

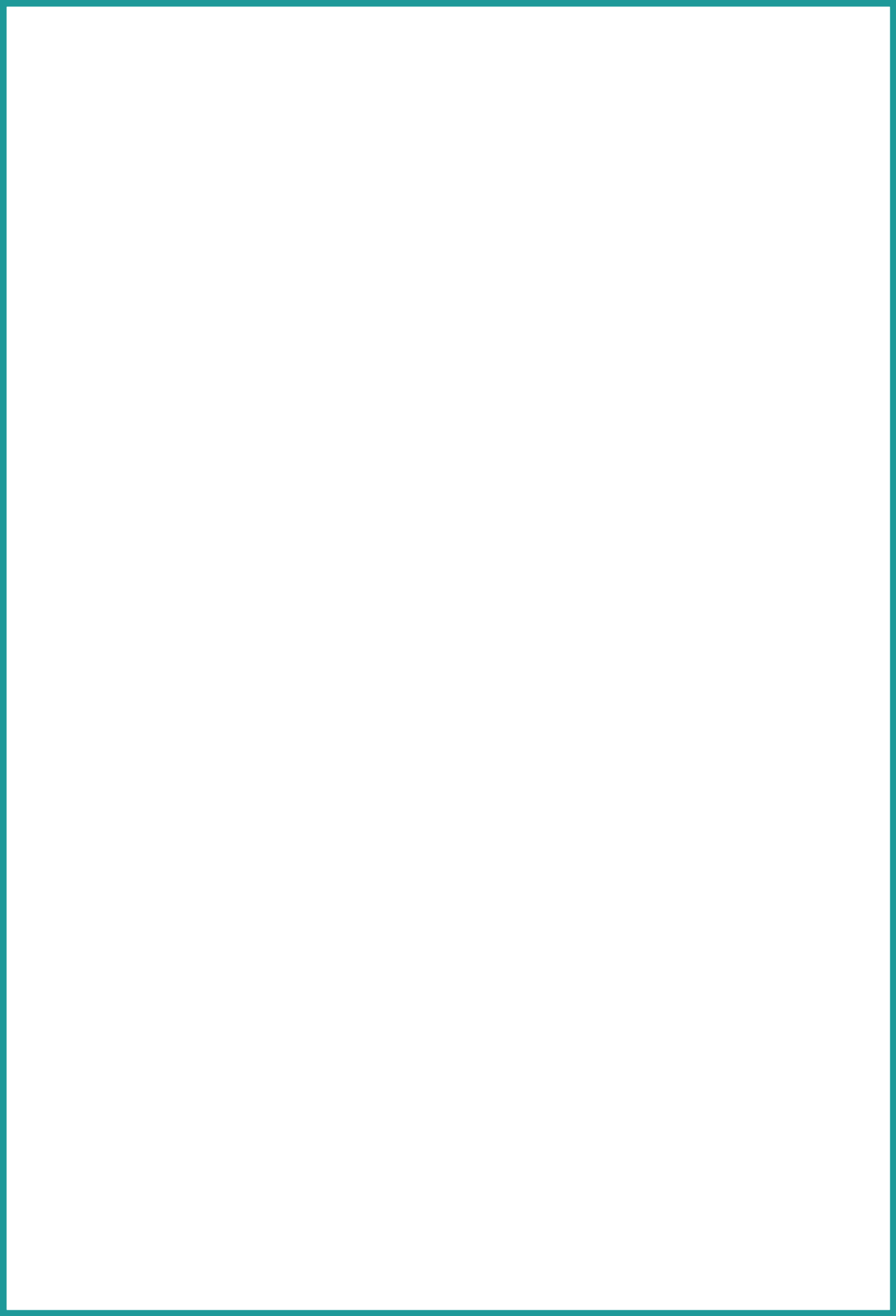
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FAR FROM HOME

Future Prospects for Syrian Refugees in Iraq





FAR FROM HOME

Future Prospects for Syrian Refugees in Iraq

January 2019

DURABLE
SOLUTIONS
PLATFORM

The Durable Solutions Platform is a joint initiative of the Danish Refugee Council (DRC), International Rescue Committee (IRC) and Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC). The platform aims to generate knowledge that informs and inspires forward-thinking policy and practice on the long-term future of displaced Syrians. Since its establishment in 2016, the DSP has developed research projects on key questions regarding durable solutions for Syrians. In addition, DSP has strengthened the capacity of civil society organizations on solutions to displacement.

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COVER PHOTO

A mother and her children walking home in West Mosul, Iraq. June, 2017. Photo by: Noe Falk Nielsen / DRC-DDG

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

FGD	Focus group discussions
GIS	Geographic information system
GoI	Government of Iraq
GPS	Global positioning system
HH	Household
HLP	Housing, land and property
IASC	Inter-Agency Standing Committee
IDP	Internally displaced persons
ISIL	Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant
KI	Key informant
KII	Key informant interview
KRG	Kurdistan Regional Government
KRI	Kurdistan Region of Iraq
MoMD	Ministry of Migration and Displacement
NES	North-east Syria
NGO	Non-governmental organisations
ODK	Open Data Kit
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Science
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UN Refugee Agency)

GEOGRAPHIC CLASSIFICATIONS

Governorate	Highest form of governance below the national level
District	Second highest administrative boundary. Each governorate is comprised of collections of districts.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY¹

Whilst the regional refugee response to the Syrian crisis has largely focused on Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey, less is known about the situation of Syrian refugees in Iraq. Iraq hosts approximately 250,184 of the 5.6 million (4.4%) registered Syrian refugees in the Middle East region. The majority of them are of Kurdish ethnicity and arrived in Iraq following conflict in 2012 and 2013. Approximately 98.8% of the Syrian refugees in Iraq are registered in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI) in Erbil, Dahuk and Sulaymaniyah governorates. The remaining minority of Syrian refugees are registered in central and west Iraq. With conditions in Syria not being conducive for voluntary return in safety and dignity, there is a need to better understand the potential of Syrian refugees finding a durable solution in Iraq. Therefore, this study looks specifically at the **potential for local integration** in Iraq by assessing:

- Syrian refugees' progress towards local integration according to the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) criteria on durable solutions, through comparisons with Iraqi residents.
- The enabling and limiting factors impacting Syrian refugees' ability to locally integrate.
- Syrian refugees' decision-making and long term preferred durable solution.

Data collection was conducted in August 2018. The study focused on households living with the host community in **urban areas only**, with a geographical focus on Erbil city and Dahuk city in KRI, and Qaim city in the Anbar governorate of Iraq. **Syrian refugees** and **Iraqi residents** (not Iraqi IDPs) were covered. Data collection activities included (i) 413 household surveys using random sampling, (ii) 11 focus group discussions (FGDs), (iii) 3 life stories and (iv) 19 key informant interviews. In Anbar, 19 key informant interviews were conducted remotely due to restricted security access.

ERBIL CITY AND DAHUK CITY: PROGRESS TOWARDS IASC'S CRITERIA ON DURABLE SOLUTIONS

Since the start of the Syrian conflict, the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) has shown hospitality and positive efforts in accommodating the influx of Syrian refugees despite Iraq's domestic challenges and difficult circumstances. However, findings illustrate gaps in basic needs and protection for both Syrian refugees and the host community. Community tension could worsen if gaps, including perceived gaps, in access are not adequately addressed.

Of the eight assessed IASC criteria on durable solutions and access to humanitarian assistance, the household survey found that the lowest proportion of Syrian and Iraqi households reported access to public participation (17%) and access to justice (51%), followed by access to employment opportunities (69%). The study found a statistically significant difference where a lower proportion of Syrian households reported access to **income-generating opportunities** and **documentation** compared to Iraqi residents. On the other hand, a higher proportion of Iraqi resident households reported being a **victim of safety/security incidents** and a lower proportion of Iraqi households reported having access to **sufficient drinking water** compared to Syrian refugees. Across both population groups, only around one third of the assessed households perceived equal access to income-generating opportunities (34%) and humanitarian assistance (32%).

- **Safety, security and freedom of movement:** Although a majority of assessed Syrian refugees (93%) and Iraqi residents (94%) reported feeling safe walking around their neighbourhood, a higher proportion of Iraqi resident (21%) than refugee households (8%) reported having been a victim of a safety or security incident in the three months prior to data collection. In FGDs, Iraqi participants perceived that the arrival of Syrians had negatively affected the level of safety in the neighbourhood. Syrian refugees raised concerns about challenges associated with requirements for security approval from Iraqi authorities, such as when renting accommodation and accessing certain jobs.

¹ The Durable Solutions Platform (DSP), through the financial assistance of the European Regional Development and Protection Programme (RDPP), commissioned this research to IMPACT Initiatives. Research activities were led by IMPACT under the guidance of DSP.

- **Adequate standard of living, including access to goods and services:** Lower proportion of Iraqi residents (65%) than Syrian refugee households (77%) reported having regular access to drinking water, with a statistically significant difference between the two population groups. There were no statistically significant differences between Syrian refugees and Iraqi residents regarding their access to basic food, housing, education and healthcare. According to FGDs, a few Syrians reported Iraqis not renting property to Syrians or charging Syrians a higher rent, though these issues have reportedly improved over time due to increased general trust. Iraqi residents reported overcrowding and pressure on basic services due to the influx of Syrian refugees (and Iraqi IDPs) into the community.
- **Access to income-generating opportunities:** Across all assessed IASC indicators, access to income-generating opportunities has the highest gap between population groups. Less refugee households (59%) reported access compared to resident households (78%), though percentages are low for both groups. Surveys also found that less refugee households in Erbil city (45%) than Dahuk city (73%) reported having access. In FGDs, Syrian refugees reported being limited to working in low-skilled sectors; and having to accept lower wages and longer work hours. Some reported facing harassment at the workplace. Iraqi residents reported challenges in job competition due to the influx of Syrian refugees (and Iraqi IDPs).
- **Access to mechanisms to restore Housing, Land and Property (HLP) rights:** A considerable proportion of assessed Syrian refugee households in Erbil city (53%) and Dahuk city (26%) reported losing their property in Syria due to damage as a result of the conflict and/or displacement. This suggests refugees might be unable to return unless a mechanism to restoring HLP is in place.
- **Access to and replacement of personal and other documentation:** A majority of Syrian and Iraqi households reported having access to documents (e.g. birth certificates, marriage certificates and family booklet), with the exception that only 30% of assessed Syrian refugee households had passports. A few Syrian refugees reported that obtaining KRI residence permits was a lengthy bureaucratic process, where they waited in long queues and faced delays if they did not have the required supporting documents.
- **Voluntary reunification with family members:** 45% of the assessed Syrian refugee households reported that they were separated from family members during displacement; with more households in Dahuk city (57%) than Erbil city (34%) reporting family separation. Of the respondents that reported family separation, 67% (62) of households had members staying behind in Syria compared households reporting members being displaced elsewhere.
- **Participation in public affairs:** Regarding respondents' awareness of decision-making bodies, Iraqi residents mentioned the Kurdish parliament, ministries, and political parties. Syrian refugees mentioned the Asayish, the Ministry of Interior and UNHCR. The household survey found that 23% of refugee households and 6% of resident households reported "sometimes" or "regularly" participating in decision-making bodies; though these percentages are not directly comparable as refugees are unable to participate in formal political institutions.
- **Access to justice:** Only 21% of assessed resident households and 16% of refugee households were aware of legal and justice bodies in Iraq. Bodies cited by residents and refugees included the police, the court (e.g. supreme court, criminal court), Ministry of Justice, Asayish, and the Real Property Dispute Resolution Authority.
- **Access to humanitarian assistance:** 11% of assessed refugee households and 17% of resident households reported having access to humanitarian assistance. Regarding perceptions, only 14% of refugee households and 49% of resident households perceived their households to have equal access to humanitarian assistance compared to others in their community.

ERBIL CITY AND DAHUK CITY: ENABLING AND CONSTRAINING FACTORS FOR SYRIAN REFUGEES' LOCAL INTEGRATION

The study found that the **shared Kurdish identity** facilitated local integration to a certain extent. Although Syrians had to culturally adapt such as learning the local Kurdish dialect spoken in KRI; some reported being treated as "guests" or "their people" rather than as "refugees". As some Iraqi Kurds were displaced in the 1990s, FGD participants mentioned that being displaced or in exile was a 'shared Kurdish experience' that led the host community to welcome Syrian refugees. However, despite a shared Kurdish identity, some Syrian refugees reported feeling alienated or faced mistrust by the host community.

In FGDs, Syrian refugees also reported that the **influx of Iraqi IDPs** led to additional integration challenges. FGD participants reported an increase in rent, lowered wages, increased job competition, and the diversion of humanitarian assistance from refugees to IDPs. In comparison, Iraqi residents reported that it was easier for Syrian refugees to integrate compared to Iraqi IDPs. Iraqi FGD participants perceived Syrians to be hardworking, more willing to accept low wages and adaptable to working in different sectors.

Overall, Syrian refugees reported integration challenges to have **shifted from socio-cultural barriers to economic barriers** over the years. Given KRI's economic decline - due to the arrival of IDPs causing additional resource constraints, halt of transfers from the central budget, drop of oil prices, among other factors - access to jobs became an increasing challenge and source of community tension. This illustrates how progress towards local integration is not a linear path, but rather a dynamic process where the location integration is vulnerable to external shocks faced by the host community.

Although a considerable proportion of Syrian refugees wished to integrate locally as their long-term durable solution as elaborated in the section below, all Syrian refugees (except one) in FGDs did not expect Iraqi nationality. As there is currently **no legal pathway offered to Syrian refugees to obtain Iraqi citizenship**; legal restrictions remain a significant barrier to full integration. Syrian refugees reported experiencing fewer rights compared to Iraqis, such as in freedom of movement from the KRI to the rest of Iraq, and facing restrictions in their ability to start businesses or own property.

ERBIL CITY AND DAHUK CITY: DECISION-MAKING AND INTENTIONS

In the short term, next three months, 78% of Syrian refugees intend to remain in their current location and only 1% wished to return to Syria. The remaining percentages include 2% of households that intend to move to another location and 19% that reported not knowing where they want to be. In FGDs, Syrian refugees reported that the **minimum conditions for return were not met** due to the lack of safety, basic services and economic opportunities in Syria, in addition to forced conscription for men upon return.

Regarding preferred durable solutions, **37% of assessed Syrian refugee households wished to integrate locally and become part of the community in the long term**. 33% of households wanted to resettle to a third country and 25% of households wanted to return to Syria. The remaining 5% reported not knowing their preferred durable solution. However, despite progress made by Syrian refugees in the socio-cultural and economic dimensions of integration, the absence of citizenship (which can only be granted by the Government of Iraq) remains a significant barrier in achieving full integration. For refugees, it is paramount that there is political will to provide an adequate legal framework for integration or at least long-term protection of refugees.

63% of the assessed Syrian refugee households reported "**feeling hopeless**" or "**frequently negative**" about the situation and the future. 34% of assessed refugee households in Dahuk city (compared to 5% in Erbil city) reported not knowing where they would like to be in the next three months from the time of data collection. Households **lacked future prospects** and the ability to make long-term plans. Decisions depended on changes in the safety/security situation, economic opportunities and the availability of basic services in Iraq and Syria. Findings also suggest that return or onward migration are likely to increase if the situation in Iraq worsens.

ANBAR

At least 300 Syrian refugee families were estimated to be living in host communities in Anbar, of whom majority of the Syrians are Arab Sunni Muslims from Deir ez-Zor governorate. They had left camps during ISIL's occupation and moved to the towns near Qaim, Obaide, Rawa and Ana, where they currently remain. Syrian refugees and Iraqis in Anbar **share socio-cultural similarities**, including kinship and tribal relations, however Syrian refugees faced multiple challenges and vulnerabilities that impacted that progress towards integration. Qaim city is a conservative community with ISIL presence still looming. Therefore, Syrian refugees faced limited trust from the host community given residents' suspicions of Syrian refugees being affiliated with ISIL. For this reason, KIIs found trust to be an important factor in facilitating integration and having Iraqi reliable relatives in Anbar was reportedly crucial for Syrians to find jobs. Other challenges in **accessing secure employment opportunities** included requiring stamped Syrian passports, security clearance procedures and exploitation at the work place. Syrian refugees also reported having to take up high-risk and socially degrading jobs, and at times go into debt, in order to meet basic needs. In addition to facing challenges in accessing secure economic opportunities, refugees were also subject to security restrictions and were not able to move freely to other cities in Iraq to e.g. seek better access to economic opportunities and/or basic services. Additional challenges were faced by Syrian refugees living in houses owned but vacated by Iraqi IDPs as they had to find alternative housing arrangements as soon as Iraqi IDPs returned. This means that these people would have to start all over again in a new community. Finally, the **lack of prospect in getting citizenship and Iraqi nationality** was also reported as a barrier for local integration in the long term.

Overall, this study demonstrated the progress made so far - and the potential for - Syrian refugees' local integration in Iraq. In particular, the shared Kurdish identity (in KRI) and tribal links (in Anbar) between Syrian refugees and Iraqi residents facilitated the socio-cultural dimensions of integration. The study also found evidence of successful economic integration; though the host community's capacity remained fragile when faced with domestic challenges and tensions are likely to escalate if economic conditions deteriorate. Given a considerable proportion of assessed Syrian refugees wished to locally integrate in Iraq; more attention and critical engagement is needed by governments and the international community to uphold the rights and long-term protection of Syrians while supporting Iraq in its current and future challenges. This includes developing legal and policy frameworks that incorporate Syrian refugees in Iraq's national agenda and programmes; as well as implementing macro-economic policies targeted at benefiting both the displaced and host community to further increase Iraq's capacity to accommodate Syrian refugees in the long term.

1. INTRODUCTION

This report focuses on the potential of local integration for Syrian refugees in Iraq. Through secondary and primary data collection among Syrian urban refugees and Iraq residents in Erbil, Dahuk and Qaim city it provides insight into both opportunities as well as obstacles to local integration.

Whilst the regional refugee response to the Syrian crisis has largely focused on Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey, less is known about the situation of Syrian refugees in Iraq. Iraq hosts approximately 250,184 of the 5.6 million (4.4%) registered Syrian refugees in the Middle East region.² The majority of them are of Kurdish ethnicity that arrived in Iraq following conflict in 2012 and 2013.³ Approximately 98.8% of the Syrian refugees in Iraq are registered in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI) in Erbil, Dahuk and Sulaymaniyah governorates.⁴ Most refugees in KRI originated from Hasakeh and Aleppo governorates in Syria. The remaining minority of Syrian refugees are registered in central and west Iraq. This includes Syrian refugees that originated from Deir ez-Zor governorate in Syria, which had fled cross-border to Anbar governorate in West Iraq, under the Government of Iraq (GoI).⁵ Approximately 37% (92,568 persons) of the total number of Syrian refugees in Iraq live in nine camps and 63% (157,615 persons) in non-camp/urban areas.⁶

When the influx of Syrian refugees to Iraq began in 2012, Iraq, and KRI in particular, enjoyed relative economic stability and progress. People seeking refuge entered a welcoming environment in which both the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) and host community were willing to support the refugee population.⁷ Later, steps were taken to reform national legal and procedural system in terms of migration and asylum with the establishment of coordination systems and bodies (such as the Ministry of Migration and Displacement (MoMD) and the Joint Crisis Coordination Centre (JCC) at the Ministry of Interior of the KRG).⁸ In the KRG relatively favourable policies were implemented towards Syrian refugees in KRI and residency permits were granted to Syrian refugees which entailed freedom of movement within the KRI provinces, the right to education free of charge in public schools on par with Iraqi nationals, as well as the right to work in the private sector. Refugees also had access to health services in the KRI. In the rest of Iraq, Syrian refugee children were able to register free of charge to public schools and refugees were entitled to the same health services as nationals; though refugees residing in camps could not work.⁹

2 UNHCR (2018), Iraq: Syria Situation Operational Update (July - September 2018).

3 UNHCR (2018), Iraq: Syrian Refugee stats and locations, July 2018.

4 Ibid. There are also about 43,962 non-Syrian refugees, including Iranian, Turkish and Palestinian refugees. Source: UNHCR (2018), Iraq Factsheet (August 2018).

5 UNHCR (2018), Iraq: Syrian Refugee stats and locations, July 2018.

6 UNHCR (2018), Iraq: Syria Situation Operational Update (July - September 2018).

7 UNHCR (2016), Displacement as challenge and opportunity: Erbil Governorate; UNHCR (2016), Displacement as challenge and opportunity: Dohuk governorate.

8 See Warda, W.K., et al., (2018), Global Migration: Consequences and Responses Iraq – Country Report Legal & Policy Framework of Migration Governance, Paper 2018/06, May 2018, Hammurabi Human Rights Organization

9 ACAPS (2013), Legal status of individuals fleeing Syria.

Box 1: Legal Framework in Iraq

Similar to other countries in the region hosting Syrian refugees, Iraq is not party to the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees or its 1967 Protocol. Iraq relies on various legislative instruments related to refugees or foreigners and migrants in general: Political Refugee Law No. 51 of 1971, MoMD Law 21-2010, and Foreigners' Residency Law No. 76 of 2017.¹⁰ Work permits for foreigners are regulated by the Labour Law No. 37 of 2015, Directives No.18 of 1987 and Resolution of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs No. 80 of 2013. In 2017, the Iraq Council of Ministers approved a new bill on refugees that was drafted after consultation with various stakeholders to meet international requirements for the protection of refugees. However, no new law has been enacted yet. There are ongoing discussions of a Refugee Law but this law has yet to be passed. Without a uniform and approved law in Iraq, refugees have faced different standards of treatment and policy changes that affect the realisation of their rights.¹¹

However, the situation changed when the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) advanced in Iraq in 2014. Large parts of the western and northern territories of the country were occupied, including the second biggest city Mosul. The resulting large influx of IDPs put the KRG under immense strain, especially in the provision of public services. The rise of ISIL and the influx of people also led to the decline of foreign investment and increase in job competition in the KRI.¹²

In December 2017, when the Government of Iraq (GoI) regained Mosul and large-scale military operations against ISIL ended, the humanitarian response entered a new phase in which the government and international community called for efforts to support Iraq's post-conflict reconstruction and return movements.¹³ As of October 2018, however, there are still 1.9 million IDPs in Iraq¹⁴ and recent assessments suggest that a majority of IDPs reported no intention or ability to return in the near future.¹⁵ Whilst the humanitarian community shifted its focus to support IDP returns in Iraq, it is anticipated that the country will continue to face protracted internal and Syrian displacement at least in the short term.

