



ICMPD

International Centre for
Migration Policy Development

VISION ON SUSTAINABLE REINTEGRATION OF RETURNEES IN IRAQ

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SUMMARY

The Government of Iraq undertakes that sustainable reintegration of Iraqi returnees and IDPs is only possible through a tailored approach addressing specific needs of different categories of returnees, relying on systematic data collection and data sharing across the relevant Ministries and beyond, and ensuring that development programmes respond also to reintegration challenges.

In this vein, the consultations with the national stakeholders and the results of the various monitoring and mapping exercises dedicated to this area of migration management put forward the following elements for a *Vision on Sustainable Reintegration of Returnees in Iraq*:

- ▶ Tailored Approaches to Specific Needs of Different Categories of Returnees
- ▶ Maintaining Up-to-date Data and Sharing Data between Ministries and beyond
- ▶ Linking with Development Actors in Iraq on Reintegration Programming
- ▶ Stakeholder Mapping
- ▶ Private Sector Engagement on Reintegration

Genuine engagement of all stakeholders remains a founding principle at the core of return and reintegration programming working for the benefit of sustainable reintegration of returnees, their families, and communities of return - and the Iraqi eco-system at large.

LIST OF ACRONYMS

AVRR	Assisted voluntary return and reintegration
CAIR, Project	Capacity Building for long-term reintegration of returnees to Iraq
CBO	Community-based Organisations
CCCM	Camp Coordination and Camp Management
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
DELMi	Swedish Migration Studies Delegation
EMN	Return Expert Group
ERRIN	European Return and Reintegration Network
ERSO	European Reintegration Support Organisations
ETTC	European Training and Technology Centre
EU	European Union
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation
GCC	Gulf Cooperation Council
GCM	Global Compact for Safe, Orderly, and Regular Migration
GSCoM	General Secretariat of the Council of Ministers
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH
GMAC	German Centre for Jobs, Migration and Reintegration in the Kurdistan Region in Iraq
HLP	Housing, land, and property
ICMPD	International Centre for Migration Policy Development
IDMC	Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
IMED, Project	Developing the Iraqi Government's Knowledge and Expertise in Migration Management Project, implemented by ICMPD
IOM	International Organisation for Migration
IDMC	Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre
IRFAD	Iraqi Research Foundation for Analysis and Development
ISIL	Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant
ISSAT	International Security Sector Advisory Team

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KRI	Kurdistan Region
MercyHands	Mercy Hands for Humanitarian Aid not-for-profit organisation
MoE	Ministry of Education
MoFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MoH	Ministry of Health
MoI	Ministry of Interior
MoLSA	Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs
MoMD	Ministry of Migration and Displaced
MoP	Ministry of Planning
MRC	Migrant Resource Centre
NRC	Norwegian Refugee Council
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education Training
UNDP	UN Development Programme
UNHCR	UN High Commissioner for Refugees
USAID	U.S. Agency for International Development
WBG	World Bank Group

I. PROJECT BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION

Project “Capacity Building for long-term reintegration of returnees to Iraq” (Project CAIR), funded by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Denmark and implemented by the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD), aims to facilitate the creation of conditions for the sustainable reintegration of Iraqi nationals returning back to their homeland from abroad (thereafter referred to as *returnees*). This includes both individuals and families within their communities of return, as well as a range of categories of returnees - such as highly qualified returnees, rejected asylum seekers, female heads of households, etc.

As part of Project CAIR, the provision of systematic capacity building for government institutions is envisaged and ongoing, in order to develop inclusive governance systems and ensure better access to services, support programmes, and referrals for returnees, while integrating them into the national reintegration framework. This includes developing and carrying out training workshops, inter-agency consultations, and multilateral meetings involving Iraq’s private sector, on the specific subject matter of return and reintegration. This provides government counterparts with greater understanding and confidence to address the long-term reintegration needs of Iraqi individuals and families returning to their homeland.

Despite the inherent challenges and difficulties present for Iraqi returnees, one of the long-term objectives is to set up a system to pinpoint and identify early setbacks in the reintegration process in order to link them with systemic responses. Additionally, the Project includes the creation of a Multi-Stakeholder Platform (MSP) for public-private sector engagement and partnerships in order to improve access to employment opportunities for returnees and link reintegration support to local market needs.¹

In light of the above, ICMPD has facilitated the organisation of multiple workshops and consultative meetings in Iraq to support the development of a *Vision on Sustainable Reintegration of Returnees in Iraq and its complementary Action Plan*.

