

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

DESK REVIEW

Authors: Roger Guiu, Lahib Higuel and Naresh Singh.
Middle East Research Institute.

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Middle East Research Institute
1186 Dream City, Erbil
Kurdistan Region, Iraq

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<http://www.meri-k.org>
info@meri-k.org

Table of contents

1. Introduction.....	5
1.1. Background and context.....	5
1.2. Scope of the study.....	6
1.3. Report outline.....	7
2. Rationale for a programmatic approach to resilience.....	8
2.1. Contextual driving forces for adopting resilience-building.....	8
2.2. The stance of the international community: from humanitarian assistance to resilience-based development.....	9
2.3. Previous experiences of former refugee camps turned into vulnerable settlements in Kurdistan.....	10
2.4. Other programmes for resilience-building in crisis-affected communities.....	11
3. Framework for assessing resilience.....	14
4. Review of the data available to formulate a livelihoods baseline.....	15
4.1. Host community in the Kurdistan Region.....	16
4.1.1. Household assessments available.....	16
4.1.2. Evaluating the baseline prior to the crisis.....	17
4.1.3. Evaluating post-crisis changes in the livelihoods baseline.....	32
4.2. Syrian refugees living in a camp setting.....	40
4.2.1. In-camp assessments available.....	40
4.2.2. Evaluating the current baseline.....	40
4.2.3. Drawing comparisons with refugees living within the host community.....	55
5. Conclusion: how do livelihoods in Syrian refugee camps compare to those of their host community?.....	58

1. Introduction

This desk review is undertaken as a foundation for a feasibility assessment for resilience-building in Syrian refugee camps and their neighbouring host communities in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. The overall aim of the assessment is to explore ways in which the response to the Syrian refugee crisis can move from provision of humanitarian assistance solely to a support of long term self-reliance among the refugee and host communities equally. In broad lines the assessment aims to investigate:

- Key resilience-building requirements for in-camp Syrian refugees and their neighbouring host communities.
- Obstacles and threats to resilience as well as vulnerabilities that may need targeted assistance.
- Costs required for the interventions of camp and host community resilience.

This desk review aims to lay the ground for the fieldwork by (i) analysing the context in the Kurdistan Region and its shocks and stresses; (ii) introducing the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework which will form the base for evaluating livelihoods programming; (iii) evaluating the pre-crisis and current post-crisis livelihoods baseline of the host community; and (iv) evaluating the baseline of the Syrian refugee community in camps.

1.1. Background and context

The conflict in Syria that is now well into its fourth year has caused vast human suffering and massive displacements both within Syria and in its neighbouring countries. In Iraq the number of Syrian refugees have reached nearly a quarter of a million, of which 96% have sought refuge in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI). Approximately 100,000 refugees are hosted in the governorates of Erbil and Duhok respectively and 30,000 in Sulaimania. Nearly 40% of the refugees are hosted in camps while 60% are residing in non-camp settings, mainly in the urban areas¹.

Over the course of four years people have been displaced to Iraq in several waves and for different reasons relating to the conflict. While some fled Syria as a direct consequence of violent conflict, others left due to economic hardship caused by the conflict. Although occasional returns to certain parts of Syria have been noted, the overall trend of number of refugees has been increasing rather than decreasing, and with no reversal in sight.

When the influx of Syrian refugees started, Iraq and Kurdistan in particular enjoyed relative stability and economic progress. People seeking refuge thus entered a benign environment with both the government (KRG) and host community willing to support the refugee population. However, the situation changed with the Islamic State's advances in Iraq since June 2014, when

¹ UNHCR 2015. Registration trends for Syrian persons of concern. Iraq consolidated statistics, 15 March 2015.

large parts of the western and northern territories of the country, including the second biggest city Mosul, were occupied. The deteriorating security situation unleashed a severe displacement crisis within Iraq that has now reached 2.7 million, with close to 1 million displaced in the governorates of KRI². This has set the KRG under a lot of strain, especially when it comes to provision of public services. The crisis also had a negative impact on the labour market as foreign investment in the KRI drastically decreased and competition for jobs increased due to the large inflow of people.

Apart from the sudden increase in the Region's population due to IDP and refugee influx, the KRG's ability to support and provide basic public services for everyone is severely restricted due to a set of stressing factors including budget disputes with the federal government, decreasing oil prices and donor fatigue in the international humanitarian community.

The budget crisis between Baghdad and Erbil dates back well before the intrusion of ISIS in mid-2014. The 17% of the federal budget that KRG is entitled to was withheld already from January 2014 based on allegations that the KRG was exporting oil independently from Baghdad and due to lack of transparency in its oil revenues. Not until December did the two parties reach an agreement for the region's oil production and revenue sharing. However, three months later public servant salaries in the KRI are still in arrears³.

Adding to this the decrease in global oil prices, which dropped from \$75 to \$55 per barrel only in December 2014, entailed a 30% fall in revenue from the beginning of the year⁴. As the oil sector provides more than 90% of the government revenue, its impact on the budget is severe.

The national and regional economic challenges facing the KRG have strongly limited its ability to respond to the displacement crisis. The international community has provided financial as well as material support but serious gaps in funding exist. Of half a billion US dollars required by the UNHCR only 50% is funded. Simultaneously donors are reluctant to further support. For example Saudi Arabia that donated \$500 million in 2014 announced that it was a one off contribution.⁵

1.2. Scope of the study

The study covers two different geographical and social elements:

- **Syrian refugee camps.** In particular, the scope focus on four specific camps: Domiz and Akre in Duhok governorate; Qushtapa in Erbil governorate; and Arbat in Sulaimania governorate. These camps were chosen by UNDP in collaboration with UNHCR and the inter-sector coordination group. They were selected for piloting a resilience approach based on various criteria, such as the stability of the refugee population, its proximity to urban centres, the higher economic opportunities, and the investments already made in resilience.

² IOM, 2015. Displacement tracking matrix, round XVII. March 2015

³ Financial Times, 2014. Baghdad and Erbil end months-long dispute over oil revenues. 2 December 2014.

⁴ Middle East Research Institute, 2014. Iraq's federal budget: some insights. February 2015.

⁵ UNCHR, 2014. Iraq factsheet, September 2014.

- **Immediate host community.** For the purpose of livelihoods programming, the evolution of the Syrian refugee community is linked to the dynamics within the host community. Hence, the current assessment also expands to include the immediate villages and towns next to the Syrian refugee camps. In practical terms, the scope is limited to the closest districts in which the camp is located, which are in almost all cases rural areas.

The focus on resilience building in camps rather than refugees residing in the host community has several reasons. Considering the UNHCR policy to alternatives to camps, it is important to find pathways out of the dependency that camps tend to engender. Secondly, the magnitude of the current crisis affects society as a whole as infrastructure and public service provisions are severely stretched. Treating refugee camps separately from the national system thus runs the risk of creating discrepancies with the host community and social tensions. As will be shown through the desk review, camps with their own parallel structures often enjoy better public service provisions than the host community itself. Refugees residing in camps also tend to be more dependent on support from the international community and, considering the scarcity of international funding, resilience of camps becomes even more pertinent.

The following table summarise the camp locations within their immediate host community:

Camp	Camp Population	Host Community Districts	District Population	Governorate
Domiz	49,045	Sumel Duhok	162,058 323,400	Duhok
Akre	1,442	Akre	152,214	
Qushtapa	6,285	Dashti Hewler	203,072	Erbil
Arbat	5,878	Sharazur Darbandikhan	58,536 43,297	Sulaimania

1.3. Report outline

This report is organised as follows:

- Section 2 discusses the **contextual rationale** that underpins resilience-building for Syrian refugee camps in the Kurdistan Region.

- Section 3 briefly introduces the **sustainable livelihoods framework** applied to evaluate resilience of the communities.
- Section 4 provides an **evaluation of the livelihoods baseline** for the host community pre- and post-crisis as well as for the Syrian refugee community in camps.
- Section 5 concludes with a summary and **comparison of the livelihoods system** of both host and Syrian community.

2. Rationale for a programmatic approach to resilience

The rationale underpinning the feasibility study on resilience-building for Syrian refugee camps and host community is driven by three main factors discussed below:

- i. The driving contextual forces affecting the sustainability of the camp settings in Iraq;
- ii. The stance taken by the international community on providing feasible alternatives to camps;
- iii. Existing previous experiences of former refugee camps in the Kurdistan region endogenously turned into vulnerable semi-permanent settlements.
- iv. Experience from other programmes for resilience-building in crisis-affected communities.

2.1. Contextual driving forces for adopting resilience-building

Internal factors of the crisis in Iraq as well as external factors are reinforcing the push for a shift from a pure humanitarian response to a more nuanced development-oriented response. These factors are mainly summarised from the contextual background introduced above:

- **Diminishing aid funds** from the donors and the international community, as pressure increases to provide further support for the internal displacement crisis of Iraq.
- **Expected protracted stay of the refugees** in Iraq and Kurdistan, as there is consensus that the Syrian crisis will still endure. Even if the violent conflict recedes, the ability to pursue the former livelihoods for the refugees is severely undermined.
- **Lack of a solid financial basis of the KRG** to match the humanitarian support that refugees are receiving currently from the international community. In this sense, the KRG cannot substitute for the humanitarian partners but capacity-building for the KRG and for the society needs to be promoted.

2.2. The stance of the international community: from humanitarian assistance to resilience-based development

As the international humanitarian community fears the longevity of the protracted conflict in Syria, key UN agencies have recognized the conflict as a simultaneous humanitarian as well as a development crisis. With over 7 million displaced within Syria and over 3 million refugees in neighbouring countries the crisis is seriously challenging social, economic and political conditions in the host communities and countries, which may not only halt but also reverse development gains. To this end the Regional United Nations Development Group recommended a resilience-based development response to the Syrian crisis⁶. The Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan (3RP) for 2015-16 thus has a resilience component in addition to the refugee component. Its aim is not to replace humanitarian assistance but to complement with activities that reduce long-term dependency among beneficiaries and supports independent and self-sustaining development. The resilience approach has three strategic objectives:

- i. **Coping:** individuals, communities, authorities, institutions and systems are strengthened in their ability to cope with shocks and stresses without complete or partial collapse.
- ii. **Recovering:** individuals, communities, authorities, institutions and systems are able to recover from setbacks and return to prior levels of development and prosperity, or better.
- iii. **Transforming:** individuals, communities, authorities, institutions and systems learn lessons from coping and recovering to build back better, and so are strengthened and transformed in their ability to accelerate development and to enhance their ability to prevent or deal with future crises.

This also works in line with the UNHCR policy on alternatives to camps⁷, which recognizes that camps tend to have a negative impact over the long term, for all concerned. While camps engender dependency and weaken the ability of refugees to manage their own lives they also tend to distort local economies and development plans. Although camps may be essential as immediate emergency response in order to provide protection they also limit rights and freedoms of refugees. Alternatives to camps should therefore remove barriers to leading an independent life and enhance prospects of normality as members of the community. This includes refugees living in urban as well as rural areas.

Both of these approaches of resilience-based development and alternative to camps policy require convergence with national development planning, may it be infrastructure, education or health services. A comprehensive approach is more sustainable as it avoids duplication that arises from parallel structures serving refugees and instead contributes to lasting impact that also benefits the host community. This entails refraining from camps in the first instance and making refugees an integral part of the host community system, or phasing out existing camps by turning them into

⁶ UNDP, 2013. Position paper: a resilience-based development response to the Syria crisis. December 2013

⁷ UNHCR 2014. Policy on Alternatives to camps. July 2014.

sustainable settlements that are linked to local infrastructure, economy and public service provision.

2.3. Previous experiences of former refugee camps turned into vulnerable settlements in Kurdistan

The KRI is not new to the experience of refugees. During the Iran-Iraq war in the 1980's thousands of Iranian Kurds sought refuge in Iraq and during the 1990's Turkish Kurds fled government crackdown and settled in the Kurdistan Region. The majority of both these communities remain in the KRI. The camp settlements where they live can serve as an indicator of the extent to which refugees previously have managed to become self-reliant.

What these refugee communities have in common with the recent wave of Syrian refugees is that they are all, to a large extent, Kurds. This has made their integration in the KRI easier as the host community views them as brothers and sisters. There are few or no tensions with the surrounding communities, and government authorities in general hold a positive attitude.

The Iranian Kurds settled in Al-Tash camp in the Anbar province in 1982, where they lived until the security situation started to deteriorate after the regime fall in 2003. By 2005 all had been relocated to the Kawa camp in Erbil governorate and the Barika camp in Sulaimania with the assistance of the UNHCR.

In 2011 the Danish Immigration Service carried out a fact-finding mission on the Iranian refugees in the KRI⁸. They found that above all, the main barrier to a stable life was differences in legal status, which in turn affects access to sustainable livelihoods. The fact that refugees cannot obtain Iraqi citizenship hinders them from obtaining permanent government jobs. Instead they take casual jobs, run their own small businesses or are employed on short-term contracts in the public sector. Secure sources of income are therefore not common amongst the refugees and keep many in poverty. Although access to education is free of charge many families cannot afford to have their children in school. Almost half of the children in secondary school age work to support their families.

Iranian refugees are not as mobile as normal Iraqi citizens. Holding a KRG ID-card, they can move freely within the region but not travel to the rest of the country, let alone travel abroad. Refugees can also not buy land or property unless they can register in the name of an Iraqi citizen.

Major differences have been noted between the camps. While the Kawa camp is similar to local villages with good facilities including paved roads, a health clinic, a primary school and good sanitation facilities, Barika camp suffers from bad infrastructure with houses that have had little maintenance since they were built in 2004 and roads in the camp are not paved. Residents complain that they need to pay for electricity, which used to be free. The camp lacks a health care

⁸ Danish Immigration Service 2011. Iranian Kurdish Refugees in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI). March 2011

centre and only a primary school exists. On the other hand children can access both kindergarten and secondary school education in the neighbouring community.

People in both camps feel abandoned by the UNHCR and many are frustrated with unfulfilled promises of resettlement. Many seek to migrate abroad and many families are left vulnerable as young males leave.

In case of the Turkish Kurds⁹ who fled government repression in the mid-1990's many finally settled in the Makhmur camp in the Erbil governorate in 1998. The camp population is now estimated to be around 11,000 and is largely run by the inhabitants themselves.

The camp which is more like an isolated gated settlement or village runs its own schools, small businesses and shops and there are also green houses. However, residents complain about the lack of proper health care facilities and clean water is a continuous problem.

It is estimated that around 2,000 residents are daily labourers in the city of Makhmur and Erbil. Many young people study outside the camp and a few have entered universities in Kurdistan.

As late as 2011 the UNHCR was granting cash assistance on a case by case basis to the most vulnerable groups in the camp as well as conducted protective and social activities for women and youth through two implementing partners.

Although the camps have existed for over a decade and turned into semi-permanent settlements, few systematically targeted livelihoods activities have been carried out with the aim of making the populations more self-reliant. Especially in the case of the Iranian refugees it is evident that the withdrawal of external aid has made people more vulnerable. Furthermore, there are no livelihoods assessments carried out on these camps that would allow comparison with the host community.

2.4. Other programmes for resilience-building in crisis-affected communities

The concept of resilience-building has been envisaged for the whole of Iraq as part of UNDP's **Iraq Crisis Response and Resilience Programme (ICRRP)**¹⁰. Its key elements involve the support of sustainable forms of livelihoods, improve the institutional emergency response capacity and improve performance of justice and protection mechanisms. The programming aimed to achieve the following outputs:

- i. *Crisis response coordination, management and mechanisms institutionalised.* This supports federal and regional governments through generating and sharing knowledge for better planning, such as assessing the areas of displacement origin or mapping social tensions.

⁹ Swiss and Finnish Immigration Services 2012. Report on Joint Finnish-Swiss Fact-Finding Mission to Amman and the Kurdish Regional Government (KRG) Area, May 10-22, 2011.

¹⁰ UNDP, 2014. Iraq crisis response and resilience programme. November 2014.

- ii. *Improved participatory decentralised basic service delivery, institutional responsiveness and accountability.* Promoting participation tools is important in order to ensure that communities are able to highlight the main barriers to their development and help shape the responses.
- iii. *Displaced population groups and crisis-affected host communities benefit from livelihoods stabilisation and sustainable livelihoods opportunities.* This prioritises interventions that support income generation, strengthen labour markets and increase vocational training opportunities for both displaced population and host community.
- iv. *Protection mechanisms strengthened for vulnerable communities, specifically women and youth.* As part of a broader action on rule of law strengthening and access to justice, projects here target specific challenges emerged from the crisis affecting the safety of the community.
- v. *Strengthened social cohesion through dialogue and capacity building of local and national actors and communities.* It aims to build capacities of local authorities to manage possible tensions through actions such as awareness raising within communities or participatory approaches to prioritise interventions through key community leaders.

Another case of resilience-building and early recovery involves Syria and its prolonged internal conflict. The **Syria Emergency Assistance for the Restoration and Stabilisation of Livelihoods**¹¹ aimed to strengthen the resilience of the Syrian people to cope with the effects of the current unrest and unable the livelihoods that were disrupted. The framework for this programming involved partnerships between local authorities; NGOs for community mobilisation and participatory monitoring; the private sector that can operate in some fields related to livelihoods development; and other UN agencies that cover areas affecting livelihoods. This programming sought the following outputs combining emergency response and early recovery:

- i. *Emergency employment opportunities created for improved service delivery and repair of basic community infrastructure.* This looked to cover for rising unemployment and the destruction of infrastructure, providing cash injections and short term emergency jobs.
- ii. *Emergency support for restoration and stabilisation of disrupted livelihoods provided.* As many displaced households have left their livelihoods asset base behind, including savings, support is provided through basic items and restoring the markets that can provide for the needs.
- iii. *Emergency support provided for vulnerable groups with special attention to female-headed households and people with disabilities.* This involves, on one side, emergency employment for women in areas of their expertise to generate quick earnings and, on the other side, rehabilitation cycle for persons with disabilities.