Iraq and KRG in particular has shown great generosity in its response to the Syrian refugee crisis, such as in granting residency permits for Syrian refugees and facilitating their right to work and enrol in public schools and universities as mentioned above.¹⁶ UNHCR's Refugee Response Plan also suggests longer-term responses in addition to meeting humanitarian emergency responses, such as resilience building, improving livelihoods, and building the capacity of local authorities to respond to refugee needs. Nevertheless, there is no clarity on the potential of local integration as a durable solution for displaced Syrians in the country.

10 Law 21-2010 established the Ministry of Migration and Displacement, which provides assistance and services to IDPs and refugees inside Iraq. The Political Refugee Law of 1971 established benefits for refugees, such as the right to work and the same health and education services as Iraqis. However, the scope of the law is limited to political refugees rather than a large influx of refugees with humanitarian needs. Source: Library of Congress (2018), Legal Status of Refugees: Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, and Iraq, Law 21-2010, Al Waqa'a al Iraqiyah, vol. 4141, 1 Nov. 2010. The Foreigners' Residency Law No. 76 of 2017 aims to regulate the entry and exit of foreigners to and from the Republic of Iraq; identify types of entry and exit visas for foreigners to the Republic of Iraq; and regulate the residency of foreigners inside Iraq. See Warda, W.K., et al., (2018), Global Migration: Consequences and Responses Iraq – Country Report Legal & Policy Framework of Migration Governance, Paper 2018/06, May 2018, Hammurabi Human Rights Organization.

11 'The Iraqi Constitution gives [the Government of Iraq] the exclusive power over regulating issues of borders, citizenship, naturalization, residency, and the right to political asylum' and currently, '[the Government of Iraq] does not issue residency permits, nor work permits to asylum seekers'. See Warda, W.K., et al., (2018), Global Migration: Consequences and Responses Iraq – Country Report Legal & Policy Framework of Migration Governance, Paper 2018/06, May 2018, Hammurabi Human Rights Organization and ACAPS (2013), Legal status of individuals fleeing Syria.

12 Middle East Research Institute (2015). Pathways to Resilience: transforming Syrian refugee camps into self-sustaining settlements feasibility study for resilience-building in Syrian refugee camps and their neighbouring host communities in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. UN News (2018), Targeted support, reconstruction needed as displaced Iraqis return and rebuild their lives, urges UN agency; February 2018. According to a KI, recent changes in funding and programming has helped IDPs return to their areas of origin but have been less attentive to the residual IDP caseload, leaving major gaps.

14 In January 2018, for the first time since early 2014, the number of people returning to their area of origin exceeded the number of people who remain displaced. Source: IOM (2018), Iraq Mission Displacement Tracking Matrix.

15 2% of assessed IDP households in Erbil governorate and 2% of IDP households in Dahuk governorate reported intentions to return to their area of origin in the three months following data collection, conducted in April and May 2018. Assessed IDPs considered their areas of origin to be unsafe, lack basic services, lack livelihood opportunities, among other reasons. Source: REACH Initiative (2018). Intentions Survey: Out-of-Camp IDPs Dahuk Governorate, Iraq. May 2018. REACH Initiative (2018). Intentions Survey: Out-of-Camp IDPs Erbil Governorate, Iraq. May 2018. See also: IDMC (2018), Nowhere to return to - Iraqis' search for durable solutions continues.

16 UNHCR (2017), 3RP Regional Refugee & Resilience Plan 2018-19, Iraq.

As previous research largely focused on the return or local integration of Iraqi IDPs, it is unclear the extent to which Syrian refugees have been able to locally integrate in Iraq; and how Syrian refugees' progress towards local integration (or lack thereof) impacts their long-term intentions and preferred durable solution. On the policy level, it is unclear whether (and if so, how) the Syrian refugee population could be considered in the future of Iraq. Therefore, this study seeks to assess **Syrian refugees' progress towards - and potential for - local integration in Iraq.**¹⁷ Given the large majority of Syrian refugees resides in KRI, the main focus of the study is on analysing integration between Syrian Kurds and Iraqi Kurds in the KRI, although one component also looks at the potential for local integration of Syrian refugees in Anbar.

Local integration lacks a formal definition in international refugee law but it is understood as a "process of legal, economic, social and cultural incorporation of refugees, culminating in the offer of citizenship".¹⁸ For refugees in Iraq, however, the road to naturalisation is long and unforeseeable as it has not been an option provided by GoI. For refugees in KRI, any negative changes on the residence status provided by KRG could lead to protection concerns; whilst legal pathways towards citizenship are not realistically an option. Therefore, the study acknowledges that the potential on local integration as durable solution is currently limited.

As a majority of Syrian refugees in Iraq originated from North-east Syria (NES), this study is complementary to IMPACT's research report "Picking up the Pieces - Realities of Return and Reintegration in North-East Syria",¹⁹ which adopted the same methodological approach to explore durable solutions for displaced and returned Syrians in NES.²⁰ Although this study focuses on local integration, it recognises the importance of other durable solutions that should be available for displaced Syrians, including voluntary return in safety and dignity and third country resettlement.

17 According to IASC, a durable solution is achieved when "displaced persons no longer have any specific assistance and protection needs that are linked to their displacement and can enjoy their human rights without discrimination on account of their displacement". The three types of durable solutions include return and reintegration to their country of origin, local integration in the first country of asylum and third-country resettlement. The 1951 UN Refugee Convention articulates the obligation for first countries of asylum to "facilitate the assimilation and naturalisation" of refugees. Source: The Brookings Institution - University of Bern Project on Internal Displacement (2010), IASC Framework on Durable Solutions for Internally Displaced Persons.

18 Jacobsen, K. (2001), The forgotten solution: local integration for refugees in developing countries. New Issues in Refugee Research, Working Paper No. 45.

19 IMPACT Initiatives (2018), Picking up the Pieces - Realities of Return and Reintegration in North-East Syria.

20 UNHCR (2018), Iraq: Syrian Refugee statistics and locations (31 January 2018). IMPACT (2018), Durable solutions for displaced Syrians in urban areas in Hasakeh and Raqqa: realities of return and reintegration. For research on Syrian refugees' options for third-country resettlement, see Durable Solutions Platform (2018), Access to Resettlement and Complementary Pathways for Syrian Refugees.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1. ERBIL, NORTH IRAQ²¹

Erbil governorate, with a total population of around 2.0 million people, hosts the capital of the KRI. Like the rest of the Kurdistan Region, Erbil was deeply affected by waves of displacement²² resulting from the conflicts in Syria and the rest of Iraq, as well as from a pervasive financial crisis affecting the public and private sector economy.²³ The first wave occurred immediately after 2010, with the influx of Syrian refugees fleeing civil war entering into the region. A second wave began in late 2013, and spiked in 2014 and 2015, with an increasing flow of IDPs seeking shelter and safety from the armed conflict that erupted in Iraq during that time. The majority of IDPs in Erbil governorate originated from Anbar (33%) and Nineveh (43%), followed by Kirkuk and Salahaddin. There are currently 214,380 IDPs in Erbil governorate.²⁴

Erbil governorate hosts 126,232 Syrian refugees (per 30 September 2018), which is approximately 50.5% of all Syrian refugees in Iraq. This includes an estimation of 23.8% (30,017 persons) of in-camp refugees and 76.2% (96,215 persons) of non-camp refugees.²⁵ The largest proportion of the displaced population, both refugees and IDPs, live in the urban areas as opposed to rural areas. The urban refugee population tends to cluster in the Erbil district centre (i.e. Erbil city), and it was suggested that three out of four Syrian refugees in the governorate are located in Erbil city. Previous studies show that refugees were driven to Erbil city to pursue better economic opportunities, likely after spending time elsewhere in displacement.²⁶ IDPs and refugees comprise of around 17.0% of the total population.

2.2. DAHUK, NORTH IRAQ

Dahuk lies at the western side of KRI, bordering Turkey and Syria (Annex 1, Map 1). It is the main entry point by road for both people and goods between these two countries and KRI. It also features the Mosul Lake, which is strategically located on the border between the Nineveh and Dahuk governorate.²⁷ This geographic position has placed the Dahuk governorate as the principal shelter for Syrian refugees fleeing the conflict in the northern areas of Syria in 2012, as well as for families displaced after the fall of Mosul, Nineveh, in June 2014. In August 2014, after the fall of Sinjar, Dahuk received large numbers of Yezidi IDPs, often fleeing and transiting through the Sinjar Mountains and Syria before settling in the Dahuk governorate. IDPs in Dahuk did not primarily stem from within its boundaries, like in the case of the Anbar governorate, but come from various other governorates.

The Dahuk governorate has a total host population of 1.5 million people, as well as 88,566 Syrian refugees (per September 2018)²⁸ and 348,198 IDPs (per October 2018).²⁹ In other words, approximately 29.7% of the total population in Dahuk governorate is displaced. Even though the governorate has a relatively high percentage of refugees and IDPs in camps compared to the rest of Kurdistan's governorates, many refugees and IDPs live outside of camps. Around 39.2% (34,750) of Syrian refugees hosted in Dahuk governorate are living outside of camps.

21 For more information on the demographic profiles of the host and displaced population in KRI, see IOM, UNFPA and KRSO (2018), Demographic Survey: Kurdistan Region of Iraq, July 2018.

22 Four major waves of displacement have been identified since the 1970s; in which Iraqi citizens have been forced to leave their homes in search of safety due to both prolonged conflict, sectarian violence and forced population movements targeting specific ethnic and religious groups. The first corresponded to the political regime of Saddam Hussein from 1979 until 2003 during which different ethnic and religious groups faced oppression, targeted attacks and economic exclusion resulting in over 1 million IDPs. The second wave followed the overthrow of Saddam Hussein in 2003 when some 250,000 persons were displaced over the following three years. Between 2006 and 2008 an upsurge in sectarian violence created a further 1.6 million internally displaced persons. Estimates by the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre suggest that up to 1.1 million people are still living in protracted displacement following the 2006-2008 sectarian conflict. The latest displacement crisis began in January 2014 with the emergence of ISIL. Source: ICRC (2016), Iraq: Situation of Internally Displaced Persons. IDPs come from different religious and ethnic backgrounds - Christians, Yezidis, Sunni Arabs and Kurds. Source: Saaid, H.M. (2016), Syrian Refugees and the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, LSE Middle East Centre Blog.

23 UNHCR (2016), Displacement as challenge and opportunity: Erbil Governorate

24 IOM (2018), Iraq Mission Displacement Tracking Matrix (15 October 2018).

25 UNHCR (2018), Operational Portal Syria Regional Refugee Response - Iraq (30 Sep 2018)

26 UNHCR (2016), Displacement as challenge and opportunity: Erbil governorate

27 UNHCR (2016), Displacement as challenge and opportunity: Dahuk governorate

28 UNHCR (2018), Operational Portal Syria Regional Refugee Response - Iraq (30 Sep 2018)

29 IOM (2018), Iraq Mission Displacement Tracking Matrix (15 October 2018).

2.3. ANBAR, WEST IRAQ

Anbar governorate is under Gol's jurisdiction. As of August 2018, UNHCR reported that there are 1,039 non-camp Syrian refugees in Anbar.³⁰ Syrian refugees reportedly resided in towns near Qaim, Ana, Rawa and Obaide.³¹ These are urban centres in the west of Anbar governorate, situated on the banks of the Euphrates river in close vicinity to the Syrian border (Annex 1, Map 2). The area was held under ISIL rule from June 2014 until the end of 2017, during which thousands (including Iraqi residents and Syrian refugees) fled their homes.

Qaim city is one of the major urban centres in western Anbar governorate, situated about 330 kilometres northwest of Baghdad and strategically located at the border between Syria and Iraq, opposite the Syrian city of Abu Kamal.³² The city is surrounded by fertile agricultural lands. Economic activity focuses on cross-border trade as well as the oil and cement industries. Qaim came under control of ISIL in June 2014 and Gol re-established control over Qaim in November 2017. The area saw two primary waves of displacement, first when ISIL established control over the area, and again during military operations to return Qaim to Gol control. The estimated population of the district during ISIL's occupation was 60,000 people. Since the Gol re-established control over the area, an increasing number of displaced individuals have reportedly returned to Qaim city, with an estimated 90,000 returnees.³³ As of July 2018, a community leader estimated the population of Qaim city to be 115,000. According to the same KI, 90,000 of these were returnees and 25,000 non-displaced people. Another 70,000 of the people originally from Qaim city were estimated to be still living in displacement. In addition, it was estimated that there were approximately 300 refugee families from Syria residing in Qaim.³⁴

30 UNHCR (2018), Operational Portal. No information provided on the number of refugees or person of concern in camps in Anbar.

31 NGO KI, October 2018.

32 REACH Initiative (2018), Rapid Overview of Areas of Return (ROAR) Qa'im and Surrounding Areas, July 2018.

33 Ibid.

34 NGO KI, October 2018.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

- To assess Syrian refugees' progress towards local integration according to the Inter-Agency Standing Committee's (IASC) criteria on durable solutions as listed below, and draw comparisons with Iraqi residents to identify the extent to which refugees face displacement-specific vulnerabilities.
- To assess the enabling and limiting factors for Syrian refugees' local integration in Iraq.
- To assess Syrian refugees' decision-making and long term preferred durable solution, including whether to locally integrate, move elsewhere or return to Syria.

3.2. ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

Local integration is a multi-faceted process that includes legal, economic, social and cultural integration of refugees into the host community.³⁵ To analyse progress towards local integration, the study adopted the IASC's criteria on durable solutions.³⁶ Given that a durable solution is understood to be achieved when the displaced population no longer has any displacement-specific vulnerabilities, the study drew comparisons between Syrian refugees and Iraqi residents across the IASC criteria to assess the potential for local integration.³⁷ IMPACT adapted a set of sub-indicators to measure each IASC criterion (see Annex 3)³⁸, but placed more emphasis on indicators i, ii and iii.³⁹ As integration requires adjustments and adaptations from both the displaced population and members of the host community, the host population's perspective including attitudes towards Syrian refugees were also captured in the study.

As borders do not always mark a sharp territorial separation between social, political, and economic realities, a more nuanced examination of trans-border relations is needed to explain the modes of displacement and its responses from host communities.⁴⁰ This study therefore assesses the extent to which socio-cultural relations across the Iraqi-Syrian border has influenced the process of integration. This is of particular relevance given that almost all Syrians residing in KRI are Syrian Kurds. Additionally, Syrian refugees in Anbar are largely from Deir ez-Zor and border towns in Syria that share tribal relations with Iraqis in Anbar.

In deciding on whether or not and when to migrate, conditions at the potential destination community (or community of origin for returnees) are often weighed against conditions at the current location. Therefore, the study seeks to understand decision-making by identifying push and pull factors at the place of displacement and potential destination community that influence decisions on whether to integrate locally, to return or move elsewhere. However, as a push-pull framework does not assign weights to different factors affecting migration decisions,⁴¹ the study also analyses the dynamic interplay between different factors determining the long-term intention of whether to integrate locally, as well as preconditions and potential triggers to return or move elsewhere.

35 Meyer, S., (2008), Forced Migration Online Research Guide on Local Integration.

36 The 2010 IASC Framework on Durable Solutions for Internally Displaced Persons broadly agreed-upon definition of durable solutions and lists eight criteria "to determine the extent to which a durable solution has been achieved." Source: IASC Framework on Durable Solutions for Internally Displaced Persons (2010). The Brookings Institution - University of Bern Project on Internal Displacement.

37 The study assesses attitudes of Syrian refugees at the time of data collection and recognises that some households have yet to decide whether they wish to integrate locally, return to Syria or seek for alternative durable solutions in the long term.

38 We also made use of the Durable Solutions Indicator Library. See Joint IDP Profiling Service (2018), Durable Solutions Analysis Guideline.

39 The scope of the study were selected due to interest expressed from preliminary KIs with practitioners conducted prior to study and also due to sensitivities around certain indicators (e.g. participation in public affairs and access to justice). Whilst acknowledging that not all IASC criteria are fully achieved by Iraqi residents, comparisons between the two population groups sought to highlight any displacement-specific vulnerabilities faced by Syrian refugees compared to Iraqi residents.

40 Dionigi, F (2018), The Syrian Refugee Crisis in the Kurdish Region of Iraq: Explaining the Role of Borders in Situations of Forced Displacement, International Migration.

41 D.S. Massey, J. Arango, G. Hugo, A. Kouaouci, A. Pellegrino, J. Edward Taylor (1993), Theories of International Migration: A Review and Appraisal, Population and Development Review, Vol. 19, No. 3, pp. 431-466

3.3. DATA COLLECTION

This study used a mixed methods approach, including household surveys, focus group discussions (FGDs), key informant interviews (KIIs) and life stories (Table 1). The study covered two population groups, as defined below:

- **Syrian refugees in urban areas:** individuals or households that had been displaced outside of Syria in or after 2011 for more than one month.⁴² In KRI, only registered Syrian refugees were assessed.⁴³ KIIs with Syrian refugees in Anbar included registered and non-registered refugees. Only refugees residing in urban areas have been assessed.
- **Iraqi residents:** individuals or households currently residing in their community of origin.⁴⁴ Iraqi IDPs were not included in this population group.

As urban refugees have the freedom of movement in and out of camps, and have more direct interaction with the host population and a higher likelihood of achieving local integration in the displacement location, the research focused on Syrian refugees **residing in urban areas with host communities and not camps**. This study's assessed locations were Erbil city, Dahuk city, and Qaim city. Sulaymaniah in KRI was not covered. Given that previous assessments largely focused on Iraqi IDPs, the scope of this study focused on Syrian refugees only. Primary data collection was conducted between 6-16 August, 2018. Due to security restrictions, all data collection in Qaim city was conducted remotely via phone.

⁴² Syrian refugees that fled from other conflict prior to 2011 (e.g. Qamishli uprising in 2004) were not covered in this study.

⁴³ All survey respondents and FGD participants were reportedly of Kurdish ethnicity, though this was not a selection criteria in the sampling approach adopted.

⁴⁴ Not broken down by vulnerable host.

Table 1: Summary of data collection activities

Assessed locations	Population groups	# HH surveys			# FGDs			# KIs (FGD questions)			# KIs (community leaders)			# life stories		
		F	M	Total	F	M	Total	F	M	Total	F	M	Total	F	M	Total
Erbil City	Syrian refugees	20	84	104	1	1	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	1	1
	Iraqi residents	23	76	99	3	0	3	-	-	-	1	4	5	-	-	-
Dahuk City	Syrian refugees	44	59	103	2	1	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	1	1
	Iraqi residents	70	37	107	1	2	3	-	-	-	0	6	6	-	-	-
Qaim City	Syrian refugees	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	8	9	-	-	-	0	1	1
	Iraqi residents	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	9	10	3	5	8	-	-	-
Total		157	256	413	7	4	11	2	17	19	4	15	19	0	3	3

Household surveys assessed multiple dimensions of the population groups' intentions, access to rights, and quality of life. Household surveys were conducted for Syrian refugees and Iraqi residents, covering IASC's criteria on durable solutions.⁴⁵ The aim was to assess (i) households' progress towards each indicator, and (ii) whether households perceived themselves to have equal access (e.g. basic services, employment opportunities) compared to others in their community. Comparisons were made across population groups to evaluate the extent to which certain population groups faced displacement-specific vulnerabilities when compared to Iraqi residents.

A randomised sample of the Syrian refugee and Iraqi resident population in Erbil city and Dahuk city was used. Due to security issues limiting access and the lack of population records of Syrian refugees in Anbar, household surveys were not possible. A qualitative approach (with KIs) was adopted via remote data collection.

Syrian refugee households in KRI were selected using random sampling of UNHCR's registered beneficiary list. A call centre was set up to gain consent for participation and to obtain their address in order to visit them.⁴⁶

Iraqi resident households in KRI were selected using geographic information system (GIS) technology to generate randomised Global Positioning System (GPS) points within the assessed cities, adjusted based on the city's population density. If households refused to participate, enumerators were instructed to go to the next GPS point. Enumerators were also instructed to record their GPS point at the household after completing the survey to verify that they followed the GIS sampling strategy correctly. The survey interviewed an adult member of the household, and survey responses were recorded using the Open Data Kit (ODK) application.

45 All IASC criteria for durable solutions were covered with the exception of effective mechanisms for housing, land and property (HLP) rights and provided with compensation. Although this criterion could impact Syrian refugees' decisions on whether to return to Syria, it was considered less relevant for this study on local integration.

46 Out of the 742 households that enumerators called in total, they were able to reach 543 households. Others had numbers that were not in use, phones were switched off, or it was ringing with no response. Out of the 543 households that enumerators were able to reach by phone, 55 (10%) refused to participate in the survey including 21 households from Erbil city (4%) and 34 households from Dahuk city (6%).

Survey respondents of assessed Syrian refugee households in KRI mainly originated from Hasakeh (63%) and Aleppo (32%). A majority (81%) of assessed Syrian refugees have been displaced in Iraq for more than four years, and 38% of household survey respondents were female. See Annex 2 for demographic details on household survey respondents.

Focus group discussions (FGDs) were key in capturing community dynamics, including perceptions and attitudes towards local integration. They were also used to understand demographic differences in migratory decisions at the individual level among Syrian refugees to complement household survey findings. FGDs were conducted with Syrian refugees and Iraqi residents in Erbil city and Dahuk city, with six to eight participants per FGD. Purposive sampling was used to select participants according to gender and population group, in which male-only and female-only FGDs were held. 39 (63%) of 62 FGD participants in KRI were female. All Syrian refugee respondents in Erbil city and Dahuk city were Kurdish.

Key informant interviews using FGD questions: Due to the security situation in Anbar, FGDs with Iraqi residents and Syrian refugees in Anbar were not possible. Instead, enumerators conducted remote one-on-one KIIs using FGD questions. KIs were identified through enumerators' networks and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) present in the field, and two of the KIs were female. Assessed Syrian refugees in Qaim city originated from Bou Kamal, Myadeen and Soseh village, Deir ez-Zor governorate (Annex 1, Map 1).

KIIs with community leaders were used to understand broader trends and community concerns. Purposive sampling was used to select informants, which included teachers, lawyers, businessmen and former government workers; and only Iraqis were interviewed.

Life stories were used to trace individuals' experiences, including her/his perspective of what was considered a 'durable solution', as well as the decision-making process and experience in seeking durable solutions. This included, for example, tracing an individual's multiple stages of displacements and respective decisions made at each stage, and the process of local integration over time. Informants for life stories were selected using snowball sampling from FGD participants. Only Syrian refugees were interviewed for life stories.

