



## UNDERSTANDING THE INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION NEEDS AMONG IDPs IN NORTHERN IRAQ

***“Our needs are not only food and water, we want to know about our future”***

**INTER-AGENCY RAPID  
ASSESSMENT REPORT • AUGUST 2014**





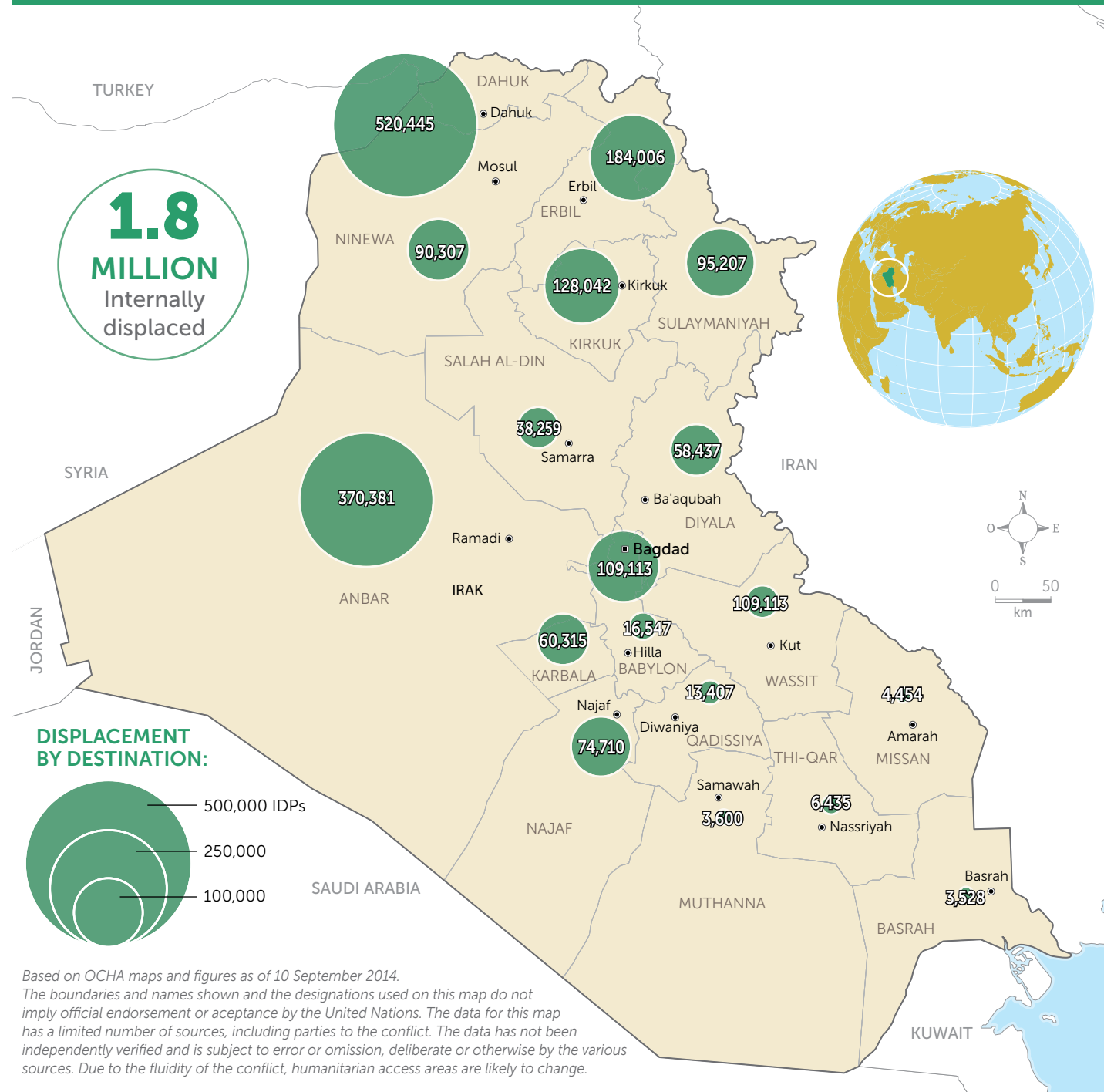
A humanitarian warehouse and distribution centre in Lalesh, a small mountain valley village situated in the Shekhan District of Nineveh Province in northern Iraq. The village is about 60km north-east of Mosul. The Lalesh temple is the holiest site for the Yazidi community (IOM).

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## IRAQ: NEW DISPLACEMENT (1 JAN. TO 04 SEPT. 2014)



## INTRODUCTION

The current crisis in northern Iraq began in January 2014 in the Anbar governorate and has deteriorated since the beginning of June across a large portion of the country. The events under way in Iraq are fundamentally changing its political, social and territorial landscape.

The fluid and dynamic nature of the conflict makes it difficult to monitor and track mass and multiple displacements across the country, which often occur in short timeframes.

In June 2014, the situation rapidly deteriorated further as a result of violent advances by armed groups, including the so-called Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS). On 9 June, armed groups seized control of Mosul – Iraq's second largest city – causing the massive displacement of 650,000 people to the Kurdistan Region and the Ninewa Plains.

On 3 August, ISIS launched attacks in Sinjar District (Ninewa Governorate) causing over 250,000 people to flee their homes. Ten days later, due to the scale of the humanitarian crisis, the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) declared Iraq a 'Level 3 Emergency'. As of 5 September, the United Nations is using a planning figure of 1.8 million Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) across the country. In addition, there are 216,000 registered Syrian refugees in Iraq.

From August 17-22, 2014, an inter-agency team comprised of UN agencies, INGOs and a media development organization<sup>1</sup> carried out a rapid assessment with displaced populations and host communities to understand their information needs and access to communication channels.

The team visited Erbil, Dahuk and Sulaymaniyah Governorates in the Kurdistan Region. Since January 2014, some 850,000 Iraqis have been displaced and sought refuge in all three Governorates. The majority of the recently displaced people - 64 per cent - have sought refuge in the Dahuk Governorate.

The team held focus group discussions with women and men among displaced communities in each area, while also meeting with aid agencies, local government authorities and representatives from local media and telecommunication companies.

The inter-agency mission also mapped current activities on Communication with Communities (CwC) in Iraq and, has formed the basis for proposed next steps, including how CwC can support the humanitarian system in Iraq. With adequate funding, CwC activities could be immediately rolled out to help meet the information and communication needs of displaced people.

This inter-agency mission was undertaken following a request by humanitarian partners operating in Iraq to the Field Coordination Community of Practice of the Communicating with Disaster Affected Communities (CDAC) Network.

The CDAC Network is a cross-sector initiative between aid agencies, UN organizations, the Red Cross Movement, media development organizations and technology providers that recognizes information and two-way communication as key humanitarian deliverables.

<sup>1</sup> THE TEAM COMPRISED OF UNOCHA, UNHCR, WORLD VISION INTERNATIONAL, INTERNEWS, IOM AND THE NORWEGIAN REFUGEE COUNCIL (NRC).

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

***“It’s only when there are children running, that we know there is something happening”***

The key finding of this rapid assessment<sup>2</sup> is that displaced people in northern Iraq live in an information vacuum which is hindering their ability to cope with the catastrophe in which they find themselves.

This vacuum has two main origins: lack of access to reliable news and information from the local media, particularly satellite TV and radio, and lack of access to information about existing and planned aid services.

Access to communication channels is clearly regarded as a key priority by those affected. As a woman told the team in Suleymaniya, “our needs are not only food and water, we want to know about our future.” This finding also reflects the experiences of other responders. For example, at the height of the crisis in early August, displaced people reportedly stranded on Sinjar Mountain called the OCHA Operations Centre hotline requesting for mobile phone chargers to be included as part of air drops delivering humanitarian aid.

With regard to **access to information**, IDPs currently only have limited access to conflicting and broken information regarding the provision of and access to basic services and entitlements and procedures regarding assistance and displacement. They are also struggling to access accurate

information about what is happening in their places of origin and to connect to loved ones also left behind. This is creating confusion, mistrust and is increasing their feeling of isolation.

In particular, **IDPs in camps** highlighted very poor knowledge of services available and the different mandates and remits of aid organizations. “We don’t know the organizations or their names; we have never spoken with them. We don’t know anything about their work”, said a man in Dahuk. Many of the people consulted in camps stated that when they do approach the camp administration to seek information they receive little information, which is often of little use. Very few reported having experienced action or feedback following their requests.

