



Needs Assessment Study on Migration Information in Iraq

Final Report

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IMPROVING MIGRATION
MANAGEMENT IN THE SILK ROUTES



ICMPD

International Centre for
Migration Policy Development

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The report is based on desk research, key informant interviews, focus group discussions and a qualitative survey among potential, intending and returning migrants in selected provinces in Iraq.

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List of Acronyms

Acronym	Stands for
GOI	Government of Iraq
ICMPD	International Centre for Migration Policy Development
KRG	Kurdistan Regional Government
MRC	Migrant Resource Centre
CSOs	Civil Society Organizations
FGDs	Focus Group Discussions
GRID	Global Report on Internal Displacement
IDMC	Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre
IDPs	Internally Displaced Persons
ILO	International Labour Organization
IOM	International Organization for Migration
MOE	Ministry of Education
MOFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MOI	Ministry of the Interior
MOLSA	Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs
MOMD	Ministry of Migration and Displaced
MOUs	Memorandums of Understanding
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organizations
NRC	Norwegian Refugee Council
PWDs	Persons with Disabilities
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNOCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

Executive Summary

Introduction and Aim of Study

The primary purpose of this Needs Assessment Study is to understand the information that communities need to have about migration and identify the tools and means by which rural and urban communities can be better reached. It provides the basis for strategic interventions such as the development of media campaigns to reach the broader public, in order to develop context-specific, sustainable, and long-term activities that are driven by the needs of the communities. This study seeks to examine what potential migrants, returnees, and institutional and organizational stakeholders think of the Migrant Resource Centre (MRC) and the possible services and operations it could offer to meet their information needs. This Needs Assessment will support the work of the Migrant Resource Centre (MRC) that was jointly established by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (MOLSA) and the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD) in February 2020. It can also be used to inform the actions of other government and non-governmental organizations. The aim of this Needs Assessment is to:

- Identify the profile of Iraqis requiring information on migration, including the governorates and districts they come from, their gender, age group, place of residence, and reasons for migrating, as well as the information they need to have (e.g. risks of migration including human trafficking and people smuggling, legal migration, return, reintegration, etc.).
- Identify the needs of Iraqis, according to the different profiles identified, regarding the information and support needed at the community level, including pre- departure, while abroad and upon return.
- Identify the means by which the population concerned can be reached, specifically at community level.

This report discusses the findings of the Needs Assessment Study, triangulating data collected through the desk research/literature review, 35 semi-structured interviews with potential migrants, 35 semi-structured interviews with returnees, and 35 semi-structured interviews with government, non-governmental, and international stakeholders (hereinafter referred to as institutional and organizational stakeholders) from the seven provinces of Baghdad, Ninewa, Erbil, Anbar, Salah Al-Din, Basra, and Kirkuk. It provides a comprehensive background on the state of migration in Iraq and discusses the migration information needs of the Iraqi population as well as their access to information and its related challenges. It describes the institutional framework governing migration in Iraq, and explores the challenges facing potential migrants and those faced by returnees. The report also discusses the support needs of potential migrants and returnees and considers the possible role the MRC could play in addressing some of these needs. It discusses the institutional programs, activities, and strategies of the relevant institutions and organizations, as well as the specific needs and challenges they face. The report ends with a set of conclusions and recommendations.

Key Findings

The Needs Assessment Study shows that the vast majority of potential Iraqi migrants prefer to migrate outside of Iraq rather than internally to a different province. They prefer Western countries such as Western Europe and North America, in addition to neighboring countries such as Turkey and Jordan. There are a number of push factors and pull factors contributing to their decisions, with push factors often having greater influence than those pulling them to migrate. These push factors include insecurity, instability, deteriorating economic conditions, and the lack of job opportunities. By contrast, pull factors in countries of destination include stability, peace, human rights and personal protection, education opportunities, and public services.

About two-thirds of the potential migrants interviewed indicated that they had either made the arrangements they thought necessary for their migration journeys or had started planning to make them. It is worrying that many of the potential migrants interviewed had not made the necessary arrangements. In addition, many of them did not acknowledge how necessary it is to make proper plans if the migration is to be a success, particularly as some of them indicated that they were intending to migrate irregularly. It is also worth noting that even those who said they had made proper plans, may not be entirely ready, especially as the majority of them seemed to rely on information provided by relatives or friends which tends to be unreliable and problematic. In fact, while many of the returnees interviewed believed that the information they had received before they left Iraq was sufficient for a successful migration journey to their countries of destination, many indicated that the information they had been given was inaccurate. The institutional and organizational stakeholders interviewed for this study agreed that potential migrants and returnees do not have sufficient information regarding their migration journeys which often results in them experiencing huge difficulties. They also agreed that some information would-be migrants receive, especially information acquired through word of mouth, can be rather inaccurate on many issues including, general living standards, prevalence or ease of access to opportunities, and matters relating to asylum applications. Additionally, this inaccurate information contributes to misconceptions among Iraqis about migration and perpetuates their disappointment and disenchantment with the migration journeys they undertake.

More positively, the majority of potential migrants indicated they wanted more information about migration e.g. on legal matters such as migrant rights and asylum procedures; societal integration; finding employment and housing; and regulatory updates such as new laws or regulations. That said, of the 35 potential migrants interviewed, 10 believed that the information they had was sufficient, and the same number of returnees believed that they would not need more information if they decided to migrate again. Those returnees who did want more information identified the need for information related to asylum and citizenship processes, employment opportunities, finding housing, and social integration.

Looking at where to get information from on the migration journey, both potential migrants and returnees were reasonably aware of who to contact if they found themselves in danger. These sources of information included: Iraqi government institutions such as embassies and consulates; local government and security institutions; international humanitarian organizations such as the UNHCR, IOM, and Human Rights Watch. Among the participants, there were still those who nonetheless said they would contact family or friends if they face violence. The relatively high level of awareness about who to contact while en route is in marked contrast to levels of awareness about who to contact on arriving in the country of destination. Instead of contacting institutions for information, the majority indicated that they would reach out to family members, friends, or acquaintances who they were probably in contact with prior to leaving Iraq. The institutional and organizational stakeholders agreed that potential migrants and returnees generally acquire migration-related information from family and friends, as well as social media.

As for the most trusted sources of information about migration, the main difference between the potential migrants interviewed and the returnees is that potential migrants trust the information they receive from friends or family members the most, while returnees trust information provided by official organizations such as the UNHCR and the IOM. Both groups also trust online information, mainly the information provided on official websites. The institutional and organizational stakeholders believe that migrant groups do not have sufficient information to enable them to face any difficulties that may arise, and that without this information, they may not be fully aware of all aspects of migration or return journeys and the risks associated. These stakeholders indicated that they provide information support to migrant groups through social media, television commercials, referrals, and field campaigns through which they look to raise awareness. The majority of both potential migrants and returnees do not believe

that the government can or will support them with information on migration. They added that they do not think that the government is capable of providing them with support more generally, and think that their needs are not part of the government's priorities. Such perceptions, according to the interviewees, are some of the driving factors behind their decision to migrate.

Some of the interviewees from the organizations believe that there is a clear difference in how information is used by migrants, dependent on the personal background of the individual, such as their education, age, culture, and gender. For example, they identified that men often know how to acquire and use the information better than women, and similarly those living in cities are able to acquire and use the information better than those living in rural areas. However, other interviewees from these organizations said that these demographic factors play no role in how the information is used.

As for the provision of support, many institutional and organizational stakeholders indicated that they offer a variety of services to potential migrants and returnees such as assisting them with their official documentation and paperwork, humanitarian support, raising awareness, and offering some financial assistance through grants or funding opportunities. The Needs Assessment Study found that migrant groups were not aware of these opportunities. The Ministry of Migration and Displaced (MOMD) and its regional offices keep a database of returnees. They encourage them to register their names in order to allocate resources to support them.

Looking at the challenges that migrant groups face, the interviewees from these groups indicated they had concerns about the physical and psychological risks, as well as the financial losses of migrating. The risks include: death by drowning or in other circumstances, abduction, getting lost, being mugged, conned or abandoned by smugglers, being denied entry, or having their asylum application denied. Most of these challenges are associated with irregular migration. While many of the potential migrants interviewed acknowledged these risks, they remained determined to migrate, some of them irregularly. More generally, despite being aware of the risks some migrants still choose to migrate irregularly, often citing financial hardship as the reason. The research found that those who migrated irregularly said that the journey was much more expensive than potential migrants anticipate, as they often have to pay criminal gangs large sums of money, sometimes more than once. There were differing points of view on this issue amongst the institutional and organizational stakeholders interviewed. About half of them said that potential migrants do not actually know much about the risks and dangers they face if they migrate irregularly. The other half said that potential migrants are in fact aware of these risks, but do it anyway. This, they said, is because the individuals believe they have to leave Iraq at any cost.

Potential migrants and returnees were more aware of people smuggling than they were of human trafficking, albeit that in some instances, they tended to conflate the two. In Ninewa, for instance, the majority of the potential migrants interviewed were unaware of human trafficking. This is worrying as Ninewa had the highest number thinking about migrating irregularly.

The majority of potential migrants indicated they needed financial support, followed by legal support for matters related to asylum applications, and support to find employment and housing. In cases where potential migrants go ahead without the necessary resources, they are likely to face similar experiences to those endured by the returnees, as discussed above. Returnees indicated that they had required similar support prior to their journey, but the support they received was minimal and came from family members only. As a result, many returnees indicated that they did not wish to migrate again because they did not want to go through the same experience, which was seconded by many of the stakeholders interviewed. However, the returnees who indicated that they wanted to migrate again said they needed financial and legal support and information. Others indicated that they needed support with family reunification, with institutional and organizational stakeholders citing this as one of the reasons why Iraqi migrants return.

While the institutional and organizational stakeholders interviewed acknowledged that their work could be much improved, there are a number of challenges that make their work difficult. Geographic and demographic outreach is a major challenge that is magnified by shortages and limitations in financial resources and field staff. They believe that minority groups, people living in rural areas, and women do not use information or enjoy the same level of awareness of outreach efforts as urban dwellers and men. In addition, the security situation in areas such as Ninewa, Anbar, and Kirkuk remain precarious which means they are often left out of the outreach efforts and do not have the same access to information and support, which is particularly troubling as these populations are more likely to migrate, often irregularly, to escape the approaching dangers.

Other challenges facing the institutions include the lack of a legal/ constitutional umbrella and lack of integration and cooperation between some of the institutions concerned whose duties may then conflict. The MOMD stakeholders indicated that the work of some institutions conflicts with theirs when it comes to looking after migrant groups, including potential migrants, returnees, and IDPs. There is also a dire need for financial support for these institutions. One stakeholder asserted that their plans “remain intangible unless we receive international support and the designated resources to be able to translate those plans into real work”. Finally, government institutions face the particular challenge of addressing citizen’s distrust in their institutions. Many Iraqis do not believe that the government is willing or capable of supporting them. The government should, therefore, seek to rebuild public confidence in its operations if it wants to play a central role in addressing the challenges associated with migration in Iraq.

Participants’ awareness of the MRC in the MOLSA was low as it has only recently launched. However, as the Centre is expected to conduct awareness campaigns, outreach activities, and workshops, and provide a hotline for inquiries, both potential migrants and returnees believe that its services will be beneficial in helping them learn more about safe migration and answer the questions they have, including those about migrant rights and the asylum process. It is notable, however, that many participants in the provinces included in the study were quite adamant about migrating irregularly and believe they would not contact the MRC if that is what they decide to do. This is a challenge the MRC needs to address given the risks associated with irregular migration.

Looking at the programmes, activities, and strategies implemented by the various institutions and organizations, the interviewees from these bodies said that they work on, or collaborate with, other institutions on awareness raising programmes and activities. These activities are championed by their field staff who, despite the shortages in human and financial resources, assume the responsibility of linking migrant groups with relevant institutions and transmitting information between them.

The participants from the stakeholder institutions and organizations said that they conduct field and virtual/ online campaigns in the form of outreach activities, workshops, and online posts and videos that present information about migration as well as the services provided by the institutions. Future MRC efforts to raise awareness about legal migration and highlight the dangers associated with irregular migration through in-person campaign events and virtual/online campaigns are expected to be supported by MOLSA, UNHCR, and IOM. The institutions currently relay information and raise awareness about migration through a variety of different channels including: the regional offices of MOMD, MOLSA, police departments in the provinces, community centres, NGOs, civil society organizations (CSOs), and international organizations; their own field staff; official websites, social media and contact telephone numbers. Other organizations employ traditional media outlets such as TV channels and radio stations. Despite these efforts, according to an interviewee from one of the organizations, work on the ground remains “subpar”.

Recommendations and Areas for Intervention

The institutional and organizational stakeholders are aware that more work needs to be done to better serve the needs of migrant groups. They believe that the legislative framework in Iraq needs overhauling to address security and living standards and provide assurances to potential migrants that their situation can improve. In other words, they believe that the framework needs to address the underlying reasons that are driving Iraqis to migrate. Work to overhaul the legislative framework with regards to security and living standards could be advanced through partnerships and support from international organizations and by working cooperatively with other concerned parties. The institutional stakeholders also suggested that more field staff need to be employed, given the importance of their role in outreach activities.

Moreover, many indicated that there needs to be more international support to develop the capacity of the Iraqi Government and its relevant ministries that work on migration, particularly to focus on the dangers associated with irregular migration by raising citizens' awareness of the dangers. Iraqi Government efforts with international support should focus on emphasizing the importance of working to improve the economic conditions in Iraq, the political conditions, development programmes, and most importantly, work on strengthening stability, which can signal favourable conditions for migrants to return.

Among the interviewees from the organizations, many indicated that they expect the MRC to assume an important role in migration-related service provision, addressing the migration crisis in Iraq, and becoming an important provider of migration-related information and guidance on regular and safe migration, visas, and migration arrangements, through channels including its social media platforms. One stakeholder suggested that the MRC should conduct campaigns related to the dangers of irregular migration as well as raise awareness of the resources available for legal migration.

The government of Iraq should produce a national strategy or plan on migration with clear objectives and goals. Such a strategy should regulate the work and jurisdiction of government and non-governmental stakeholders to optimize their efforts in addressing the needs of migrant groups.

In addition, the organizations concerned need to raise awareness about the opportunities of support for potential migrants and returnees, particularly the financial resources available. None of the potential migrants or returnees interviewed had received any support from any official institution and were not aware of the institutions and the support they offer either. However, the individuals from the organizations interviewed indicated that grants and funding opportunities were available. Migrant groups need to be made aware of these opportunities.

1. Introduction

Under the “Improving Migration Management in the Silk Routes Countries” Project, implemented by the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD), IRFAD Foundation for Development Research (IRFAD) has conducted this Needs Assessment Study on information about migration in Iraq to support the establishment, strategic planning and operations of the newly-established Migrant Resource Centre (MRC) at the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (MOLSA) in Baghdad. The MRC in Iraq raises awareness on migration in the country, including the dangers associated with irregular migration and pathways for legal migration, and seeks to support the protection of migrant workers. It provides accurate information related to migration, the dangers of human trafficking and migrant smuggling, as well as information on legal migration, migrant protection and documentation. The MRC also conducts community outreach and awareness raising sessions and provides a mapping of services to connect people to relevant stakeholders for both returning and outgoing migrants. The work of the MRC is supported and funded by the European Union as well as Norway.

This report provides an overview of the locations, drivers, and types of migration and the profiles of migrants and returnees. In order for the MRC to be able to develop an effective outreach programme to potential migrants, as well as inform the actions of other relevant stakeholders, more in-depth information on migration at the community level is needed, with a particular emphasis on the means through which urban and rural communities can be reached. This Needs Assessment looks at the information needs of those who intend to migrate along with their families, those who have already migrated along with their families, and those who are returning or have returned to Iraq. The aim of this Needs Assessment is to:

- Identify the profile of Iraqis requiring information on migration, including the governorates and districts they come from, their gender, age group and where they live, reasons for migrating, as well as the information they need to have (e.g. risks of migration including human trafficking and, migrant smuggling, legal migration, return, reintegration, etc.)
- Identify the needs of Iraqis according to the different profiles identified regarding the information and support needed at the community level, including pre-departure, while abroad and upon return.
- Identify the means by which the population concerned can be reached, specifically at community level.

This document presents the findings of the Needs Assessment Study based on the information and data collected through desk research and interviews with 35 potential migrants, 35 returnees, and 35 stakeholders from government, non-governmental, and international stakeholders (hereinafter referred to as institutional and organizational stakeholders), civil society organizations and media in Baghdad, Ninewa, Erbil, Anbar, Salah Al-Din, Basra, and Kirkuk provinces. The study includes a comprehensive background on the state of migration in Iraq, including internal and external migration, and provides details about migrants’ needs for information and the particular challenges they face in accessing information and support.

This report also provides an overview of the institutional framework governing migration in Iraq and presents the findings of the field research conducted in 2020, including information about migrant and returnee information needs, perceptions of the sources and channels through which they acquire or prefer to acquire information, as well as information relevant to the future work of the MRC. The report describes the challenges facing potential migrants as they prepare to migrate, during their migration journey, and when they arrive at their destination, along with the specific challenges returnees faced during their time abroad and on their return to Iraq. The report also discusses the findings related to the

support needs of both potential migrants and returnees and the role the MRC could play in addressing some of these issues. Finally, the report considers the institutional programmes, activities, and strategies to raise awareness of issues surrounding migration and address migrant and returnee needs. It also looks at the specific needs and challenges faced by the relevant institutional and organizational stakeholders. It concludes with a set of research-based recommendations.

The following is an overview of important definitions used throughout the Needs Assessment Study:

- **Potential Migrants** – In this context, potential migrants are Iraqis who are actively thinking about migration, whether internally or externally. They are individuals who have made the decision to migrate over the next two years. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) defines migrant as “an umbrella term, not defined under international law, reflecting the common lay understanding of a person who moves away from his or her place of usual residence, whether within a country or across an international border, temporarily or permanently, and for a variety of reasons. The term includes a number of well-defined legal categories of people, such as migrant workers; persons whose particular types of movements are legally-defined, such as smuggled migrants; as well as those whose status or means of movement are not specifically defined under international law, such as international students¹.”
- **Returnees** – Iraqis who emigrated and returned to Iraq, whether voluntarily or involuntarily. The IOM defines return as, “In a general sense, return is the act or process of going back or being taken back to the point of departure. This could be within the territorial boundaries of a country, as in the case of returning internally displaced persons (IDPs) and demobilized combatants; or between a country of destination or transit and a country of origin, as in the case of migrant workers, refugees or asylum seekers”².
- **Institutional and organizational stakeholders**– They include government institutions such as MOMD, MOLSA, MOFA, MOI; police departments, local governments, the National Labour Centre, and KRG; non-governmental organizations such as Iraqi Amal Association, Afkar Association, and the Charitable Organization; the media outlets Iraqi Media Network and Al-Sumariyah News; and international organizations including UNHCR, IOM, ICMPD, MRC, AKTED, and Un Ponte Per.

¹ “International Organization for Migration, Glossary on migration,” *IML Series*, no. 34 (2019).

² Ibid.

2. Methodology

This Needs Assessment Study started with a detailed desk review, which was finalized and delivered in August 2020. The next stage of the project started with training IRFAD's field research team in October 2020, before conducting 70 interviews with potential migrants and returnees from Baghdad, Erbil, Ninewa, Basra, Salah Al-Dine, Anbar, and Kirkuk provinces between November 2020 and early January 2021. The third stage consisted of 35 interviews with institutional and organizational stakeholders between November 2020 and early January 2021 in the same provinces. A pilot exercise was carried out before the 105 interviews which were subsequently transcribed, translated, analysed, and used for reporting. The piloting included interviews with representatives from two key institutions as well as potential migrants.