3.4. DATA ANALYSIS

Household survey data was analysed using Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS) and Excel. When disaggregated by population group and governorate, survey findings are representative with a 95% confidence level and 10% margin of error. Survey findings are representative with a confidence level of 95% and 7% margin of error when disaggregated by population group only. Sub-questions with a smaller sample size, and hence lower margins of error, are indicated in footnotes throughout the report. The chi square test was used to determine whether there are statistically significant differences between population groups.⁴⁷ For qualitative analysis, KIIs, FGDs and life stories were analysed using a thematic coding approach.

⁴⁷ The chi-square test for independence was used to determine whether there was a significant relationship between two categorical variables. The chosen significance level was 0.05. If there was a statistically significant difference, this means there was a relationship between the two variables.

3.5. CHALLENGES AND LIMITATIONS

- Scope:** To increase the representativeness of findings in KRI, the scope of the study covered registered Syrian refugees in urban areas only. As such, non-registered Syrian refugees and Syrian refugees residing in camps were not covered. The study also did not cover refugees in Sulaymaniyah due to limited resource capacities, so governorates with the highest proportion of Syrian refugees were prioritised. This also helped to maintain an appropriate level of representativeness in Erbil and Dahuk. As all FGD participants in KRI were Kurdish, further investigation could examine the experience of Arab refugees who might face additional challenges in KRI. Additionally, the study randomly selected Iraqi residents using a GIS approach and did not focus specifically on vulnerable Iraqis in the host population. Further disaggregation by income and gender could highlight specific challenges faced by vulnerable residents.
- Erbil:** Enumerators reportedly faced challenges in conducting household surveys with Iraqi residents in Erbil city, especially in more affluent neighbourhoods. Residents were reportedly not open to NGO assessments and some expressed concerns about assistance focusing on Syrian refugees rather than Iraqis. As IMPACT had a buffer list with 30% additional households to reach target number of surveys, this did not impact the ability to meet the targeted number of surveys.⁴⁸
- Anbar:** Given the security situation limiting access in Anbar, it was not possible to conduct data collection in person. All data collection activities were conducted remotely. As FGDs were not possible due to remote data collection, FGD questions were adapted for KIIs. With both Syrian refugees and Iraqis, snowball sampling was difficult to implement as all respondents were unwilling and/or unable to suggest other contacts to participate in the study, possibly due to the presence of ISIL and the lack of trust associated with remote data collection. IMPACT relied on enumerators' own networks and an NGO with field presence in Anbar to identify Syrian refugee respondents.

48 No information collected on number of Iraqi residents who refused to participate in survey. Compared to Erbil city, enumerators reported that households were more welcoming and open to assessments in Dahuk city.

4. FINDINGS

KURDISTAN REGION OF IRAQ: ERBIL CITY AND DAHUK CITY

As a significant proportion (63%) of Syrian refugees in Iraq are living outside of camps, Erbil city and Dahuk city provide important case studies in understanding the lives of urban refugees in KRI and what integration looks like in an urban setting.⁴⁹ Previous assessments suggest that refugees were likely to have spent time elsewhere in displacement, and were driven to urban centres to pursue better economic opportunities.⁵⁰ Whilst living in host communities arguably provides more opportunities for refugees to integrate compared to camp-based refugees, it nevertheless poses its own sets of challenges. The following section seeks to explore integration from a social, cultural, economic and legal standpoint according to IASC's criteria on durable solutions. It then explores how the shared Kurdish identity was able to facilitate integration but with limitations; as well as how integration challenges have shifted from socio-cultural differences to difficulties in economic integration over time. Finally, the section assesses Syrian refugees' intentions regarding whether they wish to integrate locally, return to Syria or move elsewhere as their preferred durable solution.

4.1. SYRIAN REFUGEES' PROGRESS TOWARDS LOCAL INTEGRATION

In analysing IASC's eight criteria on durable solutions, the household survey found that the lowest proportion of households reported access to public participation and access to justice, followed by access to employment opportunities (Table 2). With the exception of safety and security, the survey found that lower proportions of Syrian refugee households reported access compared to Iraqi resident households across all assessed IASC indicators. This ranged from a 3% difference between population groups on standard of living and participation in public affairs, compared to a 19% difference between population groups reporting access to income-generating opportunities.

Table 2: Proportion of households that reported having access. The largest gaps are marked Red, the small to medium gaps Orange and, from the perspective of the refugees, the positive difference between refugees and residents Yellow.

	% of HHs that reported having access		Gap
	Refugee	Resident	
i. Long-term safety, security and freedom of movement	93%	86%	6%
ii. Adequate standard of living, including at a minimum access to adequate food, water, housing, healthcare, and basic education	83%	86%	-3%
iii. Access to employment and livelihoods	59%	78%	-19%
iv. Access to effective mechanisms that restore their housing, land and property or provide them with compensation	-	-	-
v. Access to and replacement of personal and other documentation	78%	94%	-16%
vi. Voluntary reunification with family members separated during displacement	38%	-	-
vii. Participation in public affairs at all levels on an equal basis with the resident population	15%	19%	-4%

⁴⁹ UNHCR (2018), Operational portal.

⁵⁰ UNHCR (2016), Displacement as challenge and opportunity, Erbil Governorate. UNHCR (2016), Displacement as challenge and opportunity, Dahuk Governorate.

	% of HHs that reported having access		Gap
	Refugee	Resident	
viii. Effective remedies for displacement-related violations, including access to justice	47%	56%	-9%
Access to humanitarian assistance	11%	17%	-6%

Across both population groups, less than half of the assessed households perceived equal access to employment opportunities and humanitarian assistance (Table 3). A lower proportion of refugee households perceived equal access compared to resident households.

Table 3: Proportion of households that reported perceiving equal access, per assessed indicator⁵¹

	% of HHs that perceived equal access compared to others in community ⁵²		Gap
	Refugee	Resident	
i. Long-term safety, security and freedom of movement	93%	96%	-3%
ii. Adequate standard of living, including at a minimum access to adequate food, water, housing, healthcare, and basic education	78%	75%	3%
iii. Access to employment and livelihoods	21%	47%	-26%
Access to humanitarian assistance	14%	49%	-35%

The survey results found a statistically significant difference between Syrian refugees and Iraqi residents for several indicators and sub-indicators (highlighted in red and yellow in Annex 2). A lower proportion of Syrian households reported access to income-generating opportunities and personal documentation. However, there was also a significant difference in which higher proportions of Iraqi resident households reported being a victim of safety/security incidents and lower proportion of Iraqi residents reported having access to sufficient drinking water.

4.1.1. Long-term safety, security and freedom of movement

According to household surveys, a majority of Syrian refugees (93%) and Iraqi residents (94%) in Erbil city and Dahuk city felt safe walking around their neighbourhood.⁵³ However, a higher proportion of resident households (21%) reported having been a victim of a safety or security incident in the three months prior to data collection compared to refugee households (8%).⁵⁴ Regarding the perceived level of safety and security compared to others in their community, a majority of refugees (93%) and residents (96%) perceived equal levels of safety and security.⁵⁵

FGD findings suggest that population groups faced different kinds of safety and security challenges. From the Iraqi residents' perspective, some FGD participants perceived the arrival of Syrians to have negatively affected the neighbourhood's level of safety. There was reportedly a lack of trust between Iraqis and Syrians, though some FGD participants also mentioned that general trust has improved over time.

51 Indicator four on access to effective mechanisms that restore their housing, land and property or provide them with compensation was less relevant to understanding local integration and was therefore excluded from this study. The complementary study on the North-East Syria does address this topic. See IMPACT Initiatives (2018), Picking up the Pieces - Realities of Return and Reintegration in North-East Syria.

52 The phrasing of the survey question was on whether households had equal access "compared to others in your community", implying that reported perceptions could also include equal access compared to IDPs (in addition to Syrian refugees and Iraqi residents) in their community.

53 No statistically significant difference by population groups or by cities.

54 Statistically significant difference by population groups, no statistically significant difference between assessed cities.

55 No statistically significant difference by population groups or by cities.



We didn't know who the Syrian refugees were...whether he was trustworthy or whether he will transfer something bad to this community. [There was an] increase in theft incidents and feelings of insecurity if there were Syrian refugees in the same neighbourhood as us...We did our best to overcome these challenges by cooperating with the security agencies.⁵⁶

For Syrian refugees, FGD participants reported not being able to move freely from the KRI to the rest of Iraq.⁵⁷ A few Syrian refugees also reported feeling blamed for security incidents. For example, a refugee in Dahuk city mentioned that:



Whenever there is a problem, they put the blame on our shoulder without being sure of it, if there is a robbery, they say that must be [the] Syrians and so forth.⁵⁸

Although the survey found high proportions of households feeling safe and perceived equal access to safety and security, FGDs nevertheless illustrate a sense distrust between population groups to a certain extent. This suggests that continuing to address any community tension between population groups can further improve levels of cohesion.⁵⁹

4.1.2. Standard of living, including access to basic goods and services

Access to basic food, drinking water, housing, education and healthcare were assessed as sub-indicators for standard of living. With the exception of access to drinking water, the survey found no statistically significant difference between Syrian refugees and Iraqi residents in sub-indicators assessed.

Access to basic food: 88% of refugee households and 93% of resident households reported having access to basic food,⁶⁰ while 65% of refugee households and 71% of resident households perceived equal access to basic food compared to others in their community. No statistically significant difference was found between population groups. However, on perceptions, there was a significant difference where respondents in Erbil city (79%) were more likely to perceive equal access compared to respondents in Dahuk city (57%).⁶¹

Access to drinking water: 77% of assessed Syrian refugee households and 65% of Iraqi resident households reported always having access to sufficient drinking water, with a statistically significant difference between the population groups.⁶² Because refugee households tended to be smaller than resident households, this may explain the remarkable difference between both groups (see Annex 2, Table 4). Findings revealed more households in Dahuk city (82%) than Erbil city (59%) reported always having access to drinking water, with a statistically significant difference between the two cities. As shown in Figures 1 and 2, the main reasons cited by respondents for not having sufficient drinking water included that water was not available from source, and not having enough water storage.

56 FGD: Iraqi resident, male, Dahuk city.

57 Non-Iraqis require a visa to enter Iraq.

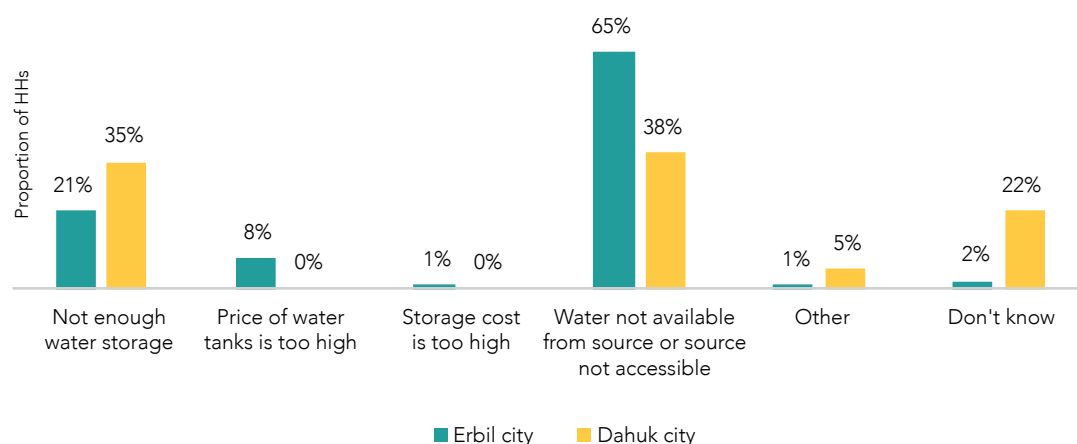
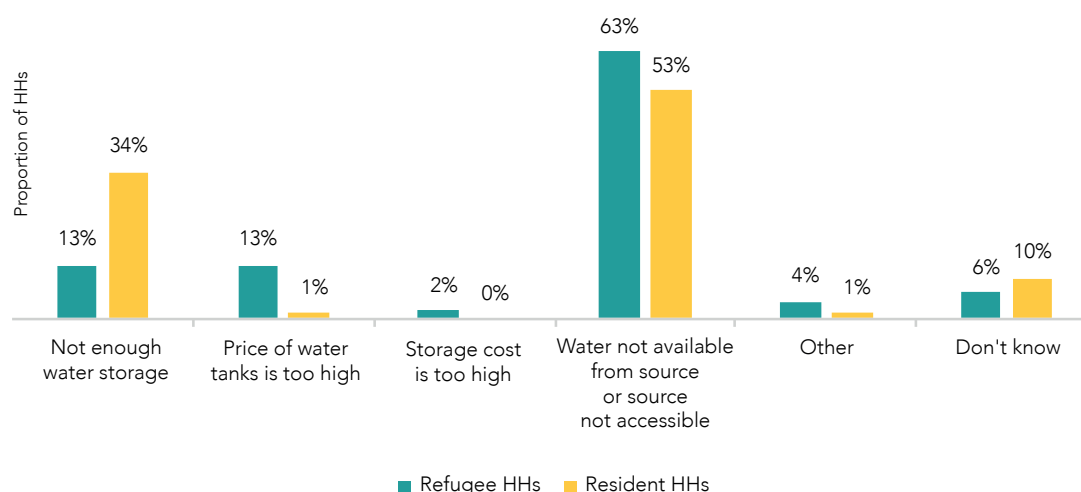
58 FGD: Syrian refugee, female, Dahuk city.

59 In Erbil, a previous study found that there are lower levels of community tension and distrust between Syrian refugees and Iraqi residents (compared to Arab IDPs and Kurdish Iraqi residents) due to cultural similarities and lower number of Syrian refugees in the neighbourhood. Source: UNHCR (2016), Displacement as challenge and opportunity, Erbil Governorate.

60 No statistically significant difference when disaggregated by city in Erbil city and Dahuk city.

61 Specific questions on food were not asked during FGDs, further investigation is needed to explain the difference across cities.

62 Respondents were asked whether they did not have access to sufficient drinking water for at least once in the past one month prior to data collection.

Figure 1: Reasons for not having sufficient drinking water by city⁶³**Figure 2: Reasons for not having sufficient drinking water by population group⁶⁴**

When mapping locations of each assessed household, there were no specific trends to suggest certain neighbourhoods having better access compared to other areas.⁶⁵ Aligning with reported levels of access, residents (83%) were also more likely to believe that they were worse off compared to refugees (95%) in access to drinking water.

Access to basic housing: A large majority of refugees (93%) and residents (94%) reported having access to basic housing.⁶⁶ However, smaller proportions of refugees (73%) and residents (70%) perceived equal access to housing.⁶⁷ When mapping the locations of respondents in Dahuk city, there was no spatial pattern to suggest respondents from specific neighbourhoods who were more likely to perceive unequal access. In Erbil city, however, respondents living closer to the city centre were more likely to perceive unequal access to basic housing compared to households living in the periphery.⁶⁸

63 Percentages represent proportion of households within their city, expressed out of households that reported lacking sufficient drinking water at least once in the past one month prior to data collection. Due to limited sample size, it is not possible further disaggregate by population group and city. Out of 121 households reporting lacking sufficient drinking water for at least once in the past one month, 37 households (13 refugee households and 24 resident households) were in Dahuk city, and 84 households (35 refugee households and 49 resident households) were in Erbil city.

64 Percentages represent proportion of households within their population group, expressed out of households that reported lacking sufficient drinking water at least once in the past one month prior to data collection within their population group.

65 Maps not shown to protect the anonymity of survey participants.

66 No statistically significant difference found between population groups.

67 No statistically significant difference found between population groups.

68 Maps not shown to protect the anonymity of survey participants.

According to FGD participants, a few Syrians reported Iraqis not renting property to Syrians or charging Syrians a higher rent; though some respondents specified that this was only during earlier years when Syrians had just arrived to the host community. Syrians reported improved access to housing due to the economic decline leading Iraqis to rent houses to Syrians as a source of income, as well as improved trust in general between Syrians and Iraqis.

“

At the beginning they did not rent their houses to refugees due to the problems that come with it, but the situation has changed and they started renting houses to us. They now deal with us respectfully and can distinguish between the ‘good’ and ‘bad’ refugees.⁶⁹

Additionally, one Syrian refugee FGD participant reported facing challenges in renting accommodation due to documentation and approval requirements. According to a KI, Syrian refugee families that wished to rent a house in the city in KRI were required to gain approval from the Mukhtar (sector or local tribal leaders) and the Asayish (KRG’s internal security or police force). Only Syrian families were granted approval, as Syrian refugees were not granted permission to live alone - with few exceptions.⁷⁰

For Iraqis, most FGDs had participants reporting challenges in increased rent and overcrowding. Beyond access to housing, an Iraqi KI experienced social tensions due to adaptations in living arrangements that reportedly led to changes in community norms.

“

...some [social] norms are being broken in the community, like to have young males living in shared areas in an apartment [with other families], or young females living alone to reduce the cost of transportation from their residence to their workplace.⁷¹

Access to basic healthcare: For both Syrian refugees and Iraqi residents, patients were required to pay an initial fee of 1,000 Iraqi dinar (~0.84 USD) when visiting public hospitals in Erbil and Dahuk. Depending on the type of health services needed, they might have to pay more. According to a KI, no documents were required to access public healthcare, with the exception of patients requiring surgery (who would need to present their KRI residence permit and UNHCR form). Of the households that reported needing to see a doctor in the past three months prior to data collection, 89% (85) of refugees and 96% (96) of residents reported visiting a health facility.⁷² 87% of the assessed refugees and 70% of residents perceived their household as having equal access to basic healthcare. In FGDs, a few Iraqis reported pressure on healthcare services due to the influx of Syrian refugees (and Iraqi IDPs), citing overcrowding and long hospital queues.

Access to basic education: Public primary and secondary schools are free for both Syrian refugees and Iraqi residents in Erbil and Dahuk. 89% of assessed refugee households and 94% of assessed resident households reported having access to basic education; while 71% and 81% of assessed refugee and resident households perceived there to be equal access to basic education.⁷³ In FGDs, a few Iraqi participants reported concerns regarding the overcrowding of classrooms and the lack of education staff. An Iraqi KI perceived unequal access to education due to assistance from the international community contributing to unfair competition.

69 FGD: Syrian refugee, female, Dahuk city.

70 The KI was aware of a case in which a Syrian refugee who worked in a restaurant were able to gain approval to live alone through the restaurant owner's sponsorship. However, this was reportedly not always the case and permission was not always granted.

71 KI: Iraqi, Dahuk city. The KI did not specify whether changes in living arrangements were for Syrian and/or Iraqi households.

72 Smaller sample size, percentages expressed out of 96 refugees and 100 residents reported needing to see a doctor in the past three months.

73 There were no statistically significant difference between population groups for both indicators.



The international efforts to look after the refugees have contributed to improving the healthcare and educational services in the area. However, Syrian students have privileges that are envied by Kurdish students, like no tuition fees, encouraging Syrian students to go to school. This reduced the number of seats available in schools so the competition increased between the Syrians and residents in accessing educational services.⁷⁴

Contrary to survey findings where higher proportions of Iraqi residents reported having access to basic services compared to Syrian refugees, some Iraqi FGD participants perceived Syrian refugees to have more advantages in accessing education.

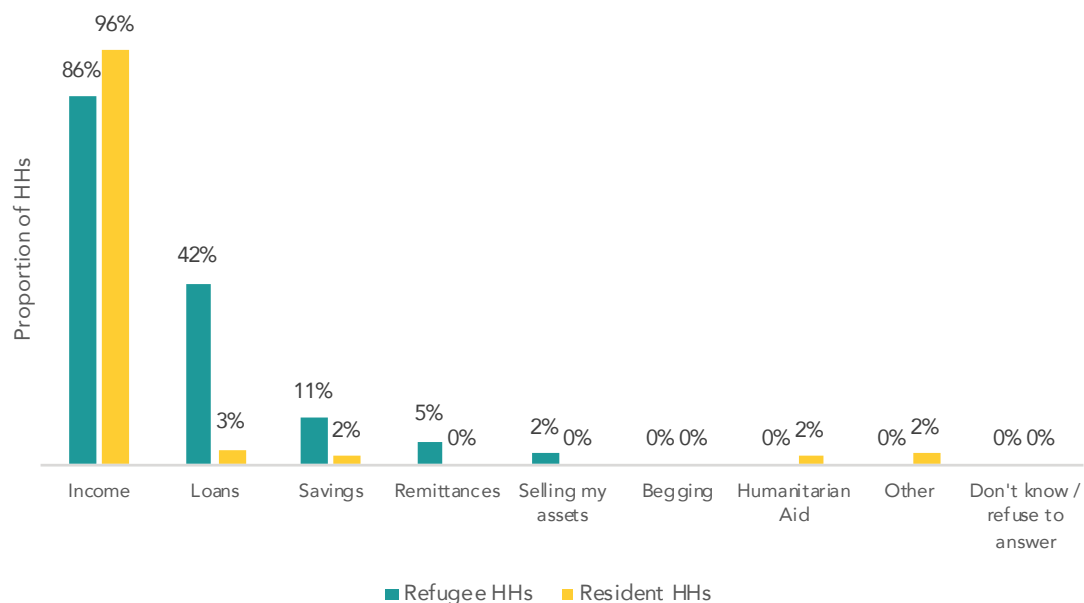
4.1.3. Access to income-generating opportunities

The household survey found low proportions of refugee (59%) and resident (78%) households that reported access to income-generating opportunities. Refugee households had a lower proportion of households reporting access compared to Iraqi residents, with a statistically significant difference between population groups.

Additionally, the study found that **less refugee households in Erbil city (45%) than Dahuk city (73%) reported having access to income-generating opportunities**, with a statistically significant difference.⁷⁵ In contrast, more resident households in Erbil city (85%) than Dahuk city (71%) reported having access to income-generating opportunities. This suggests that refugees in Erbil city might face more barriers to employment, possibly due to greater differences in dialects spoken in Erbil compared to Dahuk. The local dialect in Dahuk (Bahdeni) is closer to the dialect spoken by Syrian Kurds (Kormanje), compared to the dialect used in Erbil (Sorani). There might also be more job competition in Erbil city compared to Dahuk city, and the jobs (e.g. construction work) available in specific sectors for Syrian refugees.