Some of the community members living in camps in Erbil and Dahuk complained about not knowing who was getting what and when, and mentioned rumours and misinformation within the camp. “Sometimes we don’t know that distributions are taking place,” said a woman in Baharka camp in Erbil.

The **situation for displaced communities staying in unfinished buildings, schools, mosques, churches and public spaces** is substantially worse. They are also cut off and dependent on their diminishing financial resources and the generosity and goodwill of host families to meet their basic physical needs and to learn about what is happening back home and in their new environment.

**Women** have far less access to information than men and in some locations they report a general state of anxiety and helplessness as they had no access to some services, limited access to others, and overall no

information about assistance, including schooling for their children. Displaced women, for example, were aware that the school year begins on 10 September but had no idea whether, or where, they could send their children to school.<sup>3</sup>

In terms of **access to communication channels**, the priority issue raised by most participants was difficulty in charging their mobile phones, used for conventional call services and SMS and also sometimes used to listen to the radio and to access the internet.

Access to satellite TV, radio or print media are still very limited among displaced communities due to the current displacement and the lack of available television or radio sets.

### INFORMATION NEEDS

Overall, the priority information needs among displaced people staying in camps and outside camps are:

- » **Home:** Information about family members who were unable to flee ISIL-controlled territory or who may have been kidnapped by ISIL, the security situation back at home and the status of their property. This was a common concern for both women and men.
- » **Aid:** How to access services, including criteria and procedures for registering for assistance and exact locations to receive aid. This was also a common concern for both women and men.
- » **Future:** Many men indicated that their priority was to find out how to seek asylum and/or be assisted to resettle to another country (“America or European countries”).

Expectations about leaving Iraq, particularly among minority groups (especially Yezidis from Shengal), remain high, denoting vulnerability and an important breakdown in the social fabric in northern Iraq.

### COMMUNICATION CHANNELS

While the three top preferred sources of information among Iraqis are TV, radio and word of mouth<sup>4</sup>, displacement has resulted in loss of access to the most popular source of information and entertainment, satellite TV, and also radio and print media.

In light of limited access to mainstream **media**, the most important communication channels identified by participants were **mobile phones (especially for men), face-to-face (especially for women) and community meetings**. To date, IDP families<sup>5</sup> are mostly relying on mobile phones to keep connected to family members left behind and to follow security developments in their areas of origin. Although little information may be readily available, IDPs and host communities have been proactive at using existing communication channels within their communities.

While the capacity of local media to report on the humanitarian crisis is limited by events on the ground, particularly in ISIL controlled areas, and their own ability to report on complex humanitarian issues, mobile, TV and radio services are still available. In areas hosting displaced populations, local media and the main Iraqi and regional channels can be accessed.

People staying in camps also suggested installing information boards and complaints boxes (literacy rate is generally high, see inset box) to facilitate communication between them and the humanitarian community as well as using loudspeakers for announcements.

Women recommended tent-to-tent communication as a way to ensure that vital information reaches the intended audience, including elderly and people living with disabilities.

<sup>2</sup> FROM AUGUST 17-22 AN INTER-AGENCY TEAM COMPRISED OF UN AGENCIES, INGOS AND A MEDIA DEVELOPMENT ORGANIZATION, NAMELY UNOCHA, UNHCR, WORLD VISION INTERNATIONAL, INTERNEWS, IOM AND THE NORWEGIAN REFUGEE COUNCIL (NRC), CARRIED OUT A RAPID ASSESSMENT WITH DISPLACED POPULATIONS AND HOST COMMUNITIES TO UNDERSTAND THEIR INFORMATION NEEDS AND ACCESS TO COMMUNICATION CHANNELS. THIS CONSULTATION ALSO INCLUDED DISCUSSIONS WITH AID AGENCIES, LOCAL GOVERNMENT AUTHORITIES AND REPRESENTATIVES FROM LOCAL MEDIA AND TELECOMMUNICATION PROVIDERS. THE TEAM VISITED ERBIL, DAHUK AND SULEYMANIYAH GOVERNORATES.

<sup>3</sup> GIVEN THE SHORT TIME FRAME OF THE EXERCISE, THE SPECIFIC NEEDS OF MANY VULNERABLE GROUPS (CHILDREN, YOUTH OR THE ELDERLY) WERE NOT ASSESSED.

<sup>4</sup> SEE SECTION BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THE MEDIA AND TELECOMMUNICATIONS LANDSCAPE.

<sup>5</sup> ALTHOUGH FEW WOMEN REPORTED THAT THEY HAD MOBILE PHONES OF THEIR OWN, MOST MARRIED WOMEN STATED THAT THEY WERE ABLE TO USE THOSE BELONGING TO THEIR HUSBAND’S TO CALL FAMILY MEMBERS.

# BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THE MEDIA AND TELECOMMUNICATIONS LANDSCAPE

The media and communications landscape in Iraq is sophisticated and complex, characterised by high literacy rates and a strong and growing use of mobile phones, both as a portal to the internet and a means of accessing traditional channels such as radio as well as for voice and SMS services.

As is the case elsewhere in the Arab world, satellite TV channels are the dominant medium in Iraq. An estimated 30-40 television channels are available throughout the country, over half of which are Iraqi channels. A BBC Media Action (BBC MA) survey in 2013<sup>6</sup> found that access to satellite TV was near universal at 97% in nine southern provinces of Iraq in October 2012. Although no data is currently available for northern provinces, media sources have indicated that access is similar.

The three **top preferred sources of information** were: TV, radio and word of mouth. Less than 10% of respondents read newspapers mostly due to very limited distribution networks, even within the main cities.

**Literacy rate** in Iraq is of approximately 78.5%<sup>7</sup>. However, many of the current areas of origin of displacement had higher literacy rates (Anbar, Salah al-Din, Diyala) between 84% and 94%. Ninewa province (where the majority of displaced people currently in the Kurdistan region are from) had a literacy rate below the national average, at less than 77%.<sup>8</sup> Illiteracy rates among women (28%) are over double those among men (12%).

Although **access to internet** was still limited, Facebook statistics showed that "the number of Facebook users in Iraq increased by 35% in the last six months of 2012, standing at nearly 2.7 million in early 2013." However, according to the BBC MA survey, 76% of respondents had never used a computer. Internet penetration throughout the country was reported to be at 11% in 2014<sup>9</sup>.

In contrast, Iraq reportedly has the fastest growing **telecommunications industry** in the region, with a mobile phone penetration rate of 90%. Three main mobile providers are operating in the country: Korek is most widely used in the Kurdistan Region, while Asia Cell and Zain are more popular in central and south Iraq. The use of smart phones is low, as only 2G technology is still available. Mobile operators are now gaining approval and conducting tests for 3G services.

7 UNICEF STATISTICS - IRAQ  
[www.unicef.org/infobycountry/iraq\\_statistics.html](http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/iraq_statistics.html)

8 IRAQI LITERACY RATE OF SEGMENT OF POPULATION AGED 15-24 (IRAQ - IRAQ HOUSEHOLD SOCIO-ECONOMIC SURVEY, IHSES 2007)  
[www.intellectualltakeout.org/library/chart-graph/iraqi-literacy-rate-segment-population-aged-15-24-years](http://www.intellectualltakeout.org/library/chart-graph/iraqi-literacy-rate-segment-population-aged-15-24-years)

9 IRAQ - TELECOMS, MOBILE, BROADBAND AND FORECASTS  
[www.budde.com.au/Research/Iraq-Telecoms-Mobile-Broadband-and-Forecasts.html](http://www.budde.com.au/Research/Iraq-Telecoms-Mobile-Broadband-and-Forecasts.html)

6 THE MEDIA OF IRAQ TEN YEARS ON. THE PROBLEMS, THE PROGRESS, THE PROSPECTS. ABIR AWAD AND TIM EATON. BBC MEDIA ACTION POLICY BRIEF #8, MARCH 2013.  
[http://downloads.bbc.co.uk/mediaaction/policybriefing/bbc\\_media\\_action\\_media\\_iraq\\_ten\\_years\\_on.pdf](http://downloads.bbc.co.uk/mediaaction/policybriefing/bbc_media_action_media_iraq_ten_years_on.pdf)

## RECOMMENDATIONS

These findings indicate two main areas of work for CwC in Iraq that need to be addressed immediately:

- 1 Increasing information flow**, dialogue with displaced communities and the capacity of responders to listen to those affected,
- 2 Supporting existing communications channels**, including local media, and establishing new platforms where necessary.