¹¹ UNDP, 2013. Emergency assistance for the restoration and stabilization of livelihoods for people affected by the crisis in Syria. May 2013.

- iv. *National and local capacities for community resilience enhanced.* In order to promote the capacities of people and institutions to cope with the crisis, focus is put on making civil organisations able to engage in emergency responses and promote social cohesion.
- v. *Coordination systems for emergency livelihoods enhanced.* To ensure effectiveness of the above programming, recovery efforts would be mainstreamed in all technical working groups and clusters operating in the Syrian crisis.

Finally, another initiative which shared similar challenges and aims with the resilience-building approach discussed here is the UNDP Chad project on **Enhancing resilience to reduce vulnerability and aid dependency in the Sila Region**¹². This framework aimed to address key elements hindering resilience in this African region, which are the development of human capital, the development of rural areas, and the promotion of governance and rule of law. Specific outputs for the programming are:

- i. *Communities have access to basic social services such as health, education, water and sanitation.* This implies strengthening local government capacity for service delivery as well as improving the actual provision of services and their quality.
- ii. *Natural resource management practices are improved and conflict over land rights are prevented.* As natural resources were a key element of conflict, there is a need to build capacity among local people to enable them to build and maintain investments in soil and water as well as to enable local institutions to manage water disputes. Promoting clean energy is another key element.
- iii. *Community households have better access to inputs and produce value-added products.* To address the lack of diverse livelihoods, this aims to develop value chains where small-scale producers have a comparative advantage—by improving access to inputs and technical knowledge, introducing improved techniques in farming, strengthening commercialisation capacity, supporting micro-enterprises, etc.
- iv. *Local level mechanisms for prevention, protection and response to climate change and natural disasters are established and operational.* Disaster risk reduction is to be achieved through helping to create early warnings, contingency planning, decentralising capacities and resources, etc.
- v. *Public service delivery, rule of law and security is enhanced in targeted areas.* This puts focus on re-establishing key government functions at local and community level for institutional resilience, through logistical and technical support as well as putting in place data collection structures.

¹² UNDP, 2012. Enhancing resilience to reduce vulnerability and aid dependency in the Dar Sila region: a New Deal for crisis prevention and peace-building in Eastern Chad.

- vi. *Community participation in governance mechanisms is strengthened.* To facilitate the ownership of the governance processes and the delivery of mechanisms, it focus to create partnerships between community-based organisations and local government authorities.

The funding modality is an important characteristic of the programming. In this sense, the programmes explained above mainly rely on funding through the country appeal, such as the Strategic Response Plan in the case of Iraq. The framework for Chad puts forward an interesting mechanism, as it constitutes a Multi-Donor Resilience Trust Fund. The trust would combine implementation through government entities, civil society, private sector and United Nations. A key element highlighted is the fact that it engages governmental stakeholders in the process through its steering committee or technical oversight committee.

3. Framework for assessing resilience

The basic idea of resilience-building, as approached by UNDP¹³, consists on strengthening the capacity of households to withstand shocks and stresses, recover from such stresses and participate with the institutions to transform towards livelihoods' sustainability. In practical terms, the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework¹⁴ suggests that a more resilient livelihoods system would be achieved by:

- **Building up people's asset base.** Resilience is dependent on facilitating households to grow their assets, as they are the means to better income or well-being, enhanced food security, or reduced vulnerability. The relation between resilience and asset base appears in many ways. For instance, a household's ability to escape from poverty is critically dependent upon its access to different assets, as those with more assets tend to have greater range of diverse strategies to secure their livelihoods. In addition, having a greater asset endowment implies more influence to improve policies and institutions. Finally, those with a smaller asset base are the most vulnerable in the event of shocks as households tend to rely on negative coping strategies that deplete their asset base.
- **Transforming public structures and policies.** These elements have a great impact on the potential to build resilience within a system. For instance, they may help cushion the impact of external shocks through facilitating access to assets or through extending social safety nets to particular vulnerable groups. On the contrary, some institutional and policy elements can be the reason for social exclusion of the poor and minorities. In essence, however, without working institutions, services go undelivered, markets do not function and people's vulnerability increases.

To inform livelihoods programming in the areas above, the first step is to understand the current baseline of the communities. The Sustainable Livelihoods Framework takes into consideration the following components to build the baseline. These components encompass the means through

¹³ UNDP, 2013. Position paper: a resilience-based development response to the Syria crisis. December 2013.

¹⁴ DFID, 1999. Sustainable livelihoods guidance sheets.

which households are able to achieve their desired livelihood outcomes within a vulnerability context.

- 1) **Assets**, or capital endowments, that the households possess:
 - a) Human Capital: household size, level of education, available skills, labour force participation, age dependency ratio, health status—particularly disability and chronic diseases.
 - b) Social and Political Capital: social fabrics and networks, including support from friends and relatives, ability to influence and participate in decision-making, gender roles, legal rights and entitlements.
 - c) Physical Capital: housing and shelter status, household assets, use of water supply system and sanitation, transportation infrastructure and telecommunications.
 - d) Financial Capital: salaries, livestock, remittances, access to credit, support from social safety nets, food security.
 - e) Natural Capital: landholding, food security and agriculture, access to common resources, land use, environmental degradation.
- 2) **Livelihood strategies**, in particular, the combination of activities and choices that people make to achieve their goals, such as employment, engagement in productive activities, asset allocation strategies, participation in the market to obtain goods, etc.
- 3) **Public structures and policies**, which include the existence of proper institutions, legislation and policies. In particular, it considers the extent of public goods provision to the population based on a sustainable use of the resources.

4. Review of the data available to formulate a livelihoods baseline

The following sections aim to use existing socio-economic datasets for Iraq or the Kurdistan Region in different moments in time to evaluate in quantitative terms, where possible, three different elements: (i) the livelihoods baseline of the host community around the Syrian refugee camps prior to the crisis and conflict; (ii) changes in this baseline due to external shocks and stresses, mainly the influx of Syrian refugees and internally displaced families as well as budget constraints in the public sector; and (iii) the livelihoods baseline of the Syrian population living in the selected four camps in order to understand any livelihoods gap between both communities.

The different data sources and elements evaluated are discussed below, starting with the host community in Kurdistan and following with the Syrian refugee community living in camps.

4.1. Host community in the Kurdistan Region

The sections below aim to (i) present the data available relevant to the immediate host community for the refugee camps in the Kurdistan Region, (ii) evaluate the livelihoods baseline for this community pre-2013, and (iii) evaluate the new current baseline post-crisis to understand the main vulnerabilities.

4.1.1. Household assessments available

The livelihoods baseline discussed below draws from the data in several surveys and assessments already available for Iraq and with enough disaggregated data for the governorates and districts in the Kurdistan Region. The datasets are complemented where necessary with additional literature.

For drawing the baseline for the host community prior to 2013, when the impact of the Syrian refugees was still not significant and the conflict in Iraq was not extended, the following assessments are used, which offer statistically significant data at the regional level:

- *World Bank, CSO, KRSO, 2008. Iraq Household Socio-Economic Survey.* With field data compiled during all 2007, this comprehensive survey covers topics related to food procurement, household characteristics, labour market, income sources and provision of public services. The assessment offers the data per governorate and per type of livelihood (urban, semi-urban and rural). District-level data was unavailable and hence, for the purpose of this review, data at governorate level but specific for rural livelihoods has been used.
- *UNICEF, 2012. Iraq Multi-indicator cluster survey.* With field data compiled during all 2011, this thematic assessment focuses on health status and practices in particular of children and women, but also provides a baseline for basic household characteristics immediately before the crisis.
- *KRSO, 2014. Labour Force Survey for Kurdistan Region.* With field data compiled during all 2012, this thematic assessment focuses on the employment characteristics. District-level data was unavailable and hence, for the purpose of this review, data at governorate level but specific for rural livelihoods has been used.

For drawing a post-crisis baseline for the host community, the following assessment is used:

- *World Bank, February 2015. Kurdistan Region of Iraq: economic and social impact assessment of the Syrian conflict and ISIS crisis.* The assessment collected data from multiple existing grey literature and from a field visit in November 2014 in order to assess impacts and investments needs on the key public services (education, health, food systems, energy, etc.) after the conflict in Iraq and the arrival of near 2 million IDPs and Syrian refugees.
- *REACH Initiative, March 2015. Host community needs assessment.* With field data compiled in February 2015, the assessment provides baseline data at household level for several sectors, mainly education, livelihoods, basic services and social cohesion. The data at district

level is statistically significant at 90% confidence interval, while data at governorate level is significant at 95% level.

4.1.2. Evaluating the baseline prior to the crisis

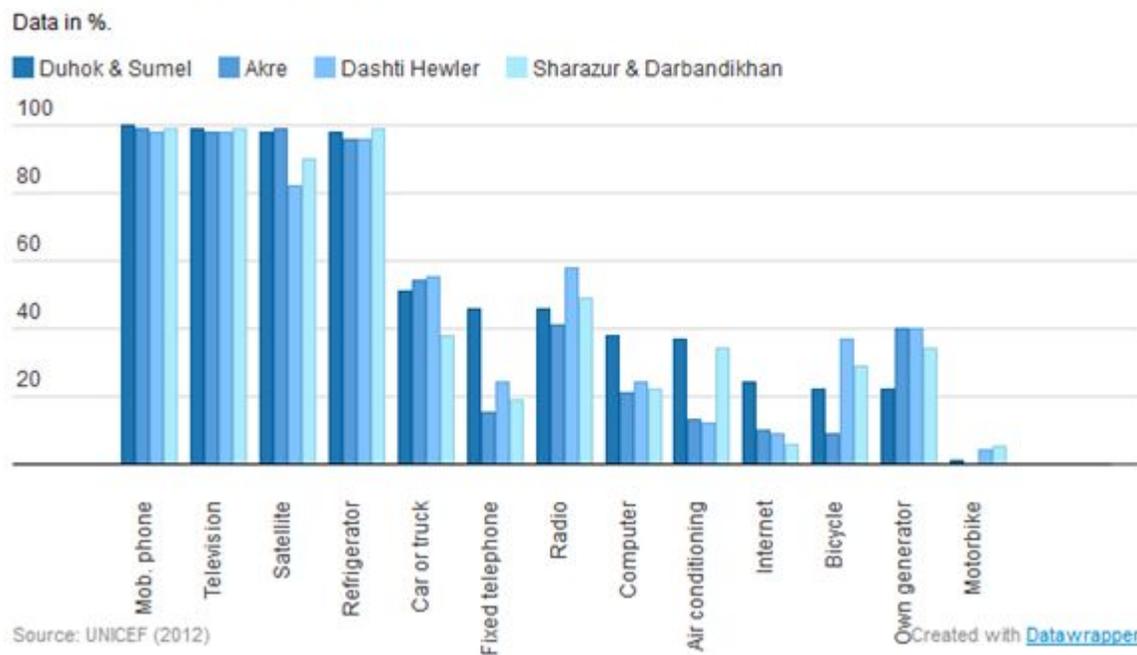
Drawing from the data available in the previous reports, the sections below aim to define the livelihoods baseline of the immediate host community prior to the arrival of Syrian refugees and the conflict in Iraq. The host community here consists of those regions and districts where the selected Syrian refugee camps are located, which were defined in Section 1.2. The data is organised under the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework previously introduced: (i) assets, (ii) livelihood strategies, and (iii) public structures and policies.

Assets: Physical Capital

- *Housing characteristics.* A safe shelter is determined by the quality and durability of the materials by which it is built. In this sense, without significant difference between districts, slightly more than 90% of the houses in Sumel, Duhok, Dashti Hewler, Darbandikhan and Sharazur are constructed with cement blocks. Only in Akre the ratio was lower (77%). The rest of the houses are built either of clay or stones with mud, less durable materials. This proportion holds independently of the gender and education level of the household head.
- *House and land ownership.* Overall, 3 out of 4 families in these districts owned the house in which they live, with very little variation between locations. For those families who do not own the house, less than half of them pay a rent; the rest live in the house for free—either through an agreement with the owner or without agreement. Only in Dashti Hewler there are more families paying rent than being exempt of rent. These proportions are practically the same for male and female-headed households, but the proportion of people who rent the house rather than own it increases with the education level of the household head. Information on land ownership is not available, although discussions with key informants revealed that it is frequent that houses are built illegally on public land.
- *Access and use of water and sanitation.* Regarding the main source of water, more than 90% of the households in the districts are connected to their own individual tap in the public network. Only the districts in Sulaimania present a different situation: in Sharazur, the percentage decreases to 75%, while in Darbandikhan only 16% have water pipe connection. For most of the families not connected, the access is provided through a communal point to the public network or, in less cases, water is fetched from a water spring. Regarding sanitation and sewage disposal, only in Sharazur and Darbandikhan people reported to have the wastewater canalised through a system (87%). The majority of households in the other districts were using a septic tank. Finally, regarding sanitary utilities, virtually all households reported having an individual water closet, with only a handful of families sharing the facilities with others.

- *Availability of fuel for cooking and heating.* Virtually all families in the region use bottled liquefied gas as the primary source for cooking fuel. The usual price for a canister of gas is around 20,000 IQD. Regarding heating fuel, kerosene is the primary source for 70% of the families, while the rest of households rely on wood. There are no significant differences between governorates.
- *Roads and accesses.* The only data available comes from the World Bank's IHSES. The quality of the road system in rural areas differs per governorate. Erbil has the highest percentage of rural households connected to a paved road (34%), followed by Duhok (23%) and Sulaimania (6%).
- *Asset ownership.* The most frequent owned household assets reported by households include television, refrigerator, mobile and, in many cases, a satellite system for the television. It is noteworthy to say that the possession of a car is not widespread in rural areas as, on average, less than half of families have one. Differences between districts are small and usually limited to minor items such as radios, bikes or phones. It is possible to draw some trends of the assets endowment of families between the survey showed in Figure 1, UNICEF'S MICS of 2012, and the World Bank's IHSES of 2007. In this sense, the possession of a satellite system has increased the most, followed by refrigerators. Also, the possession of either a computer or air conditioning was significantly marginal in 2007. Finally, cars were owned only by a third of families, on average, as compared to near 50% currently.

Figure 1: Ownership of assets per household



Assets: Human Capital

- *Household size and composition.* The average size of a family in these districts is 6.5 members, with the median established at 6. The district of Akre has the largest size, with 8.2

members, and Darbandikhan the lowest, with 4.9. Near 9% of the households are female-headed, with little variation between locations. In particular, however, female-headed households tend to have a lower educational level than male-headed households as showed in Table 1, highlighting the potential vulnerability of these families.

Table 1: Distribution of household heads by education

Data in %.

Education level	Male-headed	Female-headed
None	30	82
Primary education	40	14
Secondary or beyond	30	4
Total	100	100

Districts included: Sumel, Duhok, Akre, Dashti Hewler, Darbandikhan and Sharazur. Note: results for female-headed households are only significant at 90% interval.

Source: UNICEF (2012)

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- *Age dependency ratio.* Across all locations, the age dependency ratio stands at 0.43, disaggregated into 0.38 for the districts in Sulaimania, 0.44 for Dashti Hewler and the districts in Duhok. This ratio divides the dependent population—individuals under the age of 15 and over the age of 64—by the total number of people. A higher proportion of non-dependent individuals in a household increase the potential of earning income.
- *Levels of education.* Information on the highest education level achieved by household members shows that, on average, 26% of the population above the age of 15 did not receive formal education; 47% stopped at primary education; 14% stopped at secondary education; and the final 13% went beyond, equally divided between vocational training and university studies. There are no relevant differences between governorates except for the fact that Akre presents a lower level of educational attainment, overall. It is also noteworthy to highlight that very small differences can be seen when disaggregating data between male and female-headed households, implying that members of a female-headed households are not necessarily at disadvantage in terms of education. However, there is a significant difference between men and women, the latter presenting the highest percentage of illiteracy, as showed in Table 2.
- *Available skills.* According to the information reported in the World Bank's IHSES by the households, the range of occupations and skills is rather limited, mainly concentrated in four main groups, as showed in Figure 2. 1 out of 2 occupations cited by households are related with the agricultural sector, either in crop farming or in livestock production. Following this, occupations in the security sector are widely cited. Finally, the fourth main groups refers to

Table 2: Distribution of household members by education

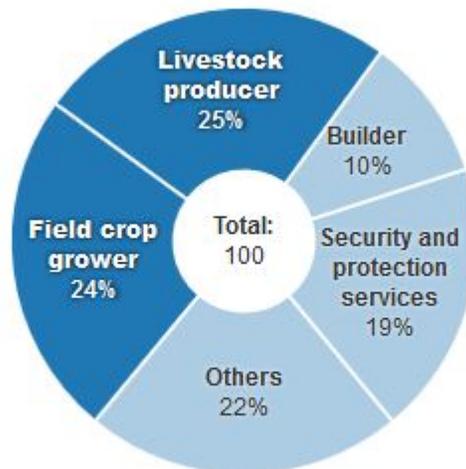
Data in %.