7-9 September 2021: The first workshop took place in Erbil with members of the Ministry of Migration and Displaced (MoMD), Ministry of Labour, and Social Affairs (MoLSA), and aimed at formulating a reintegration vision for Iraq with the direct participation of members of both Ministries.

7-9 December 2021: The second (follow up) workshop took place in Erbil, with the aim to present the draft Vision to the participants from MoMD, MoLSA, and Ministry of Planning (MoP), as well as international partners and civil society organisations, for their input, feedback, and constructive suggestions.

January - March 2022: A number of additional consultations took place during team missions to Baghdad with the aim to modify the draft Vision and bring it further in line with national priorities on return and reintegration.

¹ The Multi-Stakeholder Platform was launched in Baghdad on 5 April 2022.

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21 April 2022: A joint consultation to gather inputs for the final draft of the *Vision* from MoMD, MoLSA and MoP was organised in Baghdad. Pursuant to the consultations, the *Vision* was consolidated and finalised by ICMPD.

29-30 July 2022: Subsequently, a joint workshop was organised in Erbil to draft the *Vision* Action Plan that would chart concrete steps towards achieving the seven priorities within the *Vision*. The workshop was attended by representatives of MoMD, MoLSA, MoP, Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA), and General Secretariat of the Council of Ministers (GSCoM), including international partners and service providers active in reintegration work.

The entire process for the preparation of the *Vision* ensured complementarity to the existing return and reintegration framework in Iraq, including the *National Strategy for Migration Management in Iraq*, led by MoMD and upheld by other relevant line Ministries.

II. CHALLENGES TO ADDRESS IN REINTEGRATION OF IRAQI RETURNEES

According to the findings of Project CAIR and beyond, common challenges for the returnees from Europe apply to internally displaced persons. The government is the main duty bearer for these categories, and governance-related matters affect returnees and their ability to reintegrate and contribute to the society. Addressing the governance-related tasks in a timely and effective manner will have a direct impact on returnees, their communities, and the local economies and societies. For example, allowing for a rapid issuance of documentation, skills certification or skills recognition mechanisms represents a key to unlocking the potential of returnees. Such solutions require the close collaboration of a range of actors involved into migration governance, foreign affairs, planning, labour, and social affairs.

Governance

At present, Iraq has no specific national emigration legislation. Although the 2005 Constitution states that Iraqis have the freedom to move, travel, and live within or outside of Iraq, it does not go into detail about how this is implemented within the country or by which authorities. Additionally, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA), Ministry of Interior (MoI) and the MoMD websites do not contain accessible information related to migration – save for consular information for Iraqis abroad (MoFA) and information about relief support for IDPs (MoMD).² The proposed *Vision* responds to the need for greater coordination between the ministries, as well as the need to develop a holistic vision on reintegration in Iraq.

Data and Lived Experiences

There is commonly a dearth of data on returnees, but evidence shows specific needs among IDP returnees. The main challenges Iraqi IDPs face in displacement and return include access to safety and security; access to basic services; access to housing, land and property (HLP), documentation, and un- and under-employment. Mental wellbeing may present additional challenges for returnees - given that many individuals, families, and children experience a varied degree of shock upon their return to Iraq.³ Furthermore, inter-communal divisions and diverse levels of social cohesion between IDPs and host communities present further reintegration challenges. Lack of appropriate shelter, in particular, was cited by IDPs who returned to Iraqi Kurdistan (KRI) and struggled to afford rent.⁴

² IOM (2020), Republic of Iraq: Profile 2020, Migration Governance Indicators.

³ More details may be found, for example, here: https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/pdf/iraq_an_unbearable_reality_june_2017_1.pdf/

⁴ REACH (2017), Iraqi Migration to Europe in 2016: Profiles, Drivers, and Return (June 2017), 3

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A 2017 REACH assessment of Iraqi returnees from Europe found that they encountered similar challenges to IDP returnees - namely access to livelihoods, security concerns, and difficulties in reintegrating socially and culturally. Furthermore, returnees from abroad tended to have sold their assets, including homes, in order to migrate.⁵ Upon their return to Iraq, they no longer had the assets required to rebuild their livelihoods.

As highlighted by participants during Project CAIR workshops, increased capacity building is needed on legal frameworks pertaining to return and reintegration, data management, monitoring and evaluation for reintegration programming, in order to provide key stakeholders with a fuller picture of the reintegration-specific context and better tailor responses to the reintegration needs of returnees in Iraq.

Funding

To address the structural governance tasks, as well as the individual and community level needs experienced economically, socially and psychosocially, both a multi-levelled and multi-dimensional response is needed. Reintegration support implies longer term tailored planning of national programmes to align budget cycles with functional funding plans. With the aim to promote people's livelihoods and curb irregular migration, MoLSA and MoMD work on designing specific reintegration programmes on grant loans. Given the scale of support required, MoP lands support in terms of financial availability and technical capacities to plan and implement reintegration programmes, to the extent possible.

⁵ Ibid, p. 30-31. According to earlier UNHCR findings, the cost of reaching Europe from Iraq estimated at \$10,000. <https://www.unhcr.org/470c9be92.pdf>

III. REINTEGRATION PROGRAMMING, CAPACITY, AND RESOURCES

The current programming and capacity in Iraq allow the government to offer a range of services enabling sustainable reintegration of Iraqi returnees, as well as to design tailored responses to the needs of specific sub-groups. This section outlines i) existing governance capacity, ii) operational capacity, and iii) resource availability to build a *Vision on Sustainable Reintegration of Returnees in Iraq*.

Governance Capacity

MoMD, MoLSA, MoP, MoFA, MoI, Joint Coordination and Monitoring Center, and Central Statistics Office each play a role in supporting reintegration programmes. In cooperation with the IOM, the Iraqi government carried out a Migration Governance Indicator (MGI) assessment in 2020, which examined 90 aspects of national capacity for migration management using international reference standards in six main thematic areas. The MGI assessment identified areas of strength as well as areas for further development. Overall, individual Ministries as well as government committees address migration matters in Iraq. A Technical Working Group composed of the Ministries of Migration and Displaced, Interior, Foreign Affairs Labour & Social Affairs, Planning, Justice, Central Statistics Organisation, and officials from the Kurdistan Regional Government was formed for drafting a National Migration Strategy with the support of the International Organisation for Migration. The Strategy, while internally approved by MoMD, requires further endorsement the Prime Minister's Office.⁶ Nonetheless, implementation under the Strategy is ongoing based on roadmaps developed for each of the five priority areas.

The 2009 MoMD Law No. 21 details the groups of people for whom the Ministry provides certain services - including Iraqi returnees from abroad, rejected asylum seekers, refugees, asylum seekers living abroad, and IDPs. Although the Republic of Iraq has inter-ministerial coordination mechanisms at the national level, these solely pertain to refugees and IDPs. The Permanent Committee covers all refugee-related matters - including asylum cases - for Refugee Affairs, which includes MoMD and MoFA as members. Support and aid to IDPs- which includes resettlement - is provided by the Higher Committee for the Relief and Support of the Displaced, which is chaired by MoMD and includes MoI and the Ministry of Construction and Housing as members.⁷ Significant efforts are being made to foster data collection on migration.

The Ministry of Planning included returnees within the National Development Plan 2018-2022. They are mentioned under the fourth and fifth objectives on the building and services sector, which outlines the establishment of housing units for returnee families displaced due to terrorist and military operations. Additionally, returnees are also included under the sixth sub-objective of Objective 6 - Poverty Alleviation, which states that the social, economic, and political integration of IDPs and returnees will be enabled and promoted in "liberated areas."⁸

⁶ IOM (2020), Republic of Iraq: Profile 2020, Migration Governance Indicators.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ The Republic of Iraq - Ministry of Planning, National Development Plan 2018-2022.

Operational Capacity

MoMD is responsible for providing support and facilitating services in coordination with relevant government institutions for IDPs, Iraqis returning from abroad, refugees, asylum seekers, stateless Iraqis, and Iraqis abroad. The Department of Migration Affairs within MoMD is responsible for providing legal support to Iraqis abroad generally, including to rejected asylum seekers, those with irregular status abroad, and detained Iraqis abroad. Additionally, MoMD carries out several initiatives that aim to encourage the return of skilled Iraqis, which include supplying them with land plots and cash grants.

MoLSA receives cohorts of returnees through MoMD referrals - and supported through ICMPD-run Migrant Resource Centre (MRC) that are situated within the MoLSA premises in Baghdad. MoLSA registers them in a database on unemployed Iraqis (if applicable), and provides them with the unemployed advisory cards. Subsequently, MoLSA refers them to the appropriate departments for further assistance, including provision of personal identification documentation. MoLSA assists returnees in their reintegration by offering courses at the MoLSA training centres located across Iraq. The training courses aim to develop those skills that are in demand on the labour market and range across educational, professional development, and leadership courses. MoLSA assists returnees in finding jobs in the private sector or provides them with loans to start a small business.

As highlighted above, MoLSA and ICMPD jointly established the MRC at the ministry's premises in Baghdad in February 2020, under the framework of a European Union funded project.⁹ The primary objective of the MRC is to provide up-to-date understandable information on possibilities for orderly migration, raise awareness of the risks and dangers associated with irregular migration, and explain rules and regulations, including relevant pre-departure information, to potential migrants. Furthermore, it serves as a referral centre for returnees, providing information on post-arrival assistance, legal processes, and vocational training centres.¹⁰ Post-arrival assistance is also provided to foreign workers in Iraq, with information on laws, regulations, customs, and norms. According to MoLSA, returnees approach the MRC from different countries, including the European MS. The existence of the MRC allows persons to gain access to a wide range of information on migration matters, including return and reintegration with a specific focus on access to locally available services.

A referral system from MoMD to MoLSA is in place upon a signature of an agreement between the two Ministries in 2019. Recently, following the return of Iraqis from Belarus and Lithuania, a proposal was submitted to the Minister of Labour and Social Affairs to assist specifically those returnees, who experienced theft of their monetary assets during the journey, were trafficked or traumatically affected by their in-camp experiences, by giving them small loans to help them open their own businesses. This initiative is intended to minimise the probability of re-migration and to facilitate their reintegration into the communities of return - and the Iraqi society at large. Once the number of returnees exceeded 100 persons, this specific initiative received an approval of the Minister, and MoMD started sharing with MoLSA the names of returnees from Lithuania, who were returned at the expense of the Iraqi government, in order to better coordinate the reintegration efforts for the benefit of the returning individuals.

⁹ <https://www.icmpd.org/news/import-news-september/migrant-resource-centre-inaugurated-in-baghdad-by-the-iraqi-ministry-of-labour-and-social-affairs-and-icmpd>

¹⁰ ICMPD (2020), Improving Migration Management in the Silk Routes: Activities in Iraq, November 2020

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MoFA, as per its mandate, provides Iraqi nationals abroad with consular assistance: the website lists services offered, including document authentication, civil registration documents, visas, and passports, as well as emergency assistance to Iraqi nationals abroad in times of crisis.¹¹

In addition to government efforts, there are several programmes and activities related to return and reintegration in Iraq that are led or otherwise supported by international partners.

The Connecting Diaspora for Development initiative (CD4D2), implemented jointly by the IOM-Netherlands and MoP, works with other Ministries, such as MoMD, the Ministry of Justice (MoJ), MoLSA, the Ministry of Health (MoH), and the Ministry of Education (MoE) to promote a more active role for the Iraqis abroad in four countries, including Iraq. In the implementation phase, two Iraqi experts worked with the Central Statistics Office providing virtual training sessions.¹²

GIZ, through the Iraqi-German Centre for Jobs, Migration and Reintegration in the Kurdistan Region in Iraq (GMAC), offers support in improving returnees' living conditions by providing training courses, financial subsidies, and services related to psychosocial support. The Centre offers free advice on employment in Iraq and job search, occupational training, information on the education system, support with starting a small company, psychosocial support, information on the health system, information about programmes for those returning to Iraq, employability, soft skills training, etc.¹³

The European Return and Reintegration Network (ERRIN) representing an initiative of 16 European states that helps to ensure that people on the move can return home in a dignified and humane manner, is working with local organisations in Iraq, amongst other countries, and offering comprehensive assistance for returning migrants. The reintegration support ranges across initial aid provided immediately upon arrival, housing, medical treatment, vocational training, educational needs, and setting up a business.¹⁴ In Iraq, in Baghdad and in Kurdistan Region, ERRIN works with the European Training and Technology Centre (ETTC) as an implementing partner.

ETTC, which is active in the country since 2019 in its capacity of a development non-profit organisation, implements reintegration programmes, supports returnees on a wide range of needs, and offers vocational training sessions.¹⁵

In addition to specific actors working on reintegration, complementary initiatives in Iraq including the work of Mercy Hands for Humanitarian Aid, a non-governmental not-for-profit nonpartisan organisation.¹⁶ In the process of preparation of the Vision, MercyHands was invited to share its insights and experience in supporting livelihood projects, with the aim to broaden the knowledge about the activities to be considered for the inclusion into reintegration programming.

11 IOM (2020), Republic of Iraq: Profile 2020, Migration Governance Indicators.

12 CD4D2, <https://www.connectingdiaspora.org/countