

VULNERABILITY, NEEDS AND INTENTIONS OF INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS IN NORTHERN IRAQ

RAPID ASSESSMENT REPORT

July 2014

SUMMARY

The escalation of violence in Iraq in early June 2014 has resulted in the displacement of a large numbers of people living in conflict-affected areas, adding to over 1 million persons already displaced since January 2014, in a country with one of the highest level of internal population displacements in the world¹. In order to inform the humanitarian response to this displacement crisis, REACH is collecting primary data to address key information gaps on the vulnerability, intentions and needs of internally displaced persons (IDPs). Data has been collected at entry points to the Kurdish Region of Iraq (KRI) and at household level in displacement sites and host communities across the KRI and northern Iraq, including disputed areas in Ninewa and Diyala governorates.

Findings from REACH assessments confirm the pressing humanitarian needs of the very large newly displaced population in Northern Iraq. The overwhelming majority of IDPs left their homes in a hurry and left assets behind, fleeing as a direct result of conflict in their neighbourhood or village. The majority also reported that they do not intend to return to their area of origin until the conflict ends or the security situation is restored to pre-crisis levels. Given the continued escalation and the increasingly sectarian character of the conflict, many IDPs were pessimistic about their chances of return and uncertain about their future. This evidence points to a potential long-term displacement, which will quickly exhaust the current resources of IDPs and put a strain on their host communities.

The vulnerability of displaced people varies significantly and is influenced by several factors:

- While all IDPs left assets behind, some were able to flee their homes with some financial resources and/or had assets available in areas where they fled to. This is notably the case for wealthier urban dwellers who had cash savings in their homes. **Those IDPs who had no access to financial resources are considerably more vulnerable**, notably farmers who had contracted debts before the harvest season.
- Many IDPs are hosted by immediate or extended family or friends and benefit from their safety net. However, **IDPs without family or friend support networks are more vulnerable**, especially those residing in camps or collective shelters (schools, mosques, churches, empty buildings, etc.). Other IDPs are staying in rented accommodation or hotels, which is rapidly depleting their financial resources. Unable to find official employment, some have already experienced secondary or tertiary displacement as funds run out, which will become an increasingly common trend as their displacement continues.
- Some IDPs are able to enter the KRI, which is perceived as a safer area, while others are not. Those **IDPs who are refused entry into the KRI tend to be more vulnerable**. Their vulnerability is compounded by the fact that they often have to settle among local communities in disputed areas where resources such as water and electricity are coming under increasing stress.

The emergency response should take these factors into consideration, with an initial **focus on lifesaving activities for the most vulnerable IDPs. Water and food were the priority needs identified for the most vulnerable**. At the same time, efforts should be made **to support IDPs with depleting savings** in order to prevent their increased vulnerability in the medium to long term. The priority expressed by these IDPs is accommodation and particularly rental support. Finally, **host community safety nets should be supported**, especially where community resources are quickly depleting. With camps hosting only a small number of those displaced, host communities should be supported in adapting their services and facilities (including access to water, education, health, markets, etc.) to the influx of IDPs. **Communities in contested areas are particularly vulnerable** as they not only host some of the most vulnerable IDPs, but are starting to see a reduction in the capacities of their water and electricity facilities, which are **reliant to areas currently controlled by Armed Opposition Groups (AOGs)**.

¹ UNAMI (2014) [Iraq emergency Situation Report no. 1](#), 26.06.2014.

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

IDP	Internally Displaced Person
KRI	Kurdistan Region of Iraq
OCHA	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
ODK	Open Data Kit
AOG	Armed Opposition Group

GEOGRAPHIC CLASSIFICATIONS

Governorate	The highest administrative boundary below the national level.
District	Governorates are divided into districts
Village	Districts are composed of villages
Neighbourhood	Villages are divided into neighbourhoods

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About REACH

REACH is an interagency initiative created in 2010 to facilitate the development of information tools and products that enhance the capacity of aid actors to make evidence-based decisions in emergency, recovery and development contexts. All REACH activities are conducted in support to and within the framework of inter-agency aid coordination mechanisms.

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INTRODUCTION

Since violence broke out in the city of Mosul on 10 June 2014, fighting across parts of northern and central Iraq has caused hundreds of thousands of people to flee their homes. This latest wave of displacement takes place in a country with one of the highest numbers of internally displaced people in the world and adds to the 1 million people already displaced this year, since violence broke out in Anbar Governorate in January 2014².

With recent fighting in the governorates of Anbar, Diyala, Ninewa and Salah Al Din, moving south towards Baghdad, many displaced people have fled northwards, seeking safety in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI) or in other areas controlled by Kurdish security forces. The rapidly developing situation has left humanitarian organisations with little accurate information on how many people have been internally displaced in Northern Iraq, where they are, and what type of support they need the most. In order to fill such information gaps and facilitate humanitarian planning, REACH was deployed across KRI and Northern Iraq, including disputed areas in Ninewa and Diyala governorates, to identify displacement patterns, intentions, priority needs, and vulnerabilities of the recently displaced population.

This report consolidates assessments carried out by REACH between June 19th and July 2nd at entry points into KRI, displacement sites and IDP hotspots, and complements the reports produced at governorate level. In total, 2,304 families (representing 13,244 individuals) were interviewed within the scope of this assessment. Assessments have been conducted in close coordination with KRI-based aid coordination structures, which have been kept regularly updated on key findings. The findings of this Rapid Assessment will be complemented by an ongoing IDP Area of Origin Assessment, which examines humanitarian needs and displacement trends in areas currently affected by conflict, and which cannot be directly accessed for field assessments.

METHODOLOGY

The assessment was designed to capture key humanitarian information in a highly dynamic and rapidly evolving context of displacement. Household-level and Key Informant interviews were conducted by REACH teams in the Governorates of Erbil, Sulaymaniyah and Duhok, as well as accessible areas of Ninewa and Diyala Governorates (see figure 1 below). Data was collected among the population on the move (at entry points into KRI) as well as the displaced population in areas of high concentration of IDPs, both camps and host communities (referred to in this document as IDP 'hotspots'). While every attempt has been made to work systematically in this rapidly changing context, all findings are indicative and should not be taken as representative of the situation as a whole.

ENTRY POINT MONITORING

REACH teams conducted monitoring at each of the entry points to KRI, collecting information from the authorities and among a random sample of IDPs. Information was collected on the number of arrivals since the start of the crisis, displacement and intentions, together with qualitative data on available registration data, opening and closing times and rejections.

IDP 'HOTSPOTS'

IDP hotspots fall into two categories: specific displacement sites including camps and collective centres, and towns and villages hosting large numbers of displaced people within the community.

Upon the establishment or identification of an IDP site, REACH teams assessed a representative random sample of residents, collecting information on displacement, intentions, vulnerabilities, and priority needs of IDPs. In locations with a high reported concentration of IDPs, REACH conducted household level assessments, collecting data on displacement, intentions, vulnerabilities and priority needs.

² UNAMI (2014) [Iraq emergency Situation Report no. 1](#), 26.06.2014

Locations were targeted for assessment based on information from entry point monitoring; local authorities; REACH's community-level key informant network; IOM's Displacement Tracking Matrix; and other humanitarian actors. Using a combination of convenience and snowball sampling, REACH conducted a minimum of 20 household assessments in each selected location.

In each community targeted for assessment, the following steps were taken: 1) REACH teams were deployed to sites with reported high concentrations of IDPs to conduct household assessments; and 2) working with the IDPs in the pre-identified locations, REACH teams identified other locations (especially private rental accommodation and host families) within the target area.

In large urban areas, notably in the cities of Erbil, Duhok, and Sulaymaniyah, REACH conducted these steps in a number of locations to ensure a representation that included city centre locations, industrial areas, Kurdish, Arab, and minority neighbourhoods, and affluent and impoverished areas. Data collection was conducted using assessment tools deployed on android smart phones through the Open Data Kit (ODK) platform.

Figure 1: KRI Governorates and disputed areas

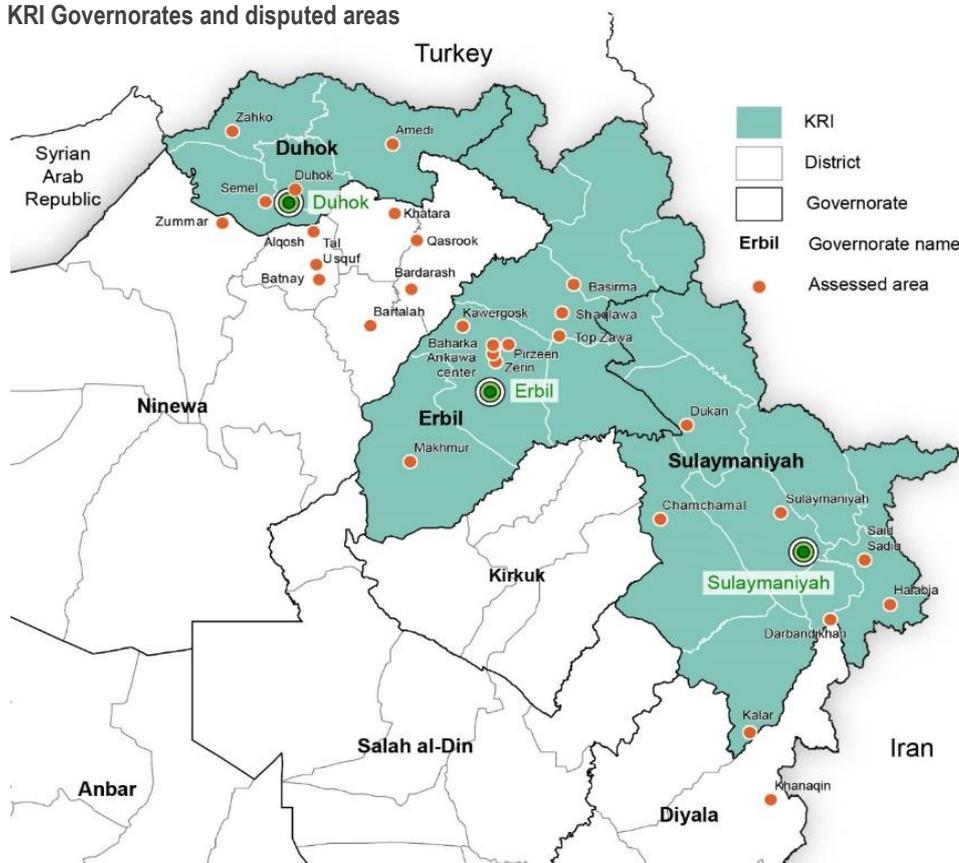


Figure 2: Sample size in the KRI Governorates and contested areas of Northern Iraq

Target Area	Number of families assessed	Number of individuals in assessed families
Disputed areas (Ninewa & Diyala) ³	736	4,249
Duhok Governorate	542	2,943
Erbil Governorate	533	3,055
Sulaymaniyah Governorate	493	2,997
Total	2,304	13,244

³ The disputed areas of Northern Iraq are contested by the KRI and the central Iraqi Government. Once home to a majority of Kurds (amongst other minorities) these areas were Arabised during Baath Party rule. The region includes parts, or all, of the Ninewa, Erbil, Kirkuk, and Diyala Governorates (see figure 2)

FINDINGS

This section highlights findings from the assessment which can be divided into three thematic areas: 1) Displacement Trends, 2) Intentions, and 3) Resources and Needs.