Education level	Male	Female
Never attended school	16	35
Primary education	52	43
Secondary education	17	11
Vocational or bachelor	15	11
Total	100	100

Districts included: Sumel, Duhok, Akre, Dashti Hewler, Darbandikhan and Sharazur.

Source: UNICEF (2012)

Created with [Datawrapper](#)

Figure 2: Distribution of labour occupations

Locations included: rural areas of Duhok, Erbil and Sulaimania governorates.

Source: World Bank, KRSO (2008)

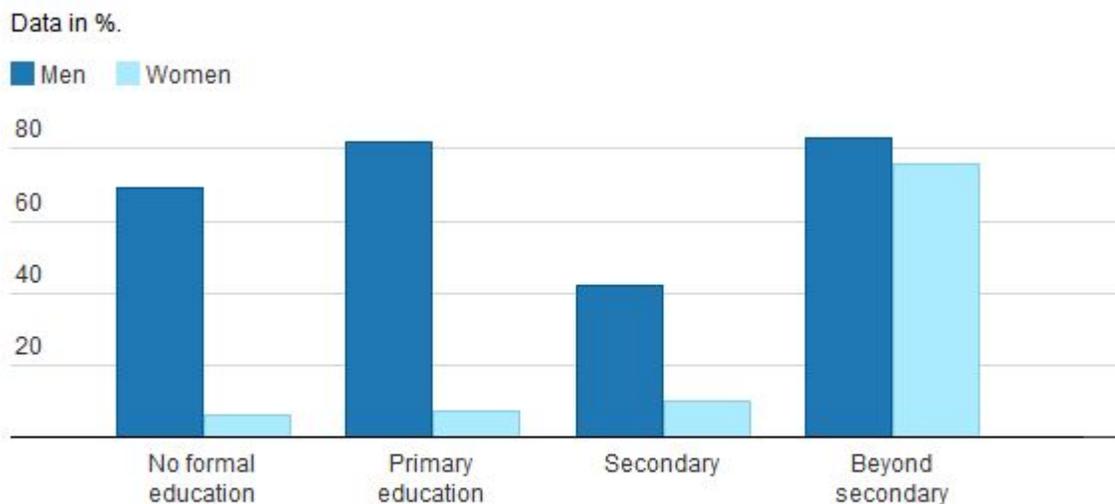
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different skills within the construction sector. Crafting and manufacturing are marginal. Geographically, the patterns are different. For instance, near 75% of the occupations cited in Sulaimania are related with agriculture and, above all, livestock. Occupations in the other governorates are more evenly distributed, with Erbil highlighting the construction sector above the region's average.

- *Labour force participation.* Based on the KRSO's Labour Force Survey, 36% of the population over the age of 15 in Kurdistan's rural areas was actively participating in the labour force. This includes those individuals that were working at the time of the assessment, either wage or non-wage job, as well as those unemployed that were willing to work. Hence,

64% of the rural population were not working neither looking for work. These percentages are not significantly different than in the urban areas. If the 36% is disaggregated according to gender, however, the gap is large. Only 8% of the female population above the age of 15 is economically active, for 66% of the male population. The only significant difference between governorates is the fact that the labour force participation of women in Duhok is significantly lower, at 3%. The overwhelming majority of women that were asked about the reasons for not participating in the labour force indicated the need to devote to housework (76%), followed by being a student (13%). The unavailability of suitable jobs was only indicated by 1% of women. Disaggregation by age was not available, but it is possible to draw comparisons across education levels. Figure 3 shows how labour force participation increases with the education attained, especially within the female population.

Figure 3: Population above age of 15 economically active



Locations included: rural areas of Duhok, Erbil and Sulaimania.

Source: KRSO (2012)

Created with [Datawrapper](#)

- *Health status.* Based on data self-reported in the World Bank's IHSES, 21% of the households reported to have at least one member suffering from a disability, with very little variation across governorates. Half of the population disabled is aged between 15 and 60. Also half of the cases involve a physical disability. Regarding chronic illnesses, the percentage of households reporting at least one member in this category raises to 59%, which mainly range from high blood pressure to chronic kidney disease or asthma. In addition, 1 out of 3 cases of disability or chronic disease remained untreated—frequently for the youngest, affecting their long-term development.

Assets: Social and Political Capital

- *Participation in social and political activities.* With very little variation across governorates, the majority of individuals aged 10 and above in rural areas reported that they never engage

in political activities (91%) or only occasionally (6%). On the contrary, only 15% of the household members said they never engage in social non-political activities, while 57% do so occasionally and 22% dedicates up to 5 hours per week.

- *Security.* In terms of safety within the environment, some indicators are available. Only 10% of the households perceived that there were some or a lot of security risks around the immediate house surroundings at the time of the assessment (early 2007). In the rural areas of Dohuk governorate, this indicator rose to 19%. In spite of this, just a handful of households reported any member rejecting employment, not being able to go to school or not receiving health treatment due to physical security risks.
- *Support from the community to cope with shocks.* A way to understand how personal networks interplay is through the safety nets that society provides. For instance, for those families that had to cope with a decrease in income due to an external shock (death of family members, bankruptcy, violence, etc.), only 10% of the households relied on help from others within the community and 36% asked close relatives or friends for a loan. Negative strategies such as reducing food intake or expenditure are still the most cited by far. On the contrary, when it comes to employment, the first action to find work is to ask friends or relatives in 82% of the cases, followed by applying directly to the employer (8%) or contact the local government (5%). Hence, social networks plays a critical role in this sense.
- *Gender roles.* Few specific data on gender roles are available through the surveys. However, the World Bank's IHSES provides information on how people spend the time in different activities. In this sense, near 7% of the male population reports to dedicate time to either food preparation, house cleaning or caring for children. Taking an average profile of day activities independently of the person's age and occupation, men are reported to spent 24% of their time at work and commuting; 16% watching TV; and 9% in social visits. For women, 22% of their day time is house cleaning or related housework; 13% watching TV; and 9% preparing food.

Assets: Financial Capital

- *Pension and social security coverage through employment.* Some households may be entitled to financial support through being included in a retirement system and social security. However, this system is mainly provided within the public sector and it is not mandatory in the private sector. Data from World Bank's IHSES supports this: specifically for Kurdistan's rural areas, 95% of the individuals working for the government are covered by pensions and social security, while this is the case only for 2% of those working in the private sector. In terms of households, 40% count with a member covered by the social security and pensions. Specifically for female-headed households, the ratio is lower, at 31%.
- *Insurance.* The World Bank's IHSES collected detailed information about the expenses in which the households incurred in the preceding month. It is relevant that only a negligible amount of households in the whole of Iraq reported to have spent money on either health, accident or car insurances.

- *Productive equipment.* There is no specific information regarding the means that households possess to undertake productive activities, such as agriculture. Hence it is not possible to understand the degree of development of activities and any particular needs in this area. However, anecdotal evidence suggests that most of the processes in rural areas are still not mechanised and still labour intensive; agricultural machinery is scarce and modern irrigation mechanisms are only seen in some areas close to the main cities.
- *Livestock.* The percentage of households that are livestock owners varies significantly across districts. Data from UNICEF's MICS indicates that 43% of the families in Akre district own any type of livestock, followed by Sharazur with 23%, Sumel 20% and Dashti Hewler 14%, which is the most sub-urban area. Livestock owners are mainly those families in the lowest wealth quintiles. Of those who own livestock across the four districts, the vast majority consists of poultry. Only one third of families have cattle, although just a handful of households responded having more than 3 animals. Slightly more than one third of households also reported owning a flock of either sheep or goats.
- *Debt and access to credit.* Slightly more than half of the families in the rural areas reported to have outstanding debts or loans. The percentage was higher in Duhok (65%) than in Erbil and Sulaimania (near 50%). Virtually all the loans were claimed to be exempt of interests. This is related to the source of the loan. 84% of the loans were granted by either relatives in Iraq, relatives abroad or friends and neighbours, with very little variation across governorates. The rest of sources mainly consisted of traders or employers, with a very marginal representation of money lenders or banks (either public or private). However, this information is not fully indicative on whether some families may have obstacles in accessing credit or borrowing money in case of need
- *Savings.* No particular information on the management of savings among families is available. However, a partial proxy is whether any member of the household have a bank account. In this sense, UNICEF's MICS finds that only 1% of the households, on average for the four districts of interest, holds a bank account. There is a correlation with wealth but even in the wealthiest percentiles the possession of a bank account does not surpass the 10%. Discussions with key informants highlighted the lack of trust and confidence of the population towards the formal financial sector as the main explanation, more than obstacles to access these services.

Assets: Natural Capital

- *Land holding.* Although the main occupation in the rural areas of Kurdistan is related to agriculture and livestock, access and ownership of land is limited to some households. Table 3 shows the data for each district of interest for the study. Overall, only 1 out of 4 households own land for the purpose of agriculture. Dashti Hewler has the lowest ratio as it is near the region's capital. The average size of the land varies depending on the district: from 38 dunums (roughly 10 hectares) in Sumel and Akre, to 31 dunums (8 ha) in Dashti Hewler and 15 in Sharazur (4 ha). Based on the wealth index developed in UNICEF's MICS, there is no

correlation between wealth and being owner of farm land; however, for those who own land, it exists correlation between wealth and bigger land size, although weak.

Table 3: Ownership of agricultural land

Data in %.

Farm land possession	Sumel	Akre	Dashti Hewler	Sharazur
No	73	69	89	79
Yes	27	31	11	21
Of which:				
10 dunums or less	41	50	29	56
11 to 50 dunums	57	47	55	42
51 to 95 dunums	2	3	16	2

Source: UNICEF (2012)

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- *Water resources for agriculture.* The information available per governorate¹⁵ indicates that only a small percentage of the farming land is irrigated, the rest being rain-fed: in Sulaimania, 20% of the fields have access to irrigation, 15% in Duhok and 7% in Erbil. However, lack of access to irrigation is not seen as an obstacle by most of the farmers. Based on a survey by KRSO¹⁶, only 30% of the farmers in Erbil and Sulaimania believed that there was not enough rain for the winter crops, which conform the main crop production and are not water-intensive (wheat, barley, legumes, etc.). For Duhok, 70% believed that there was enough rain and the other 30% believed that there was actually too much rain.

Livelihood strategies

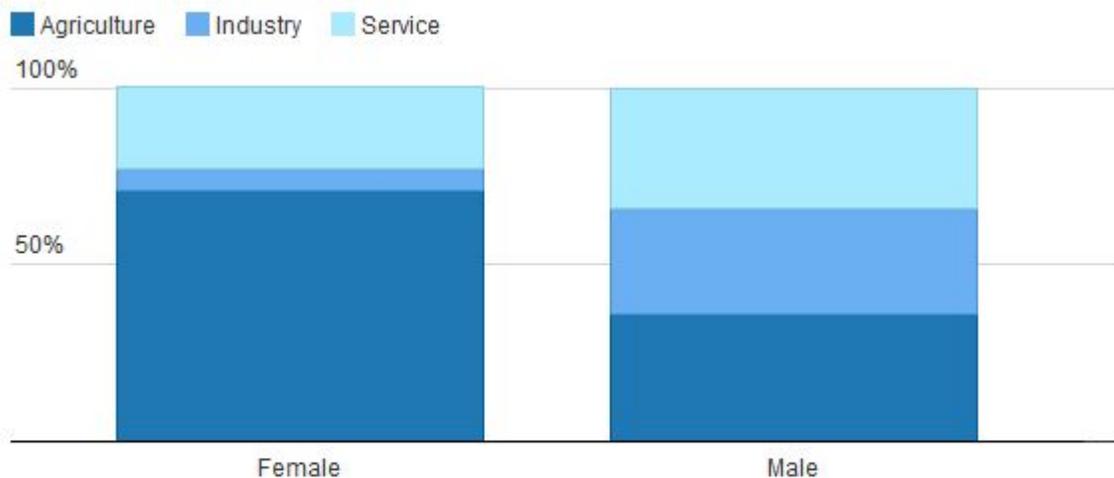
- *Business development and self-employment.* According to the KRSO's Labour Force Survey, the ratio of employed population that has a non-wage job, that is, either owns a business or is self-employed in a vocational trade, is 28% for the whole of Kurdistan, of which 85% consists of men and 15% of women. Specifically, 9% is a business owner and 19% is self-employed. However, this information is aggregated for Kurdistan, without separation between urban and rural areas. The World Bank's IHSES provides general trends, pointing to the fact that, in their sample, rural areas in Kurdistan concentrate more non-wage jobs than in urban areas as paid employment out of the public sector is relatively scarce. In addition, most of the non-wage jobs are, as expected, within the agricultural sector.
- *Labour and income sources.* The KRSO's Labour Force Survey identifies the distribution of employment among individuals at the time of the assessment (2012), both for wage and

¹⁵ KRSO, July 2012. Agricultural areas in the governorates of Kurdistan Region.

¹⁶ KRSO, May 2014. Winter crops survey in Kurdistan Region: area, yield, production, cost.

non-wage jobs. In this sense, it is significant that the public sector absorbs 45% of employment in Kurdistan's rural areas for both men and women. The rest are part of the private sector, either as waged or non-waged labourers. There are some differences across governorates, with Sulaimania having the smallest proportion in the public sector (34%) and Erbil, the capital, the highest (54%). For those working in the private sector, there are significant differences on employment per economic sector depending on the gender, as shown in Figure 4. In this sense, while employment among the male population is evenly distributed between agriculture, industry and services, the female population is concentrated by far within the agricultural sector. By governorates, the service sector in Duhok is more predominant than the other two sectors, while agriculture is the main activity for half of the population in Sulaimania. Erbil, on the other side, is the governorate with more employees in the industrial sector. Finally, data at household level is not available, hence it is not possible to know the extent of families with no independent income sources provided through employment of their members.

Figure 4: Employment per sector in private activities



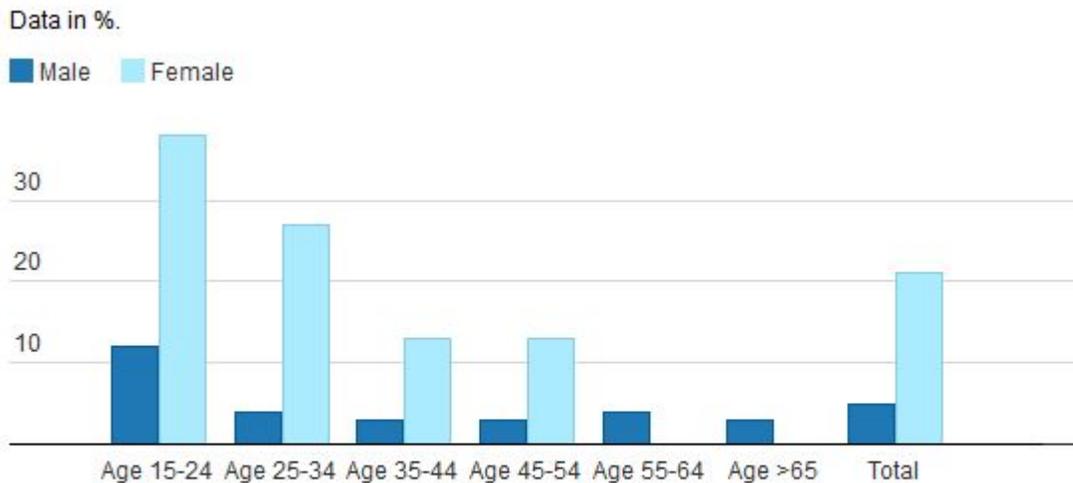
Locations included: rural areas of Duhok, Erbil and Sulaimania.

Source: KRSO (2012)

Created with [Datawrapper](#)

- *Obstacles to labour market.* As seen above, the public sector is the main employer when it comes to employment. Following this, agriculture offers most of the labour opportunities. However, as it has been discussed, only a minority of families own arable land, putting additional obstacles to employment. A related indicator is the unemployment rate, which gives an idea of the opportunities that the local region provides in terms of livelihoods. Overall, the unemployment rate in 2012 for Kurdistan's rural areas was 7%—calculated over the total population economically active, which corresponds to the 36% of the total population above the age of 15. Again, there is a big gap when disaggregating the data between age and gender, as showed in Figure 5.

Figure 5: Unemployment rates per age and gender



Locations included: rural areas of Duhok, Erbil and Sulaimania. Note: unemployment rates for women aged 55 or more not available due to small sample size.

Source: KRSO (2012)

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- Food procurement.* In the early 90s, Iraq implemented a universal food subsidy system, the ‘Public Distribution System’. Each household possess a ration card that entitles it to a certain number of basic food items¹⁷, depending on the household size. The World Bank’s IHSES provides a snapshot of the use of the system for 2007, as the survey asked how much of the items was provided through the PDS and how much was purchased from the market at market prices. On average for Kurdistan’s rural areas, the PDS covered 65% of a household’s consumption of the food items provided within the system. There are some significant regional differences: the food consumption covered by the PDS in Dohuk was 71%, 67% in Erbil and 56% in Sulaimania. When disaggregating the data, it shows that there is no statistically significant difference between male and female-headed households. In terms of vulnerability, the PDS covers 80% or more of the family’s food consumption in 1 out of 4 households, the majority being in Duhok. In terms of local food production, 3 out of 4 households engaged in agricultural activities reported that they kept part of the production for their own consumption.