At the cornerstone of the humanitarian assistance must be a coordinated, multi-platform, multi-channel suite of CwC services which will both help affected communities communicate with aid agencies and each other, and improve the capacity of responders to listen to and connect with those affected

This will require aid agencies to improve their own work in information sharing and listening to those affected. It will also require standalone investment in CwC initiatives that will serve as common service vehicles for sharing information and collecting feedback, such as newsletters, radio shows, and hotlines, which supported by an online platform, community feedback can be channelled, analysed and, where necessary, responded to. Properly managed, such platforms can also act as secure complaint referral mechanisms.

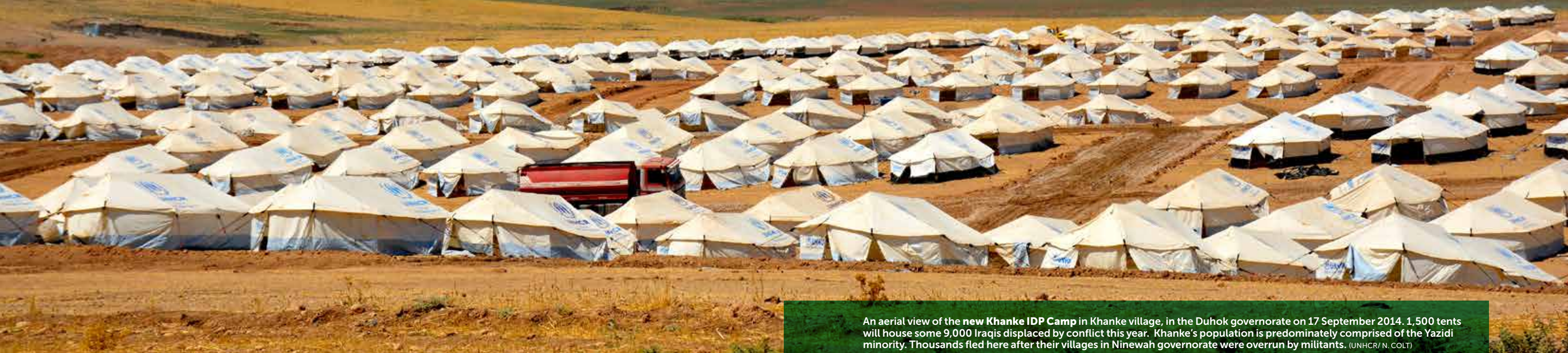
In designing these vehicles, the needs and languages of both those in camps and in host communities must be considered.

The main objective of both agency specific and common CwC services should be to direct people to life-saving assistance, reduce their stress and anxiety, manage somehow their expectations and create opportunities for dialogue to mitigate potential tensions between displaced populations and host communities.

Moreover, two-way communications between aid providers and affected people, including displaced populations and host communities, can improve the effectiveness of humanitarian assistance. Humanitarian partners need to engage local capacity and understand the local information ecosystem while ensuring that affected communities are active participants in decision-making affecting their daily lives and their future.

Overall, any specify CwC work in Iraq, and globally, need to aim at fulfilling the right that people have to know, ask questions and participate in their own relief and recovery.





An aerial view of the new Khanke IDP Camp in Khanke village, in the Duhok governorate on 17 September 2014. 1,500 tents will house some 9,000 Iraqis displaced by conflict this year. Khanke's population is predominately comprised of the Yazidi minority. Thousands fled here after their villages in Ninewah governorate were overrun by militants. (UNHCR/N. COLT)

## IMPLEMENTING A CwC RESPONSE: NEXT STEPS

- » Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) to ensure CwC relevant activities and implementing partners are in the Strategic Response Plan (SRP). Input to be provided by UNOCHA and CDAC partners.
- » Humanitarian partners and clusters to include information needs and access to communication channel questions in their individual and sectorial needs assessments. This is something that REACH is currently doing.<sup>10</sup> UNOCHA and

CDAC Network can further provide guidance on content.<sup>11</sup>

- » Cluster leads to support the secondment of two CwC Specialists to serve all the clusters to ensure information flow in and out of clusters as outlined in the CwC structure (see Annex 3: CwC proposed structure).<sup>12</sup>

10 MASS COMMUNICATIONS ASSESSMENT FOR SYRIAN REFUGEES IN CAMPS IN THE KURDISTAN REGION OF IRAQ (KRI), 3 SEPTEMBER 2014, REACH INITIATIVE. A FEW HIGHLIGHTS: THE MOST REPORTED PRIMARY INFORMATION NEED IN EACH CAMP ACROSS THE KRI WAS KNOWLEDGE OF JOB VACANCIES. OVERWHELMINGLY, HOUSEHOLDS REPORTED RECEIVING INFORMATION THROUGH FACE-TO-FACE CONVERSATIONS (ON AVERAGE 84% ACROSS KRI) FOLLOWED BY PHONE CALLS AND TV - TV IS WATCHED BY MORE THAN 90% OF HOUSEHOLDS IN ALMOST ALL THE CAMPS. IN ALL CAMPS (EXCEPT DARASHAKRAN AND QUSHTAPA), REFUGEES SAID THEY DO NOT REALLY KNOW HOW TO CONTACT AID PROVIDERS. 90% OF HOUSEHOLDS ACROSS THE KRI HAVE REPORTED THAT THEY WOULD BE INTERESTED IN A RADIO PROGRAMME FOR REFUGEES. HOUSEHOLDS WOULD LIKE TO LISTEN TO A NEWS-STYLE PROGRAMME, BOTH ABOUT EVENTS AND DEVELOPMENTS IN THEIR CAMP.

AS WELL AS THE REFUGEE SITUATION IN KRI AND UPDATES ON SYRIA. [www.reachresourcecentre.info/system/files/resource-documents/reach\\_irq\\_presentation\\_kri\\_refugeecamps\\_masscommunicationsassessment\\_03sept2014.pdf](http://www.reachresourcecentre.info/system/files/resource-documents/reach_irq_presentation_kri_refugeecamps_masscommunicationsassessment_03sept2014.pdf)

11 SEE ANNEX 1: CDAC NETWORK COMMON NEEDS ASSESSMENT TOOLS.

12 THIS IS SOMETHING CURRENTLY PILOTED BY INTERNEWS AND IOM IN SOUTH SUDAN WHERE INTERNEWS, FUNDED BY IOM, HAS SECONDED CWC SPECIALISTS FROM THE INTERNEWS/CDAC ROSTER TO THE CAMP COORDINATION AND CAMP MANAGEMENT (CCCM) CLUSTER.

- » Establish a CwC and or a cross cutting issues Working Group to be chaired by UNOCHA bringing together all relevant actors including local groups, media and mobile phone companies. This group also to work closely with and in support of colleagues and initiatives on Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP) including a greater focus on gender, age and disability across the response.
- » Donors to commit to fund the proposed CwC structure and key CwC activities, both for Mass Information and Two-way communication, including partnering with local media. A portion of funds already committed for the humanitarian response should be allocated for CwC activities.
- » Among those CwC activities, speed up the launch of an inter-agency call centre to provide IDPs with timely information and to refer complaints, feedback and urgent needs. UNHCR and UNOCHA have already committed funding for this initiative.<sup>13</sup>

13 AN ONLINE TOOL HAS BEEN DEVELOPED AND ALREADY TESTED FOR

Based on the consultations with IDPs, host communities and other stakeholders in the north of Iraq, the inter-agency team has also developed a set of more detailed recommendations. Given the collective experience and expertise in other responses by the inter-agency team, some recommendations have wider implications and require strategic decisions also at a global level:

- » For all actors involved in the north Iraq IDP crisis (Annex 4).
- » For National Governments and Donors (Annex 5).
- » On the use of ICTs as agencies are starting to use SMS and mobiles for CwC (Annex 6).

OTHER CONTEXTS THAT COULD INCREASE THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE CALL CENTRE BY ENABLING INDIVIDUAL AGENCIES CAPTURE AND ASSESS FEEDBACK RECEIVED, ENSURE FOLLOW UP AND MAKE REFERRALS, WHILE ENSURING DATA PROTECTION AND SECURITY OF THE INFORMATION COLLECTED. FOR MORE INFORMATION: WWW.COMMUNITYRESPONSEMAP.ORG



## OVERVIEW OF CURRENT CwC ACTIVITIES

In June, UNOCHA established a joint humanitarian Operation Centre (OpsCen) in Iraq to serve as a backbone of the humanitarian response. Based in Erbil, the OpsCen is multi-disciplinary and includes a small hotline to receive information from affected communities and key informants such as local authorities, concerned individuals, and civil society actors. UNOCHA, with the support of IOM and WHO, has been operating the hotline with very limited capacity since July.

