

IRAQ | DEVELOPMENT APPROACHES TO DISPLACEMENT

Context: Displacement Situation

Iraq faces a large-scale humanitarian crisis, which extends beyond affected populations to all institutions, systems and political processes. Conflict, violent extremism and insecurity affect not only Iraq, but also surrounding countries in the region, causing widespread displacement. Within Iraq, around 3 million internally displaced people (IDP) have fled their homes in the central and northern areas of the country.

Around 71 percent of these people have been displaced for 12 months or more, and thus separated from their main sources of employment and communities. The large influx of refugees and asylum seekers from the region includes nearly 250,000 people from Syria, 98 percent of whom are hosted in the Kurdistan region of Iraq. These demographic changes have caused serious economic repercussions: population influx into the country's most urbanized areas have, for instance, raised prices of commodities up to 30 percent annually.

Competition for employment – especially for the unskilled labour upon which displaced populations often rely – has increased significantly. These effects often extend to the most vulnerable communities. A 2015 UNDP assessment found that, on average, wages for host community individuals employed in unskilled labour had dropped by over 23 percent. The lack of social protection, affecting more than 35 percent of the Iraqi host community members working in the informal economy, has further exacerbated these impacts.



Displaced women preparing bread (Photo: UNDP Iraq)

UNDP's main thematic areas of work

In response to the crisis, UNDP developed the Iraq Crisis Response and Resilience Programme (ICRRP).. Through a multi-sectoral, integrated strategy that builds resilience of the communities most affected by the influx of refugees and internal displacement, the ICRRP complements the primarily life-saving and short-term activities carried out by other partners. Support has included:

- Employment and income generation, enhancing self-reliance and resilience of both host community members and displaced persons;
- Supporting central and local authorities in leading the crisis response and the rehabilitation of basic social infrastructure to meet increased demands in the protracted crisis;
- Legal support for vulnerable communities, specifically women and youth;
- Social cohesion through dialogue and capacity-building of local and national actors and communities.



Displaced persons at cultural centre (Photo: UNDP Iraq)

UNDP–UNHCR partnership moving forward

In Iraq, an inter-sectoral assessment was conducted to identify the needs of host communities in the Kurdistan region to overcome the negative impacts of the refugee and IDP influx. A Resilience Index is currently being developed that will quantitatively measure and track the level of resilience at the community and institutional level.

UNDP, in collaboration with UNHCR, has undertaken a feasibility study on resilience building in Syrian refugee camps and their neighbouring host communities in Kurdistan, in order to provide a systematic, evidence-based and in-depth overview of ground realities, needs and priorities.

Based on the study's finding that a significant proportion of families in the camps depend on external food assistance, a UNDP-UNHCR joint project the Establishment of Greenhouses and Value Chains, was developed. The project promotes employment generation through value chains, as well as developing agriculture and small-scale agro-processing in three Syrian refugee camps.

RESULTS 2014–2015

UNDP's support has provided access to sustainable livelihoods for more than 23,500 persons (40 percent of whom are women), while responding to the urgent needs of securing income sources for the most vulnerable crisis-affected groups through cash for work. Support has included the identification of niche markets, local value chain assessments, public-private partnerships, vocational trainings based on market demands, and business expansion support for small- and medium-sized enterprises with a condition of employing job-seekers from the displaced and local populations.

UNDP has undertaken over 25 infrastructure rehabilitation or construction projects such as electricity networks, water or sewerage networks, roads and health clinics in both refugee/IDP camps and host communities, to meet increased demand.

Support to access to basic services has benefitted over 72,000 refugees, IDPs and host community members. UNDP built key infrastructure for 1,400 vulnerable IDP families in IDP/refugee camps in Kurdistan. Partnerships with the local government have greatly enhanced ownership of the government over infrastructure and have ensured maintenance.

As part of UNDP's work supporting the prevention of Sexual and Gender Based Violence (SGBV), seven legal service centres have been established, servicing 5,000 IDPs and refugees for legal consultation, court representation and investigation for SGBV cases. Over 10,000 IDPs and refugees, mainly women and girls, attended legal awareness raising sessions and received awareness materials.

In order to enhance social cohesion among displaced and local people with different ethnic and social backgrounds, UNDP has established community dialogue platforms in six governorates. Nearly 2,000 people participated in consultation and dialogue sessions, and over 3,795 people participated in community activities.

UNDP has also supported mine risk education for over 90,000 displaced people settled in the Kurdistan region.

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