Public services: education

- Service provision.* The basic and secondary education is provided mainly through public schools, which are free to the families in Kurdistan. The system is funded through the regional budget. Although the total annual public expenditure in real terms has increased more than the population growth during the last decade, public education provision is still

¹⁷ These items cover the type of food that forms the usual diet of a family in the country: from flour and oil to rice and legumes. In some cases, children nutrients are also included as well as non-food items such as detergent.

critically affected by two issues. First, there is a grave school capacity shortage, especially in secondary education, although this affects more urban areas than rural ones. According to a study by RAND¹⁸, 25% of rural schools had more than one shift in 2008—one group of students in the morning and a different group in the afternoon or even evening. This reduces the amount of instructional time that students receive. Schools also suffer from overcrowded classes, although the average in rural areas is relatively low, at 13 students per class compared to 42 students in urban areas. The districts of Sumel and Duhok are especially affected. The second issue refers to the low quality of education. Although a reform was approved in 2009 to approach the system to international standards, implementation has been slow and most of the teachers still lack the key skills for effective delivery of the academic content. A survey done on teachers by RAND reported that only half of the teachers received training and less than half reported that the training was sufficient.

- *Coverage.* Basic education is compulsory, which involves 9 years of schooling. The three additional years of secondary education are optional. Hence basic education has the highest enrolment rates, as seen in Figure 6 and Figure 7¹⁹. Regarding secondary education, net enrolment rates (26% on average) are significantly lower than gross rates (90%), implying that most of the individuals in these courses are older than corresponding cohort for this grade. This supports the idea that secondary education is in increasing demand in these districts, while supply is unable to match these increases. Finally, although the data from World Bank's IHSES is relatively old, it reports that the main reason from dropping out from school for the population at school age in Kurdistan's rural areas is lack of interest from either the kid or the family (43%), followed bar far by the unavailability of school space (16%).

Public services: health

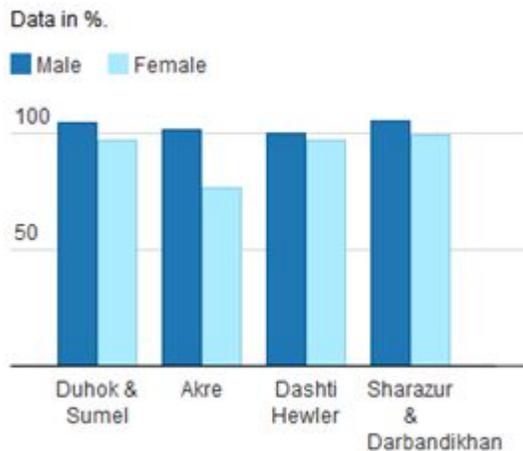
- *Service provision.* Health is defined as a basic public right and the government provides a basic level of care to all residents in Kurdistan. To cover for an expanding demand of health services, the regional government has been effectively increasing health expenditure, in real terms, over and above population growth. Service provision is administered by the Ministry of Health in Erbil and operated by each governorate, hence funded through the general budget. Co-payment is very low, limited to some medicines. However, the number of physicians per patient is significantly lower than the regional peers²⁰. In addition, they are poorly distributed, with a reduced presence in rural districts. Finally, alongside the public provision, investment in private health facilities across the region is also present. These are financed by direct out-of-pocket payments and overall represent to account for 20 to 30% of

¹⁸ RAND, 2014. Strategic priorities for improving access to quality education in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq.

¹⁹ These figures show the gross enrolment, which divides the total number of students in each grade (basic or secondary) by the number of children of the age group that corresponds to each grade. A figure above 100% implies that children above the age that should correspond to that grade are attending school.

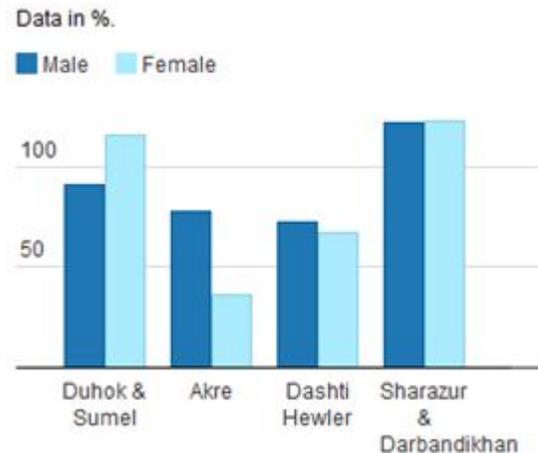
²⁰ RAND, 2014. Health sector reform in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq: financing reform, primary care and patient safety.

Figure 6: Gross enrolment in basic education



Source: UNICEF (2012)
Created with [Datawrapper](#)

Figure 7: Gross enrolment in secondary education



Source: UNICEF (2012)
Created with [Datawrapper](#)

health care spending. Private sector is rapidly expanding without regulatory guidance or a strategic investment process, as most of the physicians in the public sector tend to devote more time working also in the private sector clinics.

- *Coverage.* The total number of health facilities is relatively adequate to provide a correct coverage to the population. All governorates have public general, emergency, and pediatric hospitals, and most primary health centres (PHC) provide most of the basic care services. In rural areas, two thirds of households have a health facility in less than 20 minutes distance, according to World Bank's IHSES. The coverage, however, differs per governorate. According to data from 2012²¹, the average size of population per hospital is higher in Duhok (126,000 people per hospital) than in Erbil (89,000) or Sulaimania (85,000). Regarding PHCs, Duhok is again the least endowed governorate, with 8,762 people covered by each facility, followed by 7,316 people in Erbil and by 4,796 in Sulaimania. The situation is critical, however, in terms of qualified personnel, as only a third of the PHCs count with a physician. Regarding the use of private sector provision, 21% of the population in rural areas attended a private health care facility instead of public.

Public services: local services

- *Provision of water service.* Although the vast majority of the population count with an improved access to water, the quality of the service in terms of continuity of access remains poor. Based on data from the World Bank's IHSES, only 24% of the rural households in Erbil and Sulaimania and 7% in Duhok reported a stable supply, while the rest reported either daily interruptions or a weak supply. This is linked, however, to the fact that water

²¹ RAND 2014. The future of health care in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq: toward an effective, high-quality system with an emphasis on primary care.

consumption is estimated to be at near 400 litres per capita per day, four times higher than a normal consumption²². In addition, water tariffs are modest, usually around 10,000 IQD per month for the majority of the population, although fees collection rates are extremely poor. Overall, the revenues obtained from the service only cover 4% of the operation and maintenance costs²³—not counting capital costs.

- *Provision of electricity service.* The sector has experienced large improvements in the last 4 years, with the generation capacity more than tripled, according to the World Bank's ESIA. However, electricity demand has also increased more than the projections accounted in the sector's master plan. Distribution and commercial losses are still very large and the sector's financial sustainability is weak, hence totally dependent on the Ministry of Finance's subsidies. Due to the quick evolution of the sector, recent comparable data is unavailable. The most recent data is for 2011²⁴ and shows that virtually all households in the districts of interest for this study are connected to the public network. However, 7% of the households in Sulaimania, 19% in Erbil and 77% in Duhok relied more on a power generator than on the public network, due to lengthy and frequent power cuts.
- *Provision of solid waste management.* The provision is organised at the municipal level, although municipalities depend financially on the transfers from the region's budget. There is virtually no revenue base for local government services and solid waste management is no exemption, as it is provided free of charge to the residents. However, the population in rural areas that are provided with solid waste collection and management is significantly low across Kurdistan (40%)²⁵. Open space dumping is usual. According to the World Bank's ESIA, an Environmental Law was recently passed, which should reinforce a proper management of the waste, but it has not been enforced.

Policies affecting livelihoods

The Kurdistan Region, as a federal entity in Iraq, has the legal right to pursue its own policies and legislation in most areas and therefore the policies pursued may differ from the ones in the rest of Iraq. Some of the key policy elements in place—or absent—in the Kurdistan Region that affects how households pursue their livelihood strategies are summarised below²⁶:

- *Funding of the public sector.* KRG's budget is almost fully funded through transfers from the federal government in Baghdad, as Kurdistan is entitled to 17% of the federal budget. Iraq's budget is funded with the country's oil exports by more than 90%. In addition, Kurdistan counts with some additional revenues coming from independent oil sales. Hence, the ultimate origin of virtually all KRG's revenues is oil resources. There is no tax revenue except for minor taxes applied to large companies and some marginal fees for legal

²² A key informant stated that the planned capacity of the water supply system in rural areas, by design, is able to supply 125 litres per person per day, while in urban areas the planned capacity is 250 litres per person per day.

²³ UNDP & KRG, 2012. Building the Kurdistan Region of Iraq: the socio-economic infrastructure.

²⁴ UN Joint Analysis Unit & CSO, 2012. Iraq Knowledge Network.

²⁵ Idem.

²⁶ Middle East Research Institute, 2015. Kurdistan Region: economic reform as a way out of the crisis.

documentation. The ability to run the State does not depend on a proper functioning of the economy at all levels or on the ability of policy-makers, but it depends on good relations with Baghdad and a high oil price. In addition, the oil and gas fund created with oil revenues has not been designed adequately as to serve as financial buffer against crisis periods.

- *Absence of targeted policies to effectively develop a private sector based on a fabric of small and medium enterprises.* The public sector is the main employer of the economy, directly and indirectly. It employs a large part of the population economically active. Also, a significant part of the private sector is formed by contractors that depend on work commissioned by the State. Hence, most of the households are dependent in some way on a functioning public sector, either through salary payments or commissioning. The private sector in the formal economy has been unable to generate employment opportunities due to the lack of competitiveness in front of foreign imports. Public funds to encourage SMEs have been limited and lacked monitoring and continuity. In addition, it does not provide incentives for workers; becoming civil servant is the preferred option as it offers pension, social security, easy loans and land grants, as opposed to the absence of a legal framework for private employment. This puts private employees in disadvantage.
- *Investment incentives inducing a bubble in the real estate market.* The real estate has seen a boom period in Kurdistan during the last 7 years and created a dangerous bubble. Due to the absence of a functional banking sector where financial capital could be saved, most of the liquid money generated from a nascent oil sector in Kurdistan has been invested into new housing and office development. This is accompanied by the KRG's Investment Law that granted very favourable conditions for these type of investments in real estate, distorting the development of other sectors²⁷. However, real estate developments in Kurdistan have been de-linked from the actual needs of the region: demand for affordable housing has not been matched by large and practically all the new housing has been in the form of high-standard and luxurious dwellings. Prices of urban and semi-urban land have been rising exponentially during the last years. There has been a lack of proper regulation in place which led to the emergence of business cartels and an artificial pricing that started bursting before the onset of Iraq's recent conflict. Demand for high-income housing cannot match the available supply.
- *Social safety nets.* As reported in the World Bank's ESIA, the KRG provides a number of social protection programs mainly consisting in cash transfers to specific groups that are considered vulnerable, such as widows, divorced, orphans, elderly, disabled or injured. The transfer has been increasing from 30,000 IQD/month prior to 2012 to 150,000 IQD/month currently, with plans to increase to 420,000 IQD/month. A total of 189,000 households were eligible in 2012, which constitutes the 22% of the total households. However, household targeting lacks of a clear and defined criteria and hence the system delivery is dynamic and very variable. Finally, the largest social safety net program is still the Public Distribution System, which grants universal access to basic food items at subsidised prices. On average, this constitutes 20% of a Kurdistan's household total income.

²⁷ The Kurdistan Parliament initiated a process to reform the Investment Law in early 2015.

- *Ineffective policies to encourage local food production and improve food security.* Local producers are essentially not competitive in front of imports of foreign produces. Two thirds of the local food markets are supplied with products from Turkey and Iran, which are cheaper. The lack of competitiveness is caused by more expensive production processes, less technical capacity and absence of targeted public support for mechanising the agricultural sector. On the contrary, the regional government has usually applied protectionist measures such as bans or tariffs, which reduce local incentives to improve and harm the population through more expensive goods without an increase of quality. Federal policies such as the Public Distribution System, although being a key element of Iraq's social safety nets, has also undermined local production by increasing reliance on imported food products. Finally, quality controls are not enforced at the border and this facilitates the entry of cheap goods of bad quality that should not be present in the local markets.

4.1.3. Evaluating post-crisis changes in the livelihoods baseline

Once defined the baseline previous to the arrival of Syrian refugees and internally displaced people as well as KRG's budget restrictions, available data provides information on potential negative changes in either host community's asset base, their livelihoods strategies and the provision of public services.

The datasets used for the pre-crisis baseline and the current one are not directly comparable. However, they provide indicative trends and specific issues within the current situation for the host community. The geographical areas assessed are consistent with the previous ones: the districts of Sumel and Duhok as the immediate host community of Domiz camp; Akre district for Akre camp; Dashti Hewler and near rural areas west of Erbil city for Qushtapa camp; and the districts of Sharazur and Darbandikhan for Arbat camp.

Asset base

- *Evolution of housing characteristics and costs.* A higher percentage of families than in the previous baseline has been found to be owning the house rather than renting it. All four districts are in between 85% and 90% of house ownership. Renting costs have been under additional pressure since the onset of the crisis due to the arrival of many displaced families seeking for shelter. The rents currently reported, on average, are around 230 USD/month for the area of Duhok and Sumel; 237 USD for Akre; 195 USD for Dashti Hewler; and 189 USD for the districts of Sharazur and Darbandikhan. Figure 8 shows the steep increase in renting costs in Duhok but especially in Erbil governorate. In general, due to the increase in housing costs and rents, there is manifest risk of eviction threats from the owners. In the case of the host community, virtually no household reported being under this threat in any district, hence their situation is stable. Risk of eviction is mainly limited to the Syrian refugees and internally displaced people renting houses within the host community.

Figure 8: Evolution of rent expenses

January 2013 = 100.



Data obtained from the calculation of Iraq's Consumer Price Index.

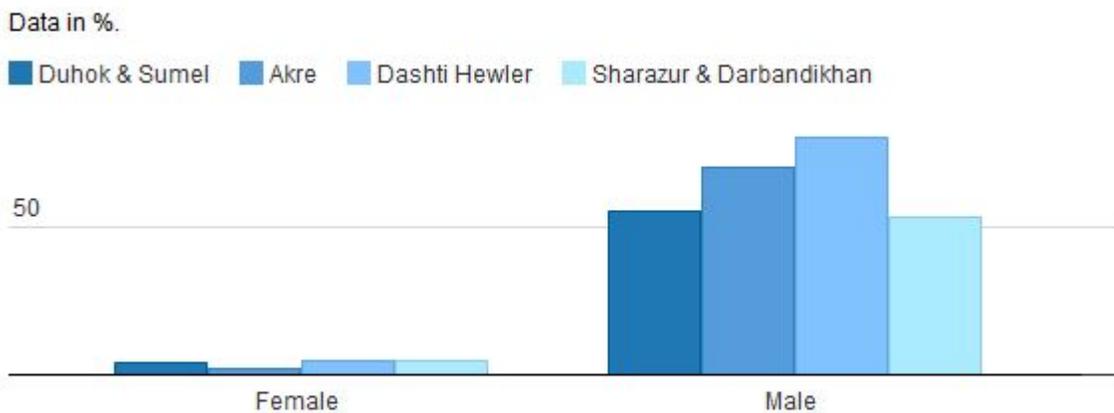
Source: Iraq CSO (2015)

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- Availability of fuel for cooking and heating.* Some households reported facing difficulties to access fuel. In terms of gas, the main fuel source for cooking, 17% of the households in the areas near Arbat camp (Sharazur and Darbandikhan) experienced shortage in its supply. Shortages of kerosene, the main fuel source for heating, was reported to be affecting more families. Across the four areas, between 15% and 20% of the households had issues with the supply of kerosene in the preceding 30 days. On average, and quite similar for all districts, supply shortages lasted longer for kerosene than for gas. As a coping strategy for the scarcity of fuel, 20% of the households relied on a negative strategy such as not heating the house; the majority, however, relied on borrowing from the family or using an alternative source. There was no information on supply problems prior to the crisis, hence it is not possible to fully establish a causal relation with the current crisis.
- Physical asset needs.* Although no information is available to compare the evolution of asset ownership over time and relate it to the impact of the crisis, it is possible to understand better which are currently the most pressing material needs of the host community households. These needs either show restrictions in its supply or an increasing affordability concerns. For instance, the most pressing material needs for the areas near Domiz camp (Duhok and Sumel) are related with housing: mainly cash assistance for housing and rental support, followed by shelter improvements and additional living space. For Akre district, the needs are focused on food availability and the supply of both water and energy. For the households near Qushtapa camp and around Dashti Hewler, availability of food and kerosene are the top concerns. Finally, for Sharazur and Darbandikhan, food availability is by far the top need, followed by rental support and better supply of water.
- Changes in labour force participation.* The REACH survey provides information on the number of individuals that have been active in the labour market and could engage in an

income-generating activity. The average for the four areas assessed shows that 65% of male individuals and 4% of female population over 17 participate in the labour market—although this excludes the unemployed, who should be technically considered as economically active population. Data per district is presented in Figure 9. Although data is not directly comparable with the assessments in past years, the percentage of people currently employed is within the same margin as the numbers presented above for 2012, for both men and women. Some variation downwards is seen in the districts in Duhok, which is reasonable given the higher influx of displaced families in the governorate.