The hotline number was mainly provided through business cards to humanitarian partners for distribution to IDPs and local NGOs in Erbil governorate. IDPs are mainly asking about opportunities for asylum and requesting for food and core-relief items. During the Sinjar crisis in early August, the UN political mission (UNAMI) and donors shared the phone number with a variety of community contacts. OCHA was therefore able to gather information on population movements as well as refer urgent needs request to relevant cluster partners.

This small-scale intervention demonstrates the importance of mobile phones in communicating with displaced people in northern Iraq, especially those who may still be on the move. However, it was immediately identified that call operators need to be provided with training and up-to-date information to pass on to IDPs.

A more elaborate system is therefore needed for clusters to share information for IDPs, and for needs requests or complaints to be adequately referred to and timely followed up by clusters.

Members of the HCT including UNHCR, OCHA, WFP, IOM and UNOPS as well as NGO partners are planning an inter-agency call centre for affected communities, which will serve as a communication channel between IDPs and the humanitarian community at large.

A number of international NGOs and media development organizations such as Un Ponte Per



Women and girls crowd around water-taps at the Baharka displacement camp on the outskirts of Erbil. (OCHA/IASON ATHANASIADIS).

(UPP) and International Media Support (IMS) have been in contact with UNHCR to develop programmes aiming at facilitating two-way communication between the humanitarian community and communities displaced in Erbil, Dahuk and Suleymaniyah governorates. These include, among others: 1) establishing outreach teams for face-to-face communication, 2) producing information materials, and 3) setting up virtual and physical venues for information-sharing such as a website and humanitarian information and communication centres.

Notwithstanding some of these initiatives and other CwC activities currently underway, notably through another CDAC Network member, UNICEF, and its Communications for Development (C4D) component, CDAC Network members operating in Iraq (i.e. OCHA, WFP and UNHCR) indicated there were

significant gaps at field level in CwC with regard to access by displaced populations to timely, accurate and well-targeted information and lack of two-way communication between aid agencies and IDPs.

Improved CwC is more than possible, but requires proper resourcing and support at agency and system level. Two-way communications can make humanitarian aid more effective, reduce vulnerability and assist affected communities to access aid and support networks.

OCHA, WFP and UNHCR further highlighted that collaboration and support to common CwC activities is urgently needed and thus requested further support through the Field Community of Practice of the CDAC Network to engage other members on this inter-agency mission.

Partnerships with mobile phone providers (i.e. Korek, Asia Cell and Zein) are currently being discussed by UNOPS and OCHA, and Internews, IMS and BBC Media Action are currently working and/or in conversations with local media organisations.

### CAPACITY OF KEY LOCAL AID ACTORS

The Barzani Charity Foundation (BCF)<sup>14</sup>, funded by former Prime Minister of KRG Nechirvan Barzani, is one of the UN's main implementing partners.

The BCF acknowledges that no one in the humanitarian system is currently looking at CwC in a strategic manner, and that internal communications within organizations is also a challenge. The BCF also pointed out that there needs to be agreement among humanitarian partners on what messages should be communicated to IDPs, to ensure that IDPs don't receive conflicting information, while partners should have a communication plan in place with a clear focal point for information requests.

The Civil Development Organization (CDO) in Suleymaniyah conducted in the past the registration of Syrian refugees. As part of what seemed a very well organised and efficient registration process, CDO distributed 5,000 SIM cards to Syrian refugees.

CDO is currently in conversations with humanitarian partners AsiaCell to set up a targeted SMS service in Kurdish and Arabic to share humanitarian messages and important information with IDPs.

Overall, the BCF and CDO recommended that communications should be improved between NGOs, the UN and local authorities, and that a dedicated CwC workshop and training for NGOs should be put in place.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>14</sup> BCF IS CLOSELY ASSOCIATED WITH THE GOVERNMENT THROUGH THE BARZANI FAMILY SINCE NECHIRVAN BARZANI IS THE NEPHEW OF KRG PRESIDENT MASOUS BARZANI.

<sup>15</sup> AID AGENCIES, INDIVIDUALS AND INTERESTED PARTIES ARE ENCOURAGED TO USE, SHARE AND PROVIDE FEEDBACK ON THE INFOASID E-LEARNING. PRODUCED BY INTERNEWS AND BBC MEDIA ACTION THROUGH THE INFOASID PROJECT, THE INFOASID E-LEARNING COURSE AIMS TO RAISE AWARENESS ABOUT THE KEY COMPONENTS OF EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION WITH CRISIS-AFFECTED COMMUNITIES, AND TO BUILD KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS ON HOW TO COMMUNICATE IN PRACTICE ([www.cdacnetwork.org/learning-centre/e-learning](http://www.cdacnetwork.org/learning-centre/e-learning))



## THE INTER-AGENCY CwC RAPID ASSESSMENT

Focus group discussions and key informant interviews were held with 63 men and 40 women among displaced populations to understand if and how communities access information, their priority information needs and their access to and preferred communication channels. This exercise took place in camp and non-camp settings in Erbil, Dahuk and Sulaymaniyah governorates.<sup>16</sup>

Priority need for a multidisciplinary assessment was identified in order to understand and identify preferred community communication channels, current capacities and activities by aid providers, and to identify individual agency, cluster and interagency roles moving forward. The outcome of this exercise is a set of recommendations that can be accessed and utilized by all humanitarian actors working in the response and a template to learn and build from for CDAC Network members to conduct rapid inter-agency assessments in the future.

If you are interested in receiving more up-to-date information on proposed CwC activities and programs by humanitarian partners please contact:

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## KEY FINDINGS

Interviews with conflict-affected populations revealed common information priorities among displaced communities, both for men and women, regardless of the location where they found refuge (i.e. camp or non-camp setting). This include:

- » Receiving updates about the situation at point of origin.
- » Keeping a line of communication open with families and friends in ISIS-controlled territory.
- » Being informed about the International community and government's plans to support them.

Some differences were noted in preferred communication channels for those living in camps to those populations living in non-camp settings, and between men and women (although no differences were noted among different ethnic groups).

For instance, those living in camps mentioned low-tech communications means such as face-to-face communication with NGO workers, community meetings, information boards and loudspeakers in addition to mobile phones as ways to disseminate information. Most in non-camp settings primarily preferred mobile phone communication as a way to access information and communicate.

In light of limited access to mainstream media, mobile phones seem to be the most preferred communication means among affected communities whether they are living in camps or outside camps, along with face-to-face (especially for women) and community meetings.

With reference to **communicating with responders**, mobile phones, face-to-face and community meetings seem to be, broadly speaking, the preferred communication channels



An 89 year-old Yezidi man sits in the Baharka displacement camp on the outskirts of Erbil on 10 September 2014 (OCHA/IASON ATHANASIADIS).

through which displaced people wish to receive humanitarian information and communicate with aid providers. Internet platforms are also another option particularly with younger IDPs as many use mobile phones with Internet bundles for connecting with friends.

While the three top preferred sources of information among Iraqis are TV, radio and word of mouth, displacement has resulted in loss of access to satellite TV, and also radio and print media. While the capacity of local media to report on the humanitarian crisis is limited by events on the ground and their ability to report on complex humanitarian issues, local media and the main Iraqi and regional channels are available.

Some media outlets in the Kurdistan region are trying to cover the humanitarian crisis though very few of them offer relevant humanitarian information (i.e. useful and actionable news and updates about available aid services) in both Kurdish and also in Arabic, the main language spoken by IDPs coming from south and central Iraq.

The major difference between camp and non-camp IDPs lies in the opportunities, occasions and venues to access aid workers, authorities and civil society organizations to find out information. Host communities are playing a very important role not just in providing basic physical needs but also in passing on information to displaced families, which is often disjointed and inaccurate.

From the perspective of the **international community**, there is also currently no systematic way for responders to access or respond to the questions and views expressed by those affected, or to source support in improving their own communications work (e.g. working with local media). This means in turn that rumours are going unchecked and misunderstandings regarding the role and mandate of aid agencies are common, a matter of particular concern in a conflict zone.

**Government officials** interviewed during this mission expressed a general sense that the humanitarian response was very slow, leaving displaced people without basic support to fulfil their immediate urgent needs, including timely and relevant information. Where some services were available, families had little to no information about these services and their right to access them.

At this stage of the relief response, there seem to be a near complete absence of adequate provision of information to IDPs regarding aid services, people's rights and entitlements and procedures inherent to assistance and displacement regardless of the location of displacement. When information is made available, it is inconsistent and unreliable, creating mistrust among communities and increasing their feeling of isolation.

Communication between displaced communities and aid providers is erratic to say the least. In camp settings, displaced people claim that when they approach the camp administration to seek information, but they get little, insufficient feedback.

<sup>16</sup> SEE ANNEX 1: METHODOLOGY, AND ANNEX 2: CDAC NETWORK COMMON NEEDS ASSESSMENT TOOLS.



**ANNEXES**

**ANNEXES**

# ANNEX 1: METHODOLOGY

The field consultation included Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with 63 men and 40 women from affected communities and key informant interviews (KIIs) with government authorities, aid providers and key stakeholders in the media and telecommunication community.

The CDAC Network Common Needs Assessment Tools<sup>17</sup> were used to guide the FGDs and Key Informant Interviews with the various groups.

A convenience sample was used to select participants for the 6 FGDs that took place in Erbil, Dahuk and Suleymaniyah with IDPs. Separate FGDs were conducted for men and women, with youth males participating in the men's group and youth females participating in the women's group. Youth age group represented: 15-18 years of age.

Governorates	KIIs	FGDs	
		males	females
Erbil	4	8-10	10-15
Dahuk	7	38	15
Suleymaniyah	6	15	10
subtotal	17	63	40
<b>Total</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>103</b>	

## LIMITATIONS

This was a rapid consultation to gauge the current information needs and access of communities; therefore, the following limitations apply:

- » The inter-agency team was not able to consult communities in the south of Iraq, because of the limited geographical scope of this mission.
- » As much as the team tried to ensure people with disabilities and the elderly were represented; the team did not conduct specific FGDs exclusively for these populations.



Nergz (left), Dawood (6months) and their family fled Shingal. They have lived in an overcrowded unfinished building structure together with 85 people. In late August they could move into a tent given by an INGO (TIRIL SKARSTEIN/NRC)

- » Only a small number of aid providers were interviewed.
- » In line with Global Child Protection Working Group guidance, children were not interviewed because of the potential harm (such as re-victimization) such interviews may have created, given the consultation took place within weeks after the displacement.
- » This consultation focussed on information needs and access by affected population. While Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP) and Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) were considered, the focus remains two-way communication. Questions regarding PSEA were only addressed to aid providers.

# ANNEX 2: CDAC NETWORK COMMON NEEDS ASSESSMENT TOOLS

A customised version translated in Arabic of the **(Rapid) Communication Needs Assessment Affected Population** Questionnaire was used to guide the Focus Group Discussions (FGD). This questionnaire is part of the CDAC Network Common Needs Assessment Tools.

These tools, based on questionnaires used by Internews in its information needs assessments<sup>18</sup>, were further refined in 2013 by three of the media

development agencies of the CDAC Network (Internews, BBC Media Action and International Media Support (IMS) and are now common tools for conducting information needs access to communication channels assessments and assess the status of the damage to the local media infrastructure following a disaster.

Four of the questions from the (Rapid) communication needs assessment affected population questionnaire are part of the Multi-

17 SEE ANNEX 2 FOR MORE INFORMATION ON THE TOOLS.

18 INTERNEWS INFORMATION NEEDS ASSESSMENTS (DADAAB (KENYA), LIBYA, COTE D'IVOIRE/LIBERIA, SOUTH SUDAN) [www.internews.org/global-issues/humanitarian-information/assessments](http://www.internews.org/global-issues/humanitarian-information/assessments)



Cluster/Sector Initial Rapid Assessment (MIRA)<sup>19</sup>, a joint multi-sector assessment rolled out in the earliest days of a crisis.

These tools have been developed by the MDAs, but this does not exclude other organisations from using them. For example, some of the questions can be included in other sector assessments to ensure data is collected on communication needs.

The CDAC Network encourages agencies and clusters to include some of the questions in their own assessments to better understand what people want to know, not just what they need, and what are the communication channels they access to and they trust. By better understanding this, the delivery of aid will be more effective, transparent and accountable.

The suite of common tools includes:

- » A Guidance Note on Using the CDAC Network Common Communication Needs Assessment Tools
- » (Rapid) communication needs assessment affected population questionnaire (i.e. to identify immediate communication and information needs of disaster-affected communities)
- » Humanitarian Responder Questionnaire (i.e. self assessment tool)
- » Radio/TV/Newspaper Questionnaire (i.e. to assess the extend of the damage to local media infrastructure)

Download the CDAC Network Common Needs Assessment Tools (July 2014):

[www.cdacnetwork.org/tools-and-resources/i/20140721171402-wj4au](http://www.cdacnetwork.org/tools-and-resources/i/20140721171402-wj4au)

Another useful tool for humanitarian workers is the **Quick and Easy Guide to Assess Information and Communication Needs**. Developed by the CDAC Network in collaboration with The Assessment Capacities Project (ACAPS), this guide is aimed at staff working in a humanitarian response.

The guide provides guidance on steps humanitarian responders can take to assess and determine how to enhance communication with and among communities at different stages of an emergency. Five key questions are suggested, including explanations of why these questions should be asked, and how agencies could act on this data to improve communication in humanitarian response.

This tool also includes a 'Pocket Guide', which is designed for field practitioners and can be printed on one double-sided sheet of paper. It summarises the key steps and provides the five key questions and response options.

The Quick and Easy Guide includes:

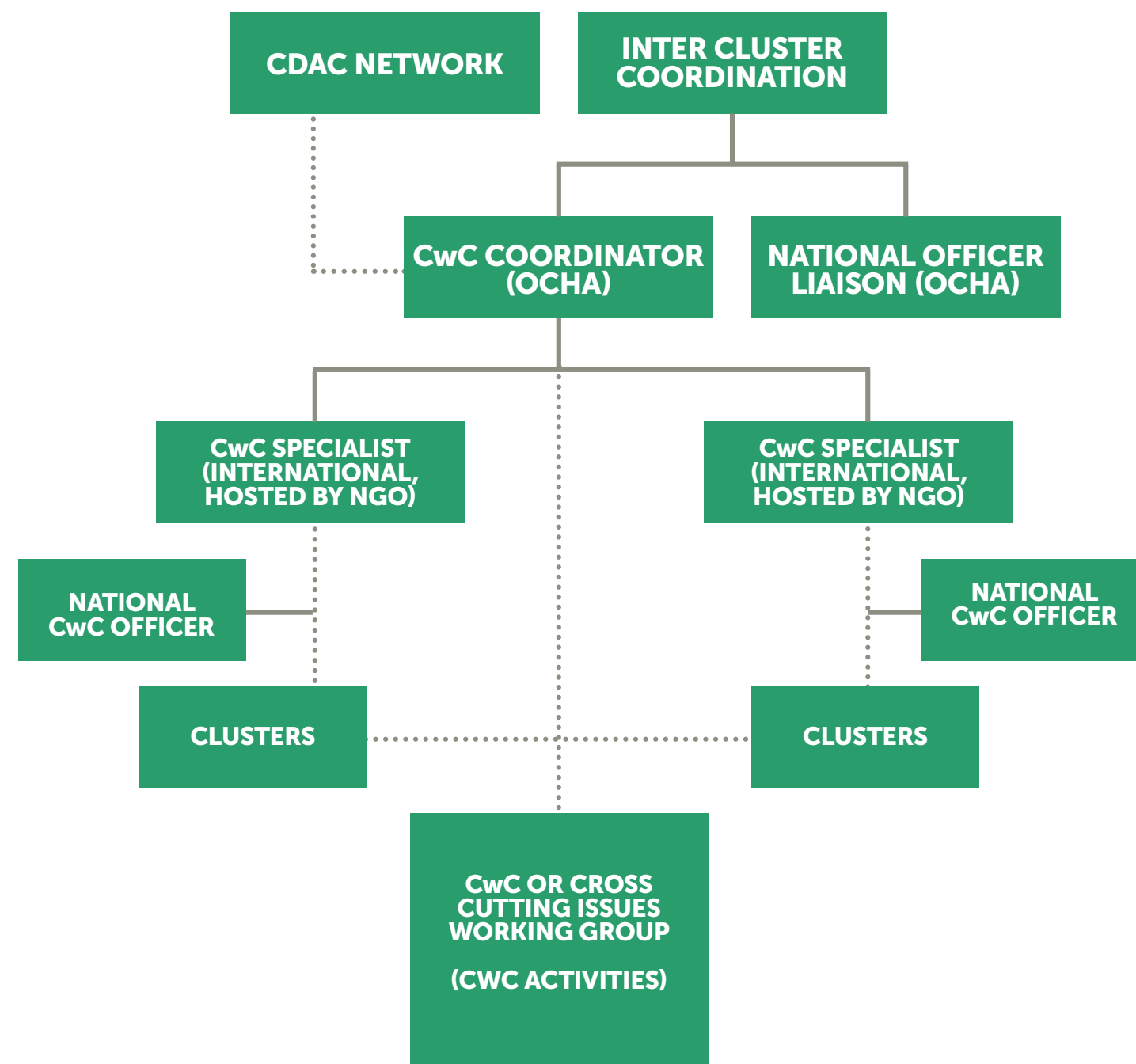
- » Quick and Easy Guide: Assessing Information & Communications Needs Booklet
- » Pocket Guide: Information & Communication Questions in Rapid Needs Assessments (Black and white and coloured versions)

