home (11%), reducing expenditure on healthcare (15%), and engaging in child labor (2%).
3.4 Hawija Assessment Findings:

3.4.1 Local authority and Community Committee Interviews

The Mayor of Hawija identified that the daily labor was the largest source of employment prior to COVID-19. Other industries common for residents in Hawija included small businesses and the trading sector. Since the restrictions enforced to reduce the spread of COVID-19 including curfews, most of people in Hawija city lost their jobs and need humanitarian assistance.

Mukhtars and CC members reported that the unemployment rate in Hawija city was high prior to COVID-19, the main obstacles to employment being high competition for jobs, an insufficient number of jobs available, and jobs located too far outside the city. Movement restrictions enacted to prevent the spread of COVID-19 added further obstacles to employment, and also caused daily laborers to lose work.

The KIs reported that most of the residents of Hawija city lacked the financial means to meet their basic needs, and the percentages of vulnerable families has increased the longer that movement restrictions were in place. The KIs also indicated that many shops and small businesses had been affected by COVID-19 curfews and they are only partially open with shorter operating hours; small shops also faced reduced cash flow as people lacked the financial means to buy household items or meet their basic needs and thus did not shop as frequently.

The majority of KIs reported that their communities in Hawija city have not received any government or humanitarian assistance during the period of COVID-19, and were adapting to the pandemic by relying on family and community support. One respondent did note that some member of his community had received hygiene kits and food baskets from local associations over the past three months.

3.4.2 Household Interviews

The IRC interviewed a total of 50 families in Hawija city center:

**Loans/Debt and Community Support:** 19 HHs (38%) indicated that they had received support from the community, friends and family as a main source of income for the last three months; 15 HHs (30%) reported that they practiced negative coping strategies to buy food on credit or through borrowed money from relatives and friends, as shown in Figure 7.
**Humanitarians Assistance Received:** Out of 50 interviewed households in Hawija city center, only two (4%) reported that they received hygiene kits, and four HHs (8%) indicated that they received food baskets from local associations over the last three months.

**Employment:** 37 HHs (74%) reported having at least one member of their household unable to work for the last three months because of movement restrictions related to COVID-19. 10 HHs (20%) reported that one person in their family above 18 years was working as a temporary or daily worker, had their own business, or worked in agriculture in last three months. The remaining 3 HHs (6%) reported that their sources of income had not been affected by COVID-19.

**Top Essential Needs:** According to Figure 8, the majority (94%) of respondents in Hawija reported that their top priority during COVID-19 pandemic was cash and livelihoods assistance; two HHs noted food as their top priority, and one HH mentioned healthcare as the top priority.

The households indicated cash as their preferred assistance method as it would enable them to buy food items and pay off debts they had accumulated as a result of COVID-19. None of the respondents felt that cash assistance would cause family conflict or disagreements among the community members.
4. Summary of Needs and Recommendations:

Based on the quantitative and qualitative data collected during this RNA, the following recommendations are made to inform IRC programming in West Mosul, Kirkuk city, Sinjar city and Hawija:

- Provide emergency cash assistance to vulnerable households that are not able to cover their basic needs, particularly to households headed by women, elderly people, or people with disabilities. Families with precarious labor conditions are also particularly affected by COVID-19 and should also be prioritized.
- Prepare a longer-term plan to address the implications of COVID-19 on the health, economy, education, and protection status of all members of the community.
- Conduct a gender analysis that examines how COVID-19 has impacted household members differently.
- Support for trainings, enterprise development, and work placement should be focused on sectors with high existing and future market demand that have been negatively affected by COVID-19 pandemic, with additional support required to improve opportunities for vulnerable groups who have lost their jobs.