Figure 9: Population above 17 economically active and employed



Source: REACH Initiative (2015)

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- Evolution of security perceptions.* Despite the large influx of displaced families in the Kurdistan Region, the majority of them living within the host community in inappropriate conditions, the overall perception of a safe environment has not deteriorated. Only a handful of households reported that family members were feeling physically unsafe in the streets, for both men and women. Similarly for perceptions on petty crime, near 3 out of 4 households reported that did not change over the preceding 3 months. For the rest of households, half of them stated that crime had decreased and the other half that had increased. Only in Duhok and Akre districts the percentage of families that thought petty crime levels had increased is significantly higher than those that perceived a decrease, again probably attributed to the higher presence of displaced families in the area.
- Support from the community.* The REACH survey asked households to judge whether the hospitality of the host community towards displaced groups had increased or decreased in face of the recent developments. In this sense, only in the areas of Darbandikhan and Sharazur, around 20% of households perceived a decrease in hospitality and more aversion to the displaced. On the contrary, 40% of households in the districts around Duhok and Dashti Hewler judged that hospitality actually increased. The majority, however, reported that no

change was visible. Intra-community support also plays a role within the crisis, for instance, through support to acquire food when supply issues or unaffordable expenses. This is relevant in the areas around Sulaimania, where around 20% of the households received help in the form of food from friends or relatives at some point during the preceding week.

- *Evolution of savings.* Although there was no previous information about the management of savings, the current situation reports that 15% of the households in the four areas of assessment have depleted their savings. There is little variation between male-headed and female-headed households, and between households active and inactive in the labour market. This is significantly higher than the other districts in Kurdistan, where the percentage stands at 7% on average. The situation could be worsening in the near future, as around 90% of the households in the area have difficulties to meet family needs with their disposable income—lower in Dashti Hewler (66%); of these families unable to meet the needs, spending savings is the option to which half of the households rely on.
- *Evolution of debt levels.* The proportion of households being in debt remains within the same level as in the situation prior to the crisis, with debt levels among the four assessed areas around 60% of the total households. However, these areas are above the average of the rest of the districts in Kurdistan, which stands at 40%. Only Dashti Hewler reports significantly lower levels of debt but it is subjected to a wide margin of error. On average, 17% of the indebted households also reported having depleted their savings, hence becoming highly vulnerable.
- *Livestock.* No specific data on changes in the possession of livestock is available. However, discussions with key informants in the KRG's Ministry of Agriculture pointed to the vulnerability of livestock in the districts closer to the frontline due to *imported* diseases from the central and north-western governorates of Iraq. Due to the arrival of cattle from these areas that were treated differently and the current restrictions in the availability of veterinary antimicrobials, above-normal deaths among the local livestock have been reported.

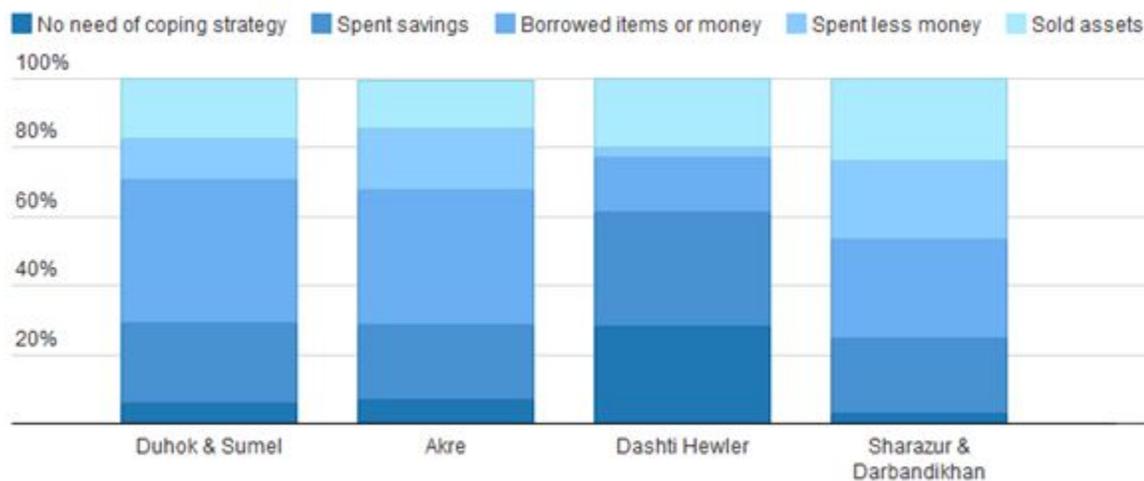
Livelihood strategies

- *Primary livelihood source of the household.* The percentage of households that reported having no livelihood source, that is, none of the members generating income, is limited to between 3% and 5% in the assessed areas. It is not possible to compare the current situation with the pre-crisis baseline due to lack of prior data, but the low percentages suggest that there may not be much variation. For the rest of the households, the higher percentage for the primary source of livelihoods corresponds public employees (36%); this is slightly lower than the percentage reported in the pre-crisis baseline, although probably linked to the absence of salary payments for most civil servants, including security forces. Beyond public employees, agriculture remains the main livelihood source for 23% of the households. The income generated by small business ownership and self-employment in vocational trades is still relevant, as the primary income source for 17% of the households. The rest of livelihoods (20%) resort on semi-skilled or skilled employment in the service sectors. Overall, this shows certain maintenance of the previous livelihoods structure in spite of the

crisis. There is little difference across locations except for the case of the district of Akre, where near two thirds of the households reported being dependent on public salaries.

- Coping strategies against lack of income.* A combination of shocks have strongly impacted the disposable income of the vast majority of households: (i) due to budget restrictions, salaries of public employees have not been paid regularly since early 2014; (ii) also linked to the budget, contractors commissioned by the KRG have neither received the remuneration for the services for the last year; and (iii) according to the DRC & UNDP's market analysis, salaries in the construction and hospitality sector have been widely impacted, with decreases up to 30% of the average wage prior to the crisis. Therefore, as reported above, although employment is largely preserved, near 90% of the families in most of the locations assessed had to rely on coping strategies in the preceding month. The most cited strategy by the households is to borrow the basic items needed, such as food. Following this, families rely on equal terms on either spend the savings, reduce the family consumption or sell domestic or productive assets. The disaggregation per location is showed in Figure 10.

Figure 10: Coping strategies for insufficient income generated



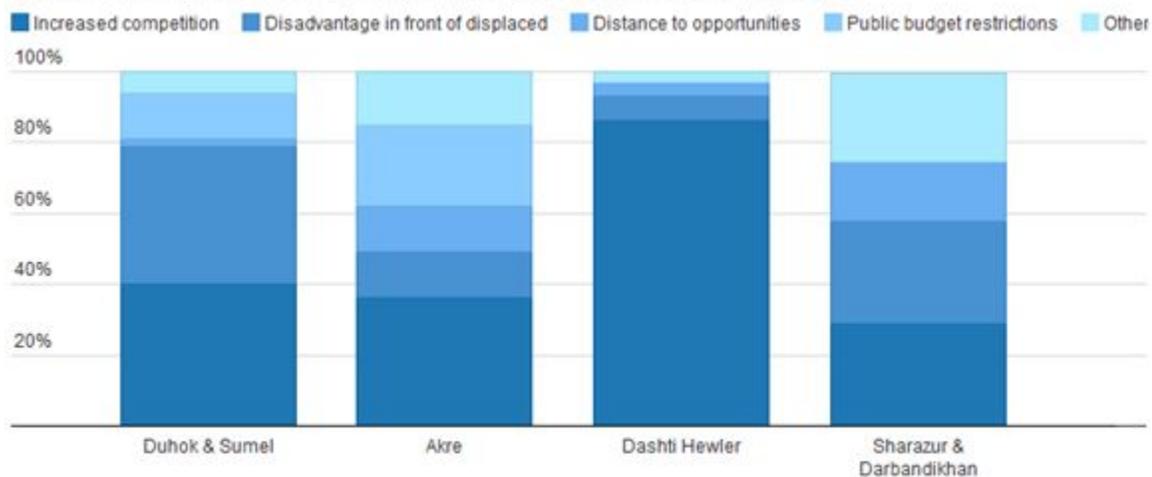
Source: REACH Initiative (2015)

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- Problems accessing employment opportunities.* There is no data on current unemployment levels, hence it is not possible to evaluate any destruction of employment due to shocks in the economy. As a proxy, REACH's survey asked households whether they faced additional problems accessing employment. Roughly 40% of the households reported problems, with very little variation across locations. However, there was a variation in the source of the problems indicated by the households, which shows the different issues faced in each location, summarised in Figure 11. In this sense, in Duhok and Sumel, where a major population of displaced families is concentrated, the two main issues are an increase in job competition (40%) and a perceived disadvantage in front of displaced people when accessing a job (39%). This is a similar ratio for Sharazur and Darbandikhan, although distance to jobs was also a relevant issue highlighted (17%). In Akre, apart from increased job competition

(36%), KRG's budget crisis was pointed to by 23% of the households, as this district have an above-average concentration of public employees. On the other hand, the overwhelming majority of employment issues in Dashti Hewler were related to increased competition in the job market. This status quo is supported by the finding of the DRC & UNDP's emergency market analysis, that highlighted the difficulty of most districts in absorbing the additional labour arrived in the market.

Figure 11: Reported obstacles in accessing employment



Source: REACH Initiative (2015)

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- Food procurement and coping strategies against lack of food.* As indicated in the pre-crisis baseline evaluation, public assistance for food through the Public Distribution System plays a significant role in the household's food procurement. REACH's survey supported the fact that no significant change is seen, as the PDS is still the primary source of food for 30% of the families. However, 10% of the families have started to rely on obtaining food from the market but at credit instead of paying, highlighting particular issues with affordability. The remaining 60% resorts on the market as the main source. However, food procurement has been negatively affected by the context as near half of the households had to rely on any coping strategy due to lack of food—slightly more than 80% in the districts of Sharazur and Darbandikhan. The vast majority of households relied on less expensive and lower quality food—53% of the households reported to do so sometimes and 15% to do it always. Limit food portions is also a recurrent strategy, although less common. Strategies such as decreasing the number of meals, barter food or sending child to work was marginally reported.
- Intentions to migrate.* When the impact on livelihoods is high, migration to other regions or countries could be considered as a feasible option. However, in the case of Kurdistan Region, the number of households considering to move location is very marginal. Only in Duhok districts the percentage raises to 3%. The main reason argued is to move to another place

where living costs are not so high. Due to the small number of observations, however, this should be considered as anecdotal evidence.

Public services

- *Education system.* The impact on the functioning of Kurdistan's education system has been felt through two mechanisms. First, the Ministry of Education has been unable to regularly pay the salaries of the teachers for the previous months, affecting the quality of the provision. Secondly, a significant proportion of the displaced families from Syrian and the rest of Iraq living within the host community are school-aged children. However, according to findings reported in the World Bank's ESIA, the vast majority of these children are not actually attending formal education—only one in ten kids does so, as language and economic expenses have been barriers to access to education. Hence, the impact on the education system is possibly yet to be felt widely if the rates of school enrolment increase in the forthcoming academic year. Already, the proportion of schools that had to rely on multiple shifts in the four locations assessed has increased to above 50% in most cases, for both basic and secondary education, as reported in REACH's survey on the host community. Enrolment rates have remained the same as in prior to the crisis or, if anything, have increased principally in secondary education. However, capital investments in the system have not been enough to absorb an increasing school-aged population. Overcrowding of classes is not a severe issue yet, as the average class size remains in between 23 and 29 students and only a small fraction of households reported that their kids are in classes with more than 40 students. Finally, it is interesting to highlight that more than 90% of the households in these areas reported that they would be willing to contribute with fees to the education system, expectedly in exchange of better quality and more facilities; only in the areas of Sharazur and Darbandikhan slightly above 50% of families said that they were not willing to pay.
- *Health care system.* According to the World Bank' ESIA, the recurrent health expenditure by the KRG did not increase in the past years in spite of the arrival of Syrian refugees to Kurdistan. Hence, the expenditure per capita actually decreased as Syrian refugees and internally displaced people have access to the services as residents of Kurdistan. The World Bank expects that this is having a potential negative effect on the overall performance of the public system, although no specific data is available. Based on data from the REACH survey, 4% of the households on average in the four locations assessed have sought health treatment. Due to the small number of observations, evidence on difficulties in accessing the service are only anecdotal, but households mainly point to the unavailability of the specific health service that they were seeking, instead of a collapse of the health system capacity.
- *Municipal services.* As compared to pre-crisis baseline, there has been a large improvement in the reliability of the water supply service. Only a very small fraction of households, less than 4%, reported spending at least one day without water supply in the preceding month. However, the pressure on the system has increased significantly: the World Bank's ESIA indicated that, in all Kurdistan, the additional demand for water increased by 11% between October 2012 and September 2014. However, as the water supply system is extremely

decentralised, that is, each town and each neighbourhood has its own independent supplied from a borehole, the potential impact is highly localised. Regarding electricity supply, the World Bank assessment reports that peak demands had reached its historical maximum during 2014 in all governorates. Hence, households continue experiencing an unreliable energy supply and it has been a major contentious point that rose to tense sessions in Kurdistan's Parliament as MPs discussed about flaws in the electricity sector. In terms of domestic supply, 16% of the households in the four areas assessed reported having public electricity only between 6 and 10 hours a day, while the rest indicated that they had supply for more than 10 hours. Hence, expenses in diesel generators is still a significant element. Finally, regarding solid waste collection, the amount of waste per capita generated has also increased significantly, especially in the urban areas as it concentrates most of the displaced population. No specific issues with the service delivery in the assessed locations is highlighted, as the solid waste system still largely relies on open informal landfills.

4.2. Syrian refugees living in a camp setting

The sections below aim to (i) present the data available relevant to the Syrian refugee community sheltered in camps, (ii) evaluate the current livelihoods baseline for this community, and (iii) draw some key comparisons with the baseline for the Syrian refugees living within the host communities.

4.2.1. In-camp assessments available

Several surveys and assessments undertaken recently examine the livelihoods baseline for the Syrian refugee community living in the camps in the Kurdistan Region. Data in all cases is statistically significant at camp level. The available assessments are the following, which are complemented where necessary with additional literature:

- *REACH Initiative, April 2014. Economic survey of Syrian refugees in camps.* With field data compiled in February 2014, this thematic assessment provides baseline data for household income levels and sources, plus a comparison with monthly household expenses and information on savings and debts.
- *REACH Initiative, September 2014. Multi-sector needs assessment of Syrian refugees in camps.* With field data compiled in May 2014, the report provides baseline data at household level for several sectors, mainly education, health, food, livelihoods, energy and water.
- *REACH Initiative, March 2015. Multi-sector needs assessment of Syrian refugees residing in camps.* With field data compiled in December 2014, the report provides comparable data with the previous assessment, with additional information on protection and social cohesion.

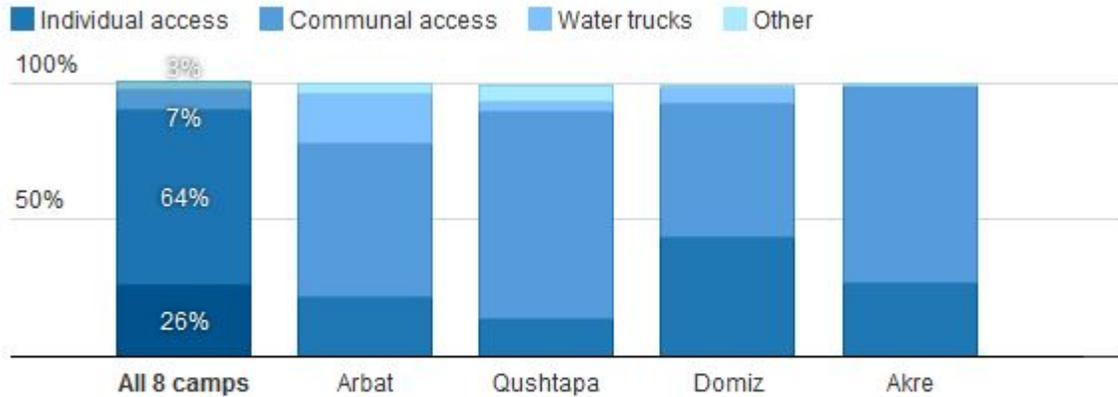
4.2.2. Evaluating the current baseline

In order to allow for comparisons with the host community, the same Sustainable Livelihoods Framework is used below to draw the livelihoods baseline of Syrian refugees sheltered in the four selected camps: Domiz, Akre, Qushtapa and Arbat. Most of the previous assessments provide data divided in ‘humanitarian sectors’, such as shelter or food security, as categorised by OCHA’s response plan. However, the data is able to cover most of the elements of the framework and, where necessary, gaps to the baseline are discussed for which more evidence is required for further tasks.