Download *Assessing Information and Communication Needs: A Quick and Easy Guide for Those Working in Humanitarian Response* (July 2014):

[www.cdacnetwork.org/tools-and-resources/i/20140721173332-ihw5g](http://www.cdacnetwork.org/tools-and-resources/i/20140721173332-ihw5g)

19 OCHA COORDINATION TOOLS: NEEDS ASSESSMENT [www.unocha.org/what-we-do/coordination-tools/needs-assessment](http://www.unocha.org/what-we-do/coordination-tools/needs-assessment)

## ANNEX 3: CwC PROPOSED STRUCTURE<sup>20</sup>



20 THIS STRUCTURE DOES NOT ILLUSTRATE HIERARCHY OR REPORTING LINES, BUT RATHER INFORMATION FLOW.



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# ANNEX 4: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ALL ACTORS INVOLVED IN THE NORTH IRAQ IDP CRISIS RESPONSE

- 1 Need to recognise that communication is a form of aid in its own right.** Effective information for, and communication with, local communities are critical in ensuring people's dignity and access to vital humanitarian assistance. Communication capability of affected populations is a lifeline to ensure that they are well informed, and can self-organise themselves as they respond to each other's humanitarian needs. In this way, access to electricity to charge mobile phones is as vital as access to more traditional forms of humanitarian assistance.
- 2 Improve internal and inter-agency communication among humanitarian partners.** As pointed out by government officials and local NGOs, international aid organisations must improve their own internal communications and communicate timely and regularly with partners. Furthermore, in order to communicate with local populations, first and foremost, it is crucial to know what one wants to say and what questions one has no answers for yet. As underscored by the UN's Transformative Agenda, not communicating is not an option anymore.
- 3 Understand the local information ecosystem.** While Multi-Cluster/Sector Initial Rapid Assessment (MIRA) are increasingly including questions on information needs and access to communication channels, it is still not enough. Just as more in depth needs assessments follow the rapid assessments, aid agencies and media development organisations need to partner and make greater investment in assessing local information ecologies. This includes understanding the local media and telecommunications landscape, conduct information needs assessments and develop research, monitoring and evaluation of humanitarian communication initiatives.
- 4 A multi-sectoral, multi-platform and multi-channel CwC strategy is necessary.** IDPs, host communities and refugees have different information needs, access to and trust different communication channels. There is a need for a multi-sectoral, coordinated CwC strategy that by definition must be multi-platform and multi-channel. This strategy should build and improve on existing face-to-face communication, megaphones and print initiatives (e.g. posters, brochures, information boards, etc.) by using affected population preferred channels such as mobile phones, local media and social media, depending on the context.
- 5 Do not reinvent the wheel: Build on existing capacity and expertise.** In North Iraq, there is a very diverse, rich (and also very politicised) media and communications sector that includes three mobile phone companies. Any CwC intervention can aid affected communities but could also do harm to communities themselves and the local media. Emergencies offer a unique opportunity to create and build strong relations and partnerships across sectors with e.g. non-traditional humanitarian actors such as media, local journalists or mobile companies, which can critically assist in relief operations now and also be leveraged in the future.
- 6 Consider digital, age and gender divides.** The dramatic rise in mobile and mobile Internet access and social media usage is transforming the world in an unprecedented manner and its use in emergencies continues to grow. Iraq is no exception. However, the reality of digital, age and gender divides should not be underestimated. We must consider the specific information needs and access to communication channels and digital literacy of women, children, the elderly and people living with disabilities. Very importantly, special consideration must be put towards



Jalal and his family fled Sinjar 3rd August. After six days in Sinjar mountains they were able to cross into Syria and 21st August they entered the Kurdish region in Northern Iraq, where they hope to be able to find shelter with some relatives. The photo shows Nasim (4). (TIRIL SKARSTEIN/NRC).

enabling the voices of minorities be heard and the protection of vulnerable groups.

- 7 Involve the end users and consumers of information in the design of interventions.** In the design and delivery of humanitarian communication products, from basic posters to mobile apps, the target audience should be involved in the design of products and services in order to ensure maximum uptake and utilisation among the target audience.
- 8 Ask affected communities about what they need to know, not only what they need.** When assessing what communities need, humanitarian partners must also ask about what affected people need to know (i.e. information needs), not only what they want. These are different things. People in a camp may demand more food but may not know when and what time food distributions take place thereby reducing coverage and access substantially.
- 9 Dialogue helps manage community expectations and reduce and mitigate potential for existing and new conflicts.** The main challenge for addressing information needs of people across northern Iraq derives out of the multitude of languages, ethnicities and locations of IDPs and host communities. While the situation pre-crisis pointed at some tensions among different groups, the continuous presence of IDPs is likely exacerbate these tensions as displacement becomes protracted in many locations. Creating physical and media spaces for dialogue and exchange will be key to avoiding polarisation, victimization and politicisation of the current situation. Monitoring those narratives, and countering them as necessary will be essential.
- 10 Effective monitoring of CwC efforts.** Very often monitoring of humanitarian communications efforts is minimal or non-existent. This is both a programmatic challenge, and leaves data gaps for assessing cost-effectiveness of these interventions and their value for money. Making it difficult to justify funding CwC work.



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Khalaf, his daughter Nasdar and the rest of the family fled Sinjar and are now living in Kandala camp, northern Iraq. (TIRIL SKARSTEIN/NRC)

## ANNEX 5: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR NATIONAL GOVERNMENTS AND DONORS

### 1 Rapid funding, time is of the essence.

The UK's Department for International Development (DFID) Rapid Response Facility (RRF) is a ground-breaking development that enables pre-qualified partners, including media development organisations (i.e. specialists in local media and CwC), to access relief funding for 12 weeks within 72h once the RRF is activated. Other donors must develop similar rapid funding mechanisms that should also finance the information to and communication with disaster-affected communities during the immediate aftermath, and in the reconstruction and early recovery phases. Coordination among donors is key.

Similarly, the UN, through the ERF, should earmark a percentage of funds toward CwC activities. UNOCHA should build on its good work in creating CwC Coordinators, by ensuring that ERF money is earmarked to support CwC interventions.

### 2 The importance of partnerships.

Donors and national governments need to include local media and telecommunication companies as integral components within their early warning, disaster response and recovery and resilience strategies.

Translating similar objectives across sectors with different languages and objectives as well as brokering partnerships with media and telecommunications companies is crucial to maximize the coverage and impact of those strategies.

## ANNEX 6: RECOMMENDATIONS ON THE USE OF ITCS TO COMMUNICATE WITH COMMUNITIES

### 1 Calling home, restoring human networks.

The vast majority of IDPs interviewed wanted to know about their families and properties left behind and when they would be able to return. The ability to make phone calls and to keep in touch with separated family members and friends is vital, helps people better cope with their own trauma.

Restoring connectivity and communication networks must become a humanitarian priority. This requires holistic approach which includes: re-establishing mobile communication networks, supporting existing local media to resume operations and considering wind-up or battery-powered radios, mobile phones and solar chargers as critical elements in Non-Food Item (NFI) kits.

### 2 Understand and leverage existing ICT consumption habits.

The use of technology by affected communities is not only related to the availability of the tool but also to the consumption habits. Effective and reliable ICT mechanisms for communicating with communities can only be built if there is a clear understanding of the local ICT landscape. This includes conducting ICT assessments and develop research, monitoring and evaluation of humanitarian ICT initiatives that take into consideration the fact that, while people may have access to a certain tool (e.g. mobile phones), they may not use it the way we think they do (e.g. they may not use SMS or trust information coming through SMS). The most successful use of ICT is the one that relies on how people are already using a specific technology, and build upon already existing ICT consumption.