As shown in Figure 3, a majority of Syrian (86%) and Iraqi (96%) households primarily relied on income to pay for basic expenses. A higher proportion of Syrian refugee households reported relying on loans (42%), savings (11%) and remittances (5%) as one of their primary sources to pay for their basic expenses compared to residents. As shown in Figure 4, there were Iraqi households in Erbil city (27%) and Dahuk city (22%) that reportedly lent money to Syrians before.

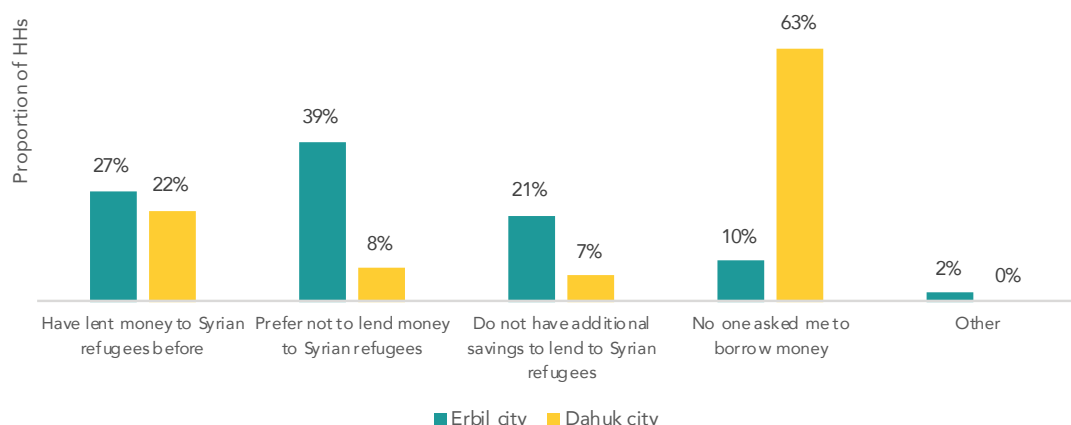
Figure 3: Primary household income sources used for basic expenses (select up to two)



⁷⁴ KII: Iraqi, Dahuk city. According to another KII, some university students apply by scholarships provided by UNICEF and foreign governments to attend public and private universities in the KRI.

⁷⁵ More resident households in Erbil city (85%) than Dahuk city (71%) reported having access to income-generating opportunities.

Figure 4: Proportion of Iraqi households reporting to have lent money to Syrian refugee households⁷⁶



As elaborated in the sections below, access to employment was found to be a cause of tension between Syrian refugees and the host population according to FGDs. Similarly, the survey found that **74% of refugee and 45% of resident households perceived that they had less access to income-generating opportunities** compared to others in their community.⁷⁷ Among FGDs, there was a mixed perception regarding access to income-generating opportunities. While some refugees and Iraqis perceived equal access, others believed the other population group had a greater advantage over them.

Employment sectors: As shown in Figure 5, the household survey found that 41% of male residents above 18 were working in the public sector compared to 5% of male refugees;⁷⁸ while 30% of male refugees above 18 worked in the construction sector compared to 9% of male residents.⁷⁹ For refugee and resident males, responses for 'other' included working as guards, drivers, teachers, electricians and in restaurants, bakeries and the military.

A large majority of female above 18, including 98% of female refugees and 81% of female residents, reported 'not applicable', meaning that women were not in paid employment or the household did not have women above 18.⁸⁰ According to a KI, women had domestic duties (e.g. looking after children) which made it hard for them to engage in paid employment.⁸¹

⁷⁶ No timeframe set in this question.

⁷⁷ Statistically significant difference between population groups. 0% of refugees and 12% (25) of residents perceived they had *more* access than others in their community; 21% (44) of refugees and 34% (69) of residents reported they had *equal* access; 4% (9) of refugee HHs and 7% (27) of residents did not know.

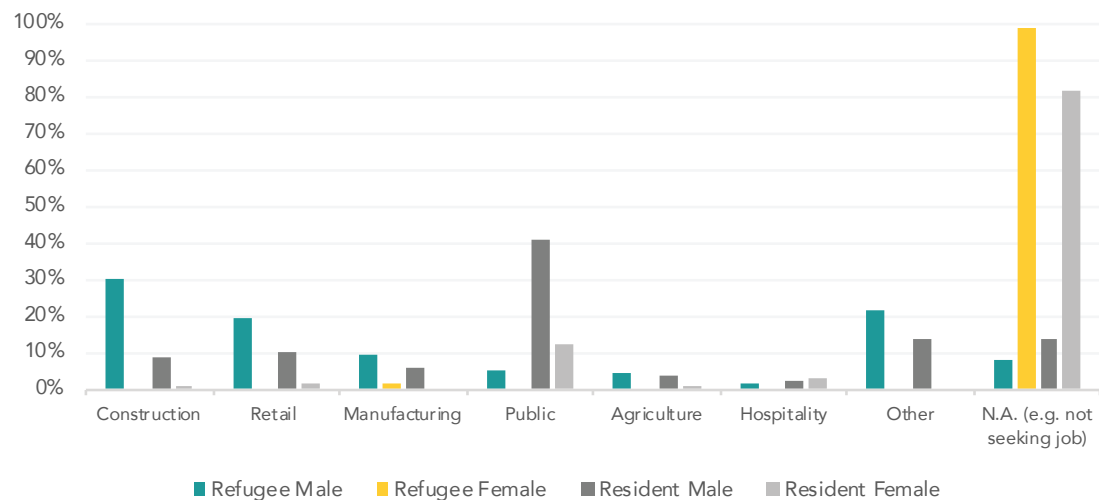
⁷⁸ Syrian refugees were able to work in public sectors in camps, but not in public sectors in the cities. To work in the public sector in the city, Iraqi citizenship and documents (including Iraqi ID, food card, information card) were required. According to KI, there are Syrian refugees who work in camps but live in cities, which might explain the small proportion of refugees reporting working in the public sector.

⁷⁹ Respondents reported on employment sectors of all members above 18 in their household. Percentages expressed out of all households.

⁸⁰ Respondents reported on employment sectors of all members above 18 in their household. Percentages expressed out of all households. According to recent study of the working population aged 15 to 64 in KRI, including host and displaced families, women in the work force represent less than 15% of the women of working age, for a male working share of 70%. Source: IOM, UNFPA and KRSO (2018), Demographic Survey: Kurdistan Region of Iraq, July 2018.

⁸¹ KI: Iraqi resident, Dahuk city.

Figure 5: Employment sectors, by population group and gender
(working-age household members)⁸²



Survey findings align with FGDs in which Syrians reported working in **low-skilled sectors** because such jobs were not sought after by residents. There were more restrictions for refugees to work in the public sector;⁸³ as well as in NGOs or to start their own businesses. Among refugee participants, there was a common perception that high-profile jobs go to residents, while low-profile jobs to refugees. A Syrian refugee reported that:

“

If we want to work as a labourer (e.g. construction, agriculture) it's fine as they don't ask usually ask for work permits, but if we wanted to open our own business, we have to get approval from the security authorities and get a licence to do so. This poses a challenge as it's not easy and very rarely do we get the licence.⁸⁴

In FGDs, Syrian respondents perceived security approvals (required to work in certain employment sectors or to start their own businesses) to be discriminatory toward Syrians. This limited opportunities for Syrians with high levels of education and qualifications to utilise their skills in their jobs. Other reported barriers to employment include requiring **connections** to get jobs and Iraqi employers **not recognising qualifications from Syria**.

“

Syrian refugees who hold university degree were working in low profile jobs or jobs that don't match his/her qualifications and skills just to make meet ends.⁸⁵

⁸² Respondents were asked to report employment sectors that all working-age female and working-age male in their household were in. Limited sample size for refugee households as gender disaggregation was later added during data collection period. Percentages are expressed out of 73 responses for refugee male, 59 responses for refugee female, 225 responses for resident male and 183 responses for resident female.

⁸³ The public sector plays a dominating role in the KRI economy. The KRG is the main employer with over 50% of total employment, 26% non-military. Source: Barwari, N., (2018). Understanding the Political Economy of the KRI: The way forward toward better governance.

⁸⁴ FGD: Syrian refugee, male, Dahuk city.

⁸⁵ FGD: Iraqi resident, female, Dahuk city.

“

During the first few years, Syrians had the chance to work for humanitarian organisations but recently, rules were set to limit the Syrians' opportunities to work [for organisations] even in camps. For instance, recently Syrians couldn't visit the IDP camps near Mosul (as the process to obtain a visa to visit the rest of Iraq became very challenging).⁸⁶

FGD participants reported that since 2016, applications for security approvals submitted by Syrians were often rejected.

“

They don't give us the [business] licence so refugees can't compete with locals in the labour market⁸⁷

“

...to get approval from the security authorities has become a must in everything. Once they know that this is a Syrian who issued the application, they reject it at once.⁸⁸

Working conditions and exploitation risks: In Syrian FGDs, the most frequently reported difference was that Syrians had longer working hours and lower wages than Iraqi residents. Additionally, Syrians were reportedly more vulnerable to exploitation by business owners.

“

[Syrian refugees] were exploited by business owners a lot and their wages were reduced because they know refugees needed money and that they [Syrian refugees] would accept whatever rate they were offered.⁸⁹

“

I know a Syrian, she was working in a beauty centre and her work was perfect but the centre owner didn't deal with her respectfully and gave her little salary despite her perfect work.⁹⁰

In one FGD, Syrian women also reported facing sexual harassment or exploitation from Iraqi men (e.g. taxi drivers), taking advantage of women's poor financial situation and the need for money.⁹¹

Hiring preference and practices: For Iraqis, some FGD participants reported preferring to hire Syrians over Iraqis as they were perceived to be more hardworking. Others cited Syrians having high educational qualifications and technical skills. However, many Iraqi FGD participants also perceived that Iraqis preferred to hire Syrians because they were willing to work for lower wages.

“

I noticed that the Iraqi people prefer to give Syrians work because they work hard with little salary, and they work more seriously. Syrians have [a] good reputation and they [Iraqis] can trust them.⁹²

86 FGD: Syrian refugee, female, Erbil city.

87 FGD: Syrian refugee, female, Dahuk city.

88 FGD: Syrian refugee, female, Dahuk city.

89 FGD: Syrian refugee, male, Dahuk city.

90 FGD: Iraqi resident, female, Erbil city.

91 FGD: Syrian refugee, female, Dahuk city.

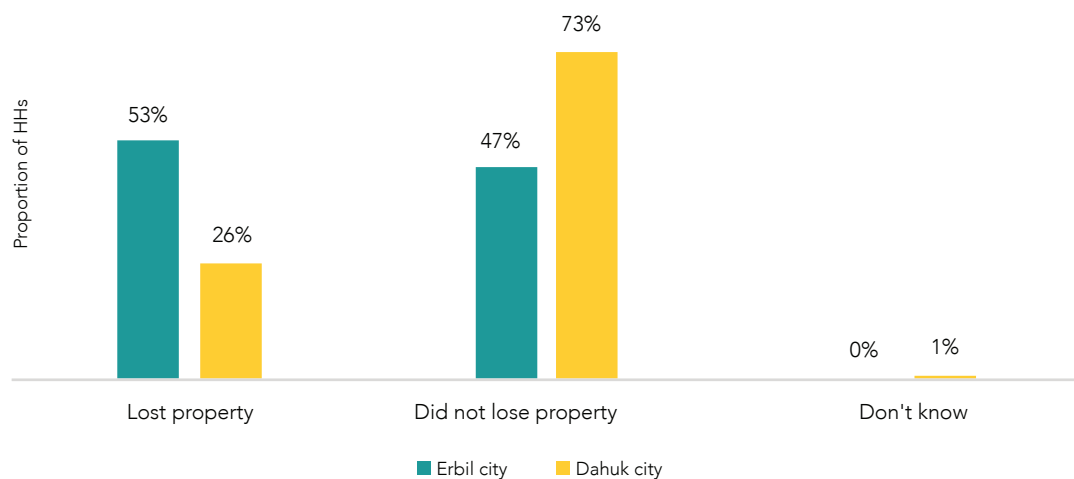
92 FGD: Iraqi resident, female, Erbil city.

Access to employment was a source of tension as some Iraqis perceived Syrians to have lowered wages and increased job competition in the labour market. Some Iraqis reportedly preferred working with Iraqis due to similarities in language, culture and traditions. A few Syrian FGD participants also perceived Iraqis to prefer Iraqi IDPs over Syrian refugees as IDPs shared the nationality and “were still from the same country”.⁹³ With KRI’s economic decline and lack of employment opportunities, overall findings suggest that access to employment opportunities was a significant source of tension between Syrian refugees and Iraqi residents.

4.1.4. Access to effective mechanisms to restore housing, land and property (HLP) or provision of compensation

As shown in Figure 6, the household survey found that a considerable proportion of assessed Syrian refugee households in Erbil city (53%) and Dahuk city (26%) reported losing their property in Syria due to damage as a result of the conflict and/or displacement, e.g. eviction or others occupying their house. However, questions on mechanisms to restore HLP or compensation in Syria were not covered by this study.⁹⁴

Figure 6: Proportion of Syrian refugee households reporting losing property (in Syria) as a result of damage or displacement



4.1.5. Access to and replacement of personal and other documentation

A majority of households reported having access to documents (e.g. birth certificates, marriage certificates and family booklet), with the exception that only 30% of assessed Syrian refugee households had passports.⁹⁵ As elaborated in Box 2, Syrian Kurds faced issues of statelessness which limit their options to travel or settle outside of Syria and Iraq as a durable solution.

⁹³ FGD: Syrian refugee, male, Dahuk city.

⁹⁴ See IMPACT Initiatives (2018), *Picking up the Pieces - Realities of Return and Reintegration in North-east Syria*.

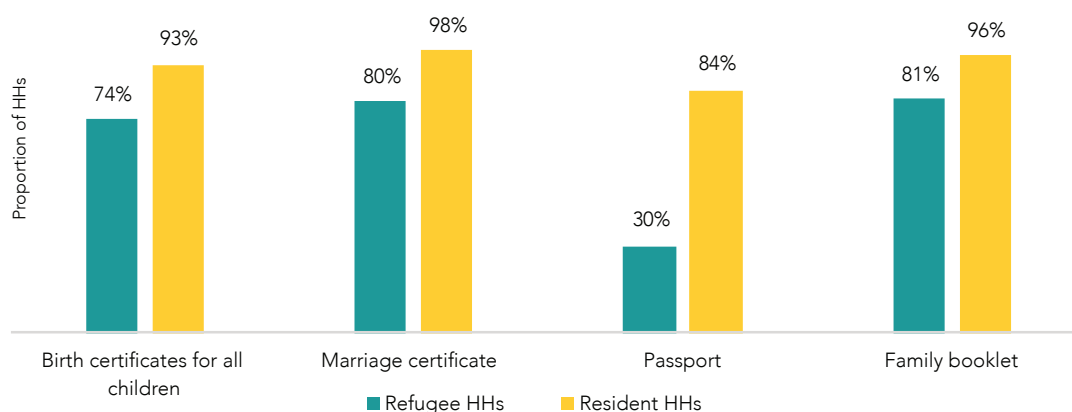
⁹⁵ This question was asked for the household, rather than for individuals within the household.

Box 2: Syrian Kurds as Stateless Refugees in KRI

The Government of Syria introduced a naturalisation decree in 2011 that grants “Syrian Arab nationality” to “foreigners” (Syrian Kurds) in Hasakeh governorate, Syria.⁹⁶ However, problems hindering the potential success of this decree were reported. For example, the maktoumeen, which make up the largest proportion of stateless Kurds, are not included in the decree.⁹⁷

While there are no accurate statistics available, it was suggested that the focus of Syria’s statelessness problem has shifted toward KRI, where the largest population of stateless Kurds outside their country of origin is presently hosted.⁹⁸ Though stateless Kurds from Syria generally do not experience specific protection concerns in KRI, many who have left KRI now face uncertainty in third countries in Europe. Protection concerns are often (re-) activated when stateless Kurds travel to third countries outside Syria and Iraq. For stateless Kurds from Syria, there are limited options available for legal resettlement, leaving no travel option but dangerous irregular routes.⁹⁹

Figure 7: Possession of documents by population group¹⁰⁰



The survey found that 91% of (registered) Syrian refugee households had KRI residence permits.¹⁰¹ FGDs suggest that Syrians reportedly faced challenges in acquiring documents such as the KRI residence permit. Syrian FGD participants reported having to go to the Asayish office to obtain and renew their residence permits, which had to be renewed once or twice per year.¹⁰² To obtain a KRI residence permit outside of camps, refugees were required to confirm their housing, obtain a sponsor, have a UNHCR card and gain security approval.¹⁰³ Specifically, one respondent mentioned that refugees were required to stay in the city for a long time in order to get security approval:

96 Relatively early on after the decree was passed, the Deputy Minister of Interior, Hasan Jalali, was quoted as saying that already more than 37,000 Kurds who are registered in the Registry of Foreigners in the Governorate of Hassakeh had applied for Syrian citizenship, and that as of June 2011 9,381 citizens had been granted citizenship. Source: Albarazi, Z., (2013). The Stateless Syrians, Middle East and North Africa Nationality and Statelessness Research Project, Tilburg University Statelessness Programme.

97 Albarazi, Z., (2013). The Stateless Syrians. Middle East and North Africa Nationality and Statelessness Research Project, Tilburg University Statelessness Programme.

98 UNHCR does not distinguish Syrians' various nationality statuses - citizen/ajnabi/maktum - when determining and registering Syrians as refugees in Iraq. In UNHCR's statistical reporting, 'stateless refugees' are counted as refugees and excluded from data on stateless persons in order to avoid double counting. Source: McGee, T., (2016), Statelessness Displaced: Update on Syria's Stateless Kurds, Institute on Statelessness and Inclusion.

99 McGee, T., (2016), Statelessness Displaced: Update on Syria's Stateless Kurds, Institute on Statelessness and Inclusion.

100 For marriage certificate, percentages are expressed out of households that are married. 3.4% (7) of refugee households and 1% (2) resident households reported 'not applicable' for marriage certificates.

101 Note that all assessed Syrian refugee households in KRI in this study were registered with UNHCR. Refugees not registered with UNHCR might be less likely to have documents such as the KRI residence permit.

102 Asayish is responsible for domestic security in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq.

103 FGD: Syrian refugee, female, Erbil city.



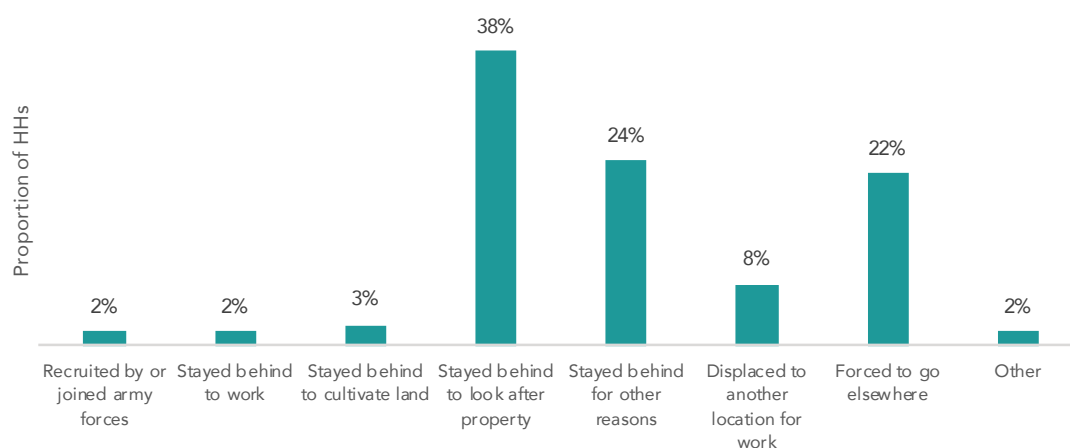
To get the security approvals, you needed to stay for a long time in the city, therefore, we worked in low-income jobs [in order] to get the approvals and then moved to find another suitable job. We hope the government [could] facilitate the process of obtaining security approvals in getting work and in finding housing.¹⁰⁴

FGD participants also reported having to wait in long queues and faced delays as they did not have the supporting documents required. Without a residence permit, refugees were not able to access employment and housing.

4.1.6. Voluntary reunification with family members separated during displacement

Almost half of the Syrian refugee households (45%) reported that they were separated from family members during displacement. More households in Dahuk city (57%) than Erbil city (34%) reported family separation. Out of the respondents that reported family separation, a larger majority of households had relatives staying behind in Syria rather than being displaced to another location. As shown in Figure 8, staying behind to look after property was the most commonly cited reason for family separation.

Figure 8: Reasons for family separation (Syrian refugee households only)¹⁰⁵



4.1.7. Participation in public affairs

Regarding respondents' awareness of decision-making bodies (open question in survey), Iraqi residents mentioned the Kurdish government, the parliament, the president, ministries and political parties. Syrian refugees mentioned the Asayish, the Ministry of Interior and UNHCR. The household survey found that 23% of refugee households and 6% of resident households reported "sometimes" or "regularly" participating in decision-making bodies. However, it should be noted that participation in public affairs is not directly comparable across population groups as they had listed different types of decision-making bodies. According to the current law, only citizens of KRI with permanent residency has the right to establish or belong to a political party.¹⁰⁶ In household surveys, few Syrian refugees named government bodies as local decision-making bodies; illustrating how it was more likely that refugees were engaging with UNHCR compared to residents engaging with government bodies. Further investigation can seek to identify and strengthen the role of community groups (e.g. neighbourhood committees) in working with local authorities to address community concerns and influence public affairs.

¹⁰⁴ FGD: Syrian refugee, female, Erbil city.

¹⁰⁵ Percentages expressed out of households reporting family separation during displacement.

¹⁰⁶ According to the Law of Political Parties of the KRI, Law No. 17 of 1993 Article 2: (i) Any citizen of the Kurdistan region, who is a resident of the region, and who has met the eligibility criteria, may have the right to participate in establishing a party; (ii) Any citizen of the Kurdistan region and any citizen with permanent residency, who has completed 18 years of age, and is legally capable has the right to belong to a party and to withdraw from it in accordance with its bylaws.

4.1.8. Effective remedies for displacement-related violations, including access to justice, reparations and information about the causes of violations

The household survey found that a small proportion of refugee households (21%) and resident households (16%) were aware of legal and justice bodies in Iraq, with no statistically significant difference between population groups. Bodies cited by residents and refugees (open question in survey) included the police, the court (e.g. supreme court, criminal court), Ministry of Justice, Asayish, and the Real Property Dispute Resolution Authority. Although the study did not focus on justice bodies addressing effective remedies for displacement-related violations, one Syrian respondent in FGDs brought up that he could not sue his employer even when he did not receive his salary.

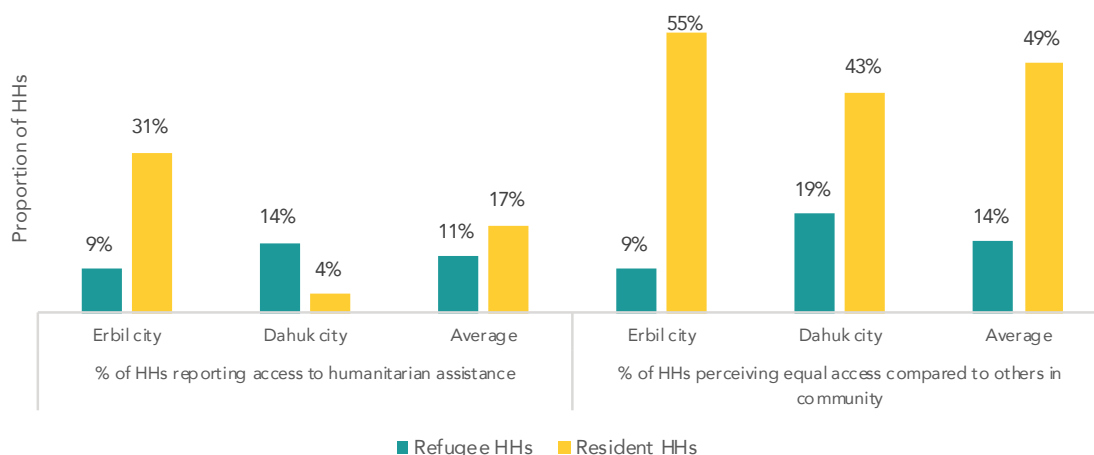
4.1.9. Access to humanitarian assistance

Although access to humanitarian assistance is not an IASC criterion on durable solutions, it is important to assess to inform the humanitarian response. As shown in Figure 9, the household survey found that 11% of refugee households and 17% of (non-displaced) resident households reported having access to humanitarian assistance, with no statistically significant difference between population groups. Regarding perceptions, 14% of refugee households and 49% of resident households perceived equal access to humanitarian assistance.¹⁰⁷

For Syrian refugees that perceived unequal access, a majority of survey respondents explained that their household did not receive any aid. In FGDs, some Syrian refugees perceived that humanitarian assistance was redirected from Syrian refugees to Iraqi IDPs when IDPs arrived in 2014 fleeing from the advancement of ISIL.¹⁰⁸ For Iraqi residents who perceived unequal access, there were a mix of responses.¹⁰⁹ Some survey respondents believed others in their community were more in need than their household, while others mentioned not receiving assistance despite being in need.

Although urban refugee humanitarian response programmes were intended to be designed in a way that addressed the needs of both the displaced and host population, the survey found that some households might still perceive aid distribution to be unfair.¹¹⁰ This could have programming implications for humanitarian organisations, such as in strengthening community outreach, adopting more inclusive participation in project design/implementation, and increasing transparency of beneficiary criteria.

Figure 9: Proportion of households having access and perceiving equal access to humanitarian assistance



KIIs suggest that assistance was able to ease tensions caused by pressure on basic services.

¹⁰⁷ 36% of refugee households and 25% of resident households perceived unequal access. 50% of refugee households and 26% of resident households reported not knowing whether they had equal access. In surveys, households were asked whether they had equal access “compared to others in your community”, implying reported perceptions could also include equal access compared to IDPs (in addition to Syrian refugees and Iraqi residents) in their community.

¹⁰⁸ For analysis on the impact of Iraqi IDP influx on Syrians’ local integration, see section 4.2.2 of this report.

¹⁰⁹ Open question in household survey.

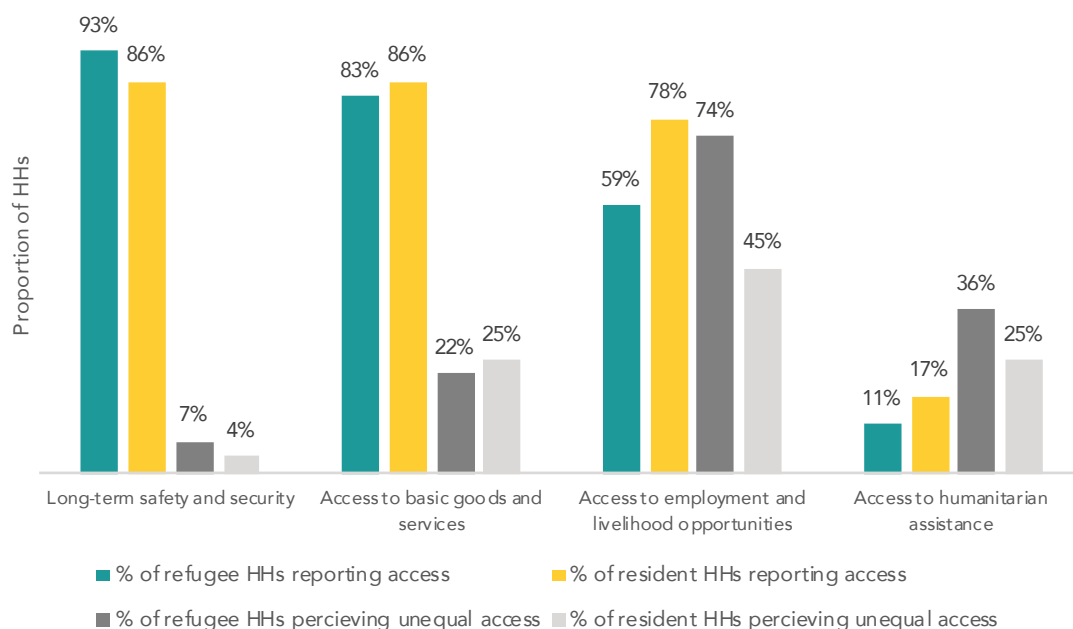
¹¹⁰ UNHCR (2009), UNHCR policy on Alternatives to Camps.

According to a KI, it was acknowledged that there were “tensions in education [due to the] lack of schools and colleges, [and from] overcrowding at classrooms and in healthcare facilities”.¹¹¹ The KI perceived that “NGOs and the Kurdistan government overcame this challenge by distributing assistance, [such as] building schools in camps”.¹¹² However, other KIs suggested that there were still tensions in access to basic services, in which free education and healthcare services for Syrians led to overcrowding. An Iraqi FGD participant brought up that new arrivals of Syrian refugees and Iraqi IDPs in their neighbourhood would impact the amount of assistance that residents would receive.

4.1.10. Perception of equal access and likelihood of community tension

The survey found a trend between the reported levels of access and perceived equality in access. As shown in Figure 10, the lower the actual reported levels of access, the more likely it was that households perceived unequal access. In some cases, high percentage of households perceived unequal access even if both population groups faced low levels of access alike (i.e. small percentage difference between actual reported levels of access between population groups).

Figure 10: % of HHs reporting actual access vs. % of HHs perceiving unequal access



Safety and security: A relatively high percentage of households (93% of refugees and 86% of residents,) reported having safety and security in their neighbourhood, and high percentage of households (93% of refugees and 96% of residents) also perceived that they had equal levels of safety. **This indicator is least likely to be a cause of community tension as most households reported having safety/security, and perceived equal levels of safety/security.**

Access to basic goods and services: A moderate percentage of households (83% of refugees and 86% of residents) reported access to basic goods and services. Although the survey only found a 3% difference between the actual reported level of access between refugee and resident households, a higher proportion of households perceived unequal access (22% of refugees and 25% of residents). **This suggests access to goods and services could be a source of tension if levels of access and service provision deteriorate.**

111 KI, teacher, Dahuk city.

112 KI, teacher, Dahuk city.

Income-generating opportunities: A moderately low percentage of households reported access to income-generating opportunities (59% of refugees and 78% of residents); and a very high percentage of households perceived unequal access (74% of refugees and 45% of residents). **This suggests that different level of access to employment opportunities is most likely to be a source of community tension, especially for Syrian refugees who have lower levels of access and are also more likely to perceive unequal access.**

Humanitarian assistance: A very low percentage of 11% of assessed refugee and 17% of resident households reported receiving humanitarian assistance. Although there is a 6% difference of households reporting having access to humanitarian assistance, a significantly higher percentage of households perceived unequal access (36% for refugees and 25% for residents). **The actual very low level of access to humanitarian assistance, combined with perceptions in unfair distribution of assistance are therefore likely to be a source of community tension.**

Although further investigation is needed to understand community dynamics (e.g. incorporating IDP perspectives, beyond status-based comparisons); this study found that (i) employment opportunities and (ii) sufficient/fair distribution of humanitarian assistance are significant challenges that need to be tackled in order to bridge gaps and increase refugees' potential for local integration.

Overall, findings in this section suggest that Syrian refugees have been able to integrate in the host community to a certain extent. A majority of Syrian refugees reported being able to access basic services, and FGDs found positive examples of social cohesion with Iraqi residents (e.g. socialising together, shared workplace, marriage). However, Syrian refugees also continue to face displacement-specific vulnerabilities. Syrian refugees reported facing discrimination (e.g. perceived criminality from Iraqi community members, receiving lower wages). Additionally, Syrian refugees reported facing legal and bureaucratic barriers that limit the extent of social and economic integration. For example, security approvals were perceived to be misused by authorities to deny Syrians from being able to fully participate in the community (e.g. made Syrians felt unwelcomed, limited in their ability to access high-profile jobs). In FGDs with Iraqis, some reported Syrian refugees to have had a positive impact in their community (e.g. opening new shops, introducing diversity to the workforce). However, Iraqis also reported challenges such as pressure on basic services, overcrowding and job competition.

4.2. ENABLING AND LIMITING FACTORS FOR LOCAL INTEGRATION OF SYRIAN REFUGEES

To better understand progress towards durable solutions outlined in the section above, it is useful to explore the underlying legal, economic and socio-cultural environment that influences processes of local integration. This section explores specific themes that influence attitudes toward local integration of Syrian refugees in KRI. Overall, findings suggest that **while Syrian refugees regarded social integration to have improved over time, economic integration is perceived to have deteriorated due to KRI's economic decline and IDP influx as a result of ISIL's entry in 2014.** This suggests that the multi-faceted process of integration can be subject to external shocks, and that the local community's capacity and willingness to host refugees is affected by changes in the external environment and other underlying factors. Finally, legal frameworks remain a barrier for local integration that limits Syrian refugees' ability to own property (if at all possible), establish businesses and access long-term legal protection or citizenship.

4.2.1. Role of shared Kurdish identity in facilitating Syrians' local integration

Shared nationalism: FGDs suggest that the shared Kurdish identity enabled integration between Syrian refugees and Iraqi residents. A few FGD participants reported notions of nationalism (including a shared experience of displacement) and the responsibility to welcome Syrian Kurds into their community. Some Syrian FGD participants mentioned that as they were Syrian Kurds, they felt treated as "guests" or "their people" rather than as refugees. A resident mentioned:



The concept of nationalism [facilitated integration] as they [Syrians] are Kurdish and so are we. We don't want them to be persecuted and be forced to move to another country so they are always welcomed here. I can work with Kurds from Syria because we are all Kurdish.¹¹³

Two refugees reported:



Back in Syria we were treated as second class citizens [as Kurds], but here we are treated as first class citizens so we don't miss our home.¹¹⁴



As [I am] a Kurdish, most of them [Iraqi Kurds] respect us [Syrians] and welcome us for they say that we suffered as you in 1990 when we moved to Iran and Turkey.¹¹⁵

Socio-cultural differences: Nevertheless, FGD participants reported practical challenges in social integration. This included differences in Kurdish dialects spoken, which was especially challenging for Syrian refugees residing in Erbil and Sulaymaniah governorates.¹¹⁶ There were also cultural differences, such as Syrians perceiving Iraqi Kurds to be “not open to other communities” and less willing to accept others. Some Iraqi Kurds perceived Syrian Kurds to be “less conservative” than Iraqi Kurds.¹¹⁷ For example, in one female FGD, Iraqi residents perceived Syrian girls to not have a good reputation and Iraqi girls allegedly “learned smoking” and “wore clothes that were not similar to our tradition”.¹¹⁸

Negative refugee label: Despite a shared Kurdish identity, some Syrian Kurds reported feeling like “strangers” and feeling “looked down” upon, especially when they first arrived.¹¹⁹ Although some Syrian and Iraqi FGD participants reported being displaced or in exile to be a shared experience (as a Kurd) that facilitated local integration as mentioned above, others felt that there was a negative label associated with being a refugee. This led to discrimination and mistrust from the Iraqis despite being Kurdish. As reported by several refugees:



This [being Kurdish] helped us a lot to integrate because there is a high sense of nationalism, but still they look down on us because in the end we are strangers to their community.¹²⁰



There is a feeling from them that we are refugees and strangers here.¹²¹



They have a pre-conception of refugees that they are all bad so they don't trust us.¹²²

113 FGD: Iraqi resident, male, Dahuk city

114 FGD: Syrian refugee, male, Dahuk city

115 FGD: Syrian refugee, male, Erbil city

116 The local dialect in Dahuk (Bahdeni) is closer to the dialect spoken by Syrian Kurds (Kormanje), compared to the dialect (Sorani) used in Erbil and Sulaymaniah governorates.

117 FGD: Syrian refugee, female, Dahuk city.

118 FGD: Iraqi resident, female, Erbil city.

119 Life story: Syrian refugee, male, Dahuk city.

120 FGD: Syrian refugee, female, Dahuk city

121 FGD: Syrian refugee, female, Dahuk city

122 Life story: Syrian refugee, male, Dahuk city

Overall, this suggests that when the Kurdish identity was compounded with other labels or identities such as being Syrian or a refugee, there are limitations in the extent to which it can facilitate integration. As further discussed below, the capacity and potential for local integration can also fluctuate depending on other factors, such as demographic changes and the economic situation of the region.

4.2.2. Impact of Iraqi IDP influx on Syrians' local integration¹²³

In 2014, the entry of ISIL into Iraq led to an influx of Iraqi IDPs in KRI, including Erbil city and Dahuk city. In FGDs, Syrian refugees and Iraqi residents had different opinions regarding the impact of IDPs on Syrian refugees' ability to locally integrate. Syrian refugees reported facing additional challenges from the arrival of Iraqi IDPs in the community - while Iraqi residents perceived the influx of Iraqi IDPs to not have had an impact on Syrian refugees.

In FGDs, Syrians reported the influx of Iraqi IDPs to have brought additional challenges, impacting Syrians' ability to locally integrate. Refugee respondents reported that the IDP influx contributed to a housing crisis that increased rent, lowered wages, increased job competition, and redirected humanitarian assistance from refugees to IDPs.

In contrast, Iraqi residents perceived that it was easier for Syrian refugees to integrate compared to Iraqi IDPs. Reasons reported included perceptions that Syrians were hardworking, able to adapt working in different sectors, willing to accept low wages, able to earn a living to provide for themselves and made more efforts to integrate. However, rather than Syrians benefiting from any specific integration policies, these reasons were arguably coping mechanisms (e.g. accepting lower wages) adopted by Syrians in order for households to meet basic needs and ensure survival in the host community.

“

Refugees were more likely to cope than IDPs as refugees were not lazy at all. They were hard workers and they wanted to work to meet their basic household needs. Also the refugees tried more than IDPs to get along with the local community.¹²⁴

“

Syrian refugees were more able to cope compared to Iraqi IDPs due to their expertise and their education level. As Syrian refugees work in different fields and they love whatever they do, they are more likely to cope well than others.¹²⁵

“

[The presence of] Iraqi IDPs increased because of the situation that happened in Iraq. This had no effect on Syrian refugees because Syrian refugee were working with little salary and they can do any hard work. Construction workers in Iraq and Kurdistan are Syrian refugees.¹²⁶

This suggests that although Syrian refugees adopted various strategies in order to cope and adapt in Iraq, they were vulnerable to exploitation when put under pressure to meet basic needs. Rather than expecting Syrian refugees to accept poorer working conditions compared to Iraqis, further attention needs to focus on how to better protect refugee rights.

¹²³ This topic was not covered in household surveys. Findings from FGDs only.

¹²⁴ KII: Iraqi, teacher, Dahuk city

¹²⁵ KII: Iraqi, lawyer, Dahuk city

¹²⁶ FGD: Iraqi residents, female, Erbil city

4.2.3. Impact of KRI's economic decline on Syrians' local integration

Since 2014, KRI suffered an economic decline due to the entry of ISIL, compounded by KRG's disputes over territories (e.g. Kirkuk oil fields) and revenue-sharing agreements with Gol.¹²⁷ This economic decline had an impact on employment opportunities in the region, including Syrian refugees' livelihoods in KRI.¹²⁸ In some FGDs, Syrian respondents perceived integration challenges to have shifted over time. While social integration between Syrians and Iraqis has improved (including language and culture), economic integration has worsened due to KRI's economic decline.

“

It [integration] has completely changed. At the beginning, to cope with them [Iraqis] was difficult, they treated us like strangers, they looked down on us and on every Syrian here. The Kurdish language was different to ours, even the traditions and customs are different. Now, socially, we have become more integrated, but the main challenge facing us now is the financial situation and lack of employment opportunities, as well as low wages for workers...¹²⁹

Rather than regarding local integration as a linear process, evidence illustrates that it is a dynamic process in which the host community's capacity to support integration is vulnerable to external shocks. Although both Syrians and Iraqis reported improvements in social integration, job competition has become a new source of tension.

4.2.4. Limitations on legal integration

There is currently no legal pathway offered to Syrian refugees to obtain Iraqi citizenship (more on legislation that affect Syrians is discussed in Chapter 1, Box 1). In FGDs, all Syrian refugees except one reported that they did not think they would get Iraqi nationality. Perceived barriers included the political situation, the high number of refugees in Iraq, and Iraqis refusing to integrate Syrians into their community. One respondent also mentioned that Syrian refugees that were in Iraq since 2004 did not get nationality.¹³⁰

“

We are part of this community to some extent but we don't expect to get nationality at all...this is due to the current political situation in Iraq and in the region.¹³¹

The lack of access to citizenship have made Syrian refugees feel to be second-class citizens in Iraq. Also, Syrians express that they face restrictions for working in the public sector, starting businesses and owning property. According to FGDs, the lack of right to purchase land or property in KRI was a particularly significant barrier.

“

We don't expect the same level of access and living standards as Iraqis as they live in their own land. They own assets and properties so they don't have to work for others [in order to] pay for rent.¹³²

127 Snow, A., (2018), Kurdistan Region's Debt Crisis Threatens Iraq's Economy: A Bankrupt Regional Government Will Slow Growth, Discourage Investors as Baghdad Disavows KRG Debt. United States Institute of Peace, May 2018.

128 Summer, F and Joseph, J., (2018), The paradox of the Iraqi Kurdish referendum on independence: contradictions and hopes for economic prosperity, British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies, Volume 45, 2018 - Issue 4: The Kurdish Case in the Middle East and Beyond: An interdisciplinary approach.

129 Life story: Syrian refugee, male, Dahuk city. Another FGD participant added that "at first we could not speak in their dialect but now we can and [we are also accustomed to] their habits".

130 As a result of the Qamishli uprising in 2004, Syrian refugees fled to KRI residing in the Moqebleh refugee camp near Dahuk city. Source: Erlich, R., (2011), Syrian Kurds Have Long Memories.

131 FGD: Syrian refugee, female, Dahuk city.

132 FGD: Syrian refugee, male, Dahuk city.



Citizens have salaries provided by the government and own lands, unlike us [as we] have to work hard to ensure housing [e.g. rent] and basic needs [are met].¹³³

Box 3: Legal requirements for Iraqi citizenship

According to Article 3 of the Iraqi Nationality Law No. 26 of 2006, Iraqi nationality is transmitted by one's parents.¹³⁴ For a child of an Iraqi and Syrian refugee couple, there is an opportunity for the Syrian to become an Iraqi citizen given the person must have:

- i. Arrived in Iraq by an official method (including a registered refugee), and
- ii. Stayed in Iraq for at least five years.
- iii. At least three official residency visas (for Gol, not just KRI) during their time of stay in Iraq.

For a child of an Iraqi and Syrian couple with their marriage contract formalised and registered in Iraq, the child of that marriage is eligible for an Iraqi national ID (even if the Syrian parent does not have a civil or national ID) as per the Iraq Nationality Law 2016.

Box 4: The Property for Foreigners Law

The process to purchase property for foreigners is a complicated and expensive process, if possible altogether for Syrian refugees. The Property for Foreigners Law (82) of 1961 states that foreigners within Iraq are treated the same way legally, as Iraqis are treated within the foreigner's country. However, there are further conditions upon any foreigner buying property in Iraq. The foreigner must meet the following criteria: (i) have stayed in Iraq at least seven years; (ii) the Gol has no security concern with the person; (iii) the property to be purchased is more than 30 km from any Iraqi border; (iv) the property has to be 'tapu' (officially registered by the Directorate of Tapu); (v) no more than one property can be purchased; and (vi) the purchase must be approved by the Ministry of Finance through a court process.¹³⁵

Despite the role of a shared Kurdish identity in facilitating the host population's hospitality to refugees, this suggests that legal barriers continue to impact Syrian refugees' potential for full integration.

¹³³ FGD: Syrian refugee, female, Dahuk city.

¹³⁴ According to Article 3, a person shall be considered Iraqi if: (i) he/ she is born to an Iraqi father or an Iraqi mother; (ii) he/ she is born in Iraq to unknown parents. A foundling found in Iraq shall, in the absence of proof to the contrary, be considered to have been born therein.

¹³⁵ RTI International (2005), Land Registration and Property Rights in Iraq.

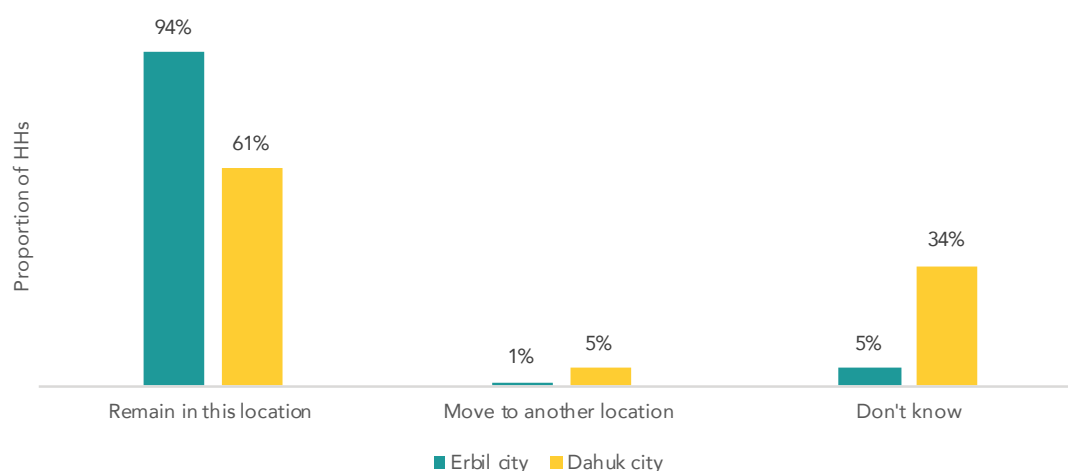
4.3. DECISION-MAKING AND INTENTIONS

To understand Syrian refugees' decision-making and intentions, this section explores intentions of assessed households. It also explores factors influencing their decisions to stay in the current location, and conditions that would trigger return or onward migration. Findings suggest that 78% of assessed refugee households intend to stay in their current location in the short term (three months following data collection), and a considerable proportion of 36% also wanted to stay in Iraq in the long term. However, given the lack of economic and political stability in Iraq, 25% of Syrian refugee households reported considering the possibility of returning to Syria one day and 32% reported considering moving elsewhere in Iraq if conditions at their current locations deteriorated. Further details on these numbers are provided below.

4.3.1. Intention for the next three months

As shown in Figure 11, 78% of Syrian refugee households wished to remain in the current location in the next three months following data collection.¹³⁶ Only 3% (six households) intended to move to another location in the three months following data collection. Of the 3% that want to move to another location, responses were equally distributed between returning to Syria, moving to another community in Iraq, and moving to another country outside of Iraq/Syria. The remaining 19% did not know where they wish to be in the next three months, including 34% (35) of assessed refugee households in Dahuk city and 5% (5) of refugees in Erbil city. Due to the security or economic instability in Syria and Iraq, households may only be able to make short-term decisions and do not always plan far ahead.

Figure 11: Reported household intended location in three months following data collection (Syrian refugees only)

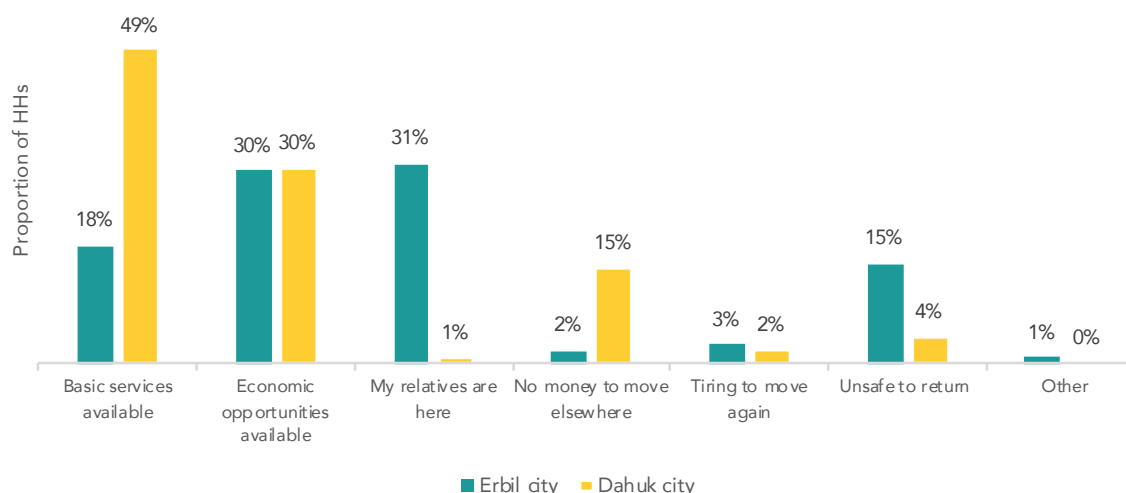


4.3.2. Factors influencing decisions to stay in current location

In household surveys, Syrian refugees in Dahuk city reported that the main reasons for staying in their current location were due to the availability of basic services (49%), availability of economic opportunities (30%), and the lack of money to move elsewhere (15%, see Figure 12). In Erbil city, main reasons were because of relatives close by (31%), availability of economic opportunities (30%), and availability of basic services (18%).

¹³⁶ From time of data collection in August 2018.

Figure 12: Conditions that caused households to stay in their current location
(Syrian refugees only, select one option)



4.3.3. Factors influencing potential to return or move elsewhere

I. Conditions for return

The survey found that as a short-term solution, only 1% of assessed refugee households considered returning to Syria. FGDs respondents perceived that conditions for return were not met.



The real home is where you feel safe and live a decent life and [as] these are missing in Syria so we do not want to go back...¹³⁷

FGD participants reported a number of factors that were needed in order for them to consider return. Conditions cited included safety and security, access to basic services (e.g. healthcare, water and electricity), employment, education opportunities and if military conscription was called off. For a few respondents, family unity would also be an important factor. One respondent who mentioned:



If many family members or relatives go back that will be [an influencing] factor for us to go back too.¹³⁸

Findings illustrate mixed perceptions on the significance of humanitarian assistance in influencing households' decisions on whether to return to Syria. Some respondent mentioned that “assistance was very limited” in Syria or were only available to “people who have contacts with the parties”.¹³⁹ In FGDs, a majority of participants mentioned that the level of humanitarian assistance was not a factor in their decision on whether to return. Respondents in one FGD mentioned that although current assistance in Syria is “not enough to make us return”, they would consider returning if assistance was perceived to be adequate. The main reason this was that they experienced feelings of “alienation at the place of displacement”.¹⁴⁰

137 FGD: Syrian refugee, male, Dahuk city.

138 FGD: Syrian refugee, male, Erbil city.

139 FGD: Syrian refugee, female, Erbil city.

140 FGD: Syrian refugee, male, Dahuk city.

II. Conditions for moving elsewhere

Findings were similar between Erbil and Dahuk city regarding factors influencing potential onward movement. In both locations, Syrian refugee households reported that they would leave if the current location became unsafe (39%), if they had a job elsewhere (33%) or if basic services became unavailable (14%).¹⁴¹ FGDs with Syrian refugees also found that decisions on whether to stay or move were largely dependent on changes in safety, economic opportunities and availability of basic services in Iraq and Syria.

“

In case our access to the basic services decreased we will go back to our country as at least it is our homeland and we own houses and we don't have to pay rent.¹⁴²

“

If we lose our job here and can't find alternative [jobs] we will move from here to another place [in Iraq].¹⁴³

“

I expect a lot people to return due to the current circumstances...[the] lack of jobs and high rent led many people to return.¹⁴⁴

Findings therefore suggest that decisions were made by weighing a combination of factors, depending on the household situation (e.g. depleting savings) and external environment. Refugees had limited options available to them when selecting their preferred location, and were required to be adaptable to the situation.

III. Demographic groups and migratory preferences

Similar to previous findings on decisions to return,¹⁴⁵ FGD participants reported that migratory decisions were made jointly with all members of the household, or by the head of household. Although FGD participants reported that decisions were discussed within the household and everyone agreed with the decision, findings suggest that different groups had different considerations or priorities, as shown below. For example, participants in one FGD mentioned that factors were weighed based on the economic and political implications of each member:

“

The decisions were made with every member of the household. All the ideas, such as livelihoods and the political implications for each member (e.g. whether he was wanted [by the army] or not) was shared among the family. The opinions differed between household members depending on their aspirations in work, education or travel; influencing their desire of whether to stay in Iraq.¹⁴⁶

Head of household: In one male and one female FGD, participants perceived that although decisions were made jointly, the head of household or 'breadwinner' had the main weight or responsibility over the decision.

141 One option only.

142 FGD: Syrian refugee, male, Dahuk city.

143 FGD: Syrian refugee, female, Dahuk city.

144 FGD: Syrian refugee, female, Dahuk city.

145 Samuel Hall (2018), Syria Spontaneous Returns. IMPACT Initiatives (2018), Picking up the Pieces - Realities of Return and Reintegration in North-east Syria.

146 FGD: Syrian refugee, female, Erbil city.

“

[The decision on whether to stay, return or migrate elsewhere was] a joint decision between the household and the family members, and mainly the head of household because he is responsible for meeting the household's basic needs.¹⁴⁷

FGD findings also suggest that male participants were more likely to mention economic factors compared to female participants. As head of households (89% of head of household survey respondents were male) were perceived to be responsible for their family's basic needs, it can be suggested that access to economic opportunities was an important factor that influenced their decision.

“

If the employment opportunities decreased here, I will move to another place in Iraq.¹⁴⁸

“

[Homesickness] is not important to me, because if I returned for the sake of family reunion and ended up with no jobs, family reunification would do no good to me.¹⁴⁹

As it is common (among Syrian families) to expect male adults to provide for the family, employment could constitute a sense of identity or source of dignity for male refugees, influencing their decision on whether to migrate in order to access better economic opportunities.

Parents: In two FGDs, participants mentioned the desire to go to Europe as they perceived better opportunities for their children there compared to Iraq or Syria. Respondents reported that Syria was not an ideal environment to raise their children.

“

The most important thing is to get education opportunities for our children. We prefer to move to Europe which is the best solution to secure our children's future especially after we lost hope of finding stability in Syria.¹⁵⁰

“

Yes it's [homesickness/nostalgia] very important for us and this is why we want to return the most, but when we remember the insecurity and the current situation in our country we feel despair about the idea of raising our kids in our hometown.¹⁵¹

Youth: Two FGD participants highlighted that their children did not want to return as they were raised in and had adjusted to life in Iraq. Similar to previous studies, this suggests that children might be more adaptable to the new environment and have less desire to return compared to adults or elderly. Participants from three FGDs also mentioned that youth were not able to return due to the risk of arrest and forced conscription.

147 FGD: Syrian refugee, male, Dahuk city

148 FGD: Syrian refugee, male, Dahuk city

149 FGD: Syrian refugee, male, Dahuk city.

150 FGD: Syrian refugee, male, Erbil city.

151 FGD: Syrian refugee, female, Dahuk city.

“

We all agree that if Syria becomes safe as it was before [the conflict] then we will return, but kids who were born and raised here don't want to return because they are used to the kind of life [here].¹⁵²

“

It is easier for children to integrate as they can learn the language faster than us and they will play with [Iraqi] children, it doesn't matter who they play with.¹⁵³

Elderly: In contrast to children, FGD participants suggest that the elderly were more likely to return to Syria. Reasons provided included homesickness and absence of a fear of forced conscription.

“

Few families will return to Syria, most of them are elderly people or those who have contacts to protect them from forced conscription, or who have financial capability to open small businesses to live with dignity.¹⁵⁴

“

Elderly people find it hardest to cope because of homesickness for their own land and of the people back in their community of origin.¹⁵⁵

4.3.4. Long-term preferred durable solution

In the latest UNHCR regional intention survey assessing registered Syrian refugees across the Middle East, 76% reported wanting to return to Syria one day (the average for refugees in Egypt, Lebanon, Jordan and Iraq).¹⁵⁶ In contrast, surveys in this study found that only **25%** of assessed Syrian refugee households in Erbil city and Dahuk city wanted to return to Syria one day. Surveys also found that a larger proportion of assessed Syrian refugee households reported wishing to **stay in Iraq (37%) or move somewhere outside of Iraq/Syria (32%)** in the long term.¹⁵⁷

To better understand preferences, data was disaggregated by city of displacement, years of displacement, lacking access to income-generating opportunities, having lost their property in Syria and area/governorate of origin.

City of displacement: When disaggregated by cities of displacement as shown in Figure 13, surveys found similar proportions of refugee households in Erbil city (24%) and Dahuk city (26%) that wished to return to Syria one day. There was a more distinct difference in which more refugee households in Erbil city (50%) wished to go to a third country, compared to refugee households in Dahuk city (15%).¹⁵⁸ In comparison, more refugee households in Dahuk city (50%) wished to integrate in Iraq compared to Erbil city (25%). A higher proportion of refugee households in Dahuk city that had opted for local integration might imply that they have been better able to integrate in KRI (e.g. due to greater similarities in dialects spoken by Syrian Kurds in Dahuk compared to Erbil).

152 FGD: Syrian refugee, female, Dahuk city.

153 Life story: Syrian refugee, male, Erbil city.

154 FGD: Syrian refugee, female, Erbil city.

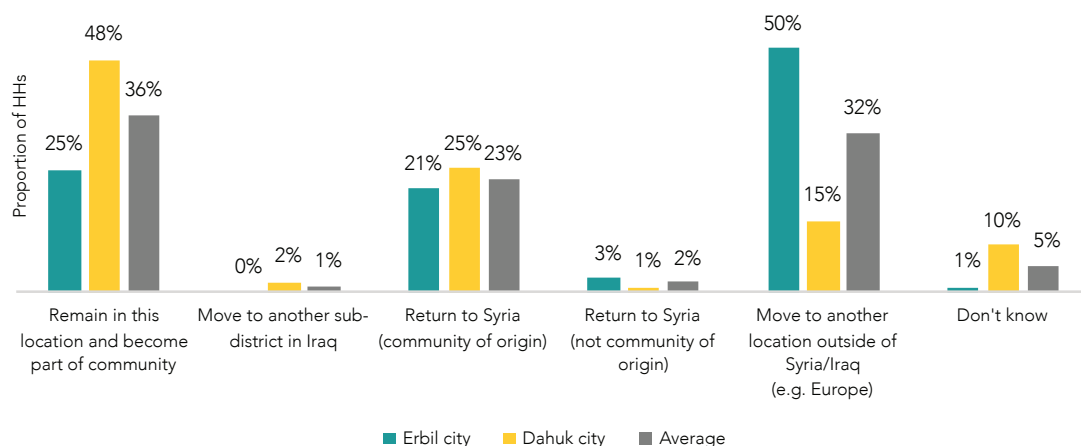
155 Life story: Syrian refugee, male, Dahuk city.

156 UNHCR (2018), Fourth Regional Survey on Syrian refugees' perceptions and intentions on return to Syria (RPIS) in Egypt, Iraq, Jordan and Lebanon, July 2018. The survey adopted random representative sampling of the overall population of Syrian refugees registered in Egypt, Iraq, Jordan and Lebanon; interviewing 4,769 refugees. No percentages are available on the proportion of Syrian refugees wishing to integrate locally or return for each of the countries of asylum.

157 "Stay in Iraq" (77) is an aggregate of households who wanted to stay in their current community in Iraq and respondents who wanted to move elsewhere in Iraq. "Return to Syria" (52) is an aggregate of households who want to return to their community of origin or elsewhere in Syria.

158 According to a KI, there are Syrian refugees in both Erbil and Dahuk registered with UNHCR that are on the waiting list for resettlement.

Figure 13: Long-term durable solution if conditions are favourable
(Syrian refugees, select one option)



Years of displacement: When broken down according to the number of years of displacement, household surveys suggest a trend in which the longer the assessed households have been displaced in Iraq, the more likely they prefer to stay in Iraq and become part of the community. 25% (9 of 35) refugee households that were displaced for less than four years, compared to 40% (67 of 167) refugee households that have been displaced for more than four years **wished to stay in Iraq**. Also, 48% (17 of 35) refugee households that were displaced less than four years, compared to 29% (48 of 167) refugee households that have been displaced for more than four years wished to **move outside of the Middle East region**.¹⁵⁹ The household survey findings align with FGDs as some participants mentioned that the protracted situation of the conflict led them to prefer staying in Iraq rather than returning to Syria as they had started building their lives in Iraq.

“

At the beginning we were planning to stay for a while until it was safe in Syria, but after all [these] years we will stay here as long as it is safe.¹⁶⁰

“

We want to stay here forever as we have projects [here] and we consider ourselves a part of this community as we are Kurdish.¹⁶¹

According to Syrian participants of FGDs, there were strong contrasts in levels of local integration. The diversity of views might be explained by personal preferences, as well as demographic factors such as education and income that might impact their ability to integrate.

“

We are not planning to stay in Iraq, because we don't feel that we can settle in a place where we are treated like strangers.¹⁶²

¹⁵⁹ Results are indicative and further disaggregation by number of years in displacement is not possible due to limited sample size. Out of the 207 assessed Syrian refugee households, 35 (17%) households have been displaced in Iraq for less than four years, and 167 (81%) have been displaced in Iraq for more than four years. “Stay in Iraq” is an aggregate of households who reported wanting to stay in their current location and households who wished to move elsewhere in Iraq. “Return to Syria” is an aggregate of households who reported wanting to return to their community of origin or elsewhere in Syria.

¹⁶⁰ FGD: Syrian refugee, female, Dahuk city.

¹⁶¹ FGD: Syrian refugee, male, Erbil city.

¹⁶² FGD: Syrian refugee, female, Dahuk city.



[Integration] depends on the income sources one can access as there are refugees who live richer and wealthier life than the Iraqi themselves.¹⁶³

Access to income-generating opportunities: When broken down on lacking access to income-generating opportunities there were variations in their preferred durable solutions. Of the refugee households (82) in Erbil and Dahuk city that reported having no access to income-generating opportunities, their preferred long-term durable solution were mixed: 34% of households wished to integrate in Iraq, 18% wished to return to Syria, 44% wished to move to a third country and 4% did not know.

Loss of property in Syria: Results were also mixed for those having lost their property in Syria. Of the refugee households (82¹⁶⁴) in Erbil city and Dahuk city that reported losing their property in Syria (due to damage or displacement), the preferred durable solutions were also mixed: 30% wished to integrate in Syria, 21% wished to return to Syria, 44% wished to move to a third country and 5% did not know.

Area/governorate of origin: Based on area/governorate of origin, the major differences were on wanting to move to a third country. Of the refugee households that originated from Hasakeh governorate (66) and Aleppo governorate (131), more households originating from Aleppo (45%) than Hasakeh (25%) reported wanting to move to a third country. Due to the limited sample size, no statistically significant difference can be observed which would require a larger sample size.

4.3.5. Iraqi attitudes towards Syrians' long-term local integration

Similar to FGDs with Syrian refugees, which found mixed opinions on whether they would like to integrate locally in Iraq, KIIs and FGDs with Iraqis also suggest mixed attitudes regarding the potential prospect of Syrians' long-term integration.



We can say that Syrian refugees are now part of this community, and the extent of integration depends on [whether] the individual can cope with [the] new culture and community or not...our country is always open for them, and at the end the decision [on whether] to stay or return is up to them.¹⁶⁵



They are already integrated with the community because they share the same language and culture as the host community and I guess they will stay here for the long term...¹⁶⁶



We really wish for them to return to their own country [as] we can't deal with them for a long time.¹⁶⁷

While some were open to Syrians integrating into the community, there were also signs of declining willingness to host refugees due to the protracted nature of displacement and its impact on the local economy.

¹⁶³ FGD: Syrian refugee, female, Dahuk city.

¹⁶⁴ By coincidence, this number is the same as the number of 82 refugee households who report lacking access to income-generating opportunities. See previous paragraph.

¹⁶⁵ KII: Iraqi, businessman, Dahuk city

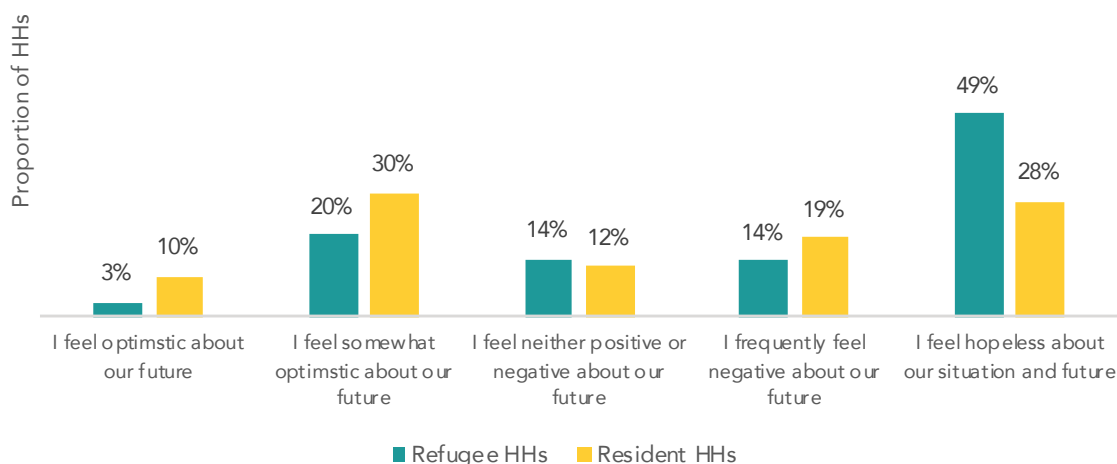
¹⁶⁶ KII: Iraqi, teacher, Dahuk city.

¹⁶⁷ FGD: Iraqi resident, female, Erbil city.

4.3.6. Hopefulness and prospects for the future

The household survey found that 63% of Syrian refugee households and 47% of Iraqi resident households reported feeling “hopeless” or “frequently” felt “negative” about their situation and future.

Figure 14: Proportion of households feeling hopeful



These figures have important implications on the need for durable solutions for both displaced and host communities beyond only meeting short-term humanitarian needs. Policy responses would need to be forward-looking in anticipating the shifts in integration challenges over time, and to mitigate the impact of prolonged displacement to refugees and the host population. As Iraq enters a new phase of the reconstructing and rebuilding of the country, it is a timely opportunity to engage with Syrian refugees on their role in the future of Iraq. Further support would be needed from the international community, including greater collaboration between humanitarian organisations with peacebuilding and development communities, to develop comprehensive and coordinated responses to protracted displacement.

ANBAR

Due to limited access, all Iraqi and Syrian refugee KIs were selected using purposive sampling through partner NGOs and through snowball sampling using IMPACT’s networks; and all KIs were conducted through remote data collection. According to KIs, Anbar is a tribal and conservative area, where a majority of the Syrians are Arab Sunni Muslims from Deir ez-Zor governorate, Syria. The current Syrian population in Anbar could be divided into different categories:¹⁶⁸

- i. Syrians who came to Iraq prior to the Syrian conflict, possessing Iraqi citizenship and have Iraqi relatives;
- ii. Syrians that married Iraqis (Syrian men who married Iraqi women do not get Iraqi citizenship); and
- iii. Syrian refugees that came to Iraq during the Syrian crisis and did not return to Syria when ISIL entered Iraq.