Assets: Physical Capital

- *Housing characteristics.* All the families residing in refugee camps have been allocated a tent, usually with an individual or shared kitchen made of concrete blocks, that allows for basic shelter needs. However, a large proportion of the households—based on comments by shelter sector members and direct observation in camp visits—have been able to adapt and upgrade their shelter into a more durable structure. This is contingent on having enough financial resources to do so—as well as construction restrictions that the governorate authorities may impose, like in the case of Erbil. Therefore, those families with insufficient income are unable to upgrade their shelter. Data on the specific characteristics of the housing in camps is unavailable, although there is consensus among partners involved in the sector that the quality of construction is below standards due to a lack of enforcement of safe building.
- *Housing and land ownership.* Refugee families are granted a parcel within the camp upon their arrival. This means ownership of the housing structures but not land. The public authorities either owns the land or rents it from private individuals. However, a black market of houses in the camps has emerged in some locations by which parcels and shelters are transacted between families.
- *Access and use of water and sanitation.* The available data shows that not all the houses in the camps are provided with an individual connection to the water supply system, but a communal access shared by a group of household is frequent, despite it may entail competition for the resources. Individual access was only significantly spread in Domiz camp at the time of the assessment (December 2014), as shown in Figure 12, although significant investments were undertaken in the rest of the camps at the time of this study. In addition, some families reported suffering from water shortages at least for 7 days during the last 30 days, in spite of the water system being planned to provide around 100 litres per day per household: 21% of families in Qushtapa reported such shortages, 14% in both Akre and Arbat, and only 2% in Domiz. Regarding wastewater disposal, the system is completely underdeveloped, in line with the rest of the region. Finally, the availability of latrines is relatively reduced in some camps, with 20 persons per latrine in both Qushtapa and Domiz, 10 persons per latrine in Akre, and 5 persons per latrine in Arbat.

Figure 12: Primary household water source



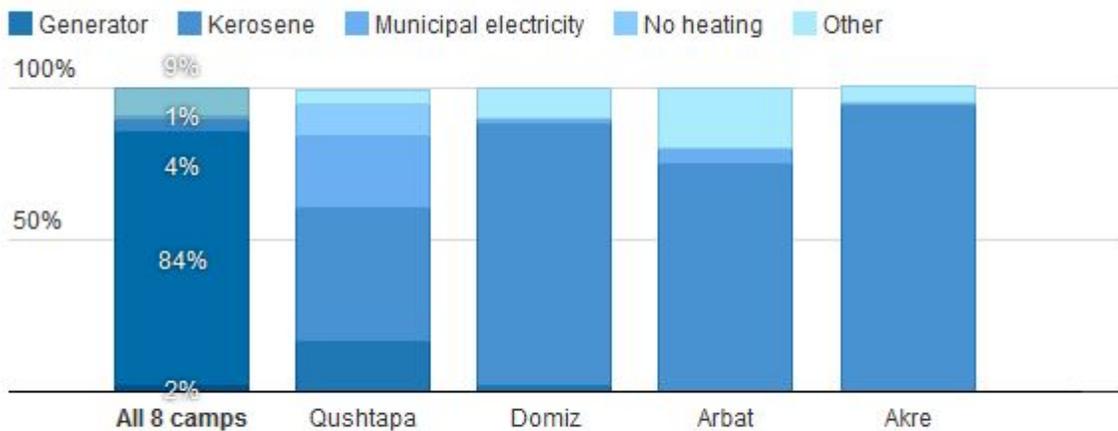
Note: water source irrespective of use (drinking or non-drinking purposes).

Source: REACH Initiative (2015)

Created with Datawrapper

- Availability of fuel for heating.* Kerosene is the most widespread source of fuel for heating, as it is provided by humanitarian partners to families as part of the ‘winterization’ programme. At the time of the assessment (December 2014), however, Qushtapa showed a significantly lower use of kerosene, as showed in Figure 13, while 1 out of 10 families reported no heating at all. This was probably linked to supply issues as 68% of the families reported at least 7 days spent during the last 30 days without any heating fuel—while 18% reported so in Arbat and virtually none in Akre and Domiz.

Figure 13: Primary household source of heating fuel



Source: REACH Initiative (2015)

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- Asset ownership.* Data on the household assets owned by the families living in the refugee camps is not available. It is reasonable to expect this specific asset base to be rather limited

due to the nature of human displacement. However, some patterns can be drawn. The economic survey by REACH highlighted that, on average, families residing in Domiz allocated 31% of their total expenses to household assets, followed afar by Qushtapa (9% of expenses allocated to household assets). This was attributed to the fact that Domiz was established well before the other camps and people exhibit more long term needs and a better integration.

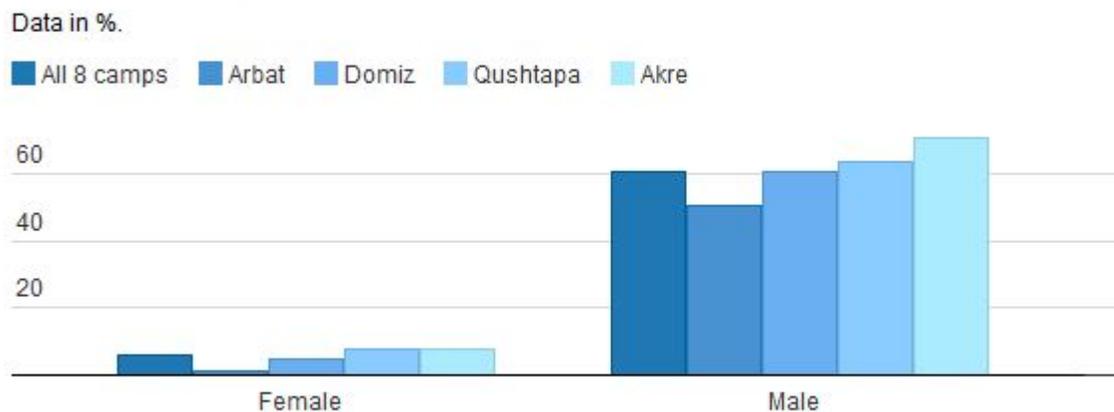
- *Missing information gaps.* Specific information on housing and shelter status will be needed to understand the vulnerability of families in camps and whether they face obstacles. This is especially important in sight of winter preparedness, as many families are expected to be completely dependent on external aid to protect the house in winter periods and to obtain the necessary assets to keep warm. In addition, information on asset ownership—for instance, how many families possess a car—and on market access to obtain the assets will be valuable. Finally, it is needed to explore whether deprivation of physical assets is linked to camp settings, such as unavailability of markets, or to specific characteristics of part of the population, i.e. vulnerable groups or families with no income are correlated with asset deprivation.

Assets: Human Capital

- *Household size and composition.* The average size of a refugee family is formed by 5 members, with the large majority of families (79%) falling under the range of 3 to 7 members. This finding contrasts with the extended assumption for humanitarian planning purposes that considers the standard size as being 6 members. 6% of the households across the camps are female-headed households, with the percentage rising to 9% in Qushtapa and Akre camps.
- *Age dependency ratio.* Across all camps, the age dependency ratio stands at 0.53, fairly similar in all locations. A higher proportion of non-dependent individuals in a household increase the potential of earning income. Hence, it would be important to contrast the ratio with information on household income or employment levels to understand the extent of vulnerability within families. In this case, the vast majority of dependent population is comprised by children over the age of 6.
- *Levels of education.* The economic survey by REACH collected data on the highest education level attained by any of the household members. In this sense, in 44% of the households the highest level by at least one member was elementary school; in 25% it was secondary school; in 15% it was university; and in 10% of the households none of the members reported to have received formal education. These levels were fairly consistent throughout the camps, with no major significant differences. In addition, it was found that households with at least a member in university education enjoyed the highest level of household income, while income levels for the other categories was not significantly different between them.

- *Available skills.* Specific information on the set of skills and previous experiences of the Syrian refugee community is not available from the existing assessments. Based on qualitative findings by a recent market mapping and analysis of Kurdistan Region²⁸, Syrian refugees are usually high skilled and experience workers, especially in the service sector. However, they are mainly only able to find unskilled or semi-skilled jobs, generally in the construction, hospitality and retail sector. This is mainly attributed to a lack of acknowledgement of Syrian certificates by local employers as well as a miss-match of skills and employment available.
- *Labour force participation.* Overall, 33% of the population over the age of 17 across the camps was actively participating in the labour force, that is, that they are willing to work and could find employment, either as waged or non-waged labour. Due to data gaps this excludes those actively seek employment but unable to find it. There is a significant big gap between genders, with 61% of the male population economically active, but only 6% of women. By location, Arbat shows the lowest ratios of labour force participation, as compared to the other camps that range between 5% to 8% for women and 60% and 70% for men, as shown in Figure 14.

Figure 14: Proportion of population aged 18-59 economically active



Source: REACH Initiative (2015)

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- *Health status.* The percentage of households reporting at least one member suffering from disability is 12% on average, within a range of 9% in Arbat to 17% in Basirma. Data on how disability is distributed between age and gender groups is not available. For those families that reported having a disability, 3 out of 5 involve a physical disability. Regarding chronic illnesses, 19% of the households reported having at least one member in this

²⁸ DRC & UNDP, 2014. Emergency market mapping & analysis of the construction and service-sector labour market system: a study of the opportunities in employment for Iraqi IDPs and Syrian refugees, Kurdistan Region or Iraq.

category—although it does not hinder employability *per se*—, within a range of 12% in Qushtapa to 24% in Domiz. Meetings with health sector leaders within the humanitarian community revealed that an individual living in a camp is more prone to suffer from medical conditions, especially due to bad preparedness in winter time and to psychological issues—traumatic experiences due to conflict, frustration for the lack of opportunities, depressions, preoccupation for the relatives, etc.

- *Missing information gaps.* Information on the skills and qualifications available, including past experience and skill development needs, is missing. In addition, further disaggregation between population groups will be valuable in order to understand how different levels of human capital determine the livelihood strategy able to adopt or willing to undertake.

Assets: Social and Political Capital

- *Household residency status.* The majority of the refugee population in camps hold residency for the Kurdistan Region, near or above 90% in most of the locations. The significant exception is Arbat camps, with only 14% of the residents being granted residency status. The reason can be found in a temporal stoppage of residency issuing by the Sulaimania governorate, where the camp is located. Possession of residency is a relatively important asset, as it is sometimes required to access more formal employment—although not necessary to engage in informal activities or to access public services within the Kurdistan Region.
- *Representative decision-making bodies.* All the refugee camps in the Kurdistan Region have a body formed by camp residents that engage with camp management on organisational issues. However, only in the case of Arbat camp this body is directly elected by the camp population and hence fully representative. In the rest of the camps, the body is appointed by the governorate authorities and elections are not allowed due to fear of interferences into local politics due to party rivalries. In addition, there is a lack of information about both the perceptions of the camp residents over these decision-making bodies and their effectiveness in improving camp conditions.
- *Support received from the refugee community to cope with shocks.* Some indicators help understand the status of the social fabric and support available within camps in times of need. For instance, all households in all the camps reported to have either bought on credit in the camps' shops or borrowed money. In addition, 19% of the families on average reported that obtaining food on credit in the shops was either the first or second main source of food—at camp level, this is 8% in Akre, 14% in Domiz, 21% in Qushtapa and 29% in Arbat. Only 2% reported that the main or second source of food as support from families or friends—with an exceptional 8% in Arbat. A visit to Qushtapa camp revealed, in effect, that some of the shops lent the goods to the families, who went to pay back every end of month.
- *Security.* Feeling safe and protected within the immediate community is another indicator for evaluating the social capital. In this sense, 11% of the female camp residents on average reported feeling physically unsafe when leaving their house, compared to 7% for men.

Significantly higher percentages are found in Arbat camp—19% and 16% for females and males, respectively— while Qushtapa camp has the lowest levels.

- *Gender roles.* One indicator for gender role is the participation of women in the labour market and, as discussed above, the ratio is still very low invariably across all camps. In parallel, the economic survey by REACH highlighted the fact that 40% of the households reported that women were involved in decision-making related to domestic finance, whether with their husband (23%) or on their own as a sole decision-maker (17%). There are, however, strong contrasts across camps, with Arbat having the lowest proportion of women involved (27%) and Qushtapa the highest (62%).
- *Development of networks within the host community.* Although evidence is extremely scarce on this topic, a recent assessment by REACH on the settlement intentions of Syrian refugees living in camps²⁹ highlighted that only 3% of the households intended to leave the camp in which they were living, mainly to move within the host community—only in Qushtapa camp the percentage was significantly higher (10%). In addition, 19% of families reported that they would prefer to move out, but decided against because life within the host community was perceived as even more difficult. This was attributed to higher expense needs as well as cultural and societal challenges, i.e. separation from relatives in the camp or re-allocation of the children from a now-familiar context. Finally, it is reasonable to expect that trading networks are being established by the shops inside the camps in order to obtain the necessary goods; however, no specific information about the performance of these networks is available.
- *Missing information gaps.* As all the camps have some sort of council aimed to coordinate camp management between the refugee community and the humanitarian partners plus authorities, it will be important to understand the effectiveness of these councils and the perceptions camp residents have. In addition, further information on social interaction with the host community as well as perceptions on better ways to organise social safety nets for the most vulnerable will be valuable.

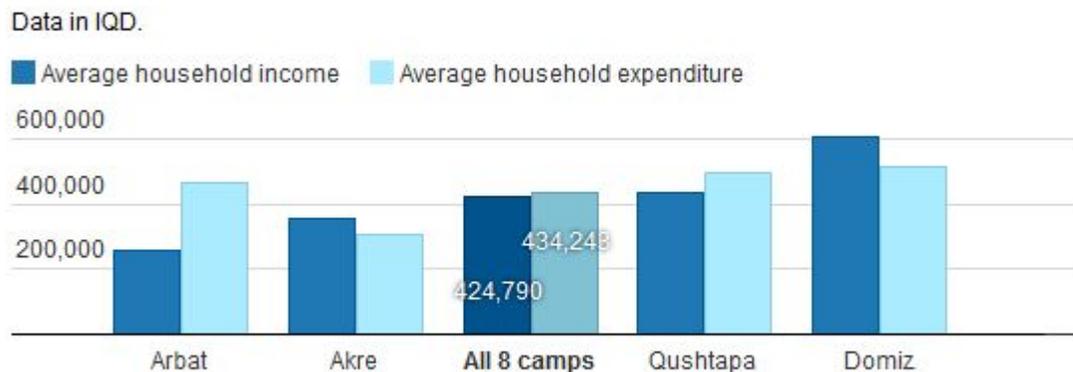
Assets: Financial Capital

- *Salaries and income earning.* 87% of households on average in the camps have been receiving some source of income, either waged labourer, business ownership or humanitarian assistance. The percentages varies significantly across the camps of interest, with Domiz and Akre above 96%, Qushtapa at 86% and Arbat at 59%, showing a particular economic vulnerability in this latter camp. This is directly correlated to the percentage of families stating that they were able to meet their basic needs in the preceding 30 days.
- *Savings.* The economic survey by REACH assessed the possession of savings when families arrived in the camp and their evolution in time. Although detail by location is not available, the assessment showed that 66% of the families arrived with some sort of savings but only

²⁹ Reach Initiative, 2015. Intentions assessment of Syrian refugees in camps in the Kurdistan Region. February 2015.

4% of the families stated that they still hold savings at the time of the assessment (February 2014). In addition, the latest assessment available (December 2014) showed that families in some camps, on average, were facing expenses for a higher amount than the income they earned. This was relevant in Qushtapa and, especially, in Arbat, as showed in Figure 15. This situation implied the need to rely on negative coping strategies such as depleting savings or borrowing money.

Figure 15: Average household income and expenditures in camps



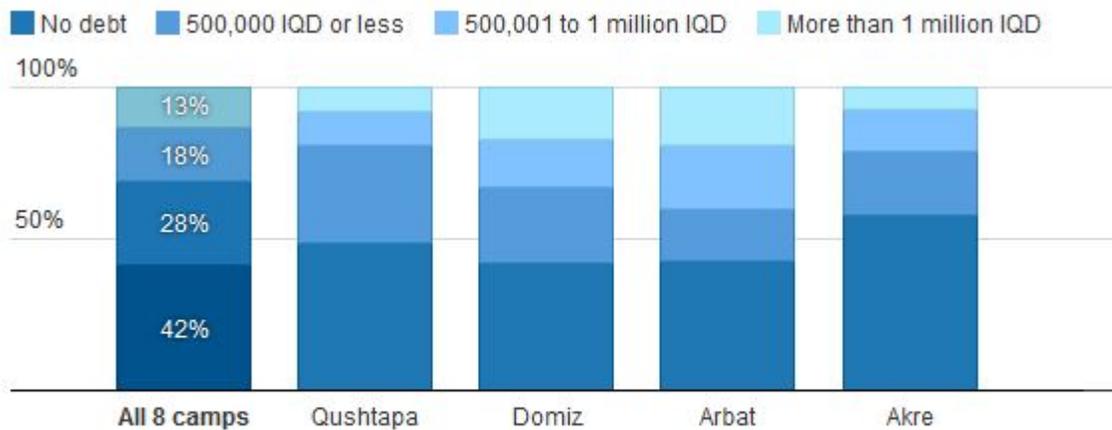
Source: REACH Initiative (2015)

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- *Livestock.* The vast majority of refugee families do not possess any kind of livestock as the camp setting does not facilitate a space for such activities. Families are neither allowed to use the surrounding lands as they are private property. However, discussions with humanitarian partners revealed that, in some camps, there are small poultry pits for private use of some resident families, but these activities are causing problems with other families due to the nuisance created.
- *Productive equipment.* Data on the productive equipment owned by families residing in the refugee camps is not available. However, it is reported that some individuals have been able to acquire equipment in order to undertake their own economic activities, such as establishing a bakery or a sewing workshop.
- *Remittances.* Data on the flow of remittances to and from the camps is not available. Some money traders, most of them Syrian refugees, operate within many of the camps, mostly allowing families to send money back to the relatives in Syria. This indicates that the flow of money is mainly from the camps to other parts outside Iraq.
- *Debts and access to credit.* 58% of the families across all camps reported being in debt, with the highest proportion in Domiz and the lowest in Akre, as showed in Figure 16. This ratio is slightly higher than the one from the assessment in May 2014, when it was at 52%. However, the number of families whose debt is higher than a million IQD has critically increased:

while in the previous assessment it accounted for 12% of the families in debt, the last data available shows that 22% of the families in debt now owe more than a million IQD—13% over the total number of households. This is especially critical in Arbat. Finally, access to credit seems to be available, but specific information on the means and source of the credit—and whether there are families seeking to borrow but without access—is missing.