### 3 Talk to affected communities, don't spam them.

As more agencies think and start using SMS to communicate with populations of concern in Northern Iraq, the Guidelines for the Use of SMS in

Natural Disasters<sup>21</sup> must be the starting point for the aid community to look into how to use mobile and SMS as emergency communication tools.

One of Haiti's 'lesson-learned' is that 'humanitarian spam' is not effective. Indeed, communities across Port-au-Prince received multiple SMSs on a daily basis with similar, conflicting and most times, neither useful nor actionable information.

### 4 Partnerships and coordination with mobile phone companies are key.

Effective partnerships with mobile telecommunication companies is particularly crucial as their capacity to reach people across the geography, including the frontlines, is unique. In Northern Iraq the UN, in coordination with GSMA Disaster Response, is already in conversations with Korek and Asia Cell to establish a call center for IDPs.

Having well-established relationships among all sectors and actors involved, including Volunteer & Technical Communities (V&TCs), before emergencies improves the flow of information and coordination of relief efforts. There is a need to ensure that efforts are not only aligned to the needs of the communities but that they avoid duplication.

### 5 Use agile methodologies and human centred design approaches in building ICT solutions.

In the design and delivery of humanitarian ICT products, from basic SMS feedback systems to mobile apps, the target audience need to be involved in the design of products and services to maximise its impact and be able to adjust the new tools to the changing environment on the ground.

21 GUIDELINES FOR THE USE OF SMS IN NATURAL DISASTERS (FEBRUARY 2013), GSMA DISASTER RESPONSE, SOUKTEL AND QATAR FOUNDATION ([www.gsma.com/mobileforddevelopment/towards-a-code-of-conduct-guidelines-for-the-use-of-sms-in-natural-disasters](http://www.gsma.com/mobileforddevelopment/towards-a-code-of-conduct-guidelines-for-the-use-of-sms-in-natural-disasters))



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# ANNEX 7: SUMMARY OF FINDINGS IN ERBIL, DAHUK AND SULEYMANIYAH

## ERBIL

The Erbil governorate is currently hosting nearly 33,000 IDP families (around 170,000 people) mostly from Salah al-Din, Anbar and Ninewa.

The team consulted displaced population in the Baharka Camp which was initially set up in 2012 to serve as a transit site for Syrian refugees and remained unused until the current IDP crisis unfolded in August. Baharka is currently home to approximately 2,500 IDPs from different communities, including Arabs, Shabak, Kakai and Yazidis. The latter three have common ties with the wider Kurdish community, while all of the populations displaced in Baharka can speak Arabic.

The group that participated in the discussion (8-10 men and 10-15 women) was a mix of Shabak and Arab communities mostly displaced from Hamdaniya (Ninewa), about 20 km from Mosul. Some IDPs, particularly from Faluja (Anbar), said that they have been displaced up to four times in the

last two months. The majority of the men from Mosul stated they would return to Mosul if the situation stabilises while men from other areas, particularly Salah al-Din, stated they would not go back.

### INFORMATION CHANNELS

Most IDPs in Baharka referred to mobile phones as their main source to receive information updates and stay connected to their families. While all men indicated they have access to a functioning phone, women noted that only a few women have access to their own mobile phone, further elaborating that most of them access mobile phones through their husband or a male family member.

Korek and Asiacell were noted as the most used mobile operators with a few that subscribe to Zain.

Several men indicated that they access the Internet using their phone, mostly to use Facebook. However, it is worth noting that Facebook was generally not perceived as a trusted source of information.

### CURRENT INFORMATION SOURCES AND TYPE OF INFORMATION ACCESSED BY IDPS

SOURCE	TYPE OF INFO	LIMITATIONS
Head of sector (members of the community)	Distribution of vouchers near to the time of delivery of food	Information seems to be inaccurate and untimely. This is mainly due to the uncoordinated and unpredictable nature of most distributions.
Facebook (access appx 3 hrs a day)	Information from friends and family University related information e.g. exam times, registration, etc	Limited trust in these channels. "Media should be more honest and fair when reporting about the crisis." IDPs can only access the Internet through their mobile phone, but not everyone can afford the costs to buy Internet bundles. According to one of the interviewees, 15 MB of Internet bundle a day for a period of 20 days cost US \$5.
Mobile (text, voice, internet, radio)	Updates from friends and family News	
Radio (access through phones) – appx 13 channels	News Peshmerga progress against IS	



A woman carries a full water container through the Baharka displacement camp on the outskirts of Erbil (OCHA/IASON ATHANASIADIS).

### KNOWLEDGE OF SERVICES

***“We don’t know when we will get food... We only know we will get food when we see a truck arrive”***

#### MAN AT BAHARKA CAMP

As the time of the consultation, IDPs seemed to know little to nothing about services available in the camp. The Barzani Charity Foundation manages the Baharka camp and several other national and other international aid agencies such as NRC, UNICEF and Qandil are visible in the camp. However, there did not appear to be coordination and systematic provision of services or information to communities about the services from these aid providers.

“We’re not getting any information from anyone” said a male participant in one of the FGD. When asked whether communities are aware of agency activities, another man responded, “The UN does not speak to IDPs... Only the management does.”

### INFORMATION NEEDS

Regardless of the gender and ethnicity of the IDPs, the priority information needs were to have access to information about the situation back at home, the development of the conflict (ISIS movement and Peshmerga progress) and their immediate future (resettlement opportunities, shelter, cash assistance).

“We want to know when we can go back home; we want to know what is the UN’s plan for our future,” a man residing in Baharka pleaded.

Several families highlighted the need to have information regarding education for their children and whether countries, particularly the US and European countries, are accepting asylum seekers.

### PREFERRED SOURCES OF INFORMATION

The preferred source of information seems to be mobile phones. Many suggested installing billboards and complaints boxes to facilitate communication between IDPs and the humanitarian community as well as using loudspeakers for announcements.

Women recommended tent-to-tent communication as a way to ensure that vital information reaches as many people as possible. Television could be also an option, but at the moment there are no TVs in Baharka. Further, not everyone trusts television and media in general, as quoted: “information is always biased and too politicized.”

Overall in Baharka there appears to be an information vacuum. During the discussion both men and women indicated that there is limited or no information regarding when and where they will get their next meal. There were distributions, but families complained they didn’t know who was getting what, why some families were getting 3 rations while those that had 2 families living in the same tent only received one ration. There were rumours and misinformation within the camp, something that women particularly highlighted.

**Families are left without support to fulfil their basic and urgent needs. Where some services were available, families had little to no information about these services and their right to access these services.**



## ANNEXES



A man displaced from the Sinjar area sits outside his tent in an ad hoc camp in Dahuk governorate's Khanke village. (UNHCR/N. COLT)

## DAHUK

Dahuk is currently hosting the largest IDP population, over 500,000 people (Arab, Shabak, Kakai and Yazidi communities) mostly from Ninewa.

The team consulted communities living in Bajet Kandala as well as those residing in Tanahi School for Girls. Bajet Kandala is east of Pesh Khabour border, the main crossing point between Syria and Iraq and was established in 2012 to serve as a transit centre for Syrian refugees before onward transfer to camps or urban areas; it is currently hosting more than 11,000 IDPs from Ninewa alone.

### CURRENT INFORMATION SOURCES AND TYPE OF INFORMATION ACCESSED BY IDPS

SOURCE	TYPE OF INFO	LIMITATIONS
People at market	Distribution of vouchers near to the time of delivery of food	Patchy, sometimes contradictory
Mobile (text, voice)	Updates from friends and family	

Given the high incidences of communities in spontaneous or makeshift camps, the team also consulted displaced Yazidi families in the Tanahi School for Girls and IDPs hosted by the Sharya town in Dahuk. Nearly 2 weeks since their displacement, only the host community has assisted these communities.

The FGD group (23 men and 7 women – consulted separately) in Bajet Kandala consisted exclusively of members of the Yazidi communities of twelve different villages around Sinjar, in the north-west of Iraq (Ninewa region). They arrived in Bajet Kandala during the first week of August.

Approximately 23 members (15 men in Tanahi School and 8 women in the Shariya community) of the Yazidi community were consulted in Dahuk. IDPs hosted by the Shariya community benefit from a well-organised volunteer network. The Yazidi host community coordinate provisions to displaced IDPs currently residing in unfinished construction sites (where families have demarcated their family areas with bricks), schools and other available spaces.