For the purpose of the study, semi-structured interview guidelines and focus group guidelines were developed for the following groups of stakeholders: potential migrants, returnees and key informant from institutions. The semi-structured interviews with potential migrants and returnees included 4 sections and at most 40 questions, some of which were follow-ups to previous questions. The key informant interview guidelines included 3 sections and included 20 questions.

IRFAD conducted a total of 15 face-to-face interviews in each province, of which five were with potential migrants, five were with returnees, and five were with institutional and organizational stakeholders. It is worth noting that the province of Kirkuk was added to this study in lieu of a number of focus group discussions. The focus group discussions were deemed unsafe in the current circumstances amid the ongoing global pandemic.

As this is a piece of qualitative research, the following procedures for sampling were used. First, IRFAD and ICMPD decided on the number of interviews to be conducted in each province, as well as the breakdown of numbers of potential migrants, returnees, and institutional and organizational stakeholders. Next, IRFAD used the desk research phase to gain a better understanding of the general profiles of potential migrants and returnees as well as identifying the most relevant institutional and organizational stakeholders. Based on this initial research, IRFAD found the six provinces initially selected as part of the study were the six provinces most affected by waves of migration. These provinces were selected for a number of reasons. For example, Ninewa, Anbar, and Salah Al-Din are provinces with high rates of migration due to the security challenges their residents face. Migration from Baghdad, Erbil, and Basra is mostly prompted by a mixture of security and economic factors. Kirkuk was added due to its status as a disputed territory between the Government of Iraq and the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG).

Once the provinces were identified and approved by ICMPD, IRFAD proceeded with finding participants based on the general demographic profiles identified in the desk research. From this research, greater focus was placed on finding younger participants, more men than women, and unemployed individuals. The sample also attempted to include a variety of religious and ethnic backgrounds, diverse marital status and educational backgrounds.

Once this had been determined, IRFAD provided the six researchers and the field supervisor with the desired demographic sample to be found. The researchers, who were selected from the same provinces they were conducting the research in, were familiar with the region and the populations living there. It is worth noting that the questionnaire included a question asking the participants to indicate whether they were thinking about migrating in the next 2 years or if they had migrated and returned. Those who did not fit either of the two categories were not taken forward as part of this research. Additionally, the researchers aimed to achieve a diverse final sample in terms of age, gender, religious and ethnic backgrounds, whilst also reflecting the demographic of the provinces they were working in. To do this,

they followed a snowball sampling method which involved randomly approaching residences from the majority of districts in their province, and inquiring whether the residents fit either of the two categories: potential migrants or returnees. Those who did were interviewed and asked if they knew of other people in their area who fitted either of the categories. The researchers then moved to another district and followed the same procedure.

a. Desk Research

The desk review included an assessment of the documents, data, studies, reports, strategies, action plans, and other important information relevant to the needs of prospective migrants and returnees in Iraq. This was done with an emphasis on areas of work that would be most relevant for the MRC to focus on. The documents were analyzed along with data from the UN, the government, and non-governmental organizations about potential Iraqi migrants and returnees. During the review of the literature, special attention was paid to information concerning safe migration and the dangers of irregular migration to map the different stakeholders and partners involved, identify channels for outreach and determine potential interviewees from the various organizations and institutions. The review also examined the legal framework in Iraq and the main actors involved in the field of migration, both government institutions and non-government agencies, and looked at existing awareness campaigns about migrating and returning.

IRFAD's analysts consulted a total of 81 sources. The research process relied on using keywords linked to the section being drafted, first using English keywords before switching to keywords in Arabic. Some of these keywords included: "number of Iraqi refugees/ returnees/ migrants/ emigrants in x country"; "challenges facing Iraqi refugees/ returnees/ migrants/ emigrants/ minorities/ Yazidis"; "the national migration plan/ policy/ strategy Iraq"; "what information Iraqi migrants look for?"; "information Iraqi migrants", among many others.

Where more recent information was required, Google filters were used to narrow the search results. The sources were also vetted according to the level of confidence in their accuracy and included: trusted academic journals; government websites, documents and updates; international organizations' response plans, data, and practitioner reports; well-known media sites; documentaries and news articles.

Of the 81 sources referenced; 15 were articles from academic journals, nine from government websites, 40 from international organizations (16 of which were from various UN agencies and seven from the IOM), 14 from various media sites, and three from polling sources. Overall, 57 sources of information were in English, while 24 were in Arabic.

One of the main limitations faced by the research team was the difficulty it had trying to locate information about the type of information potential migrants need or search for. Iraq's lack of a migration policy or strategy and difficulties related to finding numbers of Iraqi refugees or migrants in Syria posed real challenges and limited the research team's ability to gather data. Given the context, it is understandable that this data is scarce.

b. Interviews with key institutional and organizational stakeholders

IRFAD conducted 35 interviews with stakeholders from relevant institutions and organizations, including national government organizations, local governments, non-governmental organizations, security institutions, civil society organizations, media outlets, and international organizations. The interviews were semi-structured, which allowed the interviewers to probe certain points further and ask follow-up questions to obtain additional qualitative data. The interviewers used a discussion guide designed for the interviews that included specific questions interviewers could use to probe certain issues further if they

felt it was useful. The interviews provided important information for shaping and informing the recommendations. Each interview was conducted by a senior researcher.

IRFAD's research team relied on the list of institutions and organizations compiled by IRFAD and ICMPD. The list was based on the desk research that had been done and covered all the provinces selected for the project. The researchers identified the appropriate participants to interview, together with IRFAD's office team, who facilitated the contact where necessary. Once the individual had been identified and their contact information had been obtained, the research team contacted them to schedule a meeting.

Once the interview was scheduled, the senior researcher conducted the interview in person. It began with them explaining the background to the Needs Assessment Study and introducing the interview guide. They then read out the consent form and asked if they could record the interview, to which was none of the interviewees agreed so no audio recordings were made of the interviews. The interviewers reminded the participant that they could skip any questions they were not comfortable with, and could indicate if certain responses were off the record, to protect the individual in line with IRFAD's research ethics.

After each interview ended, the interviewer transcribed it and provided the full written transcripts to the research analyst who conducted a quality check and quality assurance measures. These measures included reviewing the entire transcript for logic and repetition to determine if the flow of the interview was coherent and that the responses were not contradictory. As well as reviewing each transcript independently, IRFAD also evaluated the transcripts of each field researcher to determine whether there were any repetitions or obviously identical responses from one interview transcript to another. The transcripts were evaluated on the basis of "zero matching; medium matching; and high matching" in reference to the extent to which certain responses to the same question was similar to other transcripts from the same researcher. No transcripts were evaluated as being "high matching". Researchers were asked to provide an explanation for any transcripts that were seen to be "medium" or "low matching". In addition to the explanation provided by the researcher, the supervisor called the interviewees to ask them to confirm their responses, in order to ensure that the transcripts that had been delivered were of the highest quality. The analyst then translated the full transcripts from Arabic to English to prepare them for data analysis and triangulation, and to give to ICMPD.

c. Interviews with potential migrants and returnees

IRFAD conducted 70 in-depth interviews with potential migrants and returnees; 35 with potential migrants and 35 with returnees. Both groups included interviewees across the seven provinces of Baghdad, Basra, Erbil, Ninewa, Salah Al-Dine, Anbar, and Kirkuk. These interviews were conducted by IRFAD's field researchers, who used a discussion guide designed for these interviews. The guide was supported by a number of guidelines, instructions, and follow-up questions to assist the interviewers in the interviews. The research team was also fully trained prior to commencing the field work. Training involved a comprehensive explanation of all the research questions, best practice methods, mock interviews, and questions and answers.

After the training, the field researchers were informed about the number of interviews they would be responsible for, the locations, and the sampling requirements along with the research approach. Given the number of interviews to be carried out, IRFAD allocated one field researcher to each province. Therefore, the research team consisted of six field researchers (five men and one woman) and one overall supervisor. All the researchers were chosen from among IRFAD's large pool of field researchers who live all over Iraq. The field researchers were selected on the basis of the quality of their previous work with IRFAD and their adherence to IRFAD's research ethics, as IRFAD evaluates its pool of field researchers regularly and selects the most qualified for its projects. Other criteria used in the selection process for this research project was that the researchers were from the provinces where the research was to take place.

In addition, the interviews were conducted using a snowballing method, which involved the researcher asking the participant (potential migrant or returnee) at the end of each interview if they knew of other potential migrants or returnees who researchers could interview. Once all 70 interviews had been conducted, the analyst compiled and translated the transcripts into English, sending them to ICMPD when transcripts for each province was completed. The analyst also compiled all the data, organized it into matrices and conducted comprehensive quality checks and data analysis for the final report.

Looking at the final sample breakdown, 35 potential migrants and 35 returnees were interviewed, of whom five from each group were interviewed in each province. Of the potential migrants, 26 participants were male and nine were female. The emphasis placed on males for this study stems from the fact that men tend to migrate more often than women. Among the 35 potential migrants, 20 were unemployed and 15 were employed; 23 were married, 11 were single and one was widowed; five participants were aged 18-24, 14 were 25-34; 11 were 35-44, four were 45-64, and one was 65. It is notable that 15 participants held a bachelor's degree or higher while the rest were distributed among other education levels. As for religious affiliation, 16 identified themselves as Sunnis, six identified themselves as Shiites, and five identified themselves as Yazidis.

As for the returnees, 24 participants were male and 11 were female; 13 were employed and 19 were unemployed; 27 were married, five were single, two were widowed, and one was divorced; 11 participants held a university degree, five held diplomas, four had undergone vocational or technical training, eight had completed secondary education, four had completed primary education, and three were illiterate; the largest age groups represented were those aged 35-44, followed by eight aged 25-34, seven participants were aged 45 or older, and three were from the youngest group. As for religious affiliation, 13 participants were Sunnis, six were Shiites, and five were Yazidis.

Annex A further illustrates the sample breakdown according to the demographic factors listed.

Table 1: Breakdown of migrant and returnee demographic groups interviewed



IRFAD faced challenges and limitations in conducting this study, one of which was the ongoing global pandemic. IRFAD created and delivered on a plan to ensure that the project continued. Firstly, given the restrictions on movement, IRFAD recruited field researchers from the areas where the research was taking place. The training of researchers was conducted online to limit additional travel and exposure. The field researchers were reminded of the importance of abiding by safety measures, including the essential guidelines surrounding social distancing, wearing protective masks and carrying hand sanitizer. In addition, they were instructed to conduct the interviews in open spaces where possible.

3. Background

a. Migration in Iraq

Migration encompasses internal displacement, those seeking asylum, refugees, smuggled and trafficked persons, and economic migrants. Migration can also be characterized in terms of legality of movement and the direction/destination of movement. Migrating within one's country is termed internal migration and migrating out of one's country is termed external migration. All these categories are relevant for Iraq.

i. Internal Migration

Internal migration is synonymous with domestic migration, which can be defined as "migration from one area to another within the same country – from one city to another and sometimes from rural to urban areas"³. In Iraq, internal/ domestic migration is vastly more common than external/international migration, albeit it may lead to external migration, meaning that when someone migrates from one location within Iraq to another, it may not always be their final destination⁴. Migration within Iraq can be grouped into the following categories: directional; periodic; seasonal; long-term; and definitive migration⁵. Under the first category, cities such as Karbala and Najaf tend to provide better economic opportunities, as they have holy shrines⁶. Periodic migration can be short-term, medium-term, or definitive⁷, and includes disaster-induced migration, migration of agricultural workers or of those seeking other employment, among other factors⁸. An alternative view of migration within Iraq is to look at it through the lens of either internally displaced people (IDPs) or those who voluntarily migrate due to economic opportunities.

According to the 2020 Global Report on Internal Displacement (GRID) produced by the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) and the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), in 2020, there were approximately 1.1 to 1.38 million IDPs⁹. The estimated number of IDPs has fallen from 1.6 million in 2019, 2 million in 2018, 2.6 million in 2017¹¹, 3.4 million in 2016¹², and about 6 million at the height of the conflicts¹³. About 78% of IDPs are those who have spent a protracted period of time as displaced persons, meaning they have been displaced for more than 3 years, with Duhok, Erbil, Ninewa, Kirkuk, Salah Al-Din, and Sulaymaniyah being among the most affected provinces¹⁴. Many of those who remain displaced cite insecurity, social unrest, weak infrastructure, and poor livelihoods with a lack of basic services as reasons for their displacement¹⁵.

³ David Bartram, Maritsa V. Poros, and Pierre Monforte, "Internal/Domestic Migration," in *Key Concepts in Migration* (London: SAGE Publications Ltd, 2017).

⁴ Irene Costantini and Kamaran Palani, "Displacement-Emigration-Return: Understanding Uncertainty in the Context of Iraq," *Middle East Research Institute*, 2017.

⁵ John O.Oucho and William T.S.Gould, "International Migration, Urbanization, and Population Distribution," in *Demographic Change in Sub-Saharan Africa* (Washington, DC: The National Academies Press, 1993).

⁶ Helen M. AbdulHussein, "Internal Displacement in Iraq: Applied Study on IDPs to Najaf City," *Journal of Al Koufa Studies Center* 49, (2018).

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ "Iraq: Key Figures," *UNHCR*, accessed June 2020.

¹⁰ "Displacement Tracking Matrix DTM," *International Organization for Migration – Iraq Mission*.

¹¹ Humanitarian Data Exchange, "Iraq - Internally Displaced Persons dataset", *UNOCHA*, accessed: 11 June 2020.

¹² "Displacement Tracking Matrix DTM," *International Organization for Migration – Iraq Mission*.

¹³ OCHA, "Iraq, Humanitarian Needs Overview 2020," *UNOCHA*, November 2019.

¹⁴ "Displacement Tracking Matrix DTM," *International Organization for Migration – Iraq Mission*.

¹⁵ OCHA, "Iraq, Humanitarian Needs Overview 2020," *UNOCHA*, November 2019.

Economic challenges remain a major driver behind internal migration. For example, due to the lack of economic opportunities in southern provinces, there is a pattern of people migrating to the cities of Karbala, Najaf and Baghdad. Those migrating internally tend to migrate to areas that are secure and match their ethno-religious affiliations. Najaf is reported to be the area that most migrants go to with 4,218 families, followed by Baghdad with 2,846 families, then Diyala with 1,601 families. Together, these three cities host around 97.8% of IDPs and economic migrants. In addition to the lack of economic opportunities, other reasons driving people to migrate include the increasing price of land and rent. However, many internal migrants still end up living in slums or in abandoned buildings/informal areas, with those who can afford the rising prices settling in city centres¹⁶. Unemployment remains the largest economic driver for internal migration, especially among those who are no longer able to practice their profession, such as those who work in agriculture, crafts, and on industrial projects that have been terminated. Ultimately, if the economy remains in its current state, internal and even external migration are expected to increase¹⁷, with the low skilled and those with low educational achievement, as well as Yazidis and Christians being among the most likely groups to express their intention to migrate¹⁸.

ii. External Migration

The IOM defines external migration or emigration as “from the perspective of the country of departure, the act of moving from one’s country of nationality or usual residence to another country, so that the country of destination effectively becomes his or her new country of usual residence¹⁹.” In the context of this study, external migrants are those who left Iraq to go to different countries, including neighbouring countries, Europe, North America, and Australia. Iraqi emigrants include those who fled the armed conflicts and those who left to find better economic opportunities²⁰. Many Iraqi emigrants either migrated within Iraq or were internally displaced before migrating externally. The 2017 International Migration Report shows that the protracted conflict in Iraq resulted in large numbers of emigrants²¹. The Migration Policy Institute estimates that as of 2017, Iraq’s net migration rate is at -1.2 migrant(s)/1,000 people²² and the Migration Data Portal estimates there were around 2 million emigrants in mid 2019²³. Additionally, UNHCR indicates that since 2014, about 250,000 people have sought refuge in neighbouring countries²⁴.

Since 2003, Iraq has seen a wave of migration movements out of Iraq and into various countries such as Jordan, Syria, Egypt, Lebanon, and Turkey. Most of these migrants can be identified as refugees, asylum seekers, and economic migrants looking for opportunities elsewhere. Going through the process of seeking asylum, hundreds of thousands of Iraqis resettled in third countries in the West. Since 2014, Iraqi migration into Europe increased, as over 90,000 Iraqis migrated to Europe in 2014 alone, mostly to Sweden, Germany, and Denmark²⁵. This wave of migration into Europe came from provinces including Baghdad and Ninewa. Over 30% of Iraqi migrants to Europe were previously internally displaced in Iraq²⁶, and eventually settled in countries including Turkey and Greece. Iraqis who were not displaced, but who were looking for economic opportunities (economic migrants), settled in countries including the Gulf

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Irene Costantini, “Iraq After the Islamic State: Displacement, Migration and Return,” *LSE*, February 2018.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ “International Organization for Migration, Glossary on migration,” *IML Series*, no. 34 (2019).

²⁰ “Iraqi Migration to Europe 2016: Profiles, Drivers and Return,” *REACH*, June 2017.

²¹ “International Migration Report 2017,” *United Nations*, 2017.

²² “Iraq: Country Resources,” *Migration Policy Institute*, accessed June 12, 2020.

²³ “The Total Number of International Migrants at Mid-Year 2019,” *Migration Data Portal*, 2019.

²⁴ “Iraq Refugee Crisis,” *UNHCR*, accessed June 12.

²⁵ “Iraqi Migration to Europe 2016: Profiles, Drivers and Return,” *REACH*, June 2017.

²⁶ Ibid.

States, Jordan, Egypt, European countries, Australia, and the United States²⁷. These migrants have settled with their families and now work in various sectors or run their own businesses.

Destination	Migrants		Refugees	
	2013	2019 ²⁸	2012 ²⁹	2019
Syria	759,225	202,831	471,418	68,000 ³⁰
Jordan	401,130	213,658	63,037	66,823 (2018) ³¹
United States	181,590	230,469	90,607 ³²	144,400 ³³
Lebanon	148,470	114,049	50,000 (2007) ³⁴	18,000 ³⁵
Sweden	130,449	141,430	24,741	1,515 (2018 alone ³⁶)
Germany	96,977 (2015)	188,759	49,829	138,000 ³⁷
Iran	85,523 (2015)	84,136	44,085	28,268 (2014) ³⁸

Table 1: Iraqi migrants and refugees by destination country

As for students, they tend to attend schools in Jordan, UAE, India, the UK, and the United States³⁹.

More recently, insecurity, social injustice, and inequality have been the main drivers for Iraqis' choice of Europe as a destination which they perceive as being welcoming to Iraqis. Many Iraqis chose to settle in the same countries as families or friends or relied on publicly available information on social media or word of mouth to make the decision about which country to settle in.⁴⁰ Nevertheless, those interviewed during this study revealed the hardships they faced in these countries, as long periods of waiting for settlement paperwork, among other factors, often left them feeling disappointed and hopeless.

Emigration has had a serious impact on various sectors in Iraq and has seriously depleted its human capital and resources. In particular, there has been a brain drain of people with science and engineering skills. The departure of Iraqi doctors and engineers has had a significant impact on these sectors and on development projects⁴¹.

²⁷ "Middle East's Migrant Population More Than Doubles Since 2005," *PEW Research Center*, October 2016.

²⁸ "International Migration Stock 2019," *United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs*, 2019.

²⁹ "Migration Profiles: Iraq," *UNICEF*.

³⁰ Kamal Shikho, "40 Thousand Iraqis Live in 'Alhol' and Half Want to Return to their Homes," *AlSharq AlAwsat*, March 2020.

³¹ "The Number of Iraqi Refugees in Jordan Decreases to About 67 Thousand," *Al Alam Al Jadeed*, June 2018.

³² "Population Movements: Iraqi Refugee Health Profile," *Centers for Disease Control and Prevention*, December 2014.

³³ Jens Manuel Krogstad, "Key Facts about Refugees in the U.S.," *PEW Research Center*, October 2019.

³⁴ "Rot Here or Die There: Bleak Choices for Iraqi Refugees in Lebanon," *Human Rights Watch*, 2007.

³⁵ "UNHCR Lebanon Factsheet, January 2019," *UNHCR*, February 2019.

³⁶ "EU Member States granted protection to more than 300 000 asylum seekers in 2018," *Eurostat*, 2019.

³⁷ "Germany Reveals the Number of Iraqi Refugees it Hosts," *The Baghdad Post*, July 2019.

³⁸ "Refugees in Iran," *UNHCR*, accessed June 20.

³⁹ "Migration Profiles: Iraq," *UNICEF*.

⁴⁰ "Iraqi Migration to Europe: IOM Report," *United Nations Iraq*, 2015.

⁴¹ Dhikra Ibrahim, "External Migration and its Cultural and Developmental Challenges on the Iraqi Society," *Al Adab Journal* 106, (2014): 581-608.

The findings from the field research indicated that almost all the potential migrants were thinking about migrating outside of Iraq in the near future, mostly to countries in the West e.g. Western Europe and North America, as well as some neighbouring countries such as Turkey and Jordan. This research found that the drivers behind external migration can be grouped into push factors from Iraq and pull factors from outside the country. Across all seven provinces included in the study, the push factors far exceed the pull factors. These push factors include the lack of security, instability, lack of citizen rights and freedoms, sectarianism, armed conflicts, deteriorating economic conditions and the financial crisis, unemployment, government failures, the prevalence of bribery, and feeling homesick and uncertain about the future. The most common pull factors are related to stability, peace, the prevalence of human rights and personal protection, better education and economic opportunities, and better public services, including health.

	Push Factors	Pull Factors
 Baghdad	Unemployment; bad economic conditions; terrible livelihood conditions	Prevalence of good job opportunities and provision of space to capitalize on capacity
 Anbar	Armed conflicts; corruption; feeling of detachment and rejection; the country lost its humanity	Peaceful; respect for human rights; protection; service provision education
 Ninewa	Deteriorating security conditions; unknown future; absence of rights and freedoms; sectarianism	Better service provision, especially in the medical sector
 Erbil	Instability and security; absence of rule of law; tough conditions for minorities; absence of human rights; bad economic conditions	
 Salah Al-Din	Insecurity and instability; prevalence of militant groups; tough living conditions; incapable government to protect people	Prevalence of good job opportunities
 Basra	Tough living conditions	Safety and provision of services, education
 Kirkuk	Prevalence of unemployment; halts in government appointments; instability and turbulent conditions; difficult conditions and fear of terrorism	Easier to settle abroad; they harness talents; better environment overall; more stable

Figure 1: Push and Pull Factors for External Migration

The destinations chosen are influenced by the presence of immediate family members, friends, other relatives or acquaintances in the country, as well as the country's safety, peace, stability, protection, the provision of rights, asylum, and the availability of economic opportunities and public services. The overarching finding is that they want to migrate to places that do not have the same challenges they have had to endure in Iraq.

b. Needs of Migrants: Information and Challenges

i. Access to Information

Information about migration is vital for potential migrants to have if they are to migrate safely and successfully. However, it is not easy for them to acquire this information. This is because it is difficult to

obtain information from official sources^{42 43} and because they rely on word of mouth for information, which can be inaccurate⁴⁴. Many Iraqis reflect negatively on the experiences they had in the country of destination, which in many instances was due to the misinformed perceptions⁴⁵ they had before arriving. Given that many Iraqis were looking for better opportunities elsewhere, information related to protection schemes, permanent residence, visa paperwork, return to Iraq and other legal settlement paperwork was among the most commonly sought.^{46 47} While many Iraqis indicated that information related to returning to Iraq was available, they did not trust it⁴⁸, fearing a repeat of the difficult journey they had experienced earlier⁴⁹.

Other information Iraqis sought is related to asylum and immigration laws, including the types of questions to ask during the asylum interview, whether or not it is a good idea to have a translator present⁵⁰ during the interview, consulting an immigration lawyer, authenticating paperwork, and questions around confidentiality. More broadly, an important piece of information Iraqis seek is the type of asylum or immigration/residence a person qualifies for⁵¹. Other immigration-related questions found on social media include ones concerning financial information, including how much money prospective migrants need to have for the paperwork for different countries⁵², language requirements, medical records, and university admission-related information⁵³.

Information about migration is often gained through word of mouth⁵⁴, which may explain why people report such high levels of disappointment following their experiences abroad. Those who are considering emigrating can easily be convinced by the stories they hear from the people they speak to in other countries, or even from those living in other cities in Iraq.

Many people migrate to reunite with family and friends or choose countries where they know people. Similarly, many tend to rely on the information people they know provide them with as a first step, before they try to seek more information themselves. While the information provided through word of mouth may not always be entirely accurate, it provides accessible information in amount of time. This tendency to rely on verbal accounts of other migrants has driven official channels such as embassies and consulates to publish stories of immigrants and their migration experience⁵⁵. Other migrants seek information from less traditional channels such as social media⁵⁶, where they can engage in online forums or simply ask questions on official pages.

⁴² "Youth Perceptions on Migration," *United Nations Iraq*.

⁴³ "Iraqi Migration to Europe 2016: Profiles, Drivers and Return," *REACH*, June 2017.

⁴⁴ "Minister of Migration and Displaced: Establishing a Joint Information Network between Iraq and France to Exchange Information and Expertise Related to Migration, Return, and Integration," *MoMD*, April 2019.

⁴⁵ "Iraqi Migration to Europe 2016: Profiles, Drivers and Return," *REACH*, June 2017.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ "How to Prepare for an Asylum Interview? Necessary Advice," *DW*, 2018.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² "How Much Money Does an Emigrant Need to Prepare Personal Profile and Complete Immigration Papers," *Hajir*.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ "Iraqi Migration to Europe 2016: Profiles, Drivers and Return," *REACH*, June 2017.

⁵⁵ "Steps for Asylum Applications in Germany," *DW*, 2015.

⁵⁶ "Publication of Studies on Information Channels Used By Migrants," *European Commission*, June 2018.

ii. Access to Support

Similar to the types of information needed, the type of support generally required includes legal, language, and administrative support. Iraqis require support related to filing in their immigration or asylum papers, finding lawyers and translators⁵⁷. Many Iraqi migrants also need support to find work or education opportunities. Many highlight that social services, such as education and health services, were among the top reasons for selecting a destination⁵⁸. They also reported a need for support related to protection schemes, permanent residence, language and administrative support, visa paperwork, work permits, return to Iraq, and other legal settlement processes^{59 60}.

Among the migrants who have returned, many reported having to stay in camps, in severe weather conditions and with very little support⁶¹. The psychological burden of an unsuccessful journey through foreign states inhibited their ability to cope with new challenges, with many needing psychosocial and socioeconomic support⁶², protection, and housing⁶³. Many returning Iraqis indicated their need for support with their return process⁶⁴. In a similar vein, IDPs have very minimal access to support, as the support they receive, especially those outside the camps, remains inadequate, particularly when it comes to education services. IDP parents bear the costs of the 12 schools that have been set up outside the camps⁶⁵. According to the IOM, of the 1.7 million people currently displaced in Iraq, about 61% are considered to be IDPs in protracted displacement, or IDPs who have been living in displacement for over 3 years⁶⁶. About 11% of IDPs returning to their place of origin live in inadequate, undignified, and unsafe conditions⁶⁷.

iii. Challenges

The following provides an overview of some of the other significant challenges facing migrants and returnees. Those who migrate externally face the challenge of coping with life in a new country, including the language, culture, law, finances, etc. Current or prospective migrants also face difficulties getting jobs, as acquiring work permits or the necessary qualifications remains hard to fulfil⁶⁸. Securing the educational opportunities to gain the necessary qualifications is also challenging, and a disappointment to the people who indicated that they looked at the provision of services, such as education services, before deciding to emigrate to a particular country⁶⁹. Obtaining legal and administrative support, including help with filling in official application documents, pose other challenges for external migrants from Iraq⁷⁰.

⁵⁷ "Steps for Asylum Applications in Germany," *DW*, 2015.

⁵⁸ "Iraqi Migration to Europe 2016: Profiles, Drivers and Return," *REACH*, June 2017.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² "Iraqi Migration to Europe 2016: Profiles, Drivers and Return," *REACH*, June 2017.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ "Hundreds of Iraqi Refugees in Germany Go Back to Iraq," *DW*, June 2016.

⁶⁵ Internally Displaced Persons must be Presented Options Beyond Life Camp – Humanitarian Coordination," *UNOCHA*, March 4, 2019, <https://www.unocha.org/story/iraq-“internally-displaced-persons-must-be-presented-options-beyond-life-camp”---humanitarian>

⁶⁶ "Internally Displaced Persons must be Presented Options Beyond Life Camp – Humanitarian Coordination," *UNOCHA*, March 4, 2019, <https://www.unocha.org/story/iraq-“internally-displaced-persons-must-be-presented-options-beyond-life-camp”---humanitarian>

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸ "A Documentary on Iraqi Migrants in the United States," *Alsumaria*, February 2018.

⁶⁹ "Iraqi Migration to Europe 2016: Profiles, Drivers and Return," *REACH*, June 2017.

⁷⁰ "How to Prepare for an Asylum Interview? Necessary Advice," *DW*, 2018.

Economic migrants, whether currently in foreign countries or considering emigration, face similar challenges. Many of these are associated with the significant differences between Iraq and the destination countries including access to the labour market, way of life and legislation. Language and cultural barriers present some of the main challenges, as do the economic difficulties that had not been anticipated, such as high taxes⁷¹. Another important challenge is getting a job, given the regulations and qualifications, which some migrants had not anticipated or been accustomed to in Iraq⁷². Many people also cited having to work in a different sector from the one they had experience or expertise in⁷³. As with other migrant groups, many economic migrants from Iraq reported being disillusioned with their experiences⁷⁴.

Among the returning migrants, many have expressed feeling disappointed with their experiences. Many returnees had spent a significant amount of money trying to make their migration a reality, selling their house, cars, or other belongings to prepare themselves for the journey. Some reported having to pay smugglers between \$7,000-\$8,000.⁷⁵ Many reported having to stay in camps, in severe weather conditions and very little support⁷⁶. Even though many Iraqis brought savings along with them, their inability to find jobs, sustain livelihoods, or acquire a legal migration status meant that they had to go back to Iraq and face a new set of challenges.

Many returnees were exposed to socioeconomic marginalization. Those migrants who had to sell valuable belongings faced challenges to their livelihoods on their return. The psychological weight associated with the unsuccessful journey inhibited their ability to cope with the new challenges, leaving them with an immediate need for economic and psychosocial support⁷⁷. Returnees may face security-related challenges⁷⁸. Ultimately, protection, housing, socioeconomic support, and psychosocial support are among the major challenges facing those who return to Iraq⁷⁹.

IDPs in Iraq face difficulties related to living conditions, safety, access to services, damage to infrastructure, and access to education⁸⁰. A 2009 report by Brookings indicated that the key concerns of Iraqi IDPs were: harassment as it related to their sense of security; issues of protection due to the absence of the rule of law and access to police and courts: loss of property and their ability to reclaim assets and access shelter; standards of living as it related to their ability to access public services, assistance, and employment opportunities⁸¹. According to the IOM, about 11% of returning IDPs live in inadequate, undignified, and unsafe conditions⁸².

Yazidi women and girls are a highly vulnerable group of IDPs in Iraq. A 2019 report stated that many of those who lived under Daesh rule exhibit high levels of PTSD. Many of the Yazidi women and girls who

⁷¹ "A Documentary on Iraqi Migrants in the United States," *Alsumaria*, February 2018.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ "Iraqi Migration to Europe 2016: Profiles, Drivers and Return," *REACH*, June 2017.

⁷⁵ Balint Szlanko, "Iraqi Migrants Return After Europe Disappoints," *AP News*, March 2016.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ "Iraqi Migration to Europe 2016: Profiles, Drivers and Return," *REACH*, June 2017.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ "Internally Displaced Persons must be Presented Options Beyond Life Camp – Humanitarian Coordination," *UNOCHA*, March.

⁸¹ Jamille Bigio and Jen Scott, "Internal Displacement in Iraq: The Process of Working toward Durable Solutions," *Brookings*, June 11 2009.

⁸² Ibid.

are displaced reported that they had been subjected to sexual enslavement by Daesh⁸³. About 80% of Yazidi women in Germany indicated that they were raped by members of Daesh⁸⁴. Moreover, many women experienced severe levels of trauma⁸⁵. Many of those who were raped by members of Daesh subsequently had children. These children lack proof of paternity making it difficult for them to obtain legal documentation concerning their identity⁸⁶.

Iraqi IDPs face involuntary return. By late 2017/ early 2018, the Iraqi Government had evicted thousands of people from IDP camps, imposing deadlines on them to return to the areas they had previously lived in that were newly liberated⁸⁷. By August 2018, over four million IDPs had returned but there were no lasting solutions to the challenges they continued to face that included damaged or destroyed housing and mine contamination, amongst other problems still very much in evidence⁸⁸. The majority of Iraqi IDPs continue to face barriers to return including lack of security, presence of explosive hazards, lack of basic services, lack of employment opportunities, destroyed homes, lack of social cohesion, and issues related to identification documentation⁸⁹.

c. Institutional Arrangements and Bodies

Iraq is party to the 1949 ILO Migration for Employment Convention, the 1951 Refugee Convention, the 1967 Refugee Protocol, the 1975 ILO Migrant Workers Convention, the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child (ratified in 1994), the 1990 UN Migrant Workers Convention, the 2000 Human Trafficking Protocol (ratified in 2009), and the 2000 Migrant Smuggling Protocol (ratified in 2009)⁹⁰.

Iraq established its National Policy on Displacement in 2008, which aimed to find durable solutions to the issues surrounding displacement and set a framework to address the needs of IDPs. It set out plans to: respond to every need and aspect of displacement; provide adequate protection and assistance; provide a coordination structure across state institutions; and allocate funds to implement the policy. It also established that displaced persons in Iraq should enjoy the same rights as their Iraqi counterparts who were not displaced⁹¹, be protected by the Iraqi Constitution, national legislation, and international law. It also looked to safeguard the rights of IDPs, including, but not limited to, the Right to Participate in Decision Making and Implementation, Right to Non-Discrimination, Right to Protection against Arbitrary Displacement, the Legal Status and Official Recognition as IDPs, Right to Property Protection and Compensation, Right to Social Care, Right to Health Care, Right to Freedom of Expression and Access to Information, Right to Freedom of Movement, Right to Family Unity, IDP Families' Right to Rehabilitation and Job Opportunities, and Right to Having the Needs of Persons with Special Needs Met.⁹²

The Iraqi Government also worked with UNOCHA to draft and implement a national response plan, the latest of which came out in 2019. The plan monitors the migration flows and looks to build an inter-agency partnership with many government and non-governmental organizations to support the development of the private sector to provide more economic opportunities⁹³.

⁸³ "Before It's too Late - A Report Concerning the Ongoing Genocide and Persecution Endured by the Yazidis in Iraq, and Their Need for Immediate Protection," *Yale MacMillan Center*, June 2019.

⁸⁴ "A Study: Five Years Did Not End What Yazidis Suffered from Daesh," *DW*, August 2019.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ "Iraq," *Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre*, accessed June 23, 2020.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ "Migration Profiles: Iraq," *UNICEF*.

⁹¹ "National Policy on Displacement," *Ministry of Migration and Displacement*, 2008.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ "Iraq Humanitarian Response Plan 2019," *UNOCHA*, 2019.

The Iraqi Government also enacted the National Development Plan 2018-2022⁹⁴, which looks at migration as one of the barriers to developing economic sectors.⁹⁵ The Minister of Migration and Displaced indicated last year that the Ministry had a comprehensive plan for 2020 to support the return of IDPs to their original areas⁹⁶. This was part of a number of government efforts to support internal and external migrants. In 2019, the Government of Iraq enacted a programme for free and voluntary return for refugees⁹⁷ and issued the Return from Migration and Displacement Report⁹⁸, documenting these efforts.

In late 2019, the Government of Iraq and the IOM collaborated on producing a Nationwide Migration Profile with a statistical overview of migration in Iraq. This established a baseline for the development of the National Migration Strategy⁹⁹. The collaboration between the Government and the IOM aimed to address the changing dynamics of Iraqi migration as: traditional countries of emigration such as Syria have become inaccessible; the diaspora population grows; the dangers of irregular migration are increasing and; increasing numbers are studying abroad¹⁰⁰.

In 2020, the MOMD and ICMPD developed a national-level policy regarding Iraqis who live abroad. This policy aims to foster closer ties between Iraqis abroad and their homeland in a way that enables investors and people with the relevant skills to participate in the development process in Iraq. This policy works in four key thematic areas: (a) institutional and leadership development, (b) human capital support and investment, (c) financial mobilization and investment, (d) state guardianship over Iraqis abroad¹⁰¹.

⁹⁴ "The National Development Plan for Iraq: 2018-2022," *Ministry of Planning*, 2019.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ "In a Meeting with Ninewa Governor, Minister of Migration: 'We have a Comprehensive Plan for 2020 to Bring Back all Displaced Persons to their Homes' During a Field Visit," *MoMD*, April 2020.

⁹⁷ "Minister of Migration and Displaced: Establishing a Joint Information Network between Iraq and France to Exchange Information and Expertise Related to Migration, Return, and Integration," *MoMD*, April 2019.

⁹⁸ "Return from Migration and Displacement: Comprehensive Report," *MoMD*, May 2019.

⁹⁹ "Government of Iraq and IOM Share Findings of First Ever Nationwide Migration Profile," *IOM*, December 2019.

¹⁰⁰ "IOM Iraq Enacts a Strategy for the Engagement of PWDs in Society Across the Nation," *United Nations Iraq*, 2019.

¹⁰¹ "Policy on Engagement with Iraqis Abroad," *ICMPD*, September 2020.

<https://www.budapestprocess.org/silkroutesfacility/short-term-technical-assistance/246-iraq>

4. Migration-Related Information

The following sections focus on the answers provided in interviews conducted with 35 potential migrants, 35 returnees, and 35 institutional and organizational stakeholders from the seven provinces included in the study.

a. Information

i. Migrants

Pre-Departure Phase

The pre-departure phase refers to all the stages prior to the individuals leaving their homes, including preparation and planning. Given that the vast majority of interviewees, including a number of returnees, indicated their serious intention to migrate, often externally, the research sought to understand the extent to which potential migrants had information about what they might encounter on their migration journeys. The potential migrants interviewed possessed varying degrees of information about the arrangements they needed to make before migrating.