Figure 16: Proportion of households per debt levels



Source: REACH Initiative (2015)

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- *Missing information gaps.* Further information will be valuable on the credit networks within camps and the risk of contracting debt for matching consumption needs; also on the use—if any—of remittances, as well as the existence of any productive equipment and how credit may help bolster productive activities.

Assets: Natural Capital

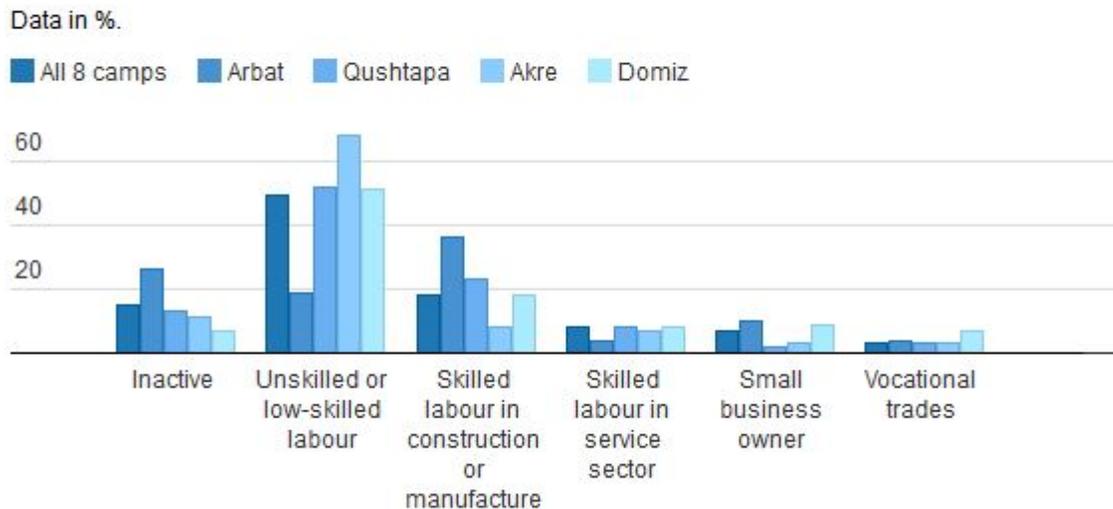
- *Land holding and access to agricultural assets.* Syrian refugees have the legal right to buy or rent arable land. However, no information is available on whether this is the case for any family in the camps. In addition, camps have a very limited available space to allow for farming and local production, although some initiatives to install greenhouses in the boundaries are under way—for instance, in Arbat.
- *Environmental degradation.* Linked to the fact that wastewater management systems are completely underdeveloped in both the camps and the host community setting, it has been commented by some humanitarian partners that there is a significant degradation of the surrounding natural environment around the settlements. In many cases, this may affect the productivity of the arable lands. In addition, as water supplies are usually obtained from boreholes, this is adding pressure to the already declining water tables in most of the groundwater basins.

Livelihood strategies

- Businesses development.* Some camps have developed a dynamic network of small shops and services within the informal sector that are able to provide some basic goods to the population—mainly food. In the latest assessment (December 2014), it was reported that, on average, these small businesses were the primary source of income for nearly 8% of the households and, in some cases, the only source. In addition, 3% of the households relied on vocational trades, that is, carpenters, electricians, plumbers, etc. The camps that are more isolated or were established longer ago tend to show a higher degree of in-camp commerces, such as Arbat and Domiz (10% and 9%, respectively), as opposed to those newer and closer to populated areas, such as Akre and Qushtapa (3% and 1%, respectively). Regarding income, REACH's economic survey revealed that the average income earned by the informal business owners was, on average, at par to that of a wage labourer outside the camp. However, information is unavailable on how the businesses perform, on the obstacles faced by the *entrepreneurs*, or on the employment able to generate.
- Labour and income sources.* Overall, for 77% of the households living in camps, the main source of income is a remunerated employment—the rest being small business ownership (8%) or not being economically active (15%). The predominant employment on average consists by far of unskilled waged labour, followed by skilled employments such as in the construction or manufacturing sector. The specific categorisation by location is available in Figure 17. As highlighted in previous points, the actual skills of the individual and the jobs available frequently do not match. In terms of revenue amounts, it has been found that the average income did not vary in statistical terms from the previous assessment 9 months before. However, large differences in income levels per camp persists, with Akre and Arbat reporting the lowest levels and Domiz reporting the highest. It must be noted that these income levels refer to the total income per household, not per individual. Hence, as income level will mainly depend on how many household members actually work, it is difficult to link income levels per camp with a particular distribution of employment—i.e. Arbat camp has the highest proportion of skilled employment, which should imply higher income levels, but at the same time has the lowest employment levels per individual.
- Obstacles to labour market.* Overall, 1 out of 2 families living in the four refugee camps of interest reported having problems accessing employment, with very little variation between locations. The most cited reason by far was the perceived increase in competition for the available job positions. This is especially the case in the camps in Duhok and Erbil governorates, in which the highest number of internally displaced people is sheltered. It is noteworthy to highlight that distance to available jobs, linguistic differences and, above all, perceived discrimination for being refugee only played a very modest role³⁰. Other key

³⁰ Only Arbat represents a special case in the sense that a relatively higher proportion of households highlighted as an obstacle the lack of possession of residency cards (only 14% of the residents possessed the card at the time of the assessment), the linguistic differences (in this region the Kurdish dialects between the refugee community and the host community differ significantly), and distance to available jobs (although still far from other camps such as Gawilan where this issue was raised by 20% of the households).

Figure 17: Distribution of primary income source for households



Source: REACH Initiative (2015)

Created with [Datawrapper](#)

obstacles that were raised in the DRC & UNDP's market analysis (December 2014) refer to the particular dynamics of local employment in the region: it was found that 2 out of 3 employers use the word of mouth or informal networks to hire workers. Syrian refugees are mostly de-linked from these networks and are usually unaware of the employment circuits. In addition, qualifications from Syria are frequently not acknowledged by the employers and it delays the employability of skilled Syrian refugees.

- *Food procurement.* In terms of the sources of food by means of procurement, Figure 18 shows that the direct assistance by the World Food Programme (WFP) was the primary source—either through food parcels distribution or through food vouchers that are redeemed in an official food retailer. Only Qushtapa and Arbat showed a greater reliance on local store markets. This is linked to the fact that these two camps still did not transition to a voucher system and hence the food parcels were usually insufficient or inadequate to meet family needs³¹. However, there is a patent competition between food voucher schemes and the in-camp *independent* supply of food. This is clear in the case of Domiz, which has a very developed fabric of small shops and groceries, but 98% of the families reported that WFP assistance through vouchers was still the main source of food. The value of the food vouchers has recently decreased from \$31 to \$19 due to WFP funding restrictions and hence the effect on the resilience of a food procurement system so dependent on external funding remains to be explored.

³¹ The assessment, in particular, found that the voucher system contributed to a better food consumption score, which measures a family's nutrients intake. The voucher system allows a family to choose their preferred products. On the contrary, the food parcels were frequently seen as inadequate and families supplemented food from elsewhere, such as the local grocery shops.

Figure 18: Primary source for food procurement



Source: REACH Initiative (2015)

Created with [Datawrapper](#)

- Missing information gaps.* In terms of employment, evidence is missing on the frequent geographical expansion of employment opportunities, that is, how far individuals are reaching to find a job. This may better determine which is the specific host community with which they interact—and compete. In addition, better understanding is needed on the obstacles faced to find a job as well as on how durable and sustainable the job placements for refugees are, although the fact that most of the employment is daily paid indicates that durable opportunities are scarce. Information on who the economic inactive families are is also valuable. Regarding the development of businesses in the camps, there is no specific inventory of the types of commerces available, whether they are simple traders or they produce value added. There is also a need to understand the obstacles individuals may face to set up the business and how they operate, perform and enter the regional supply chains. Finally, for the food procurement sources, an update is needed to understand the effect of the recent 40% decrease of the voucher value on the resilience of a food system dependent on external funding.

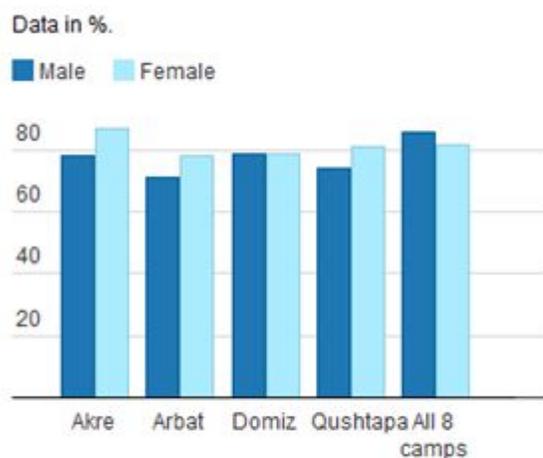
Public services: education

- Service provision.* The basic and secondary education in camps is mainly provided through schools operated by the Kurdistan's Ministry of Education, complemented in some cases by facilities run by international NGOs. Therefore, the government provides for the curriculum as well as the necessary funding for the infrastructure and teachers, who are frequently Syrian refugees with the right skills. However, with the current budget restrictions for the KRG, salaries to teachers are not being paid and the overall public running of the system is under question. In addition, most of the camps do not count with sufficient school facilities and teachers, hence school overcrowding is a wider issue than in the immediate rural host community. The problem is especially critical for secondary education: none of the camp settings provide sufficient opportunities to develop skills beyond basic education, as there are

usually limited secondary education or vocational training facilities. A discussion with education sector partners revealed deep concerns over the lack of technical preparedness for the labour market of the young population between the age of 15 to 20.

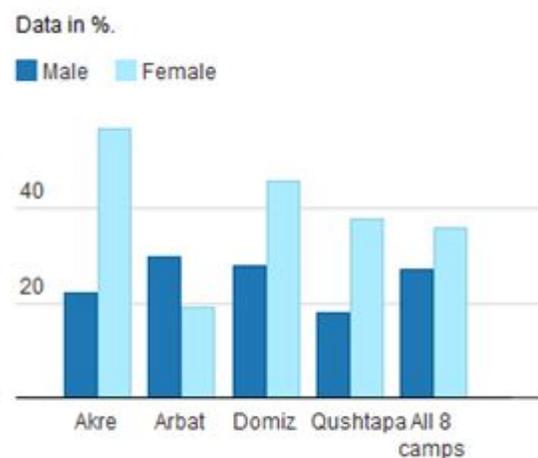
- *Coverage.* Net enrolment rates for basic education are modest as showed in Figure 19 and Figure 20, significantly below the host community standards, which are near 90%. In some of the camps, enrolment rates are below 80%. Due to the restrictions in secondary education provision commented above, the enrolment rates are significantly lower, as expected. In some cases, refugees must pursue their education out of the camps, in secondary schools within the host community. Data is unavailable on whether non-enrolment is especially frequent in female-headed households or low-income families. However, the reasons for not attending school provides further information. The most cited reasons by the male population for not attending secondary education is the need to work (especially prevalent in Qushtapa and Domiz, option selected in 45% and 41% of the cases, respectively), the lack of funds for school materials (prevalent in Qushtapa and Arbat, 38% and 35% respectively), and the perceived bad quality of the curriculum (prevalent in all camps with near 30%). Regarding the female population, the most cited reasons are class overcrowding (prevalent in all four camps with near 25%), curriculum quality (prevalent in Qushtapa, 22%) and, especially relevant, marriage (prevalent in Akre, Arbat and Domiz with near 18% of the households reporting this).

Figure 19: Net enrolment in basic education



Source: REACH Initiative (2015)
Created with [Datawrapper](#)

Figure 20: Net enrolment in secondary education



Source: REACH Initiative
Created with [Datawrapper](#)

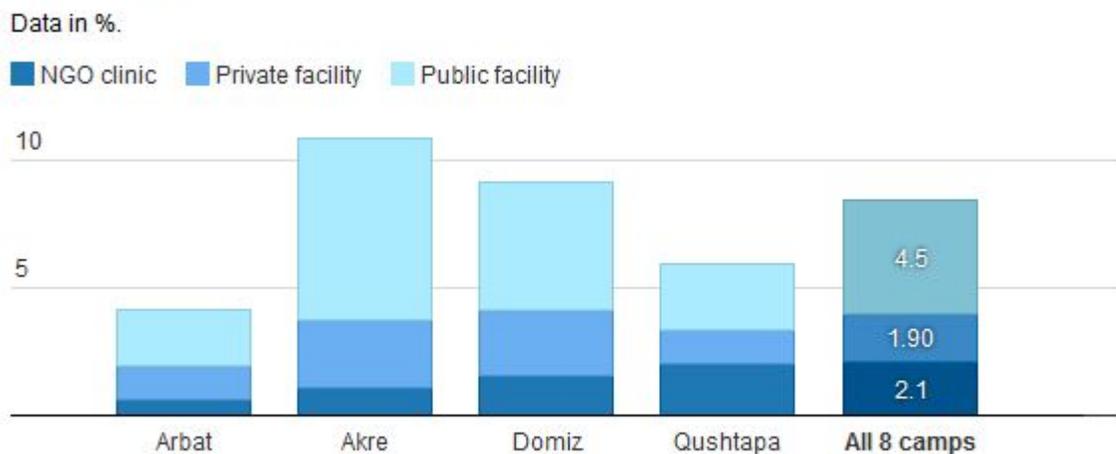
Public services: health

- *Service provision.* The provision of health care in camps is a mix of services managed by the governorate's department of health and services managed by the humanitarian community.

Overall, the governorates assume roughly a third of the total health care expenses in the refugee camps, although it varies per governorate. Duhok governorate is willing to gradually assume total control of the provision of services in camps, while Erbil governorate is less responsive. The standards of health care provision in camps, however, are relatively larger than in the host community due to higher requirements by humanitarian partners. Hence, the provision cost is higher. Health personnel is mostly formed by in-camp skilled professionals, employed by either a humanitarian partner or the governorate. Facilities are temporal, not durable, but it is not seen as a grave obstacle for a quality service provision. Furthermore, Syrian refugees have free access to health care in the KRG's medical facilities outside the camps, where patients assume some fees for medicines as a standard co-payment system. Hence, when individuals require advanced treatment, they are directed to a hospital or secondary care center within Kurdistan. Overall, the perception of refugees on the quality of health care in Kurdistan has been reported to be mostly neutral or good.

- *Coverage.* Every camp has, as a minimum, a small medical post and a primary health centre—Domiz has two PHCs due to its size. In general, this means that there is a medical post for each 5,000 individuals and a PHC for each 20,000 individuals, approximately. The services provided are of similar level in all the camps, with the exception of Akre camp, which lags slightly behind. In terms of usage, REACH's survey reported that around 9% of the households made use the health care system in the previous 2 weeks, with a maximum of 11% in Akre and a minimum of 4% in Arbat. Of these households, roughly half of them attended the KRG's public health facilities, while only 25% attended to the NGO clinics in the camps. The other 25% went to a private health provider. Disaggregation per camp is shown in Figure 21. Hence, most of the health care provision for Syrian refugees takes place outside of the camps. Some of the families also reported facing difficulties in accessing

Figure 21: Households using health care service and type of provider



Source: REACH Initiative (2015)

Created with [Datavrapper](#)

health care—especially related to health care outside of the camps. The main difficulty pointed by households (more than 50% of the cases) relates to lack of funds to afford health care, probably linked to families aiming to access private health care. The second most cited difficulty is the absence of the required treatment service. Significantly, distance to the health facility or medical staff refusing to treat the patient have not been reported as relevant obstacles. It has to be noted, however, that these disaggregation of the difficulties is subjected to a wide margin of error as the results are not statistically significant.

Public services: local services

- *Provision of water service.* The investment and operation of the water supply system is being assumed by the humanitarian partners. Those camps that count with a supply network obtain the water from close boreholes, as most of the supply systems in Kurdistan. Therefore, the network is not connected to the network of the closest municipality. However, the governorates are gradually willing to assume and participate in the technical design and provision of the service, although it does not involve assuming the expenses due to budget restrictions. For the residents in the camps, the service is provided free of charge.
- *Provision of electricity service.* The refugee camps are connected to the national power grid, which grants virtually each household with around 6 amperes of electricity—for which no fee is charged. The actual availability of electricity is dependent upon the proper functioning of the power system of the region, which is not usually able to support a 24-hours supply as seen in previous sections. More than 90% of the households in Akre, Arbat and Domiz reported more than 10 hours of power supply per day, while only 60% of households in Qushtapa reported so.
- *Provision of solid waste management.* All camps are provided with solid waste collection, as part of an extension of the service provided in the near municipalities. These services are outsourced to a private provider. The funding, however, is not assumed by the local governments but directly funded by the humanitarian partners. However, this is adding pressure on the end-side of the service, mainly landfills and dumping sites, for which capacity was already under constraints.

4.2.3. Drawing comparisons with refugees living within the host community

As around 60% of the Syrian refugee population do not live in camp settings but mixed within the host community, it is also important to assess any significant difference between the livelihood situation of both in-camp and out-camp refugees. Discussions with humanitarian key informants highlighted the fact that camps are increasingly becoming an attraction pool for some of the Syrian families struggling to afford life in the urban areas. If population in camps increase, it is not mainly because of the arrival of more refugees from Syria, but from families already in Kurdistan requesting to be hosted in the camps.

Hence, one assessment by REACH³² focused on the needs of Syrian refugees residing in the host community. The main differences in the livelihoods baseline are highlighted below.

Assets: Physical Capital

- *Housing characteristics.* Nearly 80% of refugee households residing in the host community have settled in independent forms of housing such as residential villas or apartments. Across the KRI 17% of the households shared housing with two or more families. The highest number was found in Erbil governorate where 29% of the households live in collective forms of housing. Socio-economic attributes determine housing with manual labourers and the most vulnerable dominating the collective forms. Only 4% were hosted by relatives, family-members, friends and non-relatives. 1% of the households were residing in basements or garages. The main difference with in-camp refugees is that 95% of those residing in the host community pay rent. From April to December 2014 the average rent prices increased by 20% in Dohuk governorate and 15% in Erbil as a consequence of the internal displacement crisis. A small proportion of households received shelter assistance in form of cash or shelter material. The smallest proportion of 4% was reported in Duhok governorate while certain Erbil and Sulaimania districts received over 20%.
- *Access and use of water and sanitation.* For over 80% of the households drinking water is sourced from private municipal connections and water insufficiency does not seem to be an issue. The few households (4%) using trucked water reported the highest rates of water scarcity, spending, on average 3 days without water. although over 45% of households felt that the water they consumed was not safe, half of these did nothing to sanitise their water before consumption. All households reported having access to showers and latrines.

Assets: Human Capital

- *Age dependency ratio.* Households with fewer dependants tend to cluster in urban centers. In comparison to less urbanized districts, Dohuk (0.7), Erbil (0.8) and Sulaimania (0.9) districts, have lower average dependency ratios. This might be explained by the fact that all three are populated by large urban centres where commercial and industrial agglomeration attracts a higher number of single migrant labourers or families with few or no dependants, which in turn pushes down overall dependency ratio relative to more rural and less economically developed areas. In comparison to in-camp refugees it appears that the dependency ratios are higher among the non-camp refugees in general.
- *Labour force participation.* No significant differences can be noted in the proportions of labour force participation between the in-camp and non-camp refugees. 67% of the male adult population (aged 18-65) was actively participating in the labour force, whereas the corresponding number for the female population was only 4%.

³² REACH, 2015. Multi-sector needs assessment of Syrian refugees residing in host communities.

Assets: Social and Political Capital

- *Household residency status.* While over 80% of eligible individuals in Duhok districts hold KRI residency cards, the corresponding number for Erbil and Sulaimania is only 31% and 18% respectively. The possession residency cards follow the same patterns for in-camp and non-camp refugees although the overall number is slightly higher for those living in camps (90%).
- *Access to community leaders.* Access to community leaders, or mukhtars, appears to vary greatly depending on district and governorate of residence. The majority of refugee households reportedly have access in Dohuk (92%) and Erbil (60%) governorates, whilst two thirds (an estimated 66%) of households reportedly have no access to their community leader in Sulaimania governorate. Access rates are highest in districts in Dohuk, indicating that public authorities in these districts pursue a more inclusive policy towards refugees.
- *Perceptions of support of the host community.* 66% of non-camp refugees across the KRI perceive their host community as helpful or extremely helpful. However, there are important differences between the governorates. For instance, positive experience of the host community is much larger in Dohuk than in Sulaimania. While 57% in Duhok found the host community extremely helpful, the corresponding number was only 14% in Sulaimania.

Assets: Financial Capital

- *Income levels.* There are major differences in income levels between camp and non-camp households. While the average income in camp settings was 360 USD, the corresponding level in non-camp settings was more than double. On the other hand households in non-camp settings tend to incur higher levels of debt—see below.
- *Negative coping strategies.* In comparison to in-camp refugees it seems that non-camp refugees incur slightly higher debt burdens overall. While nearly 60% of families across camps reported being in debt, the proportion for families residing in the host community was 70%. In real terms debt-burdens were found much higher in non-camp settings with an average of 890 USD, in comparison to 528 USD in camps. However, at 84%, resorting to savings was the most common negative coping strategy used by non-camp families.

Livelihood strategies

- *Labour and income sources.* There are no significant differences in levels of economic inactivity between in-camp and non-camp refugees, which stands at around 15% for both. The main source of income was generated through low skilled or manual labour, with agriculture labour at 38% and skilled waged labour such as construction at 24%. The proportion of small business owners was slightly lower among the refugees residing in the host community.
- *Obstacles to labour market entry.* Refugees residing in the host community also reported increased competition as the main obstacle to employment. The proportion was especially

high in Duhok districts where over 80% stated this reason. In a few districts distance to work was reported as a major obstacle to find work. The highest proportion was found in Soran / Choman at 20%.

- *Food procurement.* The patterns of food procurement are similar to that of in-camp households. While WFP assistance is available in all governorates, reliance is significantly higher in Duhok, with over 80% in all districts. The corresponding proportions for Sulaimania was between 20-30% and less than 20% in Erbil. The vast majority of households in Erbil governorate relied on store/market bought food purchased with private funds.

5. Conclusion: how do livelihoods in Syrian refugee camps compare to those of their host community?

This desk study has reviewed the existing data and literature pertinent to developing a resilience-based development response to the Syrian refugee community living in camps within KRI. This also included a discussion on the literature and experiences in developing a resilience response. The review has revealed a rich existing data base that allows to compare and evaluate the livelihoods system of the Syrian refugee camps and those of the host community.

This comparison of livelihoods, discussed below, provides concluding insights on the pressing areas that may require to be addressed to build a more resilient community. It also highlights key information gaps, for which further qualitative and quantitative research needs to be conducted.

Assets: Physical Capital

- *Housing and ownership.* Only a small fraction of the immediate host community households live in vulnerable houses not made of concrete. Ownership of the houses is extended and only 10% of the families actually pay a rent. No information is available for the Syrian families living in camps, but many households have been able to afford building a durable structure. In some way, as structures were paid by the refugees themselves, ownership can be claimed. Land ownership is a different issue: while a significant proportion of the houses of the host community are built illegally and families do not own nor pay a rent for the land, the refugee camps are installed on private land for which the government pay a rent on behalf of the refugees.
- *Access to fuel for heating.* Kerosene is the most widespread source of heating fuel in both communities, although still a significant part of the households in rural areas rely on wood—30% of households on average. Kerosene is provided by the humanitarian partners to the families in the refugee camps and, although they also experience supply problems, these have not been reported to be as frequent as in the host community.

- *Asset ownership.* Households in the host community are endowed with the basic household assets, but only a minority has assets such as cars, computers, air conditioning or internet. The wealth in refugee households is unknown but their endowment is expected to be lower; only in Domiz camp it seems that families are able to start building an asset base as a significant part of their expenses are allocated to household assets.

Assets: Human Capital

- *Household size and composition.* Syrian households are, on average, smaller than in the host community. The age dependency ratio also shows that there are more dependent populations (below age of 12 or above age of 60) within the refugee community than in the host community. Hence, less household members are able to seek for income generation.
- *Education levels.* Due to differences in the questions asked to Syrian refugees and the host community members, results are not directly comparable. However, some indicative trends suggest that around half of the population in both communities at least attended education up to basic level, although the proportion of people that never received formal education is still significant. Women tend to show a lower level of attainment, although this is gradually changing, as there are more girls enrolled in schools than boys, especially in secondary education.
- *Available skills.* Data available point to the fact that Syrian refugees are frequently more skilled than host community members, with more experience in the service sector. Most skills within the host community are concentrated in crop farming or livestock production, with a minority in construction. No information on how many refugees were involved in agriculture in the past is available. A relevant issue with Syrian refugees is that, although their experience is appreciated, their official certificates are usually not acknowledged.
- *Labour force participation.* The proportion of economically active population in both communities is surprisingly similar. Regarding the host community, 36% of the population in rural areas over the age of 15 are actively participating in the labour market, divided in 29% employed and 7% unemployed. There has been no visible impact of the crisis on labour participation ratios. Only Duhok sees a slight drop in employment rates, attributable to higher competition. Regarding Syrian refugees in camps, 33% of the population over 17 is employed—data on unemployment is unavailable. Only Arbat camp, in Sulaimania governorate, is showing significantly less employed people due to legal issues to participate in the labour market. Both communities also share the same gender gap: 63% of the male population in the host community and 61% in the in-camp Syrian community are employed, while only 6% of women in both communities do so.

Assets: Social and Political Capital

- *Rights equality.* The majority of Syrian refugees report to hold a temporary residency card. The percentage is above 90% in all the camps except Arbat, where at the time of the last assessment only 14% of the population had this status. Lack of residency hinders the potential for livelihoods, especially in terms of employment and free movement.

- *Security within society.* In the last 7 years, the security environment in the host community has improved significantly. While security concerns used to be moderately relevant, nowadays only a handful of households reported feeling physically unsafe. The situation is different within the camp settings, as still 7% of men and 11% of women feel unsafe in the camps, especially in Arbat and Domiz camps.
- *Support from the community to cope with shocks.* In both communities, social bounds play a huge role that has helped many households to cope with shocks such as loses of income or lack of food and fuel. Although it is not always the first action, people turn to the community to receive support, either through direct help or through borrowing money. Social networks are also widely used to obtain jobs. Hence, safety nets exist within the community and families rely on it.

Assets: Financial Capital

- *Access to pensions, social security and public safety nets.* The only population group with this coverage is formed by government employees. Those working in the private sector are not covered by any pension or social security system, as it is not mandatory. For the host community, 40% of the households count with a family member covered through this system. Other safety nets are operated by the KRG, mainly family and disability cash transfers, covering on average 20% of the households. None of these nets cover Syrian refugees.
- *Debt and access to credit.* Similar percentages of indebted households can be found in both communities. A bit more than half of the families reported to be in debt. Money is frequently borrowed from the closer social network and the use of money traders is marginal. The debt levels, however, are significantly different. While 22% of the indebted Syrian households owe more than 1 million IQD (800 USD), this is the case for 83% of the host community households. The average debt is 4,300 USD per household in the host community, directly linked to the delays in the payment of public salaries.
- *Ability to generate savings.* This is directly linked to the income levels generated and the expenses assumed at household level. More information is available for the host community: between 15% and 20% of the households in the districts surrounding the camps of Domiz, Akre and Qushtapa reported that their current expenses exceed the income they generate. This percentage rises to 36% for the districts near Arbat camp, as the average income is lower. The average of the districts is 25%. The rest of the families are just able to cover their expenses (23%) or even save money (53%). The situation is different for refugee households, as both their average income and expenses are lower—more detail provided below. Only average numbers are available, but they show that families in Arbat and Qushtapa struggle to cover their current expenses.

Assets: Natural Capital

- *Agricultural land.* There are no reports of farm land owned by Syrian refugees and the camps do not offer space for farming. Within the host community, ownership of land is not widely extended. The households that report possessing arable land is 31% for Akre district, 27% in

the districts around Domiz camp, 21% around Arbat camp, and 11% around Qushtapa camp. The majority of land pieces are relatively small, between 4 and 12 hectares.

Livelihood strategies

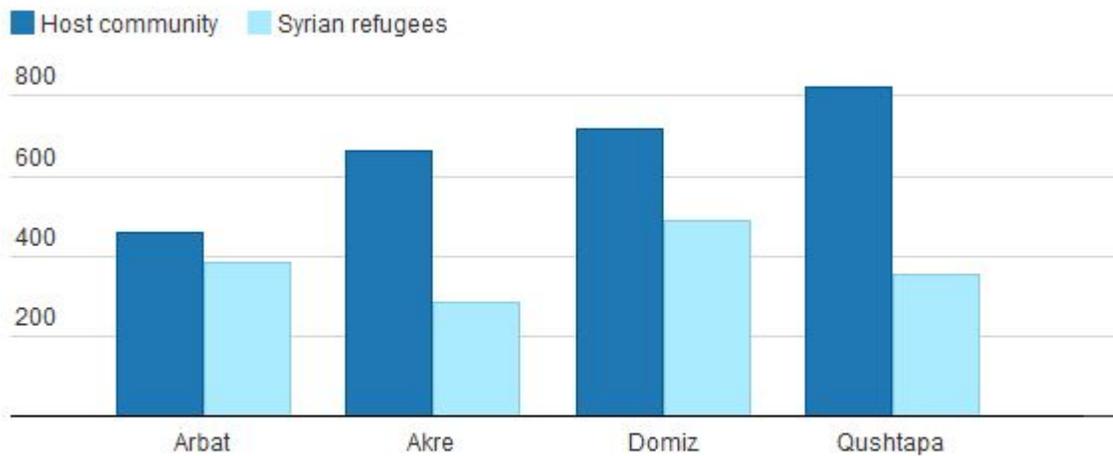
- *Labour composition.* By the nature of the local job market in the districts assessed, the livelihood structure in the host community existent before the crisis has been largely maintained in spite of the shocks. The public sector absorbs 45% of the employment in the districts around the camps, on average. For refugees, employment within government is largely limited to education and health care within camps. Workers in the private or informal sector are evenly distributed among agricultural and skilled jobs for the case host community, and mostly in unskilled positions in the case of refugees—except in Arbat camp where skilled jobs are the most frequently reported. In addition, the ratio of self-employment is relatively low among the Syrian community, although this indicator is difficult to compare as most non-wage labour reported by the host community is in farming, to which refugees have currently no access.
- *Income generation.* The fraction of households that report having no members generating income, hence, having no livelihood source, is between 3% to 5% in the immediate host community, compared to 15% of refugee households—Arbat camp being the highest with 26% and Domiz the lowest with 7%. Obstacles to find employment are higher for Syrian refugees due to the dynamics of the local labour market, which highly depends on the ‘word of mouth’ or community networks. The average income per capita generated by households with at least a member working is also lower for refugees, attributable to the less skilled jobs they occupy as well as, probably, the fewer days per month they are able to work. While income in the public sector and for skilled positions remains above 1,000 USD/month, it sharply drops for semi-skilled or unskilled positions. Differences are showed in Figure 22.
- *Food procurement.* External assistance is a key element on the food procurement system for both the host community and Syrian refugee households, as there is a significant proportion of families depending on it. For the host community, a bit more than half of the consumption of basic food items is provided by the Iraqi Public Distribution System; this is still reported to be the main source of food for 30% of the families—except for Akre, which is quite lower. For the Syrian community, the dependency link is relatively higher especially in those camps operating with food vouchers (Akre and Domiz), in spite of being the camps with highest employment rates and with the most developed system of informal shops. However, data on the functioning of food vouchers is obsolete after the value of vouchers has been decreased.

Public services

- *Education provision.* The system is provided free of charge by the Ministry of Education, although in some camps it receives support of humanitarian partners. The same curriculum is shared in both host and Syrian communities, translated into Arabic in the camp schools. Enrolment is above 90% in basic education for the host community, while it falls slightly below 80% in the camps. The picture is similar for secondary education, for which there is

Figure 22: Average monthly income per capita

Data in USD.



Note: data on the average number of days worked per month is unavailable and comparisons could be skewed.

Source: REACH Initiative (2015)

Created with [Datawrapper](#)

lack of provision and capacity in both communities; enrolment rates are very low in camps. In essence, the education system is under capacity stress as schools increasingly need to rely on multiple shifts to absorb all the school-aged population. The average size of classes in the host community ranges between 23 and 29 students, and the average size in Akre, Arbat and Domiz camps is still below 32 students; only in Qushtapa it reaches 36 students.

- Health care provision.* The government provides a basic level of care to all residents in Kurdistan, including the refugees. The number of primary facilities in the districts assessed was deemed to be adequate to cover the population, although the rural areas are faced with significantly fewer physicians per patient. At the same time, refugee camps are endowed with at least a medical post and a primary health centre, operated by either government or humanitarian partners, with standards of service seen as higher than in other areas of the region. The proportion of refugees that require health treatment is significantly higher than the host community members—9% and 4% of the households, respectively, sought treatment the preceding month. However, refugees mainly attend public health facilities within Kurdistan more than the facilities operated in camps, hence facing the same service issues as the host community.
- Municipal services provision.* Large differences remain in the water supply system, where households in refugee camps are still not endowed with individual access to water. There is a need of further investment to equate with the host community, where nearly 90% of the households have individual access. Reliability of water supply is also lower in camps. Regarding electricity supply, all households in both camps and host community are

connected to the national grid, although the grid is not able to support a 24-hours supply. However, refugee households do not have a generalised access to communal generators as the host community has. With regards to both electricity and water supply, the service in camps is provided for free to the residents, while host community households are charged by their consumption—although the fees are not usually collected. Finally, solid waste collection in the refugee camps is provided by humanitarian partners. On the contrary, collection is not usual in the surrounding districts, where open space dumping is the most common habit.