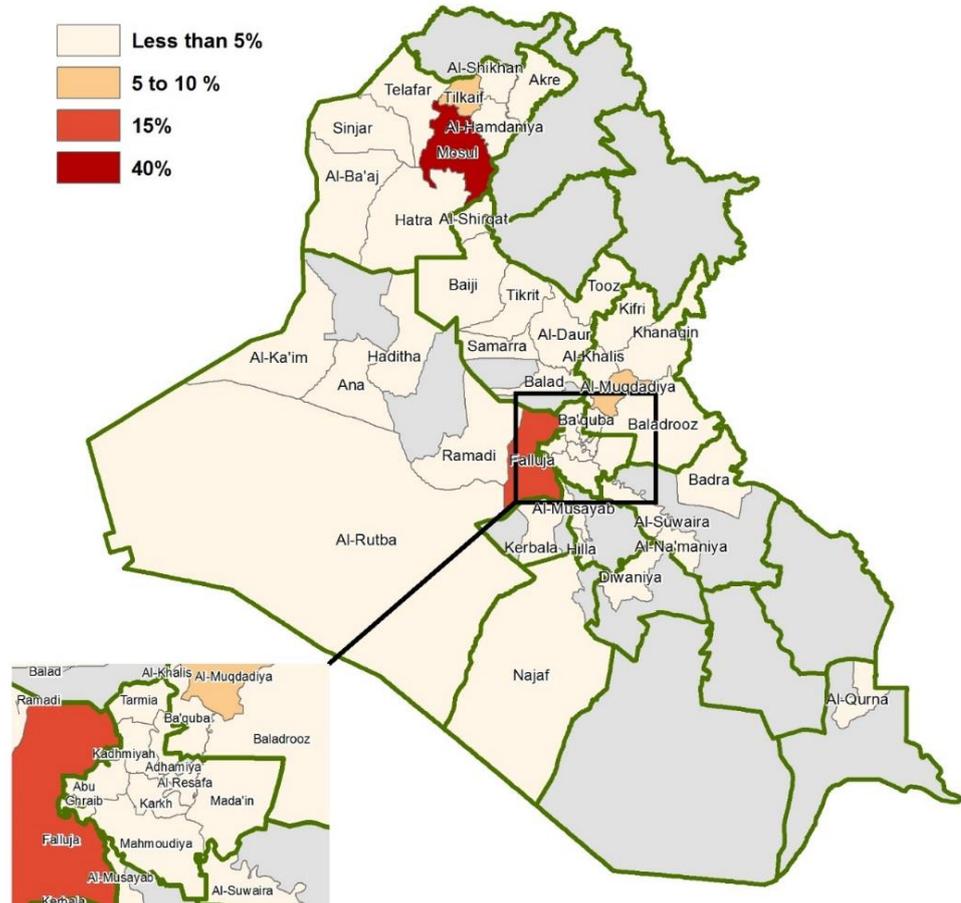
DISPLACEMENT

Displacement remained dynamic throughout the period of assessment and was affected by three main factors; ability to enter KRI; family ties and resources; and length of displacement. The location of displacement was firstly determined by each IDP's ability to enter the KRI — many stated they had no plans if refused entry, while others reported they would go to displacement sites in other areas controlled by Kurdish security forces. Within KRI, the decision on where to relocate was primarily influenced by the presence of family or tribal affiliations and the availability / affordability of temporary housing. Many of those displaced for longer periods (such as those displaced from fighting in Anbar governorate) had experienced secondary or tertiary displacement as their financial resources became depleted and they were forced to move to cheaper areas and poorer quality accommodation. Without access to employment or means to generate income, IDPs will become increasingly vulnerable to long term displacement.

IDP Area of Origin

The majority of assessed IDPs originated from Ninewa Governorate (55%), an area which has experienced significant violence since early June. Within this majority, 42% of IDPs originate from Mosul District, which came under AOG control on June 10th. As AOGs expanded their geographical presence in Northern and Central Iraq throughout June, increasing displacement was observed from the governorates of Diyala and Salah Al Din, 17% and 7% respectively. In addition to the IDPs seeking refuge in Northern Iraq as a result of the June 2014 crisis, 17% of assessed IDPs came from Anbar Governorate, particularly Falluja District, displaced as a result of clashes in the first quarter of 2014.