As of October 2018, it was estimated that there are at least 300 Syrian refugee families living in host communities in Anbar.¹⁶⁹ They had left the camp during ISIL’s occupation to the towns near Qaim, Obaide, Rawa and Ana, where they currently reside. The same areas also hold approximately 500 Syrian families who came to Anbar before the Syrian conflict. Given the areas are extremely remote and insecure, with ongoing active military operations on the border with Qaim and pockets of ISIL-

¹⁶⁸ KI: Iraqi, Qaim city.

¹⁶⁹ Local Muktar (official tribal representative of the Obaide council) and a Syrian leader in Anbar.

held territories; there is a limited number of Syrian refugees present. In Ramadi and Fallujah, there are secondarily displaced Syrians residing in IDP camps including Kilo 18, Habaniya Tourist City (HTC) Camp, Bzebz and Amirte Al Fallujah.¹⁷⁰

To accommodate the influx of Syrian refugees in Qaim, collective centres and refugee camps were opened in 2011. When ISIL entered Iraq in 2014, a majority of the refugees returned to Syria and some allegedly joined ISIL in Iraq. Camps were unofficially opened during periods of ISIL's occupation, until all were disbanded by ISIL in 2016. As of October 2018, there are no camps operational in Qaim.¹⁷¹

Qaim

In Qaim city, both Iraqi and Syrian respondents reported limited tension between Syrians and Iraqis as there were few Syrians, and the language and culture was similar. KIs reported that Syrian refugees were seen as "relatives", "connected by blood" and "belonged to the same tribe" as Iraqis in Qaim.¹⁷² A Syrian KI in Qaim city mentioned that:

“

I am from a border area between Syria and Iraq, and there were many people [Iraqis] with roots that go back to Syria, and even before the war, we have relatives and kin here.¹⁷³

“

We have roots in Syria and here in Iraq as well, and here it feels like home anyway.¹⁷⁴

Trust was a significant factor in facilitating integration, possibly due to the security context including ISIL's presence in the area. Some Iraqi respondents reported the lack of trust with Syrians, in which kinship or connections was an important element that facilitated the **economic integration** of Syrians. One respondent reported that:

“

Iraqis and refugees worked together and they hired them because of the blood connection and tribal connection, as they believe that they are from the same tribe but borders got in between them.¹⁷⁵

“

...most people [Iraqis] do not trust them [Syrian refugees] ... we don't know the family and here we must know the family and all the things in order to give work to someone....¹⁷⁶

Similar to findings from KRI, some Iraqi respondents mentioned that they preferred to work with Syrians because of their skills, work experience, as well as their willingness to learn and work long hours. However, Syrians' **difficulty in securing work permits** was a barrier in hiring Syrians compared to Iraqi IDPs and residents. According to a Syrian KI, work permit applicants were required to have their passports stamped in Syria in order to proceed with the process - but this was not possible due to the security conditions in Syria and their inability to return.

170 NGO KI, October 2018.

171 NGO KI, October 2018.

172 KIs: Syrian refugees and Iraqi residents, male, Qaim city.

173 KI: Syrian refugee, male, Qaim city.

174 KI: Syrian refugee, male, Qaim city.

175 KI: Iraqi resident, male, Qaim city.

176 KI: Iraqi resident, male, Qaim city.

According to KIs, Syrian refugees without security clearance from Gol were **restricted from freely moving to other parts of Iraq**. According to Syrian KIs, the population in Qaim was decreasing as Iraqi residents were moving to other governorates to seek better living standards and economic opportunities. However, Syrian refugees in Qaim city reported having to stay in their current location due to restrictions in moving to other Iraqi cities (e.g. Baghdad) that have better economic opportunities. An Iraqi KI also mentioned that Syrians were not allowed to open businesses due to monitoring from the local authorities and security forces.

One Syrian KI mentioned that Syrian **women were vulnerable to sexual harassment** when working as housekeepers and at restaurants. When refugees were not paid for their work, it was reportedly difficult for them to go to the police to report their case if they did not know anyone. Syrian refugees also reported having to take up high-risk and socially degrading jobs, and at times go into debt, in order to meet basic needs.

Additionally, **access to housing was a challenge**. As some Syrian refugees were living in houses owned but vacated by Iraqi IDPs, they had to move to a new place when Iraqi IDPs returned. This could mean having to integrate into a new community in a new neighbourhood. A Syrian reported that refugees had to “move to new places and get to know new people” which contributed to “lowering the level of integration in the community”.¹⁷⁷

For the displaced and host communities alike, KIs reported facing **challenges in accessing basic services**, such as electricity and water. Households reportedly have to purchase electricity from private generators which were very expensive. Another KI mentioned that Syrian refugees’ **ability to integrate has shifted over time**. He reported being able to access jobs and generate income for the household before ISIL came. However, they are facing challenges due to increased employment restrictions and declining levels of NGO assistance.

Similar to KRI, Syrian refugees in Qaim city perceived integration to require equal rights as Iraqi citizens - but refugees did not expect to get Iraqi nationality. The lack of prospect in getting citizenship was a barrier for local integration in the long term:

“

Integration means equality of rights and duties. You must first get Iraqi nationality to be [a] part of this community. I don't think I will be able to get nationality because there is no law in Iraq that allow refugees to get nationality. I don't expect to have the same right because we don't have Iraqi documents... At the beginning I was planning to stay here in the long run, but after I came to know that I won't be able to get nationality or any other documents, I am planning to stay here temporarily.¹⁷⁸

“

[Integration means] to have the same right as any other Iraqi resident and have the ability to work. I don't expect to get nationality due the restrictions that the government imposes over refugees...we want to go back to Syria because we don't have any rights here, and we have properties in Syria. I was planning to stay here because we were able to work but now we can't.¹⁷⁹

Overall, findings suggest that although there were socio-cultural similarities including kinship and tribal relations between Syrian refugees and Iraqis in Anbar, legal restrictions were the main barrier to local integration including restrictions posed on the freedom of movement difficulties in accessing employment opportunities. Additionally, the economic decline in Anbar and the return of IDPs have also made local integration more challenging for Syrian refugees in Qaim city.

177 KI: Syrian refugee, male, Qaim city.

178 KI: Syrian refugee, male, Qaim city.

179 KI: Syrian refugee, male, Qaim city.

5. CONCLUSION

Since the start of the Syrian conflict, the Government of Iraq and Kurdistan Regional Government have shown hospitality and positive efforts in accommodating the influx of Syrian refugees despite severe domestic challenges. However, this does not mean that refugees in Iraq have a clear and predictable pathway to local integration as a durable solution. Progressing towards local integration as a durable solution is a complex and multi-layered process that includes not only refugees' level of access to material, physical and legal safety, but also actual and perceived differences in access when comparing host and displaced population. Furthermore, there are socio-cultural, economic and legal factors at play that enable or constrain the potential for local integration. These factors also impact people's decision making, which may also change over time, towards pursuing local integration as their preferred durable solution.

ACCESS - AND PERCEPTIONS OF EQUAL ACCESS - TO LEGAL, MATERIAL AND PHYSICAL SAFETY

In Dahuk and Erbil city, the study has assessed access - and perceptions of equal access - to legal, material and physical safety based on the IASC indicators for durable solutions. Additionally, it looked at access to humanitarian assistance. The findings reveal that refugee and resident households reported low access to (i) regular participation in public affairs (15% refugees - 19% residents), (ii) humanitarian assistance (11% refugees - 17% residents) and (iii) justice mechanisms (47% refugees - 56% residents). On the assessed durable solutions criteria, **access to employment and livelihood opportunities presented the largest gap of 19% between Syrian refugees (59%) and Iraqi residents (78%)**. This was followed by a large gap of 17% on access to and replacement of personal and other documentation (78% refugees - 94% residents), as refugees reported difficulties in obtaining and renewing residence permits, providing proof of housing, obtaining a sponsor, having a UNHCR card and gaining security approval.

When considering both the levels of access and perceptions of access, **findings reveal that community tensions might increase in regard to accessing employment and livelihood opportunities, humanitarian assistance and basic goods and services**. Both refugees and residents were facing access challenges, but on top of that the perceptions of unequal access were also particularly high. On access to income-generating opportunities, 74% refugees and 45% residents perceived having unequal access. There were 36% refugees and 25% residents who perceived having unequal access to humanitarian assistance. For accessing basic goods and services, the level of access was fairly good (83% refugees - 86% residents) but perceptions of unequal access were also moderately high with 22% refugees and 25% residents perceiving unequal access. In short, this shows that **currently access to income-generating opportunities is the most urgent constrain to local integration** as it impacts community relationships, increases tensions and affects the potential for local integration in the assessed locations. With the already poor access to humanitarian assistance, people similarly perceive a low and unequal distribution of assistance. Furthermore, if both the quantity and quality of service provision deteriorate then this may further constrain integration as people already perceive having unequal access.

Hence, in order for local integration to be a viable option for refugees, displacement-related needs should be met and gaps with host populations must be closed. Then, priority should be given to areas where both displaced and non-displaced people have poor access and face challenges. This would help reduce perceptions of unequal access, mitigate tensions and work towards improving social cohesion.

SOCIO-CULTURAL, ECONOMIC AND LEGAL BARRIERS AND OPPORTUNITIES

The study explored socio-cultural, economic and legal barriers and opportunities for local integration from the perspectives of Syrian refugees and Iraqi residents.

From the perspective of Syrian refugees, findings show that **integration challenges shifted from socio-cultural to economic barriers over the years**. Syrian Kurds were reportedly able to overcome initial socio-cultural barriers to integration, such as adapting to local traditions and learning the Kurdish dialect in KRI - the latter being especially difficult for Syrians in Erbil where the dialect was different. At times, it also included breaking social norms such as non-married young men sharing living spaces with other families in order to save rent. Presently, however, Syrian refugees expressed the most significant barriers to be **accessing economic opportunities**, which make their economic integration the most challenging. As a way of sustaining livelihoods, Syrians reported having to accept work with low wages, long working hours and be restricted to working in low-skilled sectors, as well as facing exploitation and harassment at the workplace. Syrian also reported that employers did not recognise qualifications from Syria. Meanwhile, **legal constraints** impacted the potential for local integration in the long term as there are no laws to guarantee long-term protection or to provide a legal pathway towards citizenship for refugees. This poses limitations to refugees' ability to attain full local integration, such as having the right to work in all sectors, rights to own property, freedom of movement across the country and political participation. This shows that despite Syrians' shared Kurdish identity with the host community in KRI, as well as shared kinship and tribal relations with Iraqis in Anbar, legal restrictions led refugees to feel as 'second-class citizens' in the host community. **The lack of access to Iraqi citizenship limits the extent to which Syrians could achieve local integration and poses important limitations on the long-term prospect and future of Syrian refugees in Iraq.**

From the perspective of Iraqi residents, attitudes towards the prospect of Syrian refugees' long-term integration were mixed. Iraqis expressed feeling responsible for the Syrians who they regarded as part of their own people who **share their identity and culture**. Also, Iraqi residents appreciated the contribution and positive impact of Syrian refugees to the **society and economy**. They reported benefitting from the talent, skills and experience of the Syrian workforce such as in opening or working in restaurants, shops, beauty centres, the construction sector, health clinics, etc. However, a major concern was the overall increase in **job competition with Syrians refugees and Iraqi IDPs**. On top of that, Iraqi residents expressed sentiments that their communities were no longer able to host Syrian refugees especially given the protracted nature of their displacement, the economic decline and influx of IDPs as a result of ISIL's advancement in 2014. Also, even prior to the conflict, job opportunities and the infrastructural capacity for public service provision (e.g. water, electricity) were inadequate in meeting the needs of residents; let alone the needs of additional refugees and IDPs. This shows that the potential of local integration of refugees in Iraq is considerably impacted by the external environment and the general conditions and capacity for hosting refugees.

REFUGEES' SHORT AND LONG-TERM DECISION MAKING

Access to legal, material and physical safety and socio-cultural, economic and legal barriers and opportunities have an impact on refugees' decision making and capacity to make plans for the future.

The findings show that **in the next three months, a majority (78%) of Syrian refugees intend to remain in their current location and very few (1%) intend to return to Syria**.¹⁸⁰ Refugees expressed the availability of basic services and economic opportunities and the presence of relatives in their current locations as primary reasons for wanting to stay. On top of that, Syrian refugees reported that **in Syria minimum conditions for return are not met** due to the lack of safety, basic services and economic opportunities, in addition to fear of forced conscription upon return.

180 2% intended to move elsewhere and 19% did not know what to do.

Whilst facing a protracted displacement situation, **a considerable proportion (19%) of refugee households (34% in Dahuk and 5% in Erbil city) reported not knowing where they would like to be in the next three months.** Households lacked future prospects and the ability to make long-term plans - as decisions would depend on any changes in the safety/security situation, economic opportunities and the availability of basic services in both Iraq and Syria. **The survey findings reveal that a significant proportion (63%) of the assessed Syrian refugee households reported “feeling hopeless” or “frequently negative” about their situation and future.** Findings also suggest that return or onward migration are likely to increase if the situation in Iraq worsens. This impacts the fragility of refugee households' current integration, in which a deteriorating economic and/or security situation at the place of displacement could push further displacement or premature return. This would increase people's protection concerns as conditions for voluntary return in safety and dignity in Syria are not in place.

In the long term, a majority (37%) of Syrian refugee households wish to integrate locally and become part of the community, 33% of households wished to resettle to a third country, and 25% of households wished to return to Syria.¹⁸¹ Despite their wish to integrate, almost all refugees in FGDs mentioned that they did not expect to be granted Iraqi nationality and that they did not - and would not - have the same rights as Iraqis. This again highlights that the absence of a clear legal pathway to long-term legal protection remains a significant barrier for Syrians to achieve full integration in Iraq.

THE REFUGEE SITUATION IN QAIM CITY, ANBAR

Due to limited access, all Iraqi and Syrian refugee KIs were selected using purposive sampling through partner NGOs and through snowball sampling and interviews were conducted through remote data collection. At least 300 Syrian refugee families were estimated to be living in host communities in Anbar, of whom a majority are Arab Sunni Muslims from Deir ez-Zor governorate (Syria). They had left camps during ISIL's occupation and moved to the towns near Qaim, Obaide, Rawa and Ana, where they currently remain.

Syrian refugees and Iraqis in Anbar **share socio-cultural similarities**, including kinship and tribal relations, however Syrian refugees faced multiple challenges and vulnerabilities that impacted their progress towards integration. Qaim city is a conservative community with ISIL presence still looming. Therefore, Syrian refugees faced limited trust from the host community given residents' suspicions of Syrian refugees being affiliated with ISIL. For this reason, KIs found trust to be an important factor in facilitating integration and having Iraqi relatives in Anbar was reportedly crucial for Syrians to find jobs. Other challenges in **accessing secure employment opportunities** included requiring stamped Syrian passports, security clearance procedures and exploitation at the work place (e.g. Syrian women facing sexual harassment when working as housekeepers and at restaurants). Syrian refugees also reported having to take up high-risk and socially degrading jobs, and at times go into debt to meet basic needs. In addition to facing challenges in accessing secure economic opportunities, refugees were also subject to security restrictions and were not able to move freely to other cities in Iraq to e.g. seek better access to economic opportunities and/or basic services. Additional challenges were faced by Syrian refugees living in houses owned but vacated by Iraqi IDPs as they had to find alternative housing arrangements as soon as Iraqi IDPs returned. This means that these people would have to start all over again in a new community. Finally, the **lack of prospect in getting Iraqi citizenship** was also reported as a barrier for local integration in the long term.

¹⁸¹ The remaining 5% did not know.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In order to uphold and protect the rights of refugees, while supporting Iraq in its current and future challenges, more attention and critical engagement from all relevant actors is needed to develop ways forward.

Authorities should

- Prepare for the accommodation of refugees who are likely to remain in Iraq by ensuring that national policies and plans take into account socio-cultural, economic and legal dimensions of integration;
- Remove legal barriers for refugees seeking registration or renewal of civil documentation; freedom of movement; housing, land, and property rights; establishing businesses; and accessing judicial mechanisms;
- Establish a clear and predictable pathway to the legal and long-term protection of refugees across Iraq reflecting provisions afforded to refugees and IDPs under Iraqi domestic and international law¹⁸² (e.g. enact and operationalise the National Policy on Displacement, the Refugee Law, and become party to the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol);
- Include Syrian refugees in Iraq's national agenda, policies and programmes to ensure access to and enjoyment of rights, e.g. by including refugees in existing national social support systems;¹⁸³
- Ensure that sufficient financial resources and foreign investments are allocated to addressing the needs of refugees (and others in need) and their long-term protection;
- Develop macro-economic policies targeted at benefitting both the host community and displaced populations, e.g. job-creation policies, investments in infrastructure for drinking water and electricity;
- Support the availability of both Kurdish and Arabic based curricula to ensure refugees have the language skills needed to build a life in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq or in Syria in the future;
- Facilitate expedited registration of NGOs and visas of humanitarian personnel (including refugee staff) in Iraq to allow organisations to meet critical gaps in the delivery of assistance in Anbar and across Iraq.¹⁸⁴

Humanitarian community should

- Support Iraq in addressing current and prospective issues through programmatic interventions as well as policy recommendations;
- Monitor and respond to protection concerns of Syrian refugees and promote the establishment and maintenance of principled and effective information-sharing systems across all relevant stakeholders;
- Coordinate effectively among all stakeholders to ensure that gaps between refugees, IDPs, and host community - in particular those related to accessing employment and livelihood opportunities - are closed in a principled and needs-based manner;
- Engage with local stakeholders, host and displaced communities at all stages (including design, implementation, and follow-up) of humanitarian, early recovery and development assistance to avoid duplication of efforts and ensure that conflict-sensitive approaches are adopted.

¹⁸² See also OHCHR (2018), Status of Ratification, interactive Dashboard – Iraq, <http://indicators.ohchr.org>

¹⁸³ See “Durable Solutions Strategy” (p.9) in UNHCR (2018), Iraq Regional Refugee Response Plan, 2018-19.

¹⁸⁴ See also DRC, IRC and NRC (2018), The Long Road Home, Achieving Durable Solutions to Displacement in Iraq - Lessons from Returns in Anbar (February 2018)

International community should

- Continue to recognise that present conditions throughout Syria are not conducive for voluntary, safe, and dignified repatriation and that returns should not be promoted;
- Ensure that resources for emergency humanitarian needs, including basic goods and services, remain at appropriate levels and are not terminated prematurely;
- Increase financial support to Iraq, support the rebuilding of the country's economy, society and infrastructures and ensure that social cohesion is appropriately taken into account with all provisions, including through the Humanitarian Response Plan, the Regional Refugee & Resilience Plan (3RP), and UN's Recovery and Resilience Programme;¹⁸⁵
- Invest in early recovery activities, particularly livelihoods, legal assistance, education, and peacebuilding and conflict resolution activities, including through the provision of direct funding to local civil society organisations;¹⁸⁶
- Support the authorities in the planning and provision of financial resources to assist in the local integration of refugees and IDPs, if based on their voluntary and informed choice;
- Increase resettlement opportunities to meet the needs of 10% of the Syrian refugee population in need of international protection, expand admission to third countries through complementary pathways¹⁸⁷ (if these provide a clear and predictable path to longer-term status for refugees) and remove barriers that restrict access.¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁵ UN Iraq (2018), Iraq Recovery and Resilience Programme (RRP), <http://uniraqrrp.org/>

¹⁸⁶ See also DRC, IRC and NRC (2018), The Long Road Home, Achieving Durable Solutions to Displacement in Iraq - Lessons from Returns in Anbar (February 2018)

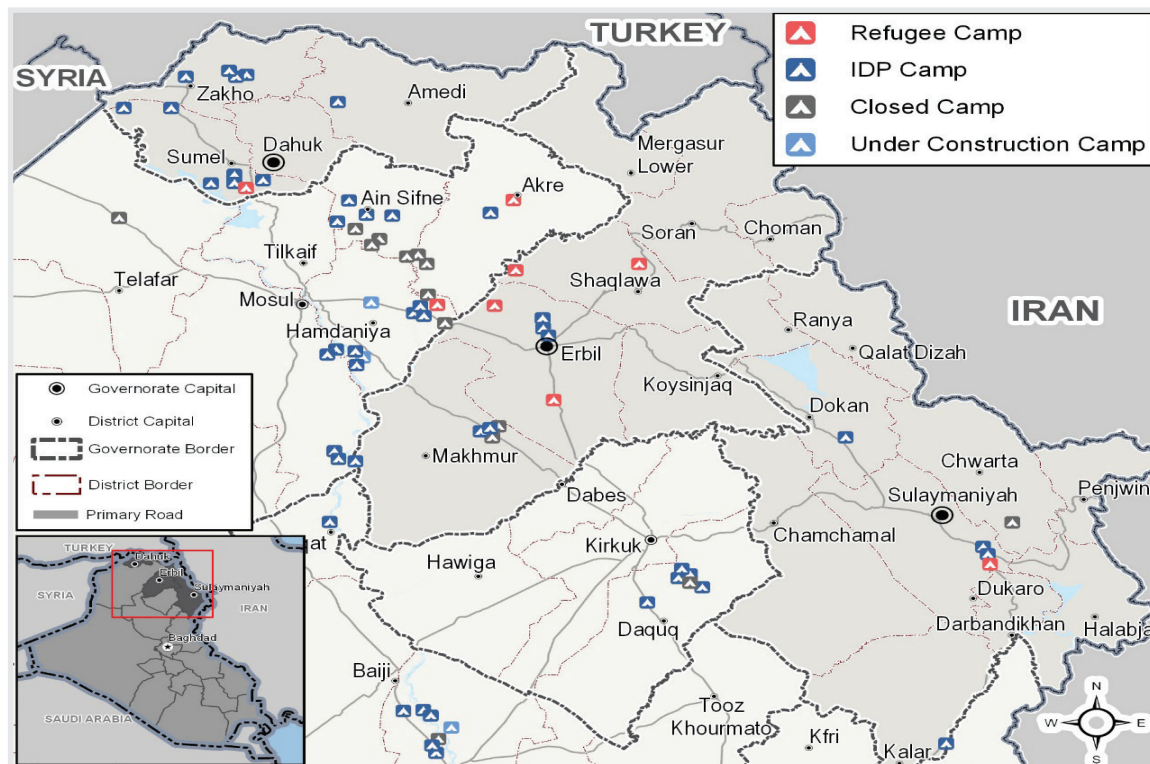
¹⁸⁷ Complementary pathways include extended family reunification and private or community sponsorship programmes that are additional to regular resettlement, including community-based programmes promoted through the Global Refugee Sponsorship Initiative (GRSI). Other potential complementary pathways are humanitarian visas, humanitarian corridors and other humanitarian admission programmes; educational opportunities for refugees through scholarships and student visas, including through partnerships between governments and academic institutions; and labour mobility opportunities for refugees, including through the identification of refugees with skills that are needed in third countries. See also UNHCR (2016), New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants, and UNHCR (2018), Proposed global compact on refugees (2 August 2018).

