



# IOM IRAQ SPECIAL REPORT: Syria Crisis Rapid Assessments: August-October 2012



# Syria Crisis Rapid Assessments

IOM maintains a field presence in all governorates of Iraq and conducts ongoing needs assessments, vulnerability mapping, and emergency response activities.

Since Syrians first began arriving in Iraq in April 2012, IOM field staff have been continuously engaged with the affected populations, monitoring the numbers, conditions, intentions, and needs of Syrian refugees, Iraqi returnees, and host communities. To facilitate these activities, IOM maintains close collaboration with relevant government ministries, district and local authorities, community leaders, and international and Iraqi organizations.

This report details rapid assessment and response activities from August to October 2012.

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# RAPID ASSESSMENT RESULTS

Between August 1<sup>st</sup> and August 14<sup>th</sup>, 2012, IOM conducted a comprehensive rapid assessment of populations in Iraq who had been affected by the conflict in Syria. The assessment included interviews with Syrian and Iraqi nationals who had recently been displaced from Syria. Field teams also conducted key informant interviews with border representatives, Ministry of Migration and Displacement (MoMD) representatives, Bureau of Migration and Displacement (BMD) representatives, local council members, and camp and Transit Receiving Center (TRC) managers.

During the course of the assessment, IOM monitors conducted 65 interviews with displaced Syrian families in Anbar, Dahuk, Erbil, and Sulaymaniyah. They also conducted 196 interviews in 15 governorates with Iraqis who had recently returned from Syria. In addition, monitors also interviewed 42 key informants.

Results of the assessment are discussed in the following sections.

## FEMALE HEADED HOUSEHOLDS

Most Syrian and Iraqi families that have recently arrived in Iraq are headed by men. MoMD and local council representatives, however, report that there are also many female headed households among the recent arrivals. Most of these women find themselves as heads of household due to the death of a husband, divorce, or because their husband has stayed in Syria to protect property or to work. Some cases have also been reported in which the husband was prevented from leaving Syria.

**11%** of assessed Syrian families were headed by women, compared with **25%** of assessed Iraqi returnee families.

## DEMOGRAPHICS OF THE ASSESSED POPULATION

According to MoMD and local council representatives, nearly all recent arrivals from Syria are either Iraqi returnees or displaced Syrians.

**56%** of assessed Iraqi returnees were Sunni Muslims, 35% were Shia Muslims, and 7% were Christians. All assessed Syrians were Sunni Muslims.

**59%** of assessed Syrians were Kurdish, while 41% were Arab.

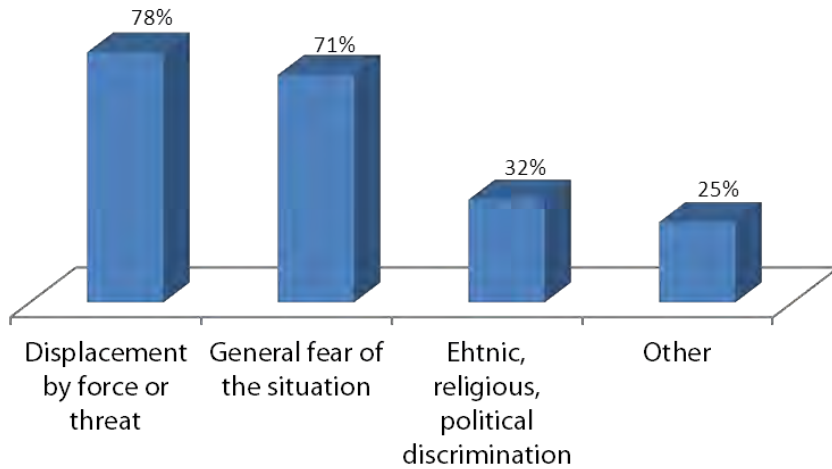
**3%** of assessed Iraqi returnees were Kurdish, while over 90% were Arab.

**43%** of assessed Syrians were 14 years old or younger. The average age was 24, and for heads of household it was 37. Syrian interviewees were up to 82 years old.

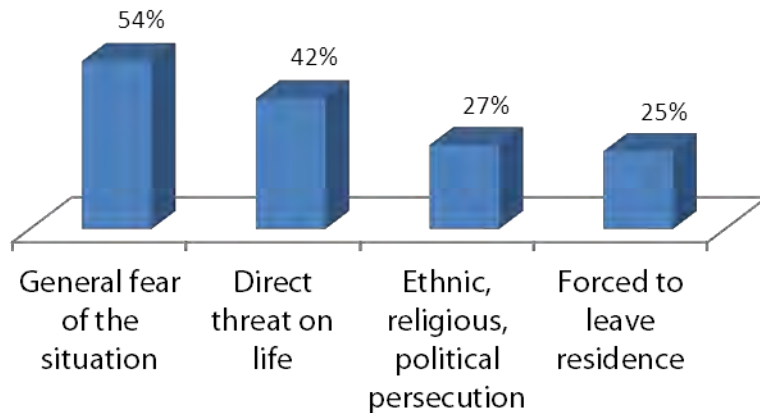
**33%** of assessed Iraqi returnees were 14 years old or younger. The average age was 25, and for heads of household it was 44. Iraqi interviewees were up to 89 years old.

## REASONS FOR DISPLACEMENT

Top 4 reasons for leaving Syria: Assessed Syrians



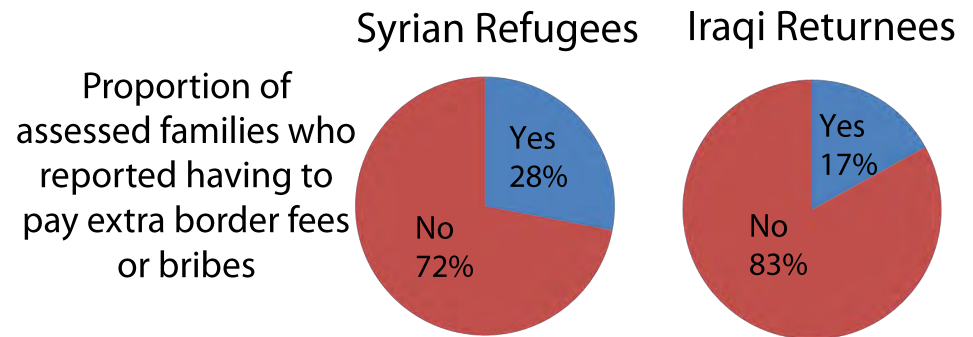
Top 4 reasons for leaving Syria: Assessed Iraqi Returnees



\*Respondents were permitted to select more than one answer.

## MEANS OF ARRIVAL

MoMD, local council, and border representatives report that the majority of displaced Syrians and Iraqis returning from Syria arrive in Iraq by bus or other vehicle. 40% of assessed Syrians indicated that they arrived in Iraq by bus, 26% by car, 20% walked, 12% took a taxi, and just 2% arrived by plane. In contrast, 37% of assessed Iraqi returnees arrived by car, 25% by bus, 20% by plane, 6% by taxi, and 13% arrived overland by other means. Assessed Syrian families most commonly used the Qa'em border crossing to enter Iraq (40% of assessed Syrian families), whereas assessed Iraqi families most commonly used the Al-Waleed border crossing (31% of assessed Iraqi families).



## DISPLACED SYRIANS IN ANBAR

A large number of the displaced Syrians in Iraq are living in Anbar Governorate where many of them have tribal and family ties. At the time of the assessment, local council representatives reported that displaced Syrian families were being housed in 18 locations in Anbar. Most of those families were living in schools, health centers, or mosques in transit receiving centers (TRCs). Since then, a large portion of the families have been relocated to camps. Host communities have been welcoming, but have been prevented from providing shelter for the displaced Syrians due to legal restrictions and security concerns.

### Snapshot of Al Qaim Transit Receiving Center

During the assessment, IOM monitors interviewed a TRC manager in Anbar. At the time of the interview, the manager reported that there were a number of injured people and widowed women in the center. All of the center's residents were from the same rural area in Syria and many had arrived with limited financial resources. Most of those living in the center came to Iraq by bus, and the manager indicated that he expected more to continue arriving. At the time of the interview, the manager reported that the center was hosting 189 individuals from 40 families. Families have to share 14 rooms in the center, which has led to overcrowding as multiple families live in a single room.

Facilities in the center are generally inadequate for the number of people there. There is, for example, just one bathroom for men and one for women. There is a small clinic in the center, but according to the manager, supplies are inadequate. At the time of the interview, there were no educational activities in the center. Electricity is available approximately seven hours per day, and thanks to donors, the center also has air conditioners. In addition, the Iraqi Government has hired a contractor to handle garbage collection there. The center is currently under the control of the Iraqi Army, and residents cannot leave without permission.

### ⇒ Food and Water in Al Qaim TRC

The Government of Iraq regularly distributes filtered drinking water to families living in the center. Most get water for personal (non-drinking) use from the municipal grid, which is often unreliable. There is also a water truck which brings water to the center directly from the river. When Syrians first started arriving in the center, local residents provided food-aid. Since then, however, government agencies and Islamic organizations have taken over that responsibility. A Government-hired contractor now provides food to the center on a regular basis. There are no refrigerators in the center, however IOM donated 2 gas cookers which help families there prepare meals and make tea. The manager reported that aid agencies are currently providing assistance, but he does not think that assistance will continue indefinitely.

### ⇒ Priority Needs in Al Qaim TRC

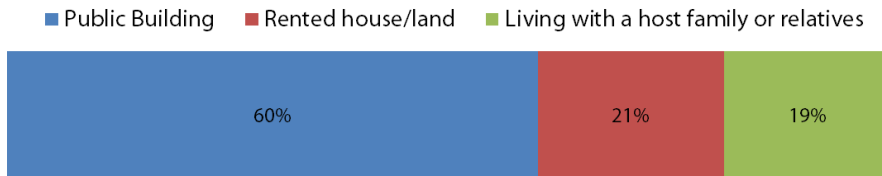
According to the TRC manager interviewed for this assessment, the Syrian residents' primary needs are improved shelter, diapers, sanitation, milk, water tanks, and filtered water. Families living in the center also need additional bathrooms and a more reliable source of water for washing.

# CURRENT LIVING CONDITIONS

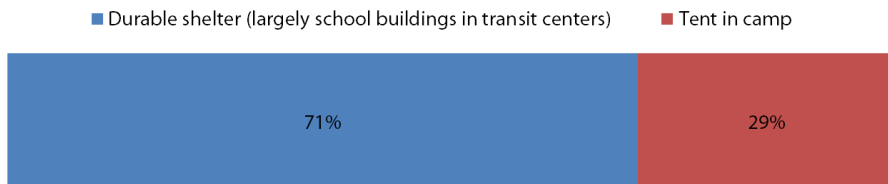
## SYRIANS

Most displaced Syrians in Iraq live in designated refugee camps or transit centers. Asked where they were currently living, 60% of assessed Syrian families who responded reported that they were living in a public building, 21% reported they were renting a house or land, and 19% reported that they were living with relatives or a host family. 71% of assessed Syrian families indicated that they were living in durable shelters (primarily in school buildings in transit centers), and 29% in tents in camps.

Housing circumstances of assessed Syrians



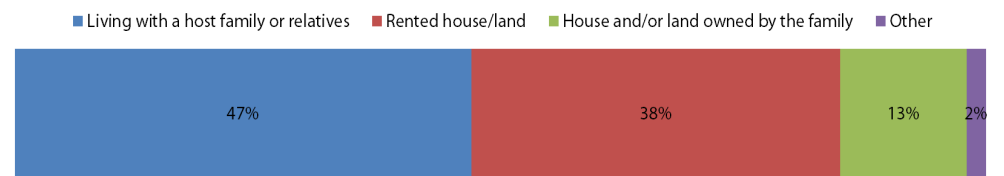
Types of shelter, assessed Syrians



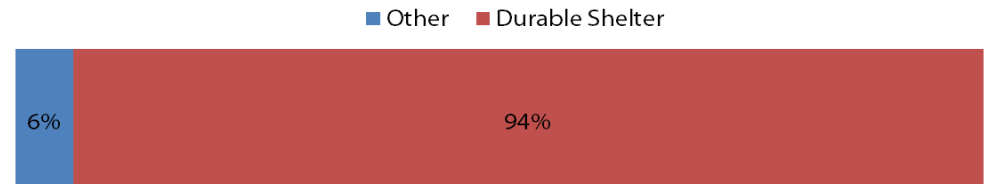
## IRAQIS

MoMD, local council, and border representatives report that most Iraqi families who have returned from Syria are currently living with host families or relatives. A smaller proportion of returnees rent homes or are staying in low-cost hotels. According to local council representatives, some returnees have also moved back to their original homes in Iraq. Among assessed Iraqi families who responded, 47% reported that they were living with relatives or a host family, 38% reported that they were renting a house or land, 13% reported that they owned their home or land, and 2% reported they were living in a military camp. In addition, 94% of assessed Iraqi families reported living in a durable shelter and 6% in other types of shelter.

Housing circumstances of assessed Iraqi returnees



Types of shelter, assessed Iraqi returnees



## LIVELIHOOD NEEDS

### FINANCIAL STRUGGLES

Local council representatives interviewed during the assessment report that most displaced Syrians and Iraqis returning from Syria are relying on savings or assistance from relatives to manage financially. Some have also dealt with the financial pressure by selling property in Syria or by taking out loans from family or friends. Representatives in Thi Qar report that families there have started selling their personal belongings to meet financial needs. Economic pressure has led some heads of household to stay in Syria so they can continue working and send money to support family members who have fled to Iraq.

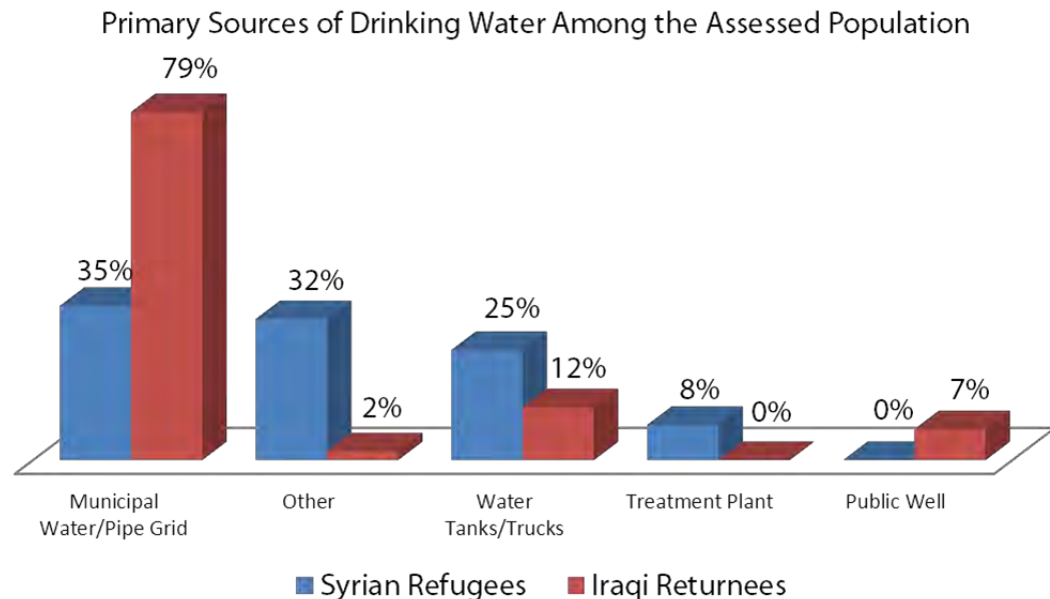
Although many Iraqi returnees are eligible to receive returnee financial grants, few of the recent arrivals have yet received them. Adding to the financial strain, many of the Syrians and Iraqis arriving in Iraq have limited savings to help them cope with displacement. Among assessed Syrian families, just 14% reported that they had access to savings. Compounding the problem, 27% of assessed Syrian families also reported that they were in debt. As for assessed Iraqi returnee families, 24% reported having access to savings and 34% reported being in debt.

### FOOD

Among assessed Syrian families, 83% reported that they have access to food and 17% reported they sometimes have access to food. In addition, 55% reported that they had to change their diet since leaving Syria. 75% of assessed Iraqi families reported that they have access to food, 16% reported that they sometimes have access to food, and 9% reported that they do not have access to food. 34% of assessed Iraqi families indicated that they had to change their diet since leaving Syria.

### DRINKING WATER

Drinking water sources varied between assessed Syrian and Iraqi families. Just 35% of assessed Syrian families reported using the public grid, while 25% reported relying on water trucks. In contrast, among the assessed Iraqi families, 79% reported using the public grid for drinking water and just 12% reported using water tanks or water trucks. This difference reflects the fact that a large proportion of displaced Syrians in Iraq live in camps and have limited access to the municipal water grid.



## HEALTH

Many of the Syrians and Iraqis arriving from Syria suffer from health issues. According to the MoMD, local council, and border representatives interviewed, many recent arrivals complain that they suffer from physical and psychological problems. One MoMD officer in Baghdad estimated that 25% of those who have arrived are sick or injured. According to a border representative, arrivals are often suffering from fatigue after long journeys from Syria, and many have been injured as a result of the unrest there. Most assessed Syrian and Iraqi families reported having access to health facilities, however access was lower among Iraqi returnees. 100% of the assessed Syrian families indicated that they had access to health facilities, whereas the proportion was just 77% among assessed Iraqi returnee families.



## REGISTRATION

Most MoMD representatives interviewed for the assessment indicated that Iraqis returning from Syria usually have the documents they need to register as returnees. Representatives report that returnees need both a passport and a national ID to register. Those who do not have these documents have to visit the National Centre for Returnees before they can register. One border representative reported that many Iraqi returnees have expired passports, but indicated that officers had been instructed to admit anyone with documentation proving that they were Iraqi.

Although the parents in Iraqi families returning from Syria usually have the documents they need to register, their children sometimes do not. In some cases, returnee children have a birth certificate but no passport. Failure to secure appropriate

documentation can have significant implications for both children and adults.

A BMD representative in Erbil reported that new arrivals must get a Kurdish resident to serve as a sponsor if they want to establish residence. These individuals need legal help to secure appropriate documents – particularly because their children cannot enroll in school there without them.

An MoMD representative in Kirkuk reported that some families do not have PDS cards and as a result they are unable to register (PDS cards, however, are not required for registration outside of Kirkuk). As for displaced Syrians, an MoMD representative in Anbar indicated that, due to the current situation, even Syrians without all required documents had been allowed to enter Iraq.

Not all Iraqis returning from Syria register with the Iraqi Government. Some returnees do not know how to register or do not know that they need to register. Others do not register because they do not have their residency papers or because they have returned to their home villages. One MoMD representative in Diyala reported that some returnees are reluctant to register because of a rumor that those who register will be prevented from leaving again. Representatives suggested that IOM and others could help raise awareness about registration among the returnee population.



## REGISTRATION CAPACITY

MoMD staff report a variety of capacity limitations that make registration difficult. Many offices do not have sufficient staff to complete document verification quickly. This adds to the amount of time it takes for returnees to register and receive returnee grants. One MoMD representative in Baghdad, for example, reported that his office had only one employee in its legal committee to audit documents.

In addition to having insufficient staff, MoMD representatives also report that many staff members are not properly trained and that offices often lack adequate equipment.

Interviews also indicate that different procedures are in place in different areas concerning the processing of returnee documents. This may indicate a need to establish standard operating procedures among all registration centers.

MoMD representatives report that the registration process could be facilitated by offering quick courses or workshops to train MoMD staff, having proper equipment (computers, printers, stationery and archiving tools), increasing the number of staff in certain MoMD offices, and reducing the number of documents required for registration. An MoMD representative in al-Qaim also suggested the need to create a form to gather information about arrivals and to establish a database to track that information.

## IMPACT ON THE HOST COMMUNITY

The arrival of displaced Syrians and Iraqis returning from Syria is likely to present challenges for host communities. MoMD representatives suggest that large numbers of arrivals could increase rental rates and competition for jobs in certain areas. Because most Iraqi returnees are living with relatives or local families, their arrival can create a special burden for the hosts. Iraqis returning from Syria have generally been welcomed by host communities, but many of the families hosting returnees already face economic challenges. Accepting more people into their homes leads to overcrowding that can strain host resources.



## INTENTIONS AND TRENDS

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Nearly all of the MoMD representatives, local council representatives, border representatives, and camp/TRC managers interviewed believe that the number of arrivals from Syria will continue to increase over the coming months. Most also believe that recent arrivals will remain in Iraq in the short term due to continuing instability in Syria. Some families plan to return to Syria if the security situation there improves, however MoMD representatives and other officials expect most to remain in Iraq long term.

Asked about their future plans, 63% of the assessed Syrian families who responded indicated that they plan to remain in Iraq for the foreseeable future. 27% indicated that they are waiting on one or several factors to make a decision, and 10% indicated that they plan to resettle to a third location. None of the assessed Syrian families indicated plans to return to Syria in the near future.

67% of the assessed Iraqi families who responded reported that they intend to integrate locally, 17% are waiting on one or more factors to decide, 10% plan to resettle to a third location, and 6% plan to return to Syria.

MoMD and local council representatives indicate that Syrian and Iraqi families' future plans depend largely on the local situation. If security, job prospects and other conditions in Iraq are acceptable, many will choose to stay. If not, families are more likely to consider returning to Syria.

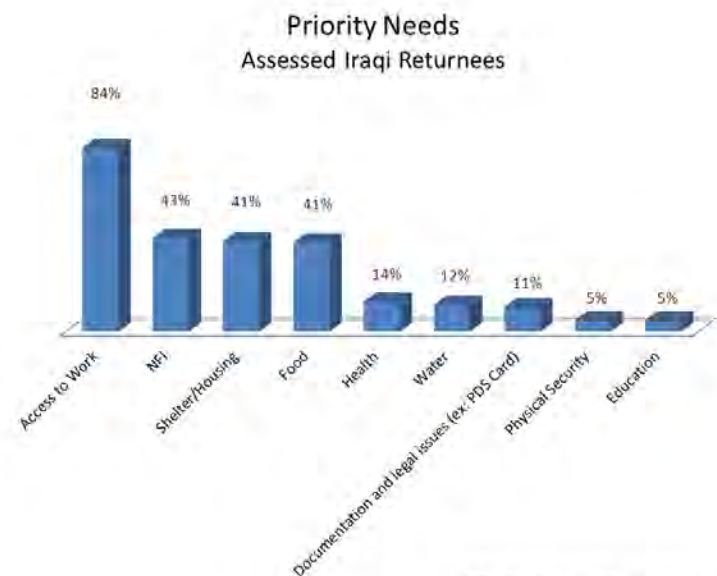


## PRIORITY NEEDS FOR ASSISTANCE

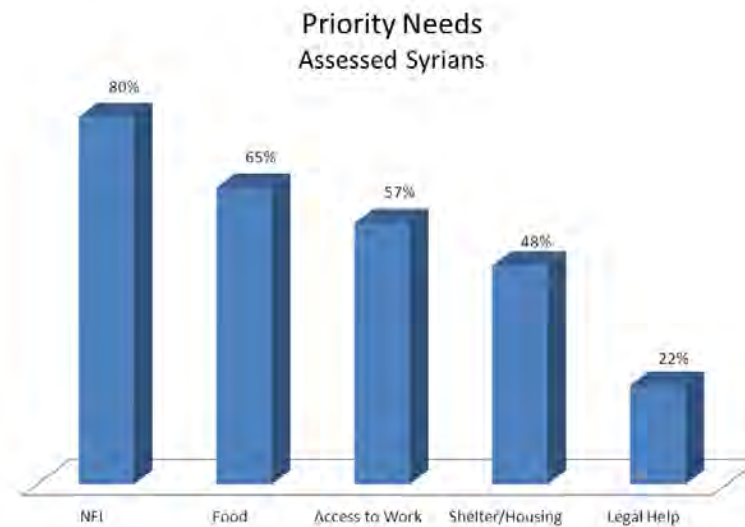
Both displaced Syrians and Iraqi returnees are in need of a variety of forms of assistance. According to MoMD and local council representatives interviewed during the assessment, top priority needs include employment, shelter, non-food items, and assistance securing legal documents. In addition, they indicated that access to financial aid, healthcare, food, water, and hygiene were also important needs. Assessed Syrian and Iraqi families reported a similar list of top priority needs.

One local council representative in Erbil reported that the biggest challenge facing arrivals in that Governorate is obtaining permission for residence. Securing such permission is only possible with the support of a Kurdish sponsor, making the process difficult for many.

MoMD and local council representatives suggest that the best ways to assist those arriving from Syria is to help them find jobs that fit their skills and to provide them with financial assistance. They also suggest that it would help to encourage new arrivals to register with MoMD, for NGOs to provide emergency distributions, to decrease the time it takes to issue returnee grants, to assist arrivals with securing shelter and to assist them with securing legal documents. One border representative in Anbar also reported that it would be helpful to provide air conditioning in waiting rooms at the border crossing because people currently have to wait for long periods of time in the heat.



\* Graph indicates the percentage of respondents who cited each item as one of their top 3 priority needs.



\* Graph indicates the percentage of respondents who cited each item as one of their top 3 priority needs.

# PROJECT RECOMMENDATIONS AND IOM ACTIVITIES

## The need for a comprehensive countrywide assistance network

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### For Syrians Living Inside Camps

The population of Domiz refugee camp is growing rapidly. In just over 1 week, 3,000 new individuals arrived. On 1 October, the population of the camp was 10,000. By 10 October, it had grown to 13,000 and the number is expected to continue climbing.

Domiz has been a residence for Syrian migrants for decades. The Syrian Kurds who lived in the original camp ('Old Domiz') have built durable homes in the same location. With more than half of assessed Syrians planning to remain in Iraq for the foreseeable future, providing these families with livelihood support will be crucial. IOM recently launched a livelihoods assistance project that will help Syrians to establish bakeries, groceries, and hair dressing businesses in the camp. With the expanding population, there is a strong potential for further IKG delivery and assistance with job placement for those who commute to Domiz town for work.

### For Syrians Living Outside Camps

There are 31,863 Syrians living in the KRG region. With 13,000 in Domiz camp, there are about 19,000 making their homes outside the camp. Additionally, families have begun moving out of Al Qaim camp in Anbar due to the camp's poor living conditions. 193 families are now living in nearby towns and many others have asked for permission to move out of the camp.

These families do not benefit from the regular assistance, protection, winterization support, and access to organizations offered in camps. There is a need to identify these families, assess their needs, and provide assistance in the way of NFIs, livelihood support, and referrals to BMD, MoMD, UNHCR, and other agencies.

### Targeted NFI Distributions

Between April and October 2012, IOM Iraq distributed more than 12,000 non-food items to over 3,700 beneficiaries through a targeted assessment and distribution system. Prior to a distribution, field teams visit the intended recipient population, whether in a camp or in a community, and conduct a rapid assessment of current needs. IOM staff select items for distribution based on what families are still lacking and to complement other distributions. The assistance delivered is specifically tailored to the families' most urgent needs.

### For Iraqi Returnees

Returnee families disperse across Iraq after crossing the borders. A majority of the 45,000 returnees have reported Baghdad as their final destination, but IOM has identified recent returnees in 15 governorates.

Returnees are not always able to register with BMD or MoMD due to either a lack of documents or a lack of information regarding the registration process. An estimated 80% of returnees have not received the cash assistance for which returnees are eligible. Government officials report a need to inform families of registration procedures, document replacement services, and to refer them to the appropriate ministries and agencies.

Livelihood support is a critical component of assisting the 67% of assessed returnees who desire to integrate to successfully do so.