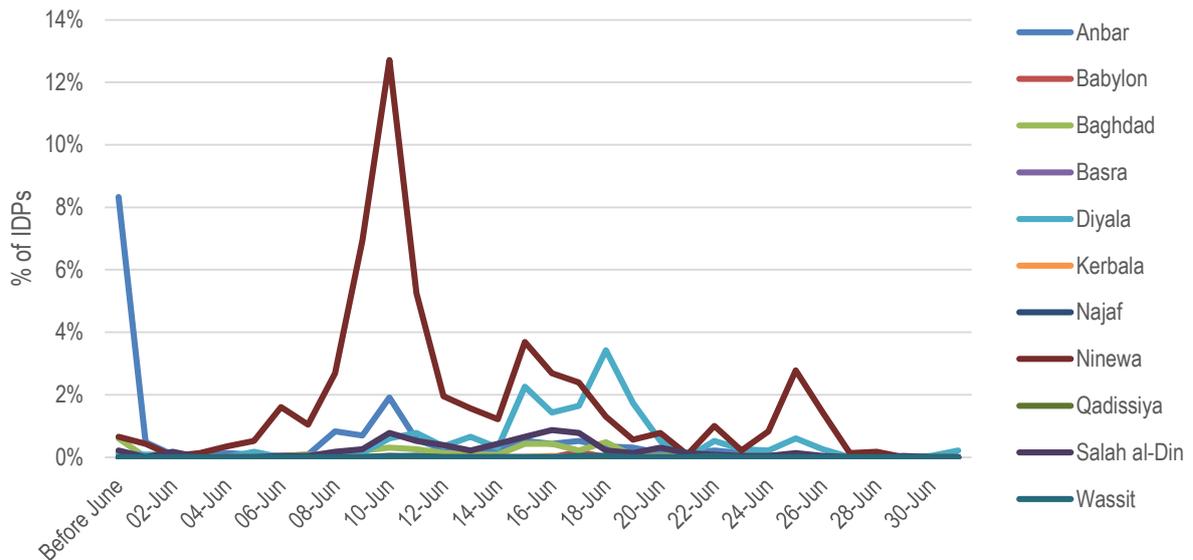
Figure 3: IDP Area of Origin



Date of displacement from area of origin

The date of displacement for IDPs is closely linked to their place of origin, where instances of conflict and AOG takeovers have resulted in significant spikes in displacement. For example, the majority of IDPs displaced prior to June 2014 originate from Anbar, which can be linked to conflict in the area during the first quarter of 2014. Similarly, spikes in displacement from Ninewa Governorate can be observed on 10 June, the day when AOGs captured Mosul City and the surrounding area, and from Diyala Governorate on 18 June as a result of intensified clashes as AOGs attempted to expand their geographical presence.

Figure 4: Date of displacement by IDP area of origin



Cause of displacement

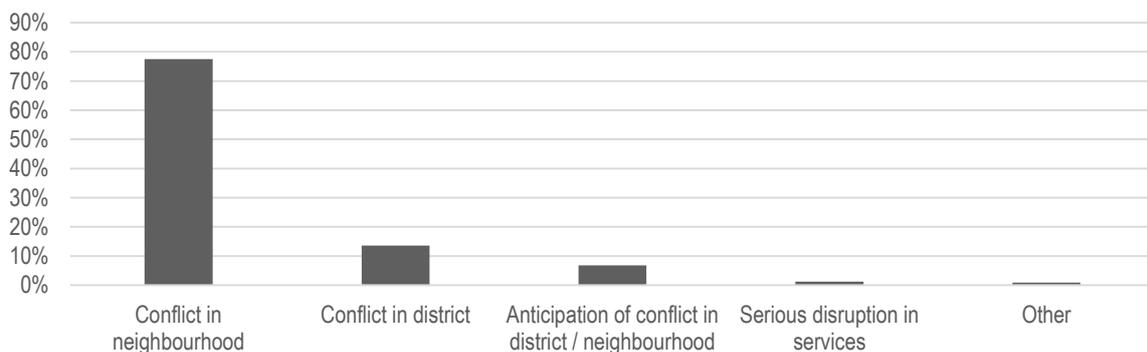
Conflict was the primary cause of displacement for 91% of IDP families, with 77% of these reporting conflict directly in their neighbourhood/village, and a further 14% in their district.

77%

While less than 7% reported that they left their home because they anticipated the spread of violence to their neighbourhood, this was stated by all IDPs assessed from the districts of Al Suwaira (Wassit Governorate) and Diwaniya (Al Muthanna Governorate). Both of these areas are in the south of Iraq, where the population is predominantly Shia.