The volunteers from the Shariya community indicated that initially 61,000 people arrived in the first week of August, during the initial attacks in Sinjar. This wave was dispersed and they are now hosting approximately 25,772 individuals (4,478 families) of which approximately 20 families are Kurdish Muslims. Approximately 90% of the families are from Sinjar. Displaced families have received some provisions from the Dahuk government particularly food and water, and the Barzani Foundation have provided them with hot meals.

The IDP communities in Bajet Kandala and Dahuk are deeply distressed, with many of its members reportedly having had close relatives, friends and neighbours either murdered or kidnapped by ISIS.

### INFORMATION ACCESS

Mobile phones remain the only communication means for the Yazidi community to stay connected with their families and friends in ISIS-controlled territory. In Bajet Kandala, there are three TVs available in the entire camp. Before the crisis, the most watched TV in and around Sinjar were Rudaw (Kurdish), Al-Sharqiya (Arabic) and Al Hurra Iraq (Arabic).

The Yazidi community indicated that people in Sinjar are unable to watch TV or listen to radio due to widespread destruction of communications infrastructure.

IDPs have limited access to the Internet through their phone due to economic constraints and poor network coverage. Mobile phones are also sometimes used to listen to radio, but it is not a widespread practice.

According to the men consulted in the school, approximately 90% of men have access to mobile phones and approximately 10% of women have access to mobile phones, though several men in the group hotly disputed this number stating that the 10% was an overestimation.

### INFORMATION NEEDS

The priority information need remains receiving information about family members who were unable to flee ISIS-controlled territory or have been kidnapped by ISIS.

Many said that it is critical to learn about safe places in other than camps where they can live with dignity and the exact locations where assistance is available.

Criteria and procedures to access assistance were also regarded as essential pieces of information.

Almost all men consulted in the Tanahi School indicated that their priority information need was to ascertain whether US or European countries are accepting asylum seekers. The entire group consisted of Yazidis from Shengal which used to live in the same area with Arabs. Since some Arabs supported the Islamic State in identifying Yazidis they do not see going back home as an option for providing security to their families.

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### CURRENT KNOWLEDGE OF SERVICES

Focus group discussions highlighted that IDPs have very poor knowledge of services available in the camp and the mandate of aid organizations on the ground.

“It’s only when there are children running, that we know there is something happening”, a man said adding that no concrete communication is available for informed decision-making.

Given the current vacuum of information in Bajet Kandala, many stated that they approach the camp administration to seek information on each and every matter, but they have little feedback from camp authorities.

### PREFERRED SOURCES OF INFORMATION

IDPs stated preferred and trusted information sources as the following:

- » Face-to-face with NGO workers
- » Community meetings
- » Community leaders
- » Mobile phones
- » Host community volunteers

Similar to Baharka camp, there was clearly an information vacuum with Yazidi families completely cut off from information. Families within the Shariya community receive some information from the host community, however it is often disjointed and inaccurate.

Families are completely relying on the good will of host families. While the host community has been quite generous in providing food there are still gaping holes in terms of meeting basic and urgent needs.

Affected communities are aware that the school year begins on 10 September but had no idea if schools would indeed open, given the large number of schools occupied by IDPs, or where they could send their children to school. They also had had no knowledge of government or UN/NGO plans for shelter/camp construction in other areas of Dahuk.



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**SULEYMANIYAH**

**CONSULTATION WITH DAHUK  
 GOVERNMENT AUTHORITY**

The team met with Mr. Havel Ahmedi the Emergency Cell representative in Dahuk who While acknowledging two-way communication was essential, emphasized the need to provide basic, survival provisions to affected families. He was also of the opinion that the Mayors' offices were regularly providing information to communities, assessing and monitoring their needs.

Suleymaniya currently hosts 15,000 IDPs from mostly Salah al-Din, Anbar, Dyala and Ninewa in spontaneous camps and host communities.

The team met with communities in Chamchamal Faaq Qadir School (Focus group with 15 men and 10 women – consultations conducted separately).

The displaced community who participated in the focus group discussion belong to the Shabak minority and are part of a larger group of 261 people (52 families) who fled from Mosul and Bartallah.

Women indicated that they fled due to the fear of sexual exploitation by ISIS fighters who particularly target young women, widows, etc. The women indicated that if they follow laws imposed by ISIS, those women who stayed behind should be safe. Women indicated that neighbours have looted their family homes. Families in Chamchamal school indicated that at least five families stay in one room citing lack of privacy as an issue.

Most families are from Mosul or the Ninewa plains and were initially displaced in June, then displaced again in August. Many families are currently residing in schools and other public areas, construction sites, etc. Families reiterated lack of access to basic services including food, water and sanitation facilities. The women indicated that a number of people have gotten food poisoning and many are unaware of access to health facilities. The Shabak families are relying exclusively on the host community to provide basic services.

Women also said that the Radio Station Rega had done two assessments in the community.



17 displaced Iraqis from Sinjar pack into the back of a pickup truck on their way from the Syrian border crossing of Peshkabour in the Kurdistan region on 13 August 2014. This family, like thousand others, was heading to the Turkish border, in hopes of leaving Iraq (UNHCR/N. COLT).

**MAIN WAYS TO FIND INFORMATION**

Mobile phones are the most immediate means to seek information and stay in touch with families and friends back home, with most IDPs being Korek and Asiaccell subscribers.

There is no TV available in the school and Internet is accessible through one mobile phone only. Many have mobile phones enabled to access the Internet but do not have the money to pay for the service.

Some listen to the radio via their mobile phones, including Somar FM, Rega Radio and Erbil Radio.

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When asked whether they had access to information channels many women sited phones (accessible via their husbands and other male family members). Few women had their own mobile phones.

It appears that committees consisting of local authorities and local charity organizations pay irregular visits to assess the needs and distribute assistance. Though there is no prior communication to notify of the visit, these committees are referred to as information providers.

**INFORMATION NEEDS**

IDPs said that their most urgent information need is learning what is going to happen in terms of shelter, assistance and education for their children. “Our needs

are not only food and water, we want to know about our future”, a retired headmaster said.

Most of the people consulted showed great concern regarding the lack of information on the cash assistance promised by the central government, as savings are quickly depleting and access to livelihood opportunities is a very limited option. “I lost 250 sheep, I lost the investment of a lifetime,” said one man now living in the school.

According to parents, children continue to ask questions about going back to school and why they are not going back home. Some men said that they have lied to their children when escaping. “We are going for a picnic (on the mountain)”, some parents told their children.



## ANNEXES

## CURRENT KNOWLEDGE OF SERVICES

***“We’re not sure what will happen to us”***

## WOMAN IN CHAMCHAMAL

There is very little knowledge of assistance targeting IDPs and public services that are available through already existing structures such as hospitals. This community is fairly cut off from information, due to limited communications means and opportunities to stay connected with the “outside world”. Women seem to have far less access to information than men, who said they keep information from women because “they do not want to burden them with sad news.”

## PREFERRED SOURCES OF INFORMATION

IDPs stated that mobile phones are the preferred communication channel through which they wish to receive humanitarian information, followed by meetings with relevant actors and the Internet (though at the moment only one phone has regular Internet access).

Women in Chamchamal were particularly vulnerable as they had no information about food, water, shelter and education services for their children. Women indicated a general state of anxiety and helplessness as they had no access to some services, limited access to others, and overall no information about assistance.

It was indicated by the local government and UNHCR that IDP populations can access services available to all people residing in KRG, and that there are special services available to IDPs; however, communities consulted had little to no information about these services.

The Emergency Cell Coordinator in Suleymaniyah agreed that two-way communication with communities was limited and that he sees the importance of information sharing. He indicated that the IDP families were struggling to integrate into the community given that they are not aware of services available, government regulations in the areas (including traffic laws).

The Mayor of Chamchamal indicated that local media provide information to host communities and further elaborated that information to host communities are passed through Mosques, local TV, radio and the Mayor’s office website.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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## PHOTOS

UNOCHA, UNHCR, NRC AND IOM

## COVER PHOTO

While the top preferred sources of information among Iraqis are TV, radio and word of mouth, displacement has resulted in loss of access to the sources of information and entertainment. To date, IDPs are mostly relying on mobile phones to keep connected to family members left behind and to follow security developments. In the picture, displaced families at the Pesh Khabour border crossing into the Dohuk Governorate. As of 28 August, over 121,000 IDPs transited via Syria and crossed into the Kurdistan Region through the Pesh Khabour border since 6 August, according to UNHCR (IOM).