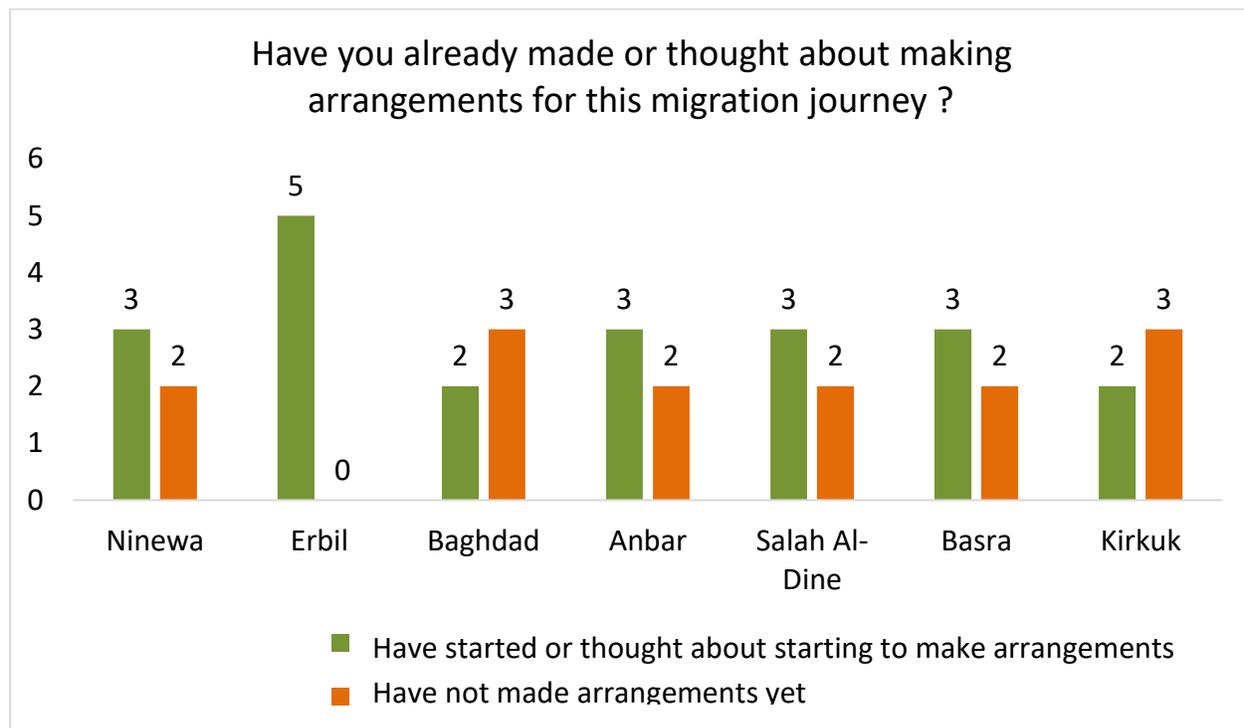


Figure 2: Arrangements made for migration journeys

In Ninewa, participants seemed aware of the arrangements that needed to be made before starting their journey as they knew the type of documents that would be needed, including having a passport, authenticating and translating travel and supporting documents. However, the interviewees had either not started making these arrangements, were relying on family and relatives to support them, or intended to migrate irregularly through smuggling. Most of the interviewees from Ninewa had very little information about what to do after arriving at the destination country, such as finding housing, jobs, and settling their legal status.

In Erbil, the potential migrants interviewed seemed to have more information about pre-migration arrangements than those from Ninewa. Unlike their counterparts in Ninewa, participants from Erbil had considered how they would cover the cost of the journey. The most popular arrangements include saving money for the trip, getting the necessary documentation issued, contacting friends or relatives with questions and securing housing. The interviewees acknowledged the importance of relaying migration-related information with some of them, indicating their intention to film and document their journey from start to finish to help those who are thinking about migrating.

The interviewees from Baghdad, showed less awareness of how migration could be undertaken safely and successfully. The majority of the participants indicated that they were still trying to find out how to acquire useful information, including looking online or through friends of acquaintances abroad. None of the participants had developed any plans yet.

The interviewees in Anbar also had varying degrees of knowledge about the arrangements to make before migrating. One interviewee had been in contact with one of the UN offices, and had gathered information about regular and safe migration to some of the countries they were interested in, and joined a number of social media groups to keep up with new regulations. Similarly, another participant had registered for language classes to be in a better position to make an application for asylum, and another participant said that they had begun thinking about how they would plead their asylum case. However, some participants had not taken any steps apart from preparing their passports and other personal documents.

The interviewees in Salah Al-Din, Basra, and Kirkuk said they were in constant contact with people abroad in countries such as, the United States, Sweden, Austria, Turkey, and Germany. They had inquired about job opportunities and travel routes. Notably, two of the participants were confident that with their skills, they would be able to find jobs, particularly as they had been told by their friends and relatives that their professions were highly sought after in the countries they wanted to migrate to. One of these participants was a photographer and the other was a chef. Overall, there seems to be an overreliance on information provided through word of mouth. Kirkuk's prospective migrants showed a greater tendency to ask for information, whether through people they knew abroad or their own research.

Migration Journey

The interviewees from Ninewa stated that they had a lot of information about the migration journeys they were going to undertake. The reality, however, is that this information is usually insufficient. In general, they said they knew what they needed to do to get to their destinations. They acknowledged the dangers of irregular migration and recognized the benefits of legal migration, yet some of them seemed determined to migrate irregularly. This is because they believe that using smugglers is much cheaper than the legal alternative. The participants in Erbil were more knowledgeable about the journeys they were potentially going to undertake and were planning to use legal and regular channels. They were planning their journeys in incremental stages, beginning with acquiring visas/permits, booking flight tickets, and arranging transportation and housing before considering longer-term plans. One reason the participants from Erbil stood out from those in the other provinces could be down to the fact that Erbil is generally safer and more secure than the other provinces. As a result, they may not be feeling the same pressure to migrate, and can instead dedicate more time to planning their journeys.

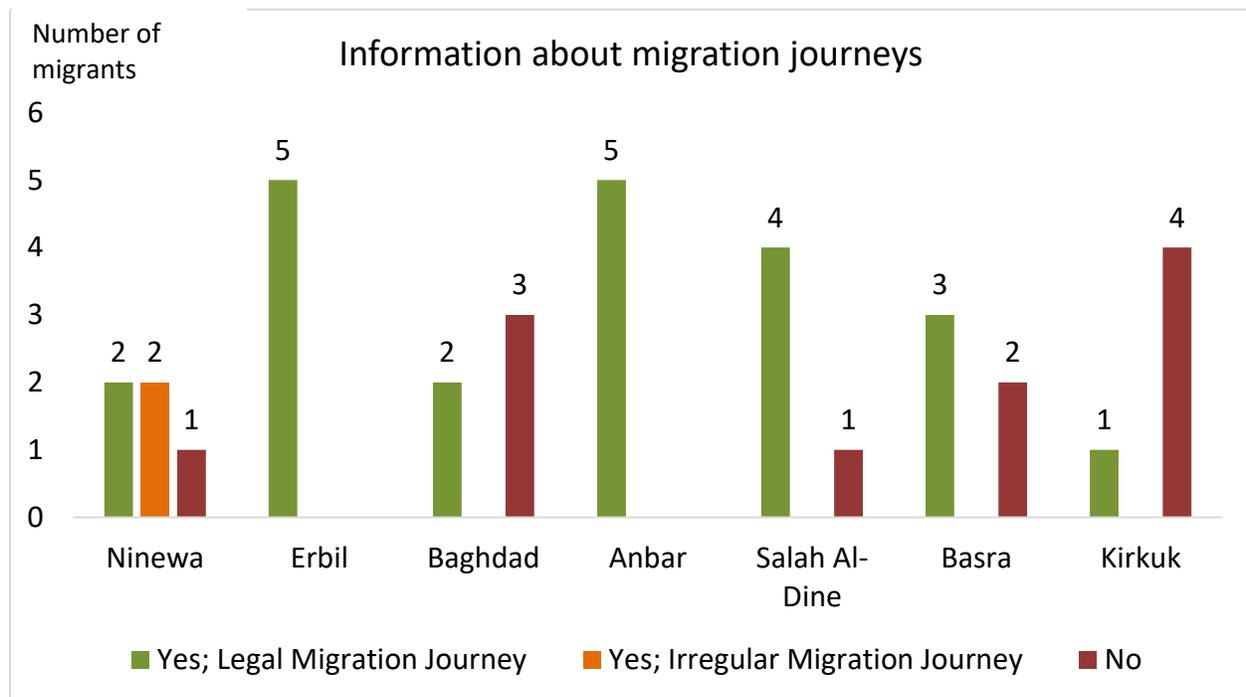


Figure 3: Information about migration journeys (number of respondents who have information about different migration)

The interviewees in Baghdad, Basra, and Kirkuk clearly did not have enough information about the migration journeys they were potentially going to undertake, often overlooking the importance of the information they might need for the journey to be safe and successful. The participants, especially those in Kirkuk, placed more emphasis on their long-term plans such as finding jobs and settling in their destinations. However, more awareness is needed about the more immediate steps that need to be taken. Conversely, the participants from Anbar and Salah Al-Din were slightly more knowledgeable. While their plans were also underdeveloped, they showed a greater understanding of the importance of having information about matters such as asylum applications, service provision, security and stability. One of the reasons why the participants from these regions might be more versed in the type of information that is needed, is because they have personal contacts in the countries they wish to migrate to. For example, one participant from Anbar stated that his sister in Germany had informed him that he needed to register for language courses before he started his migration journey.

Overall, the most popular source of information for participants across all seven provinces was that provided through word of mouth, with interviewees indicating that they asked for information and received it from their friends, relatives, and acquaintances in the countries they wished to migrate to. Some had found information on Google and social media platforms such as Facebook and Instagram. Obtaining information through social media is a particular challenge, as the information on these platforms is unverified and can be inaccurate.

ii. Returnees

Pre-Departure Phase

The pre-departure phase for returnees refers to all the phases prior to starting their journey back to Iraq, including preparation and planning. The research found that the type and amount of information the

returnees had while making their preparations to return was quite varied. Some returnees believed they had adequate information to support their journeys, while others stated they did not have enough information to ensure their journeys would be successful. In Baghdad, some returnees said that they had been provided with inaccurate information by their contacts in the countries they eventually migrated to. These contacts were generally friends and family members. The inaccurate information they were given, including about general living conditions in the country, created false expectations and left them feeling hugely disappointed when they returned to Iraq. One returnee stated that “what I was told was that life in a different country is better, but that is not true. I needed to know how tiring and how much effort it would take to start a new life. It really needed a lot of thinking and background information.” These reflections were echoed, particularly by many of the returnees in Basra, who went on to say that had they known better before, they might have different plans.

Similarly, many of the returnees in Erbil and Kirkuk said that they needed more information related to the nature of daily life in the countries they migrated to, including more background information about the customs and traditions. As for the returnees in Ninewa and Anbar, some indicated that looking back on their journeys, they would have preferred learning more about how to make an application for asylum, including status updates, migrant rights, refugee-host community dynamics and other legal matters. A number of returnees in Salah Al-Din reported having had little to no information prior to migrating.

Amongst other factors discussed later, the lack of information had a negative impact on returnees’ thoughts of migrating again but a positive effect in that it made them reflect on the importance of information to a successful outcome. In fact, the majority of returnees indicated that they do not wish to migrate again due to the obstacles and hardships they endured, along with the disappointment they felt at their failed migration. Those who said they might consider migrating again in the future indicated that they would need information about economic opportunities, legal information on applying for asylum and migrant rights, and information about the society they were going to, to determine the extent to which they would be welcome among the host communities. Some returnees in Kirkuk indicated that they would not migrate again unless the opportunity for employment was guaranteed.

Migration Journey

Similar to the potential migrants interviewed, the returnees stated that they had some information about the migration journeys they were going to undertake before departing from Iraq. Many indicated that they did not know much, and like many of the potential migrants interviewed, had contacted friends and relatives living abroad for information. The difference between the returnees interviewed for the study and the potential migrants is that they have experienced migration and have had the chance to evaluate the information they received before setting out and compare it with the reality. The research found that many returnees believe the information they had was often inaccurate and nearly always inadequate. Much of this was related to socioeconomic matters such as finding employment, integrating within the local community, and finding housing. Moreover, many returnees were not told how long the asylum process can take. A particular problem was not being told that having their passports stamped in countries along the way could negatively affect their application for asylum. Many of the returnees were told by their contacts in the countries they were going to migrate to that it would be easy to find jobs and live in these countries. However, the personal experiences they shared in the interviews show that they had a much more difficult time securing a job. They also highlighted that the difference between what they were told and what they discovered during their journey about making asylum applications, living in refugee camps, general living conditions outside of Iraq, and the outcomes of their migration, their legal status and living conditions, was often the reason behind their return. Only a few returnees contacted the Ministry of Migration and Displaced or paid travel agencies to acquire accurate information, citing positive experiences with these sources.

b. Information Needs

The following subsection discusses the main findings from the field research interviews about the “information required” and the “information needs” of the potential migrants and returnees.

i. Migrants

The information needs identified by the potential migrants who were interviewed, centred on life abroad, particularly the legal, economic, and social aspects. In Ninewa, the participants wanted to learn about the asylum process, including applications, procedures and the documentation they would need to have. They wanted to learn the languages spoken in the countries they were migrating to, learn more about the society, its communities and traditions and whether they would they be able to easily practice their own traditions. This was in addition to learning more about the dangers a migrant might face during the journey as well as within the country of destination. The responses were similar from the interviewees in Erbil who said that they wanted to learn where the best jobs were located and where other Iraqis tended to settle. They also wanted to learn about their legal rights as a migrant. Most of the participants also stated that they wanted to learn about the asylum application process as well as the paths to citizenship. The participants in Kirkuk were mostly interested in learning about the level of stability in the potential country of destination, as they prioritized being able to settle and live normally over other aspects. Kirkuk is a province that faces major security challenges and a lack of public service provision from the government, as the province includes a number of disputed areas between the federal government and the KRG.

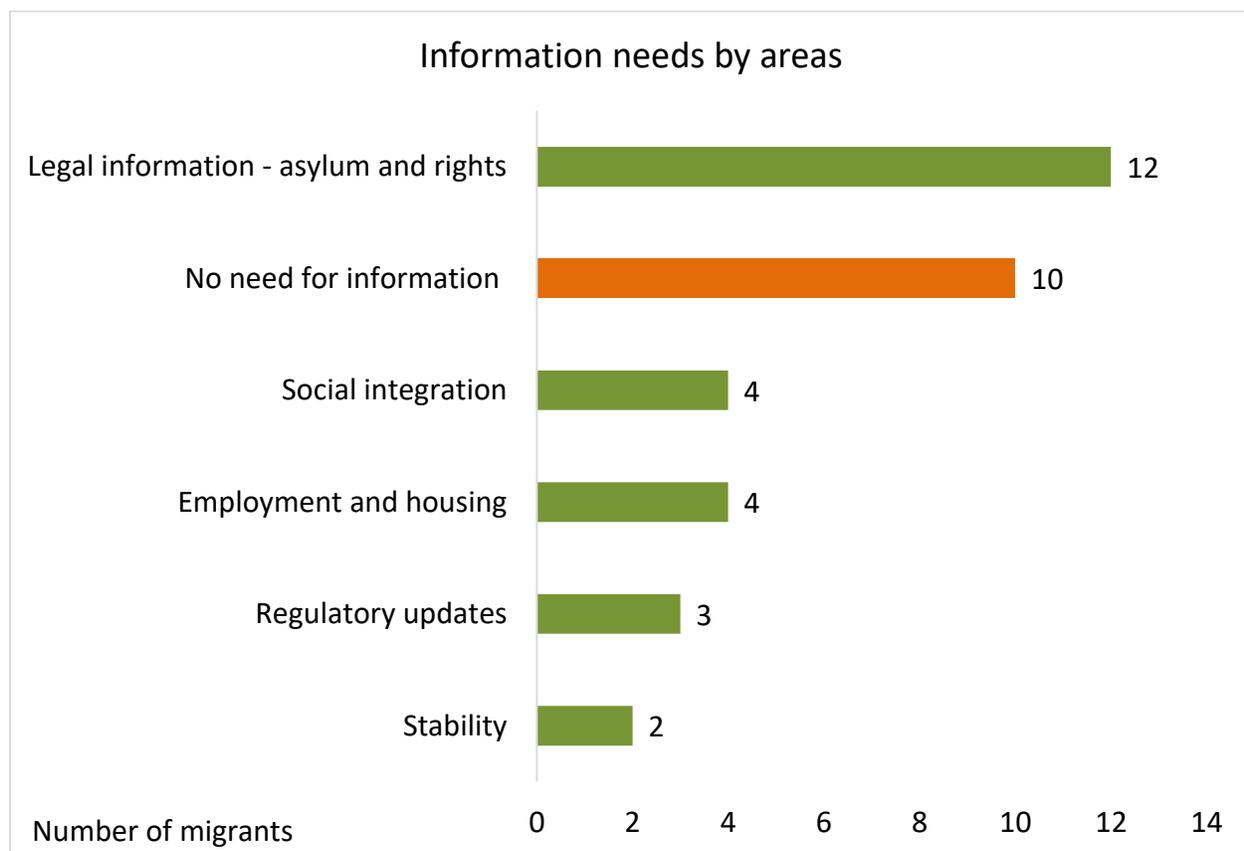


Figure 4: Information Needs

In Baghdad and Basra, with the exception of some of the respondents who wanted to learn the language, traditions, customs, regulations, and laws, the majority did not know much and would benefit hugely from awareness raising campaigns to avoid the risks associated with irregular migration. This is important especially as many of them indicated that they needed to learn a lot more than they already knew. Moreover, many of them, particularly in Basra, said they did not need to learn anything and that leaving the country by any means necessary was their priority. This attitude often results in migrants undertaking riskier journeys. While some of them said that they had already travelled to their intended destinations and would therefore not need more information, it is worth noting that visiting a country is different from migrating to it.

Similar to the other provinces, those from Anbar were also interested in learning about the asylum process and whether it differs from one country to another, as they were interested in learning about the countries that had the easiest procedures and best benefits for migrants and refugees. The safety and security of the country of destination was also very important to them, and therefore, they would want to know this information before they set out. In Salah Al-Din, the interviewers found potential migrants had a need for economic and housing information, including prices and salary ranges.

The vast majority of the participants said that they needed more information to add to what they already knew. However, a few of the participants from Baghdad and Basra, stated that they did not need any further information despite the fact they did not indicate having any specific plans for their migration journey or any accurate information. For those who said they needed more information, the type needed can be grouped under: legal information such as asylum and citizenship applications and their legal rights as refugees or migrants; economic information such as housing, employment, services, and benefits; and information about the society such as if they would be accepted, respected, and integrated into local communities, and the level of stability they would enjoy in those countries. In this context, one participant stated that they would like to attend workshops where they could learn about migration procedures and the obstacles they might face along with the best way of addressing them.

ii. Returnees

For returnees, as stated earlier, their previous migration experiences have an impact on whether they want to migrate again, and also influence their needs for information. Their experiences made many hesitant about migrating again, but if they were to migrate in the future, they would think more broadly about what they would need to make their migration a success. The majority of participants said that they needed more information, for example, when thinking about asylum applications, knowing more about what they should do if an application for asylum is denied. They also wanted to know how to acquire citizenship in the country of destination. This is to be expected, particularly from those who did not return to Iraq voluntarily, and who therefore want to know how they can legally settle permanently abroad. Returnees were also interested in the rights of migrants, especially the rights they have when they find themselves in dangerous and violent situations. One returnee in Kirkuk said that they would like to update themselves on the recent legal changes to migration regulations for 2021-2022.