OF IDPs REPORTED CONFLICT IN THEIR NEIGHBOURHOOD/VILLAGE AS THE PRIMARY CAUSE OF DISPLACEMENT

Figure 5: Primary cause of displacement



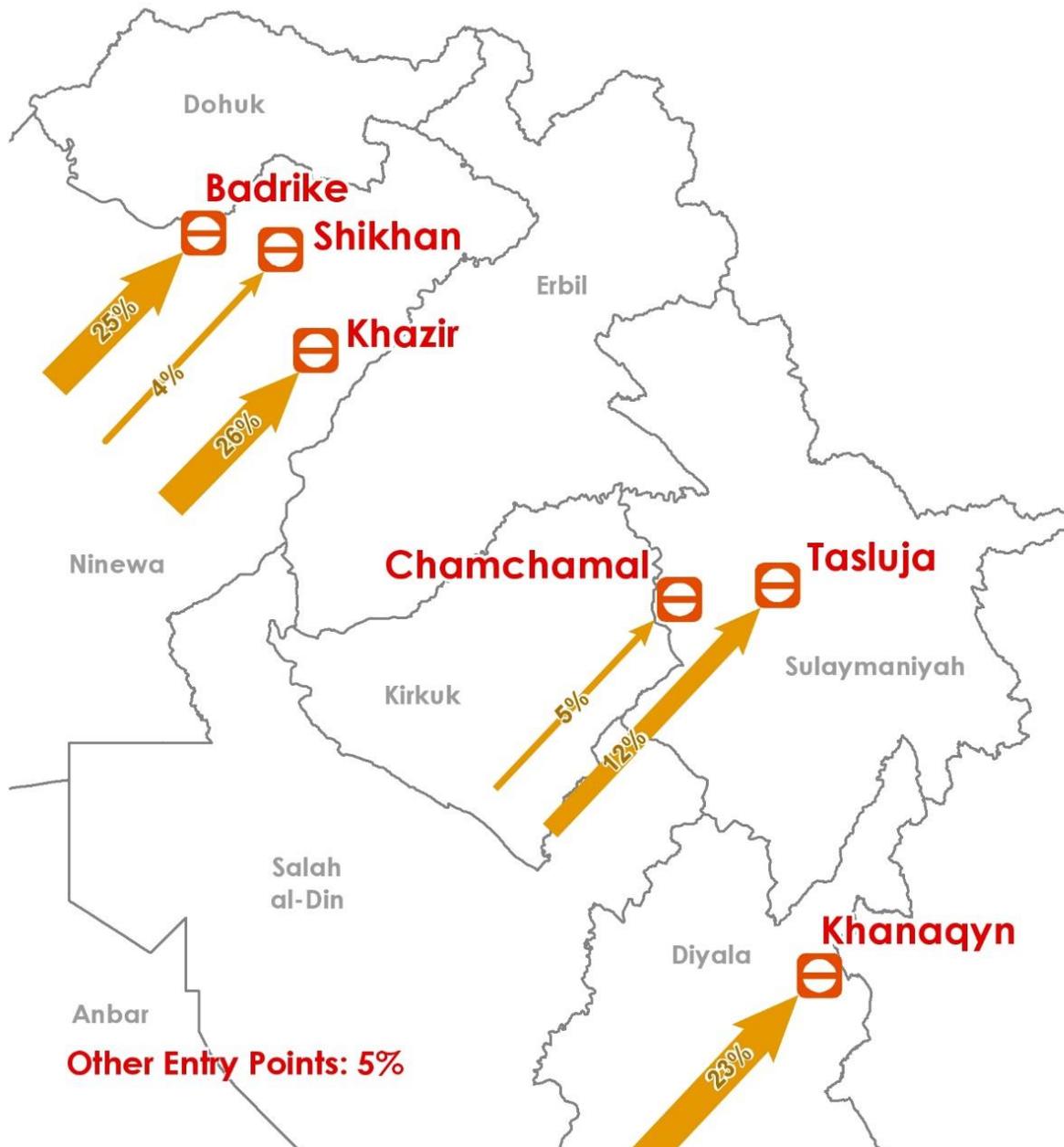
Entry points to KRI

IDPs chose to enter the KRI by the nearest route, with the choice of entry point closely linked to their place of origin. For IDPs coming from the southern governorates of Anbar, Babylon and Baghdad, the most common entry point was Tasluja, whereas IDPs from Al Najaf used primarily the Chamchamal entry point, also in Sulaymaniyah Governorate.

26% of IDPs in the KRI at the time of assessment entered through the Khazir entry point, near the Ninewa-Erbil Governorate border, and 25% entered through the Badrika entry point, near the Ninewa-Duhok Governorate border.

Over half of the IDPs assessed entered KRI in a private vehicle, with a further 23% crossing by taxi. The ability to access private vehicles could explain the high level of mobility seen amongst the IDP population, with considerable numbers of IDPs able to actively search for lower cost shelter, or in some cases, return to their place of origin relatively shortly after initial displacement.

Figure 6: Percentage of IDPs crossing per entry point



Reasons for choosing current location

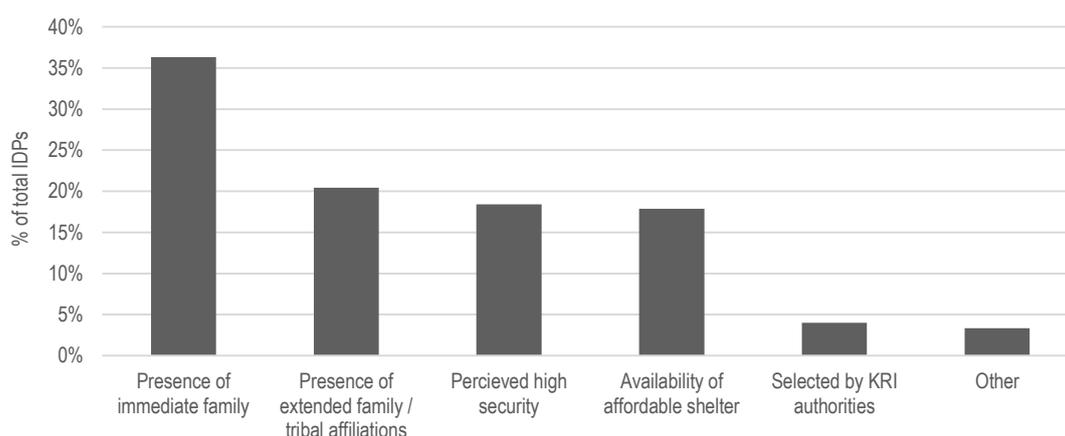
On successful arrival in KRI, the choice of location was primarily influenced by the presence of immediate or extended family members or tribal affiliations. Only 18% reported the presence of ample affordable shelter as the primary reason for selecting their current location.

In Ninewa Governorate, relative safety was of primary concern, with 95% of IDPs in Khatara and 74% in Tal Usqof stating they chose these areas because they were safer than others.

The availability of temporary and affordable housing was commonly reported as a reason for choosing to settle in rural towns. Shaqlawa, in the northern part of Erbil Governorate, is a popular tourist destination where accommodation is cheaper and more plentiful than in other areas—a primary reason for 44% of the IDPs staying there. Housing availability was also important for around half of 51% of IDPs in Amediya (Duhok Governorate), 48% in Khanaqin (Dyala Governorate) and 52% in Said Sadiq (Sulaymaniyah Governorate).

Tribal affiliation was the primary factor influencing the choice of the 61% IDPs who relocated to Chamchamal, where 62% of all IDPs assessed came from Falluja District in Anbar Governorate. Tribal affiliation was also the primary factor influencing the choice of the 25% IDPs in Amediyah, where 65% IDPs came from Falluja District, and of the 32% IDPs in Bardarash, where 73% came from Mosul District. This suggests that tribal connections may be particularly important for IDPs originating from Falluja District.

Figure 7: Reason for choosing current location



INTENTIONS

The majority of IDPs did not intend to return to their place of origin until the conflict had ended or security had been restored to pre-crisis levels. Most IDPs planned to stay where they were for at least one month and few intended to go back to their area of origin for the time being. With a high security risk throughout much of northern and central Iraq, and no immediate solution to conflict in sight, the displacement crisis is unlikely to end soon.

Planned stay or movement

While over half of IDPs assessed planned to stay in their current location for the next 10 days, a significant proportion of remained uncertain as to what they would do. Recently displaced IDPs were much less likely to have a plan than those displaced for a longer period. Coupled with relatively high mobility levels, secondary, and in many cases tertiary displacement of newly arrived IDPs is highly possible, in line with the depletion of IDP and host community resources.

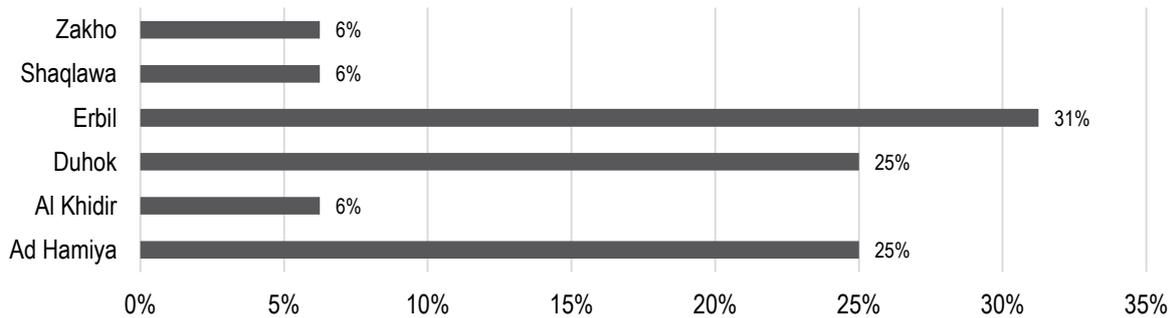
Of the IDPs currently staying in KRI, 43% intended to remain for more than one month, highlighting the potential for long term displacement as a result of the current crisis. Significant differences can be observed between KRI Governorates: in Duhok 89% of IDPs planned to remain for more than 1 month, while the overwhelming majority of IDPs in Sulaymaniyah and Erbil did not know how long they would remain.

43%

OF IDP FAMILIES IN THE KRI INTENDED TO STAY FOR MORE THAN 1 MONTH

Among the 3% who planned to move elsewhere in Northern Iraq, the greatest proportion said they would go to Erbil District.

Figure 8: Planned movement within KRI – by district



Planned accommodation

When asked at the entry point what kind of accommodation they had planned when they entered the KRI, **38% said they would stay with family, friends or a sponsor**. This supports the fact that many IDPs choose their location depending on the presence of immediate or extended family and tribal affiliations. A quarter said they would rent an apartment while 7% planned to stay in a hotel.

Barriers to entry into KRI

While the Kurdish region was perceived among IDPs as a place of relative safety, not all of those arriving at the entry points were able to enter. IDP families were interviewed at entry points, often some distance outside the KRI, and asked about their intentions if rejected. Around 40% said they did not know what they would do if unable to enter, while 20% intended to seek refuge in an IDP camp.

20%

OF IDP FAMILIES REPORTED THAT THEY WOULD GO TO A CAMP IF UNABLE TO ENTER KRI

The percentage was significantly higher among IDPs attempting to enter Duhok Governorate—36%—compared to only 8% in both Erbil and Sulaymaniyah Governorates. Lacking the support of family or friends within the KRI, or the resources to afford accommodation, IDPs unable to enter the Kurdish Region are likely to be particularly vulnerable.

RESOURCES AND NEEDS

A large number of assessed IDPs (39.41% of total and the majority within KRI) are living in rented accommodation. Rental prices rapidly consume financial resources, which is particularly difficult for families with access to limited savings, the most common economic resource among IDPs. While no general trend was identified regarding the sustainability of savings, it can be assumed that rental costs will become an increasing burden as time passes. If displaced families remain unable to work in KRI, the need to resort to negative coping strategies may increase.

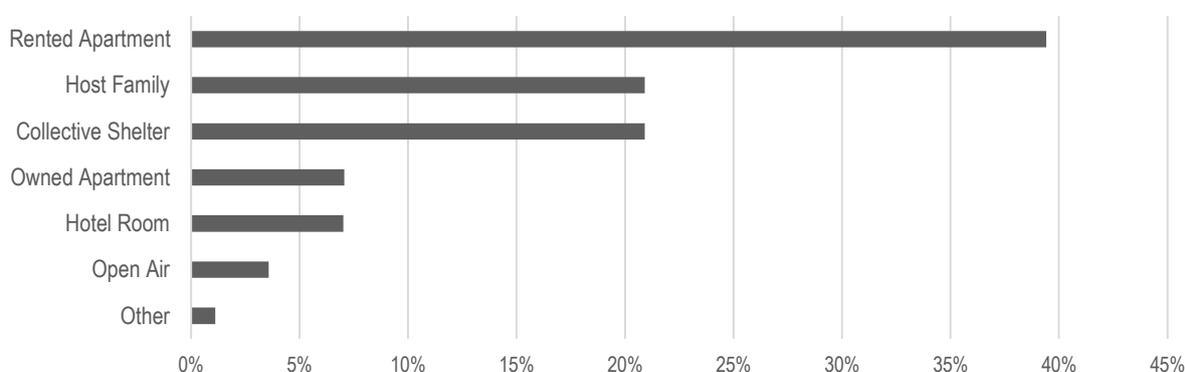
Conversely, in disputed areas, the majority of the assessed population is likely to be staying in collective sites, indicating the higher level of vulnerability and lack of access to savings. In Ninewa governorate, for example, 55% of assessed IDP families were residing in collective sites such as school, mosques, churches and other available buildings.

Primary types of accommodation

Almost 40% of IDPs live in rented apartments, the most common type of accommodation for assessed IDPs, and the type of accommodation of the majority of IDPs within KRI. A further 21% live in collective shelters (predominately schools, churches, mosques, and public buildings), the primary accommodation type among assessed IDPs in Ninewa and Diyala governorates. 21% reside with host families. IDPs in collective centres have few economic resources and are almost entirely reliant on charitable donations from the local community. In the event of long term displacement, host communities will require support to mitigate the strain this places on resources.

Although less immediately vulnerable, IDPs living in rented accommodation may soon struggle to meet rental costs, which are relatively high at an average of 143,415 IQD (123 USD) per week. It is therefore likely that increasing rates of multiple displacement will be witnessed as IDPs become forced to search for cheaper shelter solutions.

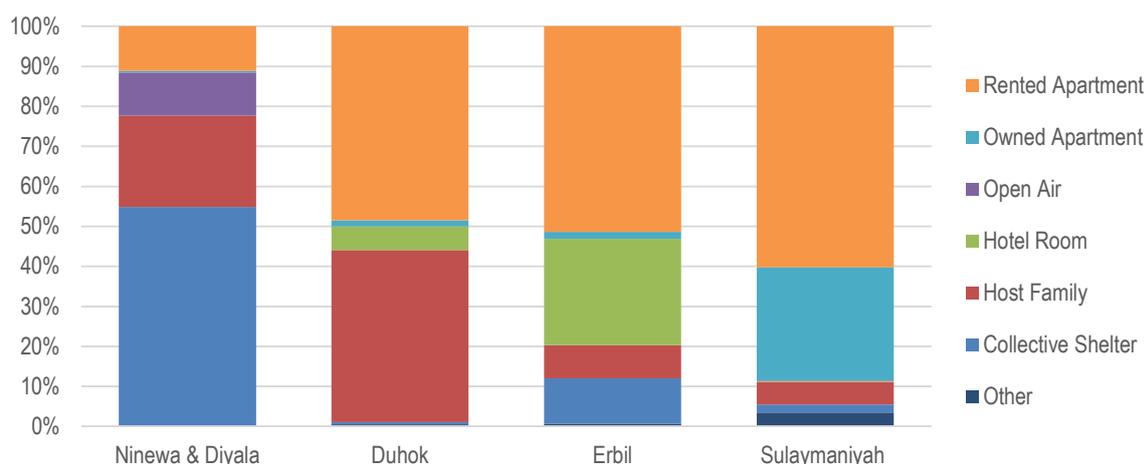
Figure 9: Accommodation Type



Significant regional differences can be observed with regards to IDP accommodation. Collective shelters, such as mosques, churches, schools, and other public buildings, are much more common in the disputed areas outside the KRI. In these areas, 55% of assessed IDPs reside in collective shelters, compared to only 5% in the KRI governorates. There is also a greater percentage of IDPs living in the open air in the disputed areas than outside the KRI.

In Erbil Governorate, 27% of IDPs were staying in hotels at the time of assessment. With an average weekly cost of 427,882 IQD (368 USD) it can be expected that IDPs relying on this type of accommodation will experience at least one, if not multiple, additional displacements as their economic resources are depleted.

Figure 10: Accommodation Type by region

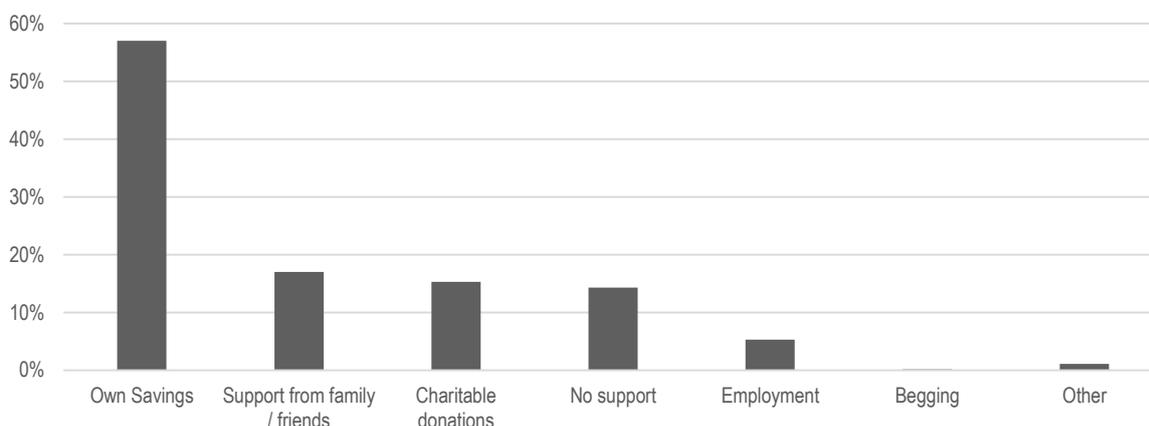


Capacity to meet basic needs

57% of IDPs reported that they are able to rely, at least in the short term, on their personal savings to cover basic needs; this figure reduced to 43% among assessed IDPs in Diyala and Ninewa. Support from family or friends and charitable donations were also reported by a significant proportion of IDPs as their means of meeting basic needs.

Only 5% of IDPs are able to access some form of employment while displaced (residency being required for legal employment inside KRI), leaving the vast majority to survive on unsustainable economic resources. It is highly likely that IDPs will become more vulnerable as personal savings are depleted, and the capacities of family, friends, the local community, and charitable organisations to support IDPs are exhausted.

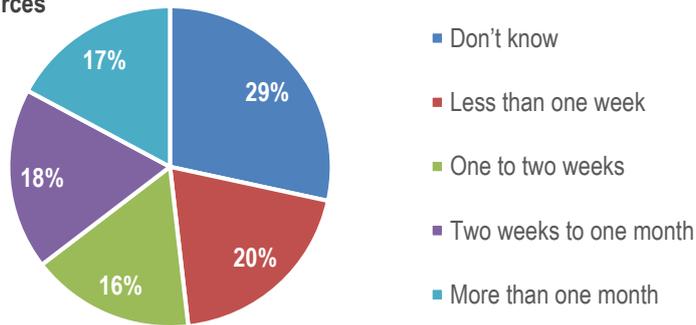
Figure 11: IDP means of meeting basic needs



Sustainability of resources

At the time of assessment most IDPs did not know how long the resources available to them would continue to enable them to meet basic needs. Only 17% reported sufficient resources to last for more than one month, leaving 54% with resources to last for less than 4 weeks. As the crisis continues and available resources are depleted, it is likely that the number of IDPs requiring assistance will continue to increase.