¹⁸⁸ See Durable Solutions Platform (2018), Access to Resettlement and Complementary Pathways for Syrian Refugees (June 2018).

ANNEXES

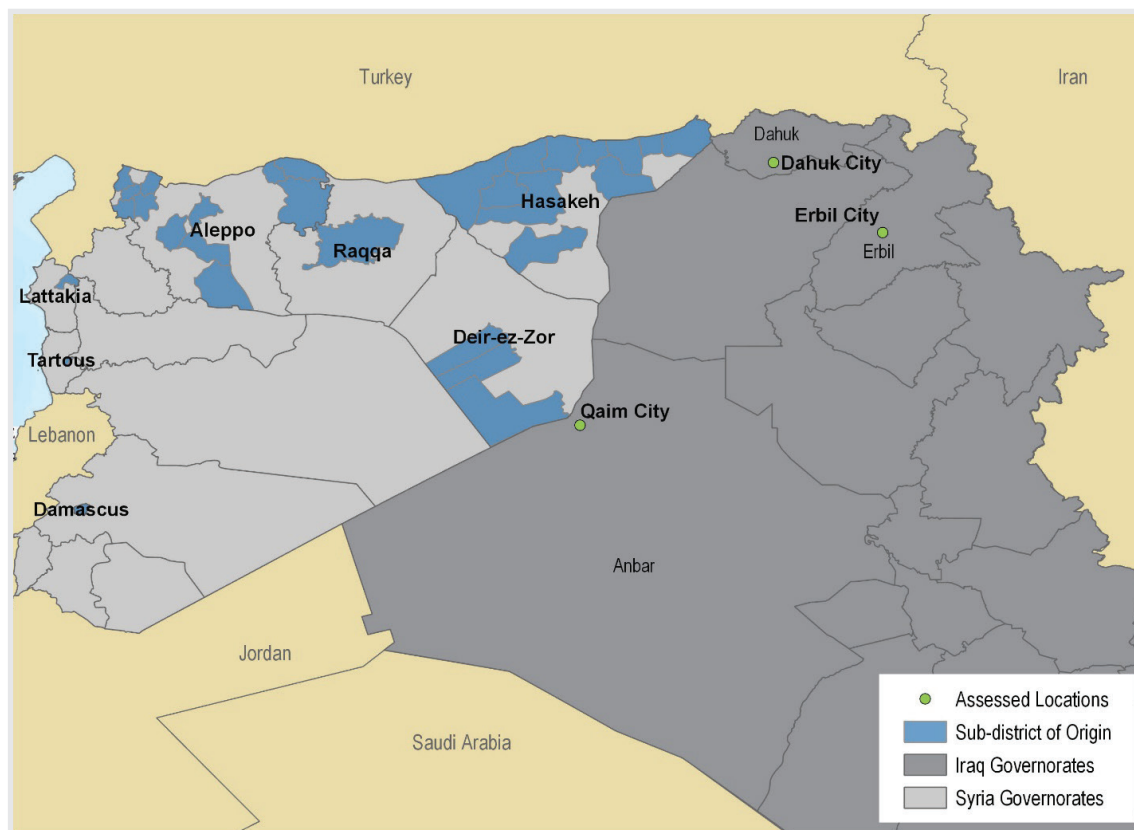
ANNEX 1. MAPS

Map 1: The Kurdistan Region of Iraq in the North of Iraq

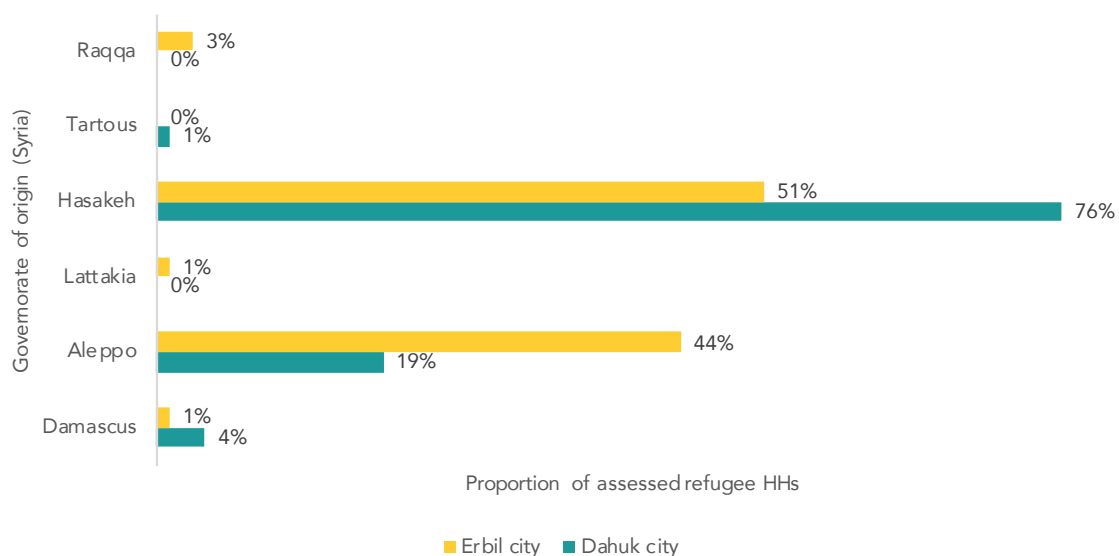


Map 2: Deir ez-Zor (Syria) and Anbar (Iraq) governorate



Map 3: Assessed locations, including sub-district of origin for assessed Syrian refugees

ANNEX 2. DEMOGRAPHIC DETAILS OF SURVEY RESPONDENTS

Figure 15: Survey respondents by governorate of origin

**Figure 16: Household survey respondents by length of displacement in Iraq
(Syrian refugees only)**

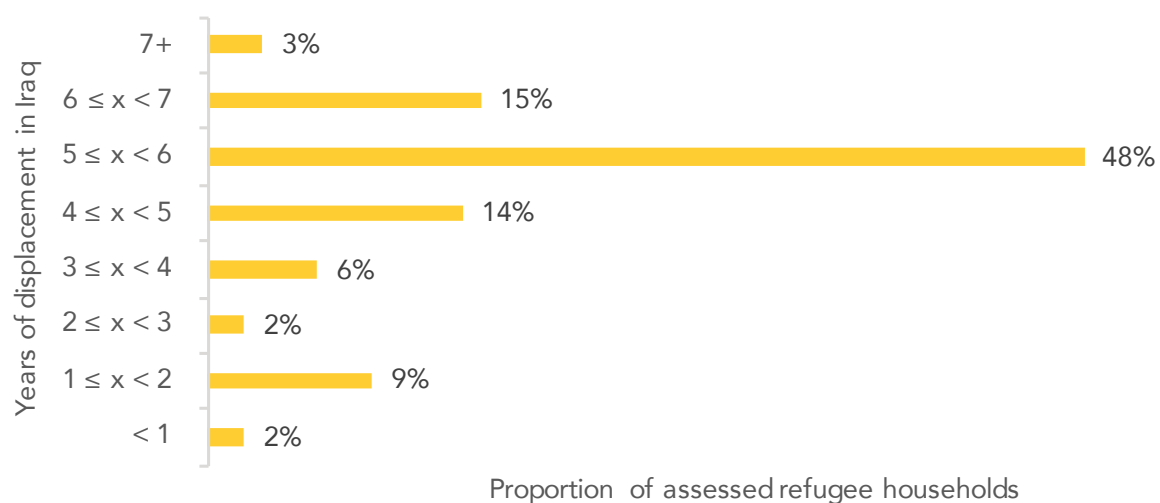


Figure 17: Household survey respondent by age and population group

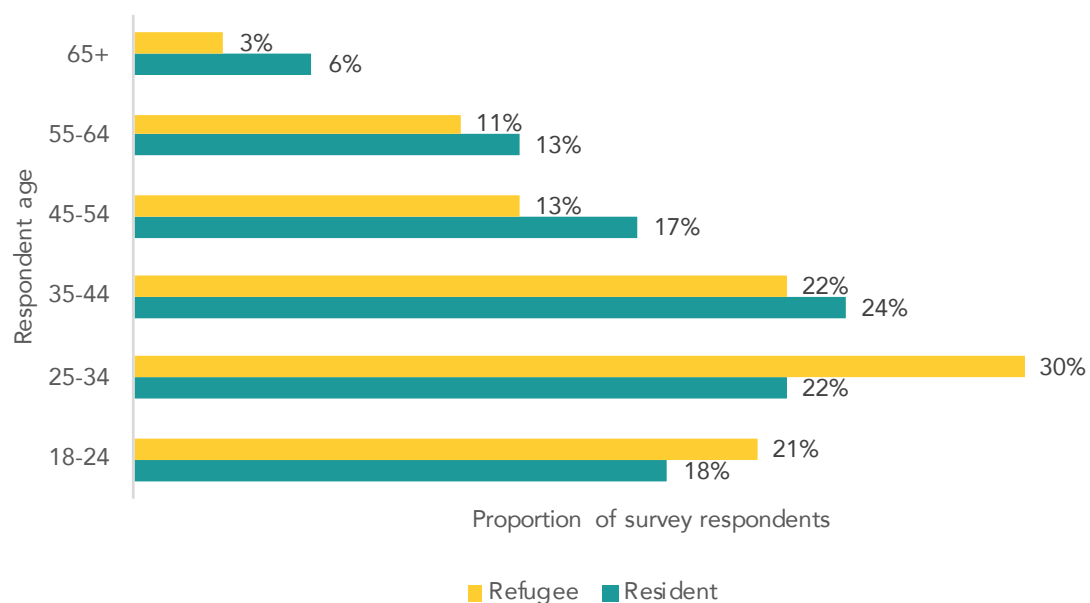


Table 4: Average household size of assessed households

	Erbil city	Dahuk city
Syrian refugee household	4.6	5.2
Iraqi resident household	6.6	7.6

ANNEX 3. IASC CRITERIA ON DURABLE SOLUTIONS

Table 5: Proportion of households reported having access and perceiving equal access, per sub-indicator

		% of assessed HHs		Statistically significant difference
		Refugee	Resident	
i. Long-term safety, security and freedom of movement	% reporting safe movement around neighbourhood in the past three months prior	93%	94%	X
	% reporting not being victim of safety/security incident in past three months prior to data collection, or since time of arrival to community	92%	78%	√
	Average of sub-indicators	93%	86%	-
	% perceiving equal safety/security compared to others in community	93%	96%	X
ii. Adequate standard of living, including at a minimum access to adequate food, water, housing, healthcare, and basic education	% reporting access to basic food in the past three months prior to data collection	88%	93%	X
	% reporting always having sufficient drinking water in the past one month prior to data collection	77%	65%	√
	% reporting access to basic housing in the past three months prior to data collection	93%	94%	X
	% reporting visiting a health facility (out of those reporting needing to see a doctor in the past three months prior to data collection)	89%	96%	X
	% reporting access to basic education (if applicable) in the past three months prior to data collection	89%	94%	X
	Average of sub-indicators	83%	86%	X
	% perceiving equal access compared to others in community (average of sub-indicators)	78%	75%	-
iii. Access to employment and livelihoods	% reporting access to income-generating opportunities	59%	78%	√
	% perceiving equal access compared to others in community	21%	33%	√
iv. Access to effective mechanisms for restore their HLP or provide compensation	% reporting losing property as a result of displacement and/or damage	38%	-	-

		% of assessed HHs		Statistically significant difference
		Refugee	Resident	
v. Access to and replacement of personal and other documentation	% reporting having birth certificates for all children	74%	93%	√
	% reporting having marriage certificate (if applicable)	80%	98%	√
	% reporting having a passport	30%	84%	√
	% reporting having a family booklet	81%	96%	√
	% reporting having KRI residence permit	91%	-	-
	Average of sub-indicators	66%	93%	-
vi. Voluntary reunification with family members separated during displacement	% reporting family separation during displacement	45%	-	-
vii. Participation in public affairs at all levels on an equal basis with the resident population	% participating in decision making bodies "regularly" or "sometimes"	7%	1%	√
viii. Effective remedies for displacement-related violations, including access to justice	% aware of legal and justice bodies	21%	16%	X
	% taking legal dispute to court (out of households that had a legal dispute in the current location) ¹⁸⁹	50%	64%	-
	% successfully resolved ¹⁹⁰	67%	86%	-
	% satisfied with experience ¹⁹¹	50%	57%	-
	Average of sub-indicators	47%	56%	-
Access to humanitarian assistance	% reporting access to humanitarian assistance	11%	17%	X
	% perceiving equal access compared to others in community	14%	49%	√

189 Smaller sample size, percentage expressed out of households that had a legal dispute in their current location. 6 of 12 (50%) Syrian refugee households and 7 of 11 (64%) Iraqi resident households reported taking their legal dispute to court.

190 Smaller sample size, percentage expressed out of households that had taken their legal dispute to court. 2 of 6 (33%) Syrian refugee households and 6 of 7 (86%) Iraqi resident households reported their legal dispute to be successfully resolved.

191 Smaller sample size, percentage expressed out of households that had taken their legal dispute to court. For Syrian refugee households, 3 of 6 (50%) households were satisfied with their experience with the legal body, 2 of 6 (33%) were not satisfied, and 1 of 6 did not know (17%). For Iraqi residents, 4 of 7 (57%) were satisfied with their experience with the legal body, 2 of 7 (29%) were not satisfied, and 1 of 6 did not know (17%).

ANNEX 4: LIFE STORIES

Box 5: Male, Syrian refugee, head of household with four members. Living in Dahuk city, originally from Qamishli, Hasakeh, Syria.

Life [in Qamishli before I came to Iraq] was easy. For sure there were some challenges related to security procedures and employment in the public department, but other than that the community was coherent and different kind of faiths and beliefs co-existed. Basic services (water, electricity, fuel) were accessible and available for all in lower prices than here. I worked as an English language teacher. I have never visited Iraq before the Syrian conflict in 2011.

[I decided to move to Iraq because] from the onset of the crisis, the government [in Syria] started to arrest people for conscription, and those who didn't join the army faced the risk of going to jail or losing their jobs. Additionally, there was a lack of jobs and basic services e.g. the power was out 23 hours a day. The living costs were high. I was thinking of going to Europe but I couldn't afford the cost of the journey and I was fearful of traveling there illegally.

After deciding to leave Syria, I contacted one of my friends to advise me on what I should do and what route to take to get to north Iraq. At that time, there were many threats from the central government of Iraq who told us that any Syrian refugees caught [entering Iraq] would be handed to the Government of Syria. So my friend connected me to someone who can take me to north Iraq. I talked to him and he informed me about the costs and challenges that I would face in my journey. After agreeing on everything, he came to Qamishli and took me at night to a Syrian village located on the Syrian-Iraqi borders. We stayed overnight there, then we moved to an Iraqi village at the border. Then there was a car waiting for us to take us to Dahuk. The challenges were that we walked a lot, the intense presence of police patrol on both borders, and the high cost of the journey as I have two kids. My first kid was two-years-old and the second was three months.

I chose to move here [to Dahuk] because my wife's relatives live here. They told us about the jobs and basic services available here. [When we first arrived, initial challenges included] the high cost of living especially rental costs, as many landlords didn't trust us and refused to rent houses to us. Many of them took advantage of our situation and raised the rent.

People in Dahuk are not very social and they have a pre-conception that refugees are all bad so they don't trust us, and maybe it's something related to religion. [I also faced challenges with] the long security procedures that we must go through if we wanted to do any kind of business here. [At the beginning] I mainly relied on borrowing money to meet my basic needs until I found a job.

[Regarding integration challenges] women faced harassment and were looked down upon compared to local women. For youth, they faced high restrictions on movement, and refused to rent houses to them. For children, there was a lack of children-friendly spaces and it was dangerous for them outside. For elderly, they find it hardest to cope due to homesickness of their own land and the people back in their community of origin.

[Today,] the tension [for integration is] still there because of the security procedures that a refugee goes through and the discrimination that they face from the local people. [It has become more difficult overtime because of] restrictions for refugees in accessing jobs where chances are given to locals only.

[I intend to] stay here in the long run, since the lack of safety, lack of educational services, lack of basic services and lack of jobs in the community of origin. [Factors that would influence me to move elsewhere would include] safety, availability of jobs, accessibility to basic services like educational opportunities for my children.

Box 6: Male, Syrian refugee, head of household with nine members. Living in Kasnazan (periphery of Erbil city), originally from Raqqa governorate.

Before 2011 it was simple and we were living peacefully. I am from Raqqa in Syria. We were living with Arabs and Kurds, Muslims and Christians together without any difference. I was a taxi driver. I didn't visit Iraq before [the Syrian conflict] because I did not know anybody in Iraq. I did not think about leaving Syria as we were healthy and we did not need to go out for [health] treatment or for tourism. We had beautiful areas in Syria.

[I decided to move to Iraq] after ISIL attacked Raqqa in 2013 and occupied our houses. There was a lack of security and [we could not meet our] basic needs (e.g. electricity, water, job and food). We couldn't stand the situation anymore so we decided to move to Turkey or to KRI. At first, we wanted to go to Turkey. We could not reach Turkey as ISIL was on the way and they killed anyone who wanted to leave Raqqa. The Turkish soldiers prevented us from entering Turkey and sometimes shot people who tried to pass the borders.

[Regarding the day I left Syria] it was 5 am when we heard sounds of heavy shooting. When we went out to see what was happening, our neighbour told us that we should run away as ISIL occupied Raqqa. So we moved to a village 10 km north of Raqqa near Al Gas factory where some of my friends lived. When we left Raqqa, one of my son was sleeping at home and he wasn't aware that we had left. So I went back to bring him but ISIL prevented me from entering and threatened me to pay 1.5 million Syrian pounds for a man inside Raqqa.

In my friend's village, we were afraid of ISIL who was coming to the village every day to threaten us by saying they would kill anybody that tried to leave. After staying in my friend's village for two months, I planned to go to Turkey through Kobane (located on the border of Turkey).

ISIL caught me when I tried to move, they beat me hard and took my car. Next I had to pay someone to escape to Kobane. When we arrived in Kobane and tried to go to Turkey, our relative advised me not to go to Turkey because the Turkish soldiers would shoot anyone that tried to cross the border.

Again, I had to pay someone to reach Qamishli city to go to KRI as we had relatives in Erbil who told me that it was better than Turkey. When I reached the borders, the road was closed by the Kurdish government. So we stayed in a village near the border in a mosque and we depended on the help provided by the villagers. We didn't have enough money to pay smugglers to enter Iraq.

After staying for more than 45 days, they allowed us to enter Iraq. They took us by buses to a camp near Erbil but after three days we asked if we could go to Erbil. They agreed and we arrived in Erbil where some of our relatives were. [The route] was very hard and dangerous. We were afraid that ISIL would catch and kill us. We didn't have enough money to buy food or other things. We were hopeless for we didn't know what would happen to us and where we will settle in.

[I chose to move to this community because] they are Kurdish and we have the same language and they will deal with us as guest not as refugees. [When I first arrived] I could not deal with the people there for they are speaking a different dialect and their habits are different from us. Integration is very difficult for me, as you have to be and do everything as them [the local people] and give up your habits.

At first, I faced challenges as I could not talk and understand them even when you wanted to visit or sit with them. It was difficult to know their habits. I could overcome these challenges as I could speak their dialect and know their habits now. For women and youth, it is hard as they don't have social relationships as we had in Syria and the level of Syrian education is higher e.g. Iraqi women have less decision-making power as Syrians. It is easier for children to integrate as they can learn the language faster than we can and they will play with children regardless of where they are from (i.e. Iraqi children).

[Integration has become easier over time because] we learnt from them their culture and they also learnt from ours. [It has become more difficult because] when their economic situation became bad they would get angry of the refugees. When I first arrived, I preferred to go abroad to Europe as I wanted my children to have a good future. I don't know [what my current intentions are] but everyone hopes to return to his place when there are good services and safety in Syria.

Box 7: Male, Syrian refugee. Living in Qaim city (Anbar), originally from Bou Kamal, Deir ez-Zor governorate.

At the start of the Syrian conflict before I came to Iraq, the security situation began to become instable and some of the basic services were inaccessible. I was living in the Bou Kamal community in Deir ez-Zor and it was like any other community. It was safe and all the basic services were available, including employment, food, education and healthcare services. I was a ceramic worker in Syria.

I have never been in Iraq before the war. The first time that I had visited was when I took refuge here. I moved to Iraq because of the war, the armed gangs and the killing that was happening on the streets. We left Deir ez-Zor immediately after events started to escalate. We went through several villages in the same governorate until we arrived at the borders of Iraq. We stayed at the border for around one month and armed gangs were in the same location.

When we first arrived in Iraq, we were handed to the Iraqi authorities. The authorities then moved us to Al Qaim camp, and then to Obaide camp. I moved to Qaim city because the services here were better and more accessible. When I first arrived, there was a lack of educational services. There were frequent blackouts and water deficiency.

Integration means a lot to me. It means to be a part of the community and to be treated as such, so we can practice our job like anyone else, and to be treated by locals as one of them and not as refugees. In Iraq, I faced challenges in finding a job in my field of experience. We took whatever job we could find even if it was not related to our skills and experience at all to ensure there was a source of income for our household. Men are more integrated in the community than women, kids and elderly, because they go out and work and deal with locals more than the other community groups. It has become easier to integrate now because we are more familiar with the area and its people. We are now more aware of the culture and norms here, how to properly deal with them, and how to avoid what they find offensive.

We are thinking of staying here in Anbar because it's the nearest safest place to their community of origin in Syria. Our initial intention was to stay here for a short while until the situation resumes to what it was. As things kept escalating, we are still here.