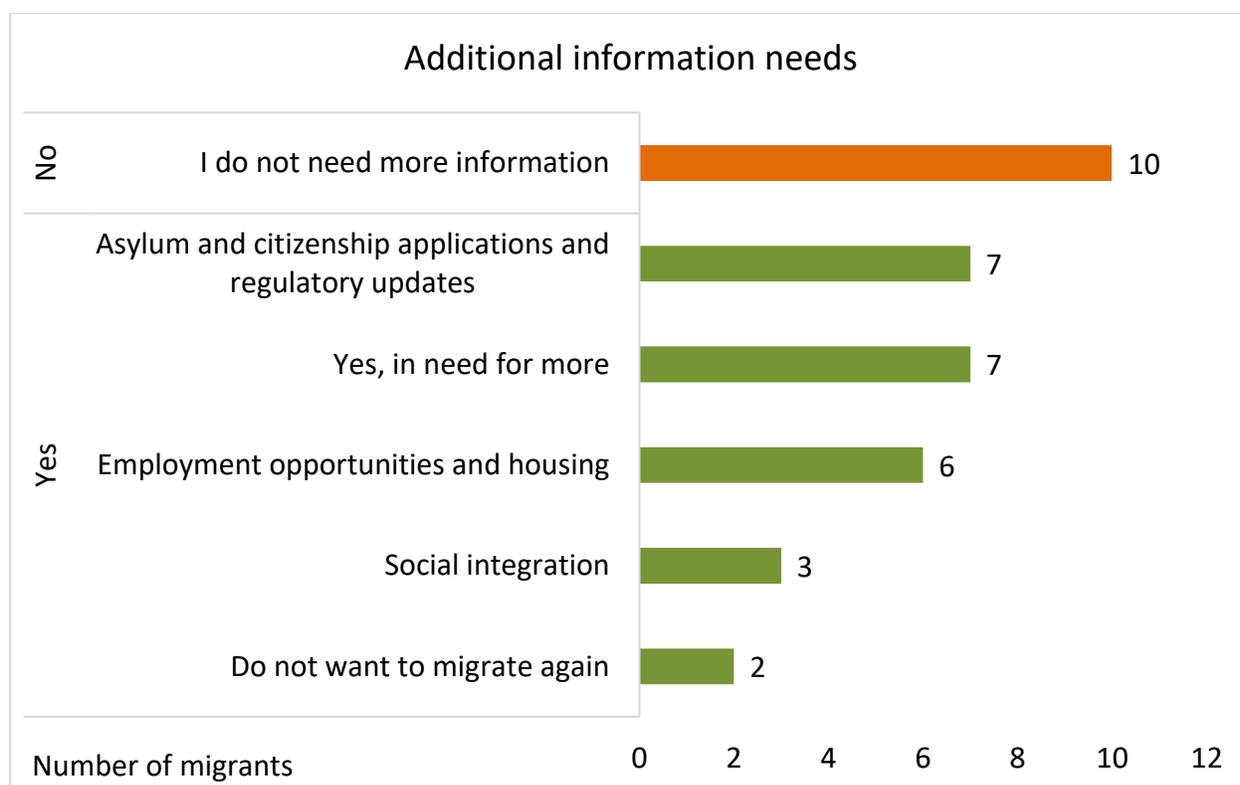


Figure 5: Additional Information needs

Some of the returnees, especially those in Baghdad, believe the media and international organizations should show what life is really like in the countries Iraqis migrate to. This is because they think many people migrate to certain countries believing they will have a much better life than they had in Iraq. However, as one returnee said, these countries have their challenges too, for example high levels of unemployment and the cost of living. Migrants are more affected by these challenges than the local population as it is usually harder for them to find employment. A returnee from Anbar highlighted the importance of having information that is up to date given the constant changes to migration and asylum laws and regulations.

In both the field and desk research, it was found that the return journey is generally easier and the information about it is more accessible. As such, a proportion of the participants indicated that they did not need any information before their return. However, of those that did ask for more information, some said that they had asked the government institutions in the countries they had migrated to, some asked people who had already returned to Iraq to learn from their experiences, and others asked the authorities in the countries of transit and destination for information. For those who wanted more information before they returned, it included learning about the safest areas in Iraq, those that have good economic opportunities and affordable housing, and provide good public services.

Many returnees attributed the reason for their return journey being easier to the fact that they stayed connected with their friends and families in Iraq who provided them with relevant information.

c. Sources of Information

This section looks at what participants said about their sources of information during the migration journey and when they arrived in the country of destination. It details the sources of information about

migration procedures they trust the most, and from whom or where they prefer to obtain their information.

There were high levels of awareness among the interviewees about where to go or what to do if they faced a violent situation during the journey. This was the case in every province apart from Baghdad, where the participants said they needed information about what to do and where to go, with one participant saying that they would try to keep calm and deal with it on their own. In the other provinces, the participants identified a variety of different sources of information they would turn to according to where they found themselves. For example, if they were still in Iraq, they would turn to local police stations and to the Iraqi Government. If they were in the airport or on the plane, they would go to airport security or cabin crew. If they were in a different country, they would go to the local government offices or nearest police station, before filing a case at the Iraqi Embassy. Some of them indicated that they would also turn to a humanitarian organization or legal entity, which is the kind of response that is associated with people living in camps or those who migrate irregularly, as many from Ninewa do. A potential migrant from Kirkuk said that migration carried many possible risks and they would need proper advice on how to avoid them, as they would not know who to turn to for help.

The majority of the returnees indicated that, while on the move, they knew who to turn to if they encountered any violence on their journey. While one of the returnees from Baghdad could list a few institutions they would report their case to, including the national government of the country they had migrated to, the UN, the IOM, and other international organizations, most did not know who they would turn to if they were in trouble. Those in Basra had similar responses to their counterparts from Baghdad. One returnee from Salah Al-Din said that they asked a friend what to do, but the friend did not give them an answer. In general, those who said they knew who to turn to, mentioned government organizations, both in Iraq and the country they found themselves in, the security forces, legal or official entities such as courts, migration offices, and international organizations, mainly humanitarian ones.

The responses from the potential migrants to the question about what they would do or who they would contact when they arrived at their intended destination, depended to a large extent on whether they knew anyone in the country they were migrating to. The vast majority of the participants across all seven provinces indicated that if they had not already contacted a friend or relative before beginning their journey, they would do so when they arrived. Some participants also indicated that they would contact a government entity, a police station, or the Iraqi Embassy. Some of those who did not know who to contact had an alternative plan, for example hiring an interpreter, while others did not know what to do.

The responses of the returnees were very similar to those of the potential migrants. Most of them stated that not knowing their surroundings when they arrived, they had contacted friends or relatives who lived in the country to come and pick them up. Some returnees said that on arriving, they contacted the authorities to register as a refugee, but these were individuals who said they did not have any friends or relatives in that particular country.

The most trusted sources of information on migration procedures identified during the interviews can be classed as either traditional or nontraditional. Of the traditional sources, the Ministry of Migration and Displaced was frequently identified as the most trusted, especially by those in Ninewa. The potential migrants from Erbil had high levels of trust in the Iraqi Embassy of the country they intended to migrate to. Those from Baghdad, Anbar, Basra, and Kirkuk stated that they would trust information provided by international organizations such as the IOM and the UN, government, non-governmental organizations and their representatives, as long as they proved trustworthy and knowledgeable. The nontraditional sources included information provided by family or friends. Others said that they would search for the information they wanted online, and that they would trust it. These two approaches were common in Basra and Salah Al-Din.

The sources of information that the returnees trusted were more diverse than those of the potential migrants. The field research found that the returnees trust official and nonofficial sources. The official sources they trusted included UN organizations, particularly the regional offices that were visited by many of the returnees from Kirkuk. Other organizations include the IOM, the Ministry of Migration and Displaced, security institutions, embassies, and other international organizations, particularly Human Rights Watch. They also reported trusting information provided by friends and family. It is worth commenting that returnees in Erbil said that the tourism and travel agencies generally provided accurate information.

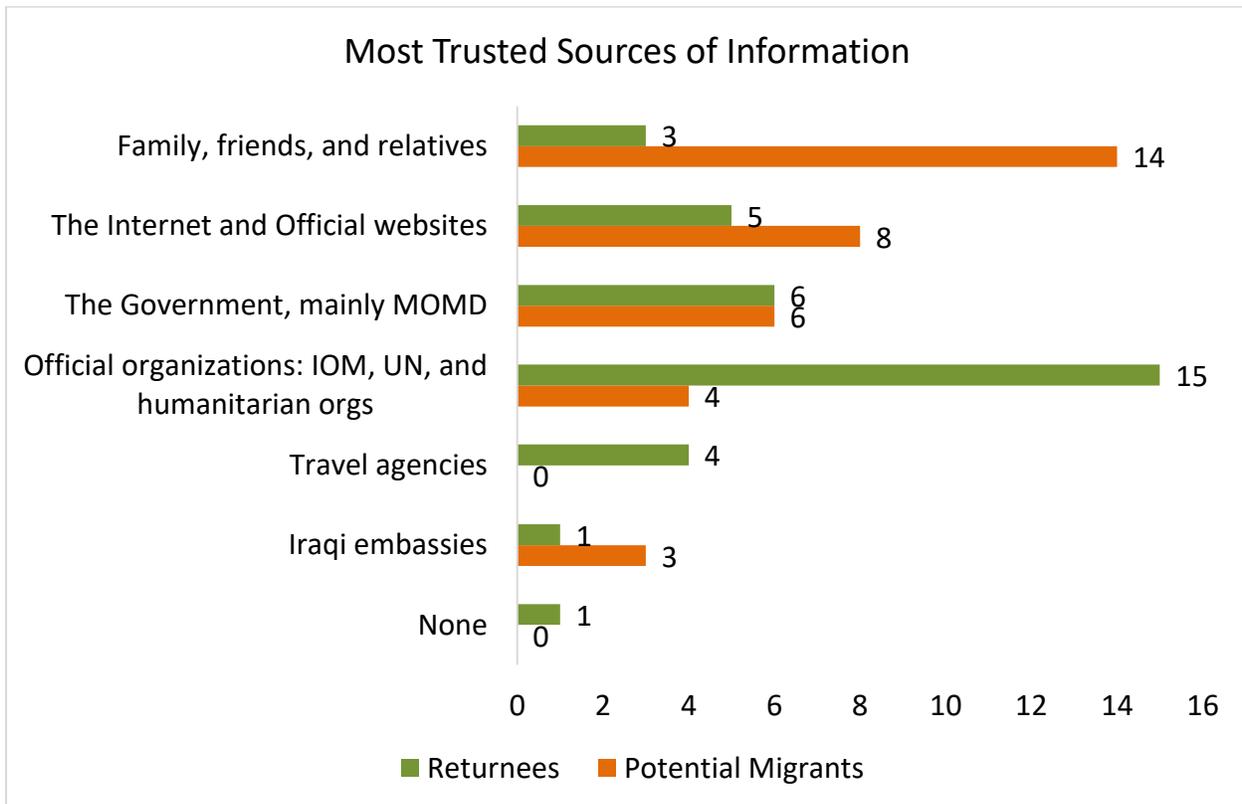


Figure 6: Most trusted sources of information

The research showed that participants' preferences for obtaining information either took the form of a proactive approach or a passive one. The proactive approach saw some potential migrants contacting friends and relatives for information about migration, mostly through social media and by phoning them. This can be problematic for the would-be migrant, as these sources may not always provide accurate information, which can also often be biased or outdated. Others contacted more trustworthy sources such as Iraqi government institutions including the Ministry of Migration and Displaced and Iraqi embassies abroad by phoning, emailing, or visiting their websites. The potential migrants who took a more passive approach said that they preferred to get their information through social media, following the pages or accounts from sites that provide information. Some of these sites are official, such as government and international organizations, while others are unofficial. The majority of the potential migrants in Kirkuk rejected the use of social media as a way of acquiring information, as they thought it could not be trusted. Many participants take account of the fact that information acquired through social media may be misleading, and therefore try to visit official websites, email official organizations or rely on friends or relatives who have already migrated.

Returnees mainly rely on family and friends for their information, using social media sites including, Facebook, WhatsApp, Telegram, and Instagram. They also rely on YouTube for educational videos, news, and documentaries that provide information about migration and its risks. They added that they get information from the government and international organizations' official websites, including email addresses to contact them. Many of them arrive at these websites following a search on Google. In Kirkuk, particularly, many returnees indicated that they prefer to acquire their information through official websites and get the phone numbers to call them directly.

Television programmes and documentaries, particularly the ones that include personal experiences, can provide important information for potential migrants. The researchers probed this topic further to better understand what the potential migrants had watched and what they had learnt from these programmes. In general, the research found that most of the potential migrants had not watched programmes about migration. Those who had watched them referred mostly to documentaries on channels such as *National Geographic*, *Al-Arabia*, and *Al-Jazeera*. Those who could remember the names of the programmes they had watched, mentioned "*Al-Hijra Al-Ashwa'iyah (Random Migration)*"; "*Ela Al-Mahjar (Toward Diaspora)*"; and "*Al-Muhajeroun (The Migrants)*". Overall, the potential migrants indicated they had learnt about the risks of irregular migration, smuggling, and trafficking from these programmes, often saying they had been put off migrating irregularly because of what they had seen. The interviews also found that some participants who were thinking about irregular migration learnt more about the routes to take.

Most of the returnees said they had not watched TV programmes about migration, particularly those from Baghdad, Erbil, and Ninewa. However, those from Anbar said they had seen a number of programmes on channels such as *Al-Arabia* and *Al-jazeera* as well as on European channels. They watched programmes about migration journeys, including a documentary that discussed migration movements through the Aegean Sea, which is known for being very risky and where many migrants struggle. Other returnees from Salah Al-Din and Basra reported watching programmes such as "*The Risks Journey*", as well as videos on YouTube to learn about the dangers associated with migration. Some returnees in Kirkuk indicated that these programmes do not show the full reality.

The vast majority of the participants believe the government does not intend or have the capacity to provide information about migration. Their reasons for thinking this vary but include: believing that the government does not want them to migrate; lack of government concern for its citizens, disenchantment and distrust in the government, and believing that the government does not have the capacity to support them. They also added that government policies are one of the reasons why people want to migrate as it is the government and its policies that have failed to protect them. Nevertheless, many participants were still quite hopeful that it could provide them with information, particularly the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Migration and Displaced. Other preferred sources of information included the UN and other international organizations.

The field research found that most of those thinking of migrating do not have adequate information about migration and the information they have is often through word of mouth which is unverified or unreliable.

One of the most important challenges facing those who are migrating is the absence of accurate information about migration, especially legal migration, which makes it almost impossible for migrants to be aware of the potential risks they face if they migrate through irregular channels. What propels them to choose irregular migration, despite its dangers, is the desire to save their families from the hardships they are experiencing in Iraq, or their longing for a place with better job opportunities, greater safety and security.

The institutional and organizational stakeholders said that potential migrants and returnees search for information through social media or rely on friends and family instead of official sources, which tend to

provide them with inaccurate or incorrect information. The institutional and organizational interviewees believed that migrant groups do not have sufficient information, resulting in them facing huge difficulties, as they may not be fully aware of every aspect and all the risks associated with migration or return journeys. They added that one of the challenges these migrant groups face is the scarcity of information and/or conflicting information. The interviewees from these organizations said they provide information support to migrant groups through social media, television commercials, and field campaigns through which they look to raise awareness. They also indicated that if they do not have the necessary information, they refer migrant groups to the relevant institutions. As to the question of how different migrant demographic groups find and use information, there were mixed responses from the institutional and organizational stakeholders. Some downplayed the differences in how migrant groups from urban areas used the information compared to those from rural areas. Others believed there are stark differences between the demographic groups with education, age, culture, and gender influencing the level of information they have access to and how they use it. Finally, MOMD keeps a database of returnees and IDPs, through which they can provide information support.

d. The Migrant Resource Centre (MRC)

This study seeks to examine what potential migrants, returnees, and institutional and organizational stakeholders think of the Migrant Resource Centre (MRC) and the possible services and operations it could offer to meet their information needs. This section provides: a detailed analysis of the findings regarding peoples' awareness of the MRC and their views about attending information sessions or workshops about migration; their reflections on the suggestion of having an MRC contact number to request information about migration and; general thoughts about having a branch of the MRC in their province to provide information, advice and other services.

The vast majority of potential migrants and returnees indicated that they had never heard of the MRC before, including those from Baghdad where the MRC is located. This is to be expected as the MRC was only established by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs in February 2020. Those who stated that they had heard of it, mentioned a recent press conference.

The participants were asked how useful they would find a session or workshop with information about migration and what they would like from these sessions. The general consensus among the potential migrants was that these sessions would be very useful to learn more about migration and obtain further information. Some of the potential migrants added that a session on this subject in the near future would be of great benefit. In Erbil, some identified that they would like to learn about the rights they would have if they were granted asylum and what would happen if their applications were turned down. Others wanted the sessions to spend time discussing how to find affordable housing, search for jobs, and find areas that are friendly to foreigners. In Anbar and Salah Al-Din, some potential migrants wanted to learn about safe migration routes. One participant suggested that sessions should be widely advertised to ensure as many people as possible hear about them and can attend. Some potential migrants from Basra and Salah Al-Din thought it would be helpful for these workshops to focus on learning how the law works in the countries they intend to migrate to, especially regarding taxation. One individual from Erbil disagreed, saying that they might not find these sessions useful because financial support is more important than having information about it.

The majority of returnees believed it would be very useful for them to attend an information workshop on migration if they wanted to migrate again. While most of them do not imagine migrating again soon, or indeed ever, they nevertheless stated that if the opportunity presented itself, they might do so and that therefore, it would be useful to attend an information session. However, their lived experiences have taught them a number of lessons about the migration experience. Therefore, many said it was likely they

would attend sessions run by the MRC to learn how to avoid the same issues and difficulties they had experienced before. They also indicated they would like to learn about the laws, regulations, and economic opportunities in the countries they would be migrating to, as well as learning about legal matters, particularly the asylum process, and migrant rights.

The researchers asked the participants whether they would feel comfortable contacting a phone number for information about migration. The majority of potential migrants and returnees said they would make use of this service to get answers to their questions, with some from Kirkuk indicating that it would be their preferred way of getting information from official organizations. The majority also indicated that apart from family members, they would not know who to contact for information and, even if they knew of an organization or entity to contact, they would not know how to get their official contact number. Some returnees indicated that they had also called local UN offices in the countries they had migrated to. One potential migrant from Baghdad did not believe there would be any benefit to having a phone number to contact for information and said that they would rather learn from their own experiences. This type of response creates a challenge for the MRC, but one that they should be able to overcome through outreach and communication strategies. Another challenge for the MRC is ensuring that the process of getting through to someone on the contact number is seamless, as some of the returnees in Kirkuk reported being frustrated at how complicated it sometimes was to reach someone at the other end of the line.

Looking at the support the MRC could provide in different provinces, the interviewees did not indicate a preference for having a branch of the MRC in their province. However, there was consensus, that if they were going to migrate legally, having a regional MRC office to provide information could be of use, but that it might not be helpful for those who were going to migrate irregularly. These responses serve to highlight that the MRC and other relevant organizations have to increase their efforts to counter the challenge of irregular migration. Potential migrants, particularly those in Erbil, believe that having access to an information centre would be useful for getting information about how to search for jobs, find housing, and apply for asylum. Those from Baghdad were more interested in learning about migration guidelines and receiving counseling and guidance. Their counterparts from Basra would like to have a centre in their province to contact and learn about migrant rights.

The returnees had a variety of responses. Some believed that it would be helpful to have a migration information centre in their province to answer their inquiries and provide them with comprehensive information on migration, especially on legal matters. One returnee from Anbar said that it would be important for these centres to be open to all Iraqis, as they recalled having visited an office in 2015 for information, only to be told that the centre was just for Syrians. Another returnee thought that these centres should offer a variety of ways of being able to reach them, including by phone and email. There were also a number of returnees who did not believe it would be helpful to have a regional centre. This is mostly driven by the fact that they associate these types of centres with the government, which they think cannot provide them with support.

The interviewees from the institutions and organizations were reasonably aware of the MRC. Notably, individuals from the IOM, the National Labour Centre, and the Planning and Studies Department at MOLSA indicated that they expect the MRC to assume an important role in providing migration-related services, and to become an important channel for providing migration-related information as part of efforts to address the migration crisis in Iraq. This would include conducting awareness raising campaigns and information sessions and responding to questions through in-person visits, on its website, through social media, and by phone. One interviewee noted that the MRC receives questions on social media platforms, generally asking for guidance and information about regular migration, visas, and the services the centre provides. This interviewee added that the MRC is still new and in the process of bringing awareness to its role and activities, but that a hotline for people to use could be very effective. Another interviewee said

that the MRC should conduct campaigns that focus on the dangers of irregular migration and raise awareness of the resources that are available for legal migration. Overall, they were hopeful that the MRC can address many of the challenges faced by migrants, IDPs, and returnees. As one interviewee asserted “The MRC has recently opened in MOLSA in Baghdad, so we are waiting to see what it is going to be doing in the future.”

5. Migration Challenges

a. Challenges during the Pre-Departure Phase

The field research found that migrants face a number of possible challenges when preparing to depart. As noted earlier, many potential migrants need a lot of information to help them plan a safe and secure journey. A number of participants in the study indicated that they intended to migrate irregularly and many of them were planning to leave without their official personal/ identification documents. Instead, they were relying on their families to mail the documents to them once they arrive at their intended destination.

This is a significant problem as traveling irregularly and without documentation exposes migrants to risks and dangers, as well as creating difficulties for them if their documents do not arrive. Without adequate planning, many migrants face challenges finding accommodation and jobs once they arrive. This is made worse by the fact that many report having limited funds, or no funds at all.

Looking at the returnees, some of the interviewees in Baghdad indicated that they had gathered some information prior to their journey, often from friends. However, the information proved insufficient to help them face the challenges of finding employment and housing, obtaining asylum, and family reunification. Some of the returnees in Ninewa said they had been able to gather enough information about applying for asylum and about the general security conditions in the countries they were migrating to. Some of them had obtained this information from friends and relatives prior to their journey while others had contacted the Ministry of Migration and Displaced. Some returnees who migrated irregularly through smuggling, said how exhausting they had found it and that they could not possibly have prepared themselves for the route, conditions, and outcomes they experienced. Similarly, most of the returnees in Erbil, Anbar, Salah Al-Din, Basra, and Kirkuk acquired some information from friends or relatives, such as where and how to apply for asylum. They said that they did not have any major challenges when they were making their preparations to migrate. However, they faced tremendous challenges en route such as encountering criminal groups, including smugglers and human traffickers. As these experiences demonstrate, migration requires serious planning and people need support from the relevant organizations. This also shows that when the returnees were planning their emigration, many of them were more focused on life in their new country than on the journey itself and how they were going to get there.

The interviewees from the institutions and organizations reflected on the risks that potential migrants face when they migrate, the extent to which they thought about these risks when they were planning their journey and whether they thought this would deter individuals from migrating. They listed a number of challenges facing the migrants including: the lack of awareness and information about migration, especially the risks associated with irregular migration; the difficulty in acquiring entry visas to migrate legally and claim refugee status; and the lack of financial resources to make the journey a success. Some of them emphasized the many dangers including: smuggling and human trafficking; the physical risks such as being mugged, drowning, or dying in other circumstances; the financial and material losses; and arrests or deportation. They also pointed to the challenge of finding housing and work, as well as other problems associated with settling in a foreign country such as integrating themselves into a new environment. Many

of the interviewees said that potential migrants do not have accurate information about legal migration, and that this lack of information often meant they underestimated the dangers of irregular migration.

When asked why these challenges do not put Iraqis off from migrating without the necessary resources, the interviewees said that nothing was going to stop them, especially if they had decided to migrate irregularly using smugglers. Some of them said that migrants do not fully acknowledge the dangers associated with migration, while others said that they do recognize the magnitude of the risks they are taking, but decide to go anyway because of the huge economic, political, and security problems facing them in Iraq. By this, they mean that some migrants ignore the dangers, while others downplay the possible impact of the risks they are taking. They said that migrants think that whatever problems come their way in other countries, the situation could not be worse than the one they face in Iraq. One interviewee said, "I believe migrants think they are escaping a relentless hell to a less dangerous hell where there may be opportunities of survival" and another added "... they do recognize these challenges, but they escape an assured death (in their country) and head towards a potential death (on the journey). Their choice is going to be the potential one."

b. Challenges during Migration Journeys

People who migrate irregularly can expect to face a number of physical, legal, and psychological challenges. They often experience hunger, fatigue, and severe weather conditions, or they get lost. They could be exposed to organized criminal groups including smugglers who steal their money and abandon them, or human traffickers. Some drown at sea or die in other circumstances. They can also face huge psychological problems as a result of the dangers they encounter. At the end of their journey, they could be denied entry into the country, spend time in prison for migrating irregularly and then be deported.

A number of the potential migrants who said they were going migrate irregularly anticipated that they would face a number of challenges on the journey. Some said they needed accurate information to be able to avoid potential problems or know how to deal with them, e.g. legal issues. Some of the interviewees from Kirkuk said that people can encounter risks and dangers almost anywhere. This kind of response illustrates the feelings of hopelessness about the situation in Iraq which often results in potential migrants downplaying or underestimating the challenges they face on the journey. To offset that, a huge effort is needed to get potential migrants to understand the risks they face and understand that the dangers are as great, if not greater, than the ones they face in Iraq.

The returnees' responses were similar to those of the potential migrants. In Ninewa, two participants said they had been unaware of the risks while the others said that they had faced or heard of risks related to human trafficking, organ selling, arrests, kidnapping, and drowning. The returnees in Erbil said they had faced imprisonment and deportation as well as other physical, legal, and psychological problems. Some of the returnees in Baghdad said they had experienced hunger, sickness, and psychological problems. They said they had known about the risk of arrest, and the risk of drowning or dying in other circumstances. Two of the returnees said that many potential migrants are well aware of these risks, but conclude that the economic and security conditions in Iraq are worse than any of those they might face on the journey, and that once they arrive, they have the opportunity of a better life.

Returnees in Salah Al-Din, Basra, and Kirkuk also spoke about the risks related to human trafficking, drowning, or dying in other circumstances as well as being arrested and other legal problems. In Anbar, some of the returnees said they were aware of the tremendous risks described above. As a result, they did some more research on the issue on YouTube and other social media platforms and decided to take the legal route. One returnee who migrated irregularly reported that their boat sank in the Aegean Sea. Unfortunately, this experience did not deter them from continuing their journey as they had already dealt

with a smuggler before this incident and then had to deal with another one afterwards, when they lost a lot of money, faced more physical danger and legal complications.

i. Human Trafficking

Human trafficking is one of the major challenges that people might face when they migrate irregularly. The research found that the potential migrants from Ninewa had an alarmingly low level of awareness of human trafficking, despite the fact that some of them were thinking of migrating irregularly. In Baghdad, the potential migrants acknowledged that with irregular migration, human trafficking was a possible danger, though their knowledge about it was limited. The participants in Ninewa thought human trafficking was synonymous with selling organs or selling people for illegal purposes. They said that it would be both impossible to avoid and that they did not know how to avoid it. Participants from Kirkuk either did not know what human trafficking was or reassured themselves that the danger was a long way and would not affect them. This kind of attitude stops people from familiarizing themselves with the risk of falling victim to human trafficking and/or how to avoid it

The participants from Anbar had more information about human trafficking, which they said was a crime carried out by people who knew how to exploit migrants’ needs for their own purpose and whose goal was to sell their organs. They said that it was one of the “riskiest events a person could encounter”.

Participants from Salah Al-Din agreed with those from Anbar, adding that the motive was always for money. Some participants said it was crucial that people remained careful and did not put their trust in strangers. One participant from Basra recalled their own experience of human traffickers, saying that it was terrible and that they lost a lot of money in the process. One of the stark findings from the interviews is that although some of the potential migrants acknowledged the risk of falling victim to human trafficking, they were nevertheless determined to migrate irregularly, often citing lack of money as the reason. However, those who have experienced irregular migration highlight the fact that it is not a cheap alternative as they often had to pay large sums of money, sometimes more than once, because there was no law or entity to protect them.

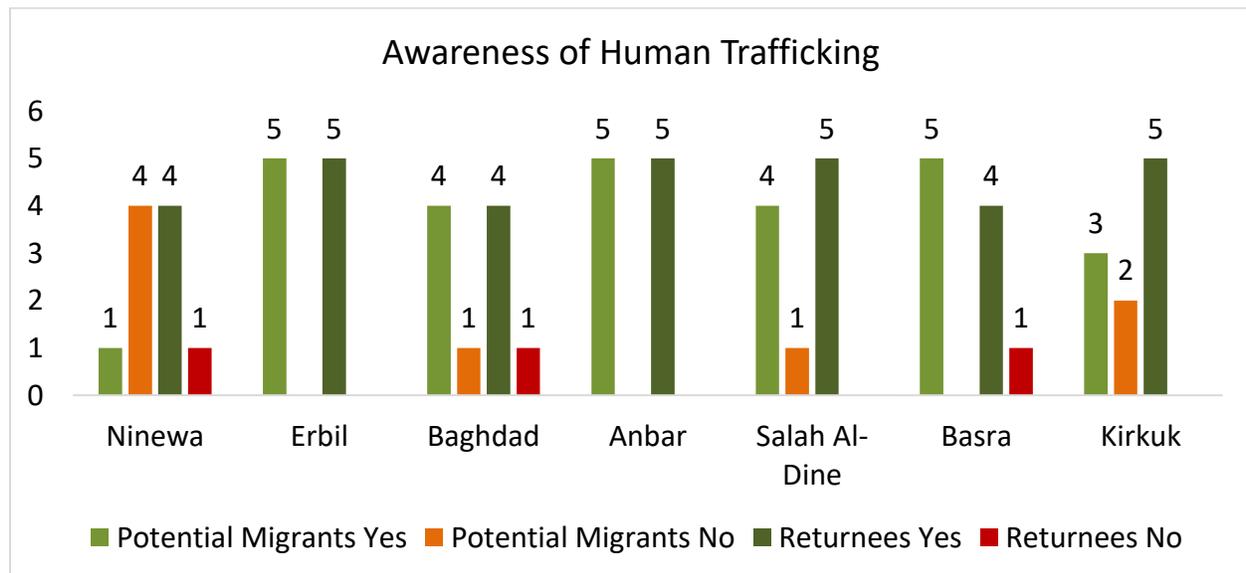


Figure 7: Level of awareness of human trafficking

As stated above, many of the potential migrants from Ninewa said they did not know how to avoid falling victim to human trafficking, while those from Baghdad and Erbil believed it can only be avoided with the

help of the security forces, international organizations, and government institutions. They thought that the security forces, such as border control, could provide protection, international organizations could provide relief support, and government institutions could offer greater protection by granting people asylum. They also thought that people who were intending to migrate irregularly should be reported to the authorities in order to protect them. Some participants said it would be helpful to raise awareness of the issue in the community. Those from Anbar thought that the only safe option was regular migration, and that the only way to avoid being trafficked was to avoid irregular migration altogether. Those from Salah Al-Din and Basra thought people should be cautious of strangers and not trust anyone to avoid being trafficked. The potential migrants from Kirkuk believe that people could avoid falling victim to human trafficking by raising awareness of the issue, including the legal complications associated with human trafficking.

The level of awareness of human trafficking among the returnees was very high. They often defined it as the selling of humans or their organs through illegal, unlawful, and criminal means and ends. They thought it was a very dangerous crime. Many of the returnees, including the ones from Ninewa, associated it with smuggling. One returnee said that they were forced to pay smugglers \$1,500 to help them. One participant from Anbar said that the information they had received through word of mouth saved them and their family from being trafficked. They said that they had decided to migrate irregularly and had agreed to go with a smuggler, but were told that anyone who came into contact with this particular smuggler, subsequently disappeared without trace.

Their views on how migrants could avoid falling victim to human traffickers differed from those of the potential migrants. Many of the returnees thought it could be avoided if one was aware of the issue and equipped oneself with sufficient information, avoided irregular migration altogether and stayed away from suspicious looking people during the journey. They thought people should have a list of the institutions and organizations to contact if they were in danger, such as the police, security forces, government organizations, and humanitarian and other international organizations. Some said that people could avoid the dangers associated with irregular migration and human trafficking if they had guarantees that they could lead a dignified life with financial support and adequate employment opportunities. However, many returnees described it as inevitable, saying that it could not be avoided, particularly if people migrated irregularly. A returnee from Ninewa said that with the current waves of migration and displacement, it was very difficult to enforce regulations to control smugglers. Another said that for as long as illegal migration paths are available, human trafficking will remain an inevitable risk for those who take those paths.

ii. Migrant Smuggling

Participants had a higher level of awareness of migrant smuggling than human trafficking. While some potential migrants did not know much about smuggling, the majority defined it as the transfer or moving of people or goods across state borders, without legal approval from the state. They thought that together with human trafficking, it was one of the most dangerous risks a migrant faced, with no guarantee of survival. They also mentioned other possible outcomes of smuggling, including imprisonment or being put on an international blacklist, emphasizing that smuggling is a crime. They talked about the negotiation techniques smugglers use, saying that potential migrants, particularly the younger ones, are easily deceived. They do not tell the migrants about the risks associated with the smuggling operation.

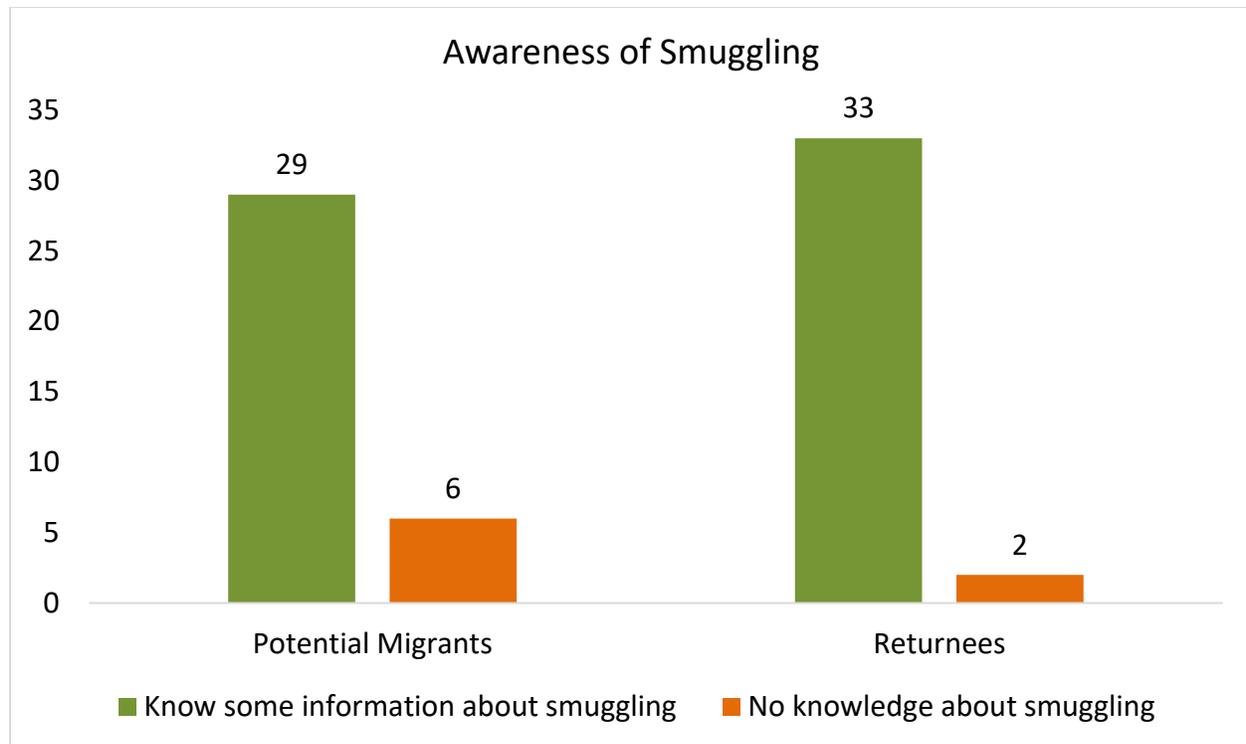


Figure 8: Level of awareness of smuggling

Many potential migrants said they learnt about smuggling from the television, especially the news, and by following social media, or listening to family and friends. Many participants thought the UN could play an important role in preventing people from taking dangerous risks with smugglers by providing support to those who want to migrate. They stressed that it was important to be patient, arguing that it was far safer to wait longer than rush things and become a victim of smuggling.

The returnees had similar views about smuggling as the potential migrants. The returnees in Ninewa and Erbil understood the definition of smuggling as the transfer of human beings or items illegally. This view was echoed by the participants in Baghdad who said they thought it was one of the most dangerous crimes migrants faced. They said that migrants often brought this risk upon themselves. Anbar’s returnees had rich insights about the deceitfulness and ruthlessness of the networks of smugglers and how they often had good relations with border guards. They said that they had spoken to people who had survived being smuggled who told them that many smugglers con people into handing over their money and then deny there was any agreement, do not provide them with adequate equipment or information, or simply abandon them. They also stressed that smuggling should not be considered a cheaper alternative. On the contrary, potential migrants end up having to pay smugglers large sums of money. Some returnees from Kirkuk said that dying was one of the risks associated with smuggling.

In general, returnees learnt about smuggling either through friends and relatives, or other migrants, or from having experienced it or almost experienced it themselves. They said people should avoid dealing with smugglers or strangers while travelling and can avoid falling victim to smugglers by learning more about it to understand the dangers. The returnees said it could also be avoided if governments and international organizations worked together to open up a space for asylum seekers and refugees and provide them with the support they need to ensure they arrive safely.

An interviewee from one of the organizations in the study spoke about smuggling, saying that many Iraqis, especially young people, travel to a neighbouring country first and look for someone to smuggle them to Europe by sea, which is known as “The Job”. They end up having to pay large sums of money and risk being tricked or end up drowning, or dying in other ways.

iii. Other Risks

The participants in the field research also spoke about other possible risks. The potential migrants said that apart from human trafficking and smuggling, they thought they might face risks to their physical and mental wellbeing, as well as substantial financial losses. As stated previously, these risks are mostly associated with irregular migration where, without access to protection, vulnerable individuals are susceptible to harm. Some of the interviewees, particularly those from Kirkuk, said they might face all manner of dangers and that they would have to persevere and learn how to deal with them. Potential migrants can mitigate the risks by researching and properly planning their journey and by migrating legally to avoid the dangers associated with irregular migration.

The returnees mentioned similar risks, citing the physical and psychological challenges, with those from Baghdad and Erbil mentioning the financial losses as well. They said the dangers were linked to irregular migration when anything was possible, even dying. The returnees in Anbar highlighted the risks associated with migration/ smuggling across the sea. While smugglers know how to get people across borders, they do not know how to navigate a boat, and do not provide adequate safety equipment to face the rough seas in the Balkans or Baltics, particularly between Turkey and Europe. Returnees in Basra and Kirkuk mentioned the fatigue and hunger they had experienced during long journeys and the mobs and criminals they had encountered. Most returnees acquired information about these risks through friends and family, media outlets, or through their own experiences.

c. Misconceptions

Among the most common reasons cited by both potential migrants and returnees for migrating irregularly were the difficulties they had obtaining official identification and travel documents, and financial distress. Many of the potential migrants and returnees said they were told that as migrants, they would have the right to free healthcare and a monthly payment. While in some countries, refugees receive these and other benefits, unless a country has a free healthcare system, a migrant will not receive free health care and certainly not have the right to it.

A number of the participants said they had migrated irregularly, or would think about migrating irregularly to save money. Some returnees indicated that they had to pay smugglers about \$700 per person with the risk of being abandoned or being asked for more money. Some of them recalled hearing about people having to pay smugglers more than once then being abandoned and losing the money they had paid the smugglers. One of the points the MRC should emphasize to potential migrants is that irregular migration can be very costly to the individual. As well as leaving themselves open to physical, legal, and psychological risks, migrants will not save any money by migrating irregularly.

Many of the stakeholders from the institutions and organizations referred to programmes that provide returnees with some financial help in the form of a loan, and other programmes that provide loans for small projects, particularly for displaced persons under Law No. 10 of 2012 for Project Support. Many of the potential migrants and returnees said they had not heard of these schemes. However, those who had heard of them, said they had experienced problems such as having to wait a long time to hear what was happening with their application for a loan or being turned down for one.

d. Challenges Faced by Returnees

As well as the challenges mentioned earlier, returnees spoke about the particular difficulties they faced when they migrated and the ones they faced when they returned to Iraq. While the majority of them were not facing any legal problems abroad, many of them said they had faced difficulties with the asylum process, and had had to stay in camps for long periods without knowing how long they would have to remain there or having any updates about their application for asylum. They also highlighted the tough security at border control, the poor living conditions in the camps and severe weather conditions.

Those who lived in the city said they had faced economic challenges. It was not easy, they said, to find a job to support themselves, which put them in a tough financial situation and added to the already difficult problem of finding somewhere to live. Added to this was their disappointment that promises of support from friends and family before they migrated were not fulfilled. Some of the returnees said they had faced difficulties integrating with the local community and problems coping with the different languages, cultures, and traditions. Some had problems with the paperwork they had to fill in, citing frustration with the number and complexity of procedures that were required. Family reunification was also a particular problem for many of them.

When it comes to the reasons behind their return, some participants said they voluntarily decided to go back to Iraq while others said they had made the choice voluntarily. Their return was influenced by both push factors from abroad and pull factors from Iraq. The factors pushing them to leave the countries they had migrated to included, being unable to find jobs and affordable housing, and having their request for asylum rejected. Being turned down for asylum meant they could not stay and reapply. Many potential migrants believe that if they are denied asylum, they can stay in the country and reapply. It is important they are told that this is not in fact the case. One returnee said that their job, which was most likely in the informal sector, lacked protection. Some returnees said they faced difficulties trying to integrate into local communities. They also had problems with family reunification, as their applications for asylum were denied. Some of the returnees, particularly those from Kirkuk, indicated that they had returned to Iraq because they could not settle or achieve a stable life in the countries they had migrated to. The factors pulling them from Iraq, tended to include improvements in the security situation, a longing to return to their families and homes, and incentives provided by the government such as the loans programmes previously mentioned by the interviewees from the institutions and organizations.

Returnees face a particular challenge in Iraq since many of them either sold everything they owned before leaving the country or left it with very little. With a failed migration experience behind them, some of them return to Iraq in an even worse situation than they were in before they left. It should be emphasized that in all seven provinces, the ongoing global pandemic has amplified the challenges facing the returnees, for example, making it even harder for them to find jobs as a result of the repeated lockdowns. The returnees said they faced challenges related to the tough economic conditions including, the lack of job opportunities and difficulties finding housing. Some of the returnees in Baghdad, Salah Al-Din, and Basra said that the conditions that had led them to migrate in the first place were even worse when they returned. They highlighted tough living conditions, instability, insecurity, lack of job opportunities and poor delivery of basic services particularly water, electricity and infrastructure.

Similarly, returnees in Ninewa and Erbil reported facing tremendous financial and economic challenges, with two returnees indicating that they would benefit from financial support to start small projects. In Anbar, many of the returnees said they faced challenges reintegrating into society along with difficulties related to administrative paperwork. Returnees in Kirkuk also faced similar difficulties to the ones they faced before leaving, now that they had returned to Iraq. They indicated that they faced economic challenges related to the terrible economic conditions and deteriorating living standards. They also

referred to the problems they were facing as a result of the ongoing instability caused by the successive crises that had driven them to migrate in the first place.

The institutional and organizational stakeholders shared similar ideas when referring to the challenges returnees faced in the countries they migrated to and the reasons for their return. They include legal and socioeconomic challenges, disappointment with their migration experience and the situation they face on returning. The interviewees said that the legal challenges returnees face during their migration journey include those relating to obtaining asylum and lawful residence, in addition to the long waits and delays in refugee camps with terrible conditions. Some of them face deportation and therefore, return to Iraq involuntarily. If they had gained asylum, they said, the individuals would probably not have chosen to return to Iraq again.

The socioeconomic challenges they face and reasons for their return include the fact that many of them experience tough living conditions in the countries they migrate to with difficulties finding jobs, affordable housing, and no social security net in place to help them. Many returnees cannot cope with the different customs and traditions and being far away from family and friends. The interviewees said that Iraqis return to the country hugely disappointed at not finding what they had hoped to find. The information gathered during the desk research phase of this project also found this to be the case, coming across many examples of Iraqis migrating elsewhere having heard stories of success only to find they could not achieve what they had hoped. Their nostalgia for Iraq also contributed to their decision to return.

The institutional and organizational stakeholders said that factors pulling people to return to Iraq include a perception among those thinking of returning that security conditions, such as arms control measures taken by the state, and economic conditions have improved. The returnees interviewed had mixed opinions about this, as many of them said that while conditions had improved, it was only temporary. The representatives from the organizations said that the MOMD has provided incentives for migrants to return. One of them emphasized that many migrants return to take advantage of promises made by political parties. Others said they return because they miss their home and families, and hope to invest and work in their homeland.

6. Support Needs

The Needs Assessment Study explored the needs of potential migrants and returnees, the support provided to these groups, and the potential role the MRC could play in providing support.

a. Migrants' Support Needs

The socioeconomic, political, and security challenges that potential migrants face are behind their decision to migrate and they need support to help them manage some of these challenges. The potential migrants from Baghdad, Salah Al-Din, Basra, and Kirkuk said they needed financial assistance to help cover the costs of migrating including finding jobs and housing in the countries of destination. They also said they needed legal support to help them with migration and/or asylum applications. Similarly, the potential migrants from Ninewa said they needed financial support, not only to cover the costs of migrating, but also to help them cope with the terrible conditions they are currently living in, particularly as many of the interviewees are the sole providers for their households.

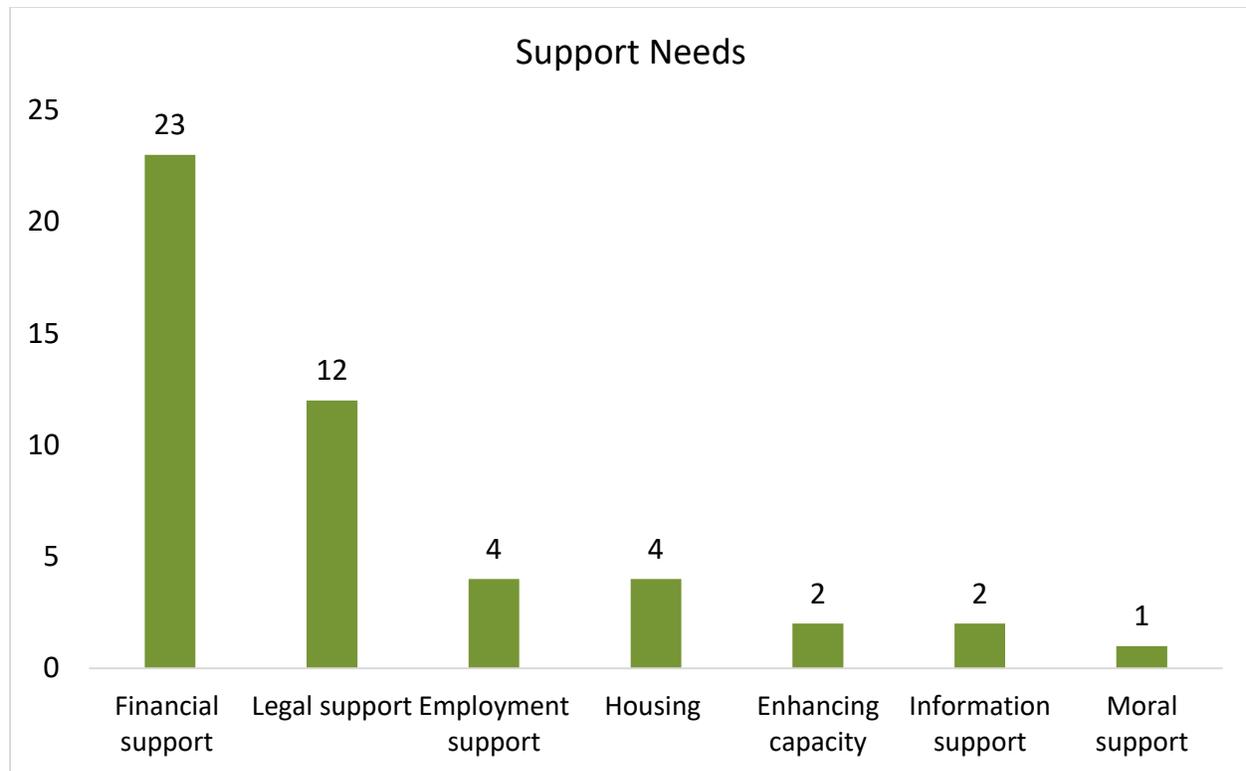


Figure 9: Potential migrants' support needs

The potential migrants from Erbil were more forward-looking about what their needs might be in the countries they intend to migrate to. They highlighted the support they need to fill in their application for asylum, find jobs, and housing. Many of these concerns were shared by the interviewees from Anbar who said that they also needed support to help make them more resilient and able to thrive in their new life abroad.

Almost all the potential migrants interviewed for this study said they had not received any support from any organization. They were asked about the support they needed and who they thought could provide this support. Almost all of them said they needed financial, legal, humanitarian, psychological, and moral support, support with housing and security as well as updated information about migration. Some of the participants from Baghdad said they needed to learn more about the culture of the countries they were intending to migrate to. The potential migrants thought that they could get the support and advice they needed from individuals, such as friends and relatives, and from institutions, such as international and humanitarian organizations, mainly the UN, along with, in some instances, Iraqi Embassies.

The stakeholders from the institutions and organizations gave examples of the kind of support potential migrants need. This includes help with: financial resources such as grants; completing legal paperwork; acquiring official documentation; work opportunities; security concerns, and humanitarian support. They said that where they are unable to respond to these needs, they redirect them to the MOMD, as the ministry responsible. Some of the participants, especially those in the provinces, indicated that they have field officers who visit displaced persons to understand their humanitarian needs.

b. Returnees' Support Needs

The first question returnees were asked on this issue was about the support they thought they should have had before they migrated that would have made their experiences better. Most of them said

financial support. The returnees from Baghdad and Kirkuk said that along with financial support, they needed legal and moral support, as they endured difficult conditions on their journeys. Erbil’s returnees also said they needed financial support and would have benefited from legal support as well. Similarly, the returnees in Ninewa said that financial support would have helped cover the cost of their journeys, as many had had to borrow from relatives. Others said that they would have benefited from receiving information related to migration routes. Like the others, the returnees in Anbar, mentioned financial as well as moral support and information about the best areas to live in. Returnees from Salah Al-Din and Basra indicated that they would have benefited from support to help them with asylum and family reunification processes, and finding employment.

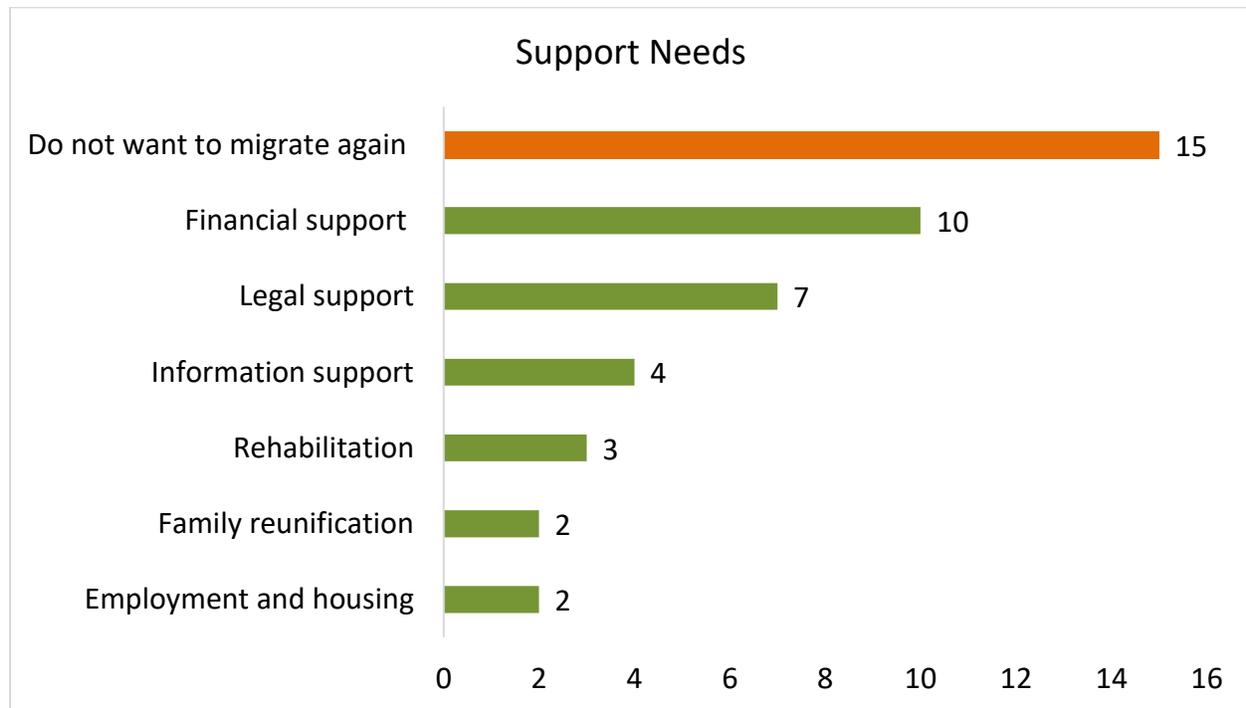


Figure 10: Returnee support needs

When asked about the type of support they would need if they were going to migrate again, many of the returnees had mixed feelings. On the one hand, their previous experiences clearly had an impact on their views about migrating and living in another country, which often lead to them saying they completely rejected the idea of migrating again. On the other hand, they said that they did not feel that conditions in Iraq had improved and that they might, therefore, change their mind about migrating. As such, when probed, many participants said that if they decided to migrate again, they would need: financial support; legal support related to immigration, asylum applications and registering for refugee status; psychological rehabilitation and support; and help to find accommodation. The range of support and advice they thought they would need is based on their desire to avoid the challenges they faced previously, especially as most of them, (like the potential migrants), did not receive any support when they originally migrated. Those who did get help, said they had received some financial support from their immediate family or other relatives, often in the form of loans. Others indicated that their friends or relatives had offered them help with short-term housing. Those who had received this support nevertheless indicated that more financial and moral support would be needed as well as help to find a job and more general information. They said that they would rely on family and friends, or international humanitarian organizations for this support.

Finally, looking at the challenges that returnees face once they are back in Iraq, the findings show that while returnees face the same challenges as other Iraqis (such as the effects of the ongoing global pandemic), they also face very specific challenges related to the fact that they have returned with little to no resources, the majority having spent most or all their belongings covering the costs of migrating. As such, the challenges they say they face include: the effects of the current deteriorating economic, financial, political, and security conditions in Iraq along with the lack of job opportunities and support for entrepreneurship, and the low level of public services. Many of them said they had problems reintegrating into their communities who criticized them for returning.

The stakeholders from the organizations and institutions gave examples of the kind of support returnees need. This includes: legal support to get official paperwork or identification documents issued; financial or economic support e.g. compensation and help with returning to previous jobs; and other procedures relating to their return. They also need legal protection, relief, humanitarian support, and help with reintegration.

c. Support Provision

i. Potential Migrants

The potential migrants were asked if they thought the government could provide them with the support they needed to be able to migrate safely. The vast majority said they would not rely on the government for support, citing reasons such as lack of trust, government ineffectiveness, inefficiencies and corruption. A few of them, however, thought that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs along with Iraqi Embassies could provide the support they needed.

The potential migrants thought that the support they needed on arrival at their destination could be provided by institutions such as international organizations, humanitarian and other non-governmental organizations, government institutions, including embassies and consulates. They thought these institutions could provide help with asylum applications, protection measures, acquiring legal rights, and psychological assistance. The second potential source of support could come from family members and friends both in Iraq and in the destination countries who, they thought, could provide them with information and help with their immediate housing needs. Some of the interviewees, particularly those from Kirkuk, see friends and relatives in the countries they want to migrate to as a steppingstone to accessing organizations such as the UN or other humanitarian organizations. It is also worth noting that those who said they did not know anyone abroad, did not have the name of any institution or individual to contact for support either.

The interviewees from the various government and non-governmental organizations said that they offer a range of measures and services to support potential migrants. These include: information to raise awareness of migration-related issues; help with administrative procedures, official applications, and identification documents; and workshops on issues related to migration. They also provide some humanitarian support, cooperating with local and international organizations to obtain and distribute aid. The MOMD indicated that there are some emergency grants from the budget of the High Committee for IDP Relief. It added that they have provided information about the potential support available for returnees online, urging returnees to register their names to assess whether they qualify for grants or compensation. The Ministry indicated that they have provided grants to over 3,500 families. Ultimately, these participants agreed that they do not have sufficient resources to conduct outreach activities, reach more individuals and provide financial support.

ii. Returnees

As for the returnees, the answers they gave about the sources of support they received after they arrived were similar to the responses the potential migrants gave about the people or organizations they would contact for support. On arriving in the destination country, the returnees said they contacted their friends or relatives who lived there who were familiar with the area. Their contacts supported them by providing temporary accommodation, helping them find their way around the area, and connecting them with local services. Some of the returnees said that they contacted the UNHCR, a destination for many returnees, especially the regional office that was formerly in Jordan but is now in Turkey. Many of the returnees indicated that they traveled to the office of the UNHCR to register their information, waited for some time, and returned to Iraq after they felt tired of waiting.

As for support if they found themselves in risky situations on the journey, many of the returnees indicated that they contacted UN offices, international or humanitarian organizations, the security forces, local government institutions, or the Iraqi embassy. Some of the returnees said that they dealt with the risks themselves without seeking support from any individual or organization. It is vital the MRC emphasizes how important it is for migrants who find themselves in dangerous situations to seek support from the relevant organizations. Given that many potential migrants and returnees rely on word of mouth for information, any information their contacts give them that suggests they can face dangerous situations alone is highly problematic.

The majority of the returnees, like the potential migrants, do not think the government is capable of providing them with support. Many returnees stated that government failures, government policies and incompetence, were the reasons for them migrating in the first place. However, some of the returnees said that the Iraqi embassy abroad and the offices of the MOMD had given them some support.

According to the interviewees from the institutions and organizations, the MOMD and its offices in the provinces have a database to register and monitor the status, conditions, and needs of returnees to allocate support. They register the returnees, establish the type of support they need and coordinate with local and international organizations to acquire and distribute the support, which is generally financial or in the form of material goods.

d. Potential role of the MRC

There was a low level of awareness of the MRC among the potential migrants and returnees. Nevertheless, they expressed a variety of different views about whether this new office could provide the information, advice and support they need. As the Centre has only recently been established, the participants said they were not yet sure how effective it would be as it was impossible to know. Some participants thought that having an office of the MRC in their province would be helpful while others disagreed. Some of those who thought it could be helpful, said it could provide the information they needed for migration e.g. the routes to take, finding jobs, asylum applications, safe areas for Iraqis to live abroad, migrant rights and other legal support.

They also said it could provide guidance and counselling, including for migrants living abroad. Some of the participants said that the Centre should act as a portal for individuals to gather information online, over the phone and in person. Others said this would only work for legal migration as those who are thinking of migrating irregularly are unlikely to use its services.

Those from the organizations agreed that the MRC, through its online and offline presence, could run information and awareness raising programmes and activities for potential migrants and returnees. It could do that proactively through information sessions, workshops and outreach campaigns, or by responding to inquiries it receives online or over the phone. They added that it could also offer guidance

on official/ regular migration and raise awareness of the dangers and risks associated with irregular migration.

7. Programmes, Activities, and Strategies

The Needs Assessment Study explored the efforts that have been made to raise awareness of issues related to migration and address the needs of potential migrants and returnees. It also focused on the measures that the interviewees from the institutions and organizations believe should be taken to better serve the needs of migrant groups in Iraq.

a. Awareness

The interviewees from the institutions and organizations stated that their institutions provide some awareness raising programs and activities. Those whose organizations do this kind of work praised their field staff for gathering information from migrant groups to help assess their needs and for leading the programmes and activities to raise awareness.

Their awareness raising activities and programmes are divided between those that are led independently by their organizations and those that they conduct (or hope to conduct), with others including the MRC, MOLSA, MOMD, and the IOM. The interviewees indicated that they conduct field campaigns as well as virtual/ online campaigns. These take the form of outreach activities, workshops, online posts and videos that relay information about migration as well as information about the services provided by the institutions. Some CSOs work with educational and research institutions through which they conduct research on migration. Media outlets also play an important role in raising awareness. For example, *Al-Sumariyah* produces news items that discuss migration in Iraq and the challenges that migrants and IDPs face. Importantly, one stakeholder stated that at the moment, efforts on the ground remained “subpar” and well below the expectations of migrants, returnees, and IDPs.

They said that their institutions also support a variety of awareness raising programmes and activities carried out by other organisations. Future in-person and online campaigns by the MRC to raise awareness about legal migration and the dangers of irregular migration, are expected to be supported by MOLSA, the UN, and IOM. MOLSA and MOMD in Baghdad and their branches in the provinces support many efforts carried out by other government organizations, police departments, and CSOs. These government ministries also receive some financial assistance for their work from international organizations.

There are a number of channels that the interviewees said can and should be used to raise awareness and provide information about migration. This includes channeling information about migration through the regional offices and field staff of MOMD and MOLSA, as well as police departments in the provinces. As well as providing information and advice from their regional offices, these bodies can also post information on their official websites and social media pages, and include phone numbers for people to contact them for information and advice. Other institutions, such as the IOM and other international organizations, also use their field offices and online presence in other provinces to raise awareness. Some of the participants said that traditional media outlets such as TV channels and radio stations are a very good way of raising awareness, and that the public can be invited to take part to get answers to their questions about migration.

b. Action Plans to Address Needs

The participants said that a number of measures needed to be taken to improve the outreach to migrants. They indicated that legislative and policy changes are necessary to provide migrant groups with security

and improve their living standards. Some argued that for that to happen, laws would need to be reevaluated and government institutions would need to conclude more Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs), partnerships, and international agreements to support migrant groups in Iraq. One interviewee said that MOMD, MOLSA, MOI, and MOE need to work together to provide better services to migrant groups and move beyond MOUs and programmes. Others reiterated the importance of using more field staff and enhancing their capacities, as field staff can act as the link between the programmers, policymakers and migrant groups to raise awareness.

Many of them stressed the importance of raising awareness about all the issues associated with migration, and indicated that the relevant institutions need to obtain the necessary support to be able to scale up these efforts and respond to the challenges and needs of potential migrants and returnees. They said that there needs to be more international support to develop the capacity of the Iraqi Government and its relevant ministries that work on migration, particularly to focus on the dangers of irregular migration by raising citizens' awareness of the dangers.

The Government needs international support to improve economic and political conditions in Iraq. More development programs are needed, as is most importantly, work to strengthen the stability of the country in order to send assurances to migrants that they can return. Organizations working on migration should also seek to enhance the capacity of local organizations, particularly CSOs, to provide the support that returnees and IDPs need. Ultimately, the institutional and organizational stakeholders interviewed for this study believe that unless the necessary measures are taken, these waves of migration will continue to affect huge numbers of people, particularly the young.

8. Institutional Needs and Challenges

Geographic and demographic outreach is the first major challenge for the institutions that work on migration. While the majority of the participants interviewed indicated their ability to cover most of the province they worked in theory, shortages and limitations in financial resources and field staff inhibited their capacity to do so. As a result, they rely on social media, which limits their ability to reach more people as the internet is inaccessible to many. The participants from the institutions confirmed that minority groups, residents of rural areas, and women do not enjoy the same level of access by their organizations as those living in urban areas, majority groups, and men. There are also areas in the provinces that are difficult to reach because of security problems. This is troubling, as those living in these areas are more inclined to migrate or are more at risk of forced displacement. The IOM representative said there was a major need for "support to get the messages across to a larger number of beneficiaries." A representative from the MOMD indicated having difficulty "in reaching displaced persons in the far away areas to register them into the database and provide them with relief support."

The second institutional challenge is related to the lack of a legal/constitutional umbrella and lack of integration between some of the institutions, which results in conflicting jurisdictions and duties. The National Labour Centre indicated that it needs a lot of support to develop a legislative umbrella to give its efforts an official stamp. Interviewees from the MOMD added that the work of some institutions conflicts with its work with migrants and displaced people. They believe it is caused by the lack of coordination between local and international organizations, who tend to approach non-sectoral organizations separately?

The third institutional challenge relates to the lack of financial resources for these organizations and institutions to conduct their programmes and address the needs of migrant groups. When asked about their programmes, one interviewee said that although they had plans, they “remain intangible unless we receive international support and the designated resources to be able to translate those plans into real work”.

Insufficient financial and human resources makes the task of trying to deal with the magnitude of the wave of migration, displacement even more challenging. The institutions do not have the means to be able to help everyone, particularly those in dire need, let alone deal with the pressing economic crisis and security conditions.

Plans remain intangible unless we receive international support and the designated resources to be able to translate those plans into real work.

Government institutions also face a particular challenge related to public distrust. Many potential migrants and returnees cited their lack of faith in the government and its institutions, seeing it as incapable of achieving anything and attributing their migration to the failure of government policies. It is essential that these institutions find ways to rebuild public support.

9. Conclusions and Recommendations

The Needs Assessment Study has reached a number of important conclusions. While institutional and organizational stakeholders that took part in the study believe that those in rural areas, minorities, and women tend to have less migrated-related information and ways of acquiring and using this information than urban dwellers and men, the findings from this research show that these differences are minimal. Iraqis of all backgrounds require accurate information about migration even if they have indicated that the information they had was sufficient for their journey. This is because their information does not come from reliable sources and it is, therefore, very often inaccurate.

All potential migrants and returnees, no matter their gender, where they live, level of educational achievement, age or religion require accurate information about migration from reliable sources. This includes, but is not limited to, information related to legal migration routes, applying for asylum or citizenship, acquiring entry visas, finding employment and affordable housing, integrating into a new environment with different traditions and customs, and family reunification.

The main support needs of migrants and returnees centred on financial, legal, informational, humanitarian, housing, and security. Taking the issue of financial support, potential migrants and returnees stated that they do not have the financial means to cover the migration costs, sustain themselves abroad, or take their families with them. As for legal support, many interviewees indicated that they require help to fill in and monitor their asylum applications, and advice about what action to take if their applications for asylum are rejected.

Many participants indicated that they would not know how to find affordable housing abroad and a number of them said that they would not know what to do or who to turn to if they found themselves in a dangerous situation on the journey. Returnees face the challenge of coming back to Iraq empty-handed, having sold most or all of their belongings before they migrated. Returnees require financial and humanitarian support on their return to Iraq, and need to be made aware of the options. Although the stakeholders from the institutions and organizations referred to grants programmes and funding opportunities for small projects, the potential migrants and returnees had little awareness of them. More efforts are needed to make people aware of these opportunities.

Finally, the Needs Assessment Study proposes a number of recommendations for the institutions and organizations dealing with migration:

- The relevant stakeholders, in particular the MOMD, MOLSA, and international organizations, should use a variety of outreach and communication channels to provide information about migration. This should include providing information using both online and offline mediums, such as TV and radio, and literature such as pamphlets, posters, phone and walk-in centres.
 - Facebook and Instagram were heavily cited as sources of information, and organizations should utilize these social media platforms and their targeted advertisement features.
 - YouTube was also cited as an important source of information. Organizations can relay information on YouTube through interactive videos, infographics, and other forms of visually representing information.
- Word of mouth remains the most popular source of information. Organizations need to reiterate to relevant populations the importance of obtaining accurate information from official/trusted sources and to spread the word that this is the best way to acquire information about migration.
- The relevant bodies should increase efforts to raise awareness about the opportunities for support available to potential migrants and returnees, particularly the financial opportunities available. Despite the repeated assertions by the representatives from the organizations

concerned that grants and funding opportunities were available, none of the potential migrants or returnees interviewed were aware of the support they could receive nor had they received any support from the relevant official institutions. The organizations should proactively spread the word so that migrant groups are able to take advantage of these opportunities to e.g. open their own business. This could provide jobs to help those who had been thinking of migrating because of the lack of employment opportunities.

10. Limitations

IRFAD faced a number of challenges in carrying out the fieldwork for the Needs Assessment Study. The conditions in Iraq brought about by the global pandemic were not conducive to conducting focus group discussions. These would have offered the research and the findings a helpful dynamic to triangulate with the interviews conducted with the potential migrants, returnees, and stakeholders from the institutions and organizations. They would have provided a helpful space for exploring migration experiences further and analyzing misconceptions better. They would also have provided the researchers with the opportunity to include more individuals in the research and would have enabled them to emphasize a number of important aspects to the attendees, such as information flows. Lastly, they were designed to ensure a mixture of backgrounds to offer more diverse insights. In response to this problem, ICMPD and IRFAD agreed to substitute the focus groups which were too unsafe to conduct, with a set of interviews with potential migrants, returnees, and institutional and organizational stakeholders from Kirkuk. These proved to be as important for the research, especially as Kirkuk is one of the disputed areas in Iraq.

Another challenge is related to the scope of the study and its research tools, which was enormous and encompassed a larger number of questions and follow-up questions than would generally be considered favorable to conducting an engaging interview. The research tools used for the migrant interviews included 42 questions, while the ones for the returnee interviews included 45 questions, which were accompanied by follow-up questions along with guidelines for the researchers on how to probe further.

This was the case as the research team sought to uncover as much detail as possible about information needs, information support, challenges, support needs, support provision, institutional challenges, and many other subjects. For future research on these topics, a nationally representative survey of a close-ended/ quantitative nature would be beneficial to gain a consensus on issues such as information channels used, information channels trusted, and support provision, among others. Further, the various topics which this field research attempted to cover could be subdivided into smaller interviews that could allow for more open and less structured discussions.

There are also some aspects that could be further explored, such as the specific experiences, challenges, and needs of IDPs who live in camps. Comparing such findings with those faced by internal migrants and returnees could offer some valuable insights to the MRC in its future work. Another aspect that could be further explored is the impact of failed migration journeys on friends and relatives, by addressing the extent to which Iraqis abroad and returnees accurately share their experiences. The research could also explore the actions taken by potential migrants and returnees in regard to smugglers such as whether or not they report them and the reasons behind their decision.

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12. Annexes

a. Achieved Sample

Sample Breakdown		
Age		
Group	Potential Migrants	Returnees
18-24	5	3
25-34	14	8
35-44	11	17
45-64	4	7
65+	1	0
Gender		
Group	Potential Migrants	Returnees
Male	26	24
Female	9	11
Social Status		
Group	Potential Migrants	Returnees
Single	11	5
Married	23	27
Widowed	1	2
Divorced/ separated	0	1
Employment Status		
Group	Potential Migrants	Returnees
Employed	15	13
Unemployed	20	19
Education Level		
Group	Potential Migrants	Returnees
Illiterate	3	3
Basic/Primary education	5	4
Secondary education	5	8
Vocational/technical training	3	4
Diploma	1	5
Bachelor's degree	15	9
Master's or higher	2	2
Religious Affiliation		
Group	Potential Migrants	Returnees
Armenian Orthodox	0	1
Chaldean Catholic	1	1
Kaka'i	1	1
Shia	6	6

Sunni	16	13
Syriac Catholic	1	1
Syriac Orthodox	0	1
Yazidi	5	5
Turkmen	2	1
Other Christian denomination	0	1
Other/ Refused to Answer	3	0
Residential Community		
Group	Potential Migrants	Returnees
City	28	28
Close to a city but outside its borders	1	2
Rural village	6	5

Table 2: Achieved Sample for Potential Migrant/ Returnee Interviews

b. Migrant interviews

Interview code	Province	Number of interviews conducted	Date interviews were held
1	Ninewa	1	November 30, 2020
2	Ninewa	1	December 1, 2020
3	Ninewa	1	December 2, 2020
4	Ninewa	1	December 2, 2020
5	Ninewa	1	December 4, 2020
6	Erbil	1	November 28, 2020
7	Erbil	1	December 3, 2020
8	Erbil	1	December 4, 2020
9	Erbil	1	December 4, 2020
10	Erbil	1	December 5, 2020
11	Baghdad	1	December 6, 2020
12	Baghdad	1	December 6, 2020
13	Baghdad	1	December 7, 2020
14	Baghdad	1	December 7, 2020
15	Baghdad	1	December 8, 2020
16	Anbar	1	November 30, 2020
17	Anbar	1	December 1, 2020
18	Anbar	1	December 4, 2020
19	Anbar	1	December 9, 2020
20	Anbar	1	December 17, 2020
21	Salah Al-Din	1	December 3, 2020
22	Salah Al-Din	1	December 3, 2020
23	Salah Al-Din	1	December 16, 2020
24	Salah Al-Din	1	December 16, 2020
25	Salah Al-Din	1	December 16, 2020
26	Basra	1	December 16, 2020
27	Basra	1	December 20, 2020
28	Basra	1	December 20, 2020
29	Basra	1	December 23, 2020
30	Basra	1	December 23, 2020
31	Kirkuk	1	January 12, 2021
32	Kirkuk	1	January 12, 2021
33	Kirkuk	1	January 12, 2021
34	Kirkuk	1	January 13, 2021
35	Kirkuk	1	January 13, 2021
	Total	1	

c. Returnee interviews

Interview code	Province	Number of interviews conducted	Date interviews were held
1	Ninewa	1	December 8, 2020
2	Ninewa	1	December 10, 2020
3	Ninewa	1	December 10, 2020
4	Ninewa	1	December 11, 2020
5	Ninewa	1	December 11, 2020
6	Erbil	1	December 2, 2020
7	Erbil	1	December 2, 2020
8	Erbil	1	December 3, 2020
9	Erbil	1	December 4, 2020
10	Erbil	1	December 4, 2020
11	Baghdad	1	December 12, 2020
12	Baghdad	1	December 12, 2020
13	Baghdad	1	December 13, 2020
14	Baghdad	1	December 13, 2020
15	Baghdad	1	December 13, 2020
16	Anbar	1	December 4, 2020
17	Anbar	1	December 11, 2020
18	Anbar	1	December 11, 2020
19	Anbar	1	December 12, 2020
20	Anbar	1	December 12, 2020
21	Salah Al-Din	1	December 19, 2020
22	Salah Al-Din	1	December 20, 2020
23	Salah Al-Din	1	December 20, 2020
24	Salah Al-Din	1	December 22, 2020
25	Salah Al-Din	1	December 22, 2020
26	Basra	1	December 9, 2020
27	Basra	1	December 9, 2020
28	Basra	1	December 14, 2020
29	Basra	1	December 15, 2020
30	Basra	1	December 15, 2020
31	Kirkuk	1	January 10, 2021
32	Kirkuk	1	January 10, 2021
33	Kirkuk	1	January 11, 2021
34	Kirkuk	1	January 11, 2021
35	Kirkuk	1	January 11, 2021
	Total	1	

d. Key Informant Interviews

No.	Institution	Province
1	Iraqi Media Network	Baghdad
2	Iraqi Amal Association	Baghdad
3	International Migration Organization (IOM)	Baghdad
4	Afkar Association	Erbil
5	Charitable Organization	Fallujah
6	The National Labor Center	Baghdad
7	Afaq Channel	Baghdad
8	Sumariyah News	Baghdad
9	Policy Planning Department – MOFA	Baghdad
10	Vocational Education Department – MOLSA	Baghdad
11	Baghdad Police Department	Baghdad
12	The Ministry of Migration and Displaced – Branches Affairs Department	Baghdad
13	National ID Department	Baghdad
14	UNHCR	Duhok
15	Planning and Studies Department - MOLSA	Baghdad
16	ICMPD	Baghdad
17	MRC	Baghdad
18	Migrants and Expatriates Department – MOMD	Baghdad
19	Information and Research Department – MOMD	Baghdad
20	Ministry of Migration and Displaced	Ninewa
21	Ministry of Migration and Displaced	Anbar
22	Ministry of Migration and Displaced	Erbil
23	Ministry of Migration and Displaced	Baghdad
24	Kurdistan Regional Government	Erbil
25	Police Department	Basra
26	Police Department	Ninewa
27	Ministry of Migration and Displaced	Basra
28	Ministry of Migration and Displaced	Salah Al-Din
29	AKTED	Duhok
30	Un Ponte Per	Erbil
31	Kirkuk Governor	Kirkuk
32	Kirkuk Police	Kirkuk
33	Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs	Kirkuk
34	International Migration Organization	Kirkuk
35	Ministry of Migration and Displaced	Kirkuk