Figure 12: Sustainability of resources



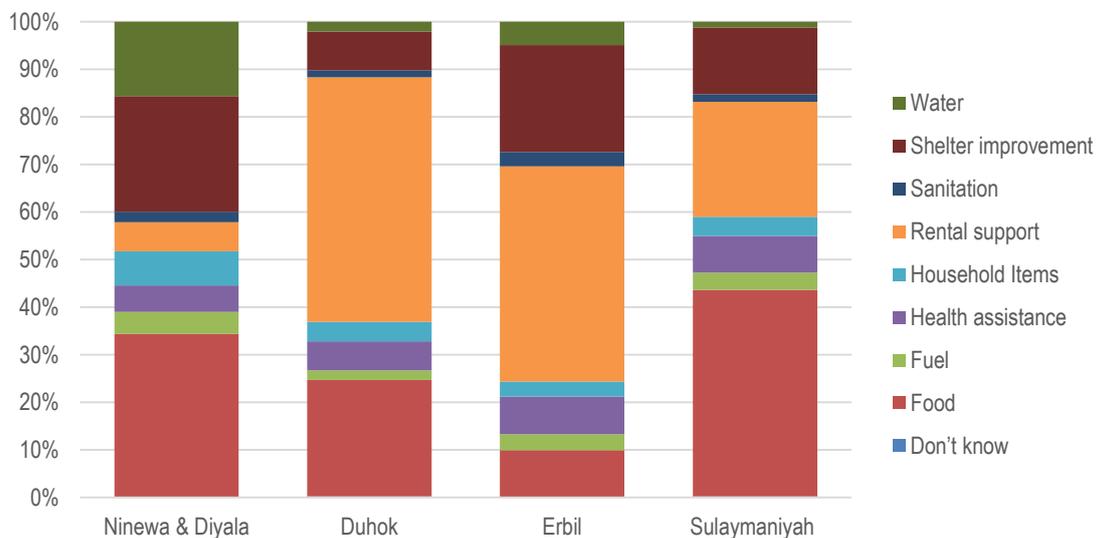
Priority needs

Due to the high proportion of IDPs living in relatively expensive rental accommodation, and the lack of sustainable financial resources to afford it, the most commonly reported priority need in KRI was rental support, identified by around 50% of IDPs assessed in Duhok and Erbil Governorates.

In the disputed areas outside KRI, where a higher percentage of IDPs are living in collective shelters, 43% of IDPs stated food as a priority need, highlighting their higher vulnerability in the immediate term. While collective shelters are free for IDPs to live in, they are often overcrowded and lacking in basic services or facilities.

Food was also the priority need of 34% of IDPs in Sulaymaniyah Governorate. This may be explained by the relatively high cost of living in this area, which has forced some IDPs to resort to negative coping strategies.

Figure 13: Priority needs per region



External assistance

The majority of IDPs reported that they had received no external assistance since being displaced from their place of origin. In the period immediately after displacement, vulnerability is closely linked to the level, and sustainability, of economic resources, as well as to support from family and friends. As these resources become stretched, IDPs may be more likely to receive assistance from other sources as they become displaced for a second or third time. Of the 27% of IDPs who had received external assistance since being displaced, the most common types of assistance reported were food and household items.

CONCLUSION

This report consolidates findings from a series of rapid assessments carried out by REACH in displacement sites, host communities and at governorate level across the KRI and contested areas in the Ninewa and Diyala governorates of Northern Iraq. Rapid assessment findings confirm the pressing humanitarian needs of this very large, newly displaced population⁴ who fled their homes as a result of conflict in their neighbourhood or village.

The majority of assessed **IDPs did not intend to return to their place of origin until the conflict ends, or until the security situation returns to pre-crisis levels**. As the conflict continues to escalate and take on an increasingly sectarian nature, the possibility of imminent return seems unlikely.

Forced to flee quickly their area of origin, **many IDPs left assets behind and are relying on their savings** to support themselves while displaced. With current resources depleting quickly, humanitarian actors should therefore prepare for the consequences of a potential long term displacement crisis and its impact on host communities.

IDPs across Northern Iraq are experiencing differing levels of vulnerability, with some of the most vulnerable living in camps and collective centres in disputed areas outside the KRI. Those displaced within the KRI are more likely to be living in rented accommodation, in areas with family or tribal connections. While less immediately vulnerable, rental costs are quickly depleting unsustainable financial resources of these IDPs and long term displacement will increase pressure on already limited resources.

Emergency response should focus on providing **lifesaving aid to the most vulnerable IDPs**, especially the provision of food and water. In parallel, efforts should be made to **support better-off IDPs whose savings are rapidly being exhausted** in order to mitigate their medium to long term vulnerability. Finally, **host community safety nets and services should be supported**, especially where community resources are quickly depleting.

Given the extremely fluid nature of the crisis, with multiple displacements affecting the same populations, there is a **critical need to put in place monitoring systems that allow the humanitarian community to gather up to date information on IDP locations, numbers, vulnerabilities, intentions, and priority needs**. With this in mind, REACH will continue to contribute towards the interagency response through providing technical support to the establishment of joint and/or coordinated assessment platforms.

In addition, initial evidence suggests that there are **considerable numbers of IDPs in areas which are at present inaccessible to the humanitarian community** as a result of the security situation. To meet this information gap, **REACH is establishing a key informant network to conduct remote data collection** that will ensure that the needs and vulnerabilities of IDPs in inaccessible areas are captured and incorporated into humanitarian planning.

⁴ REACH assessment teams did not collect data on the total number of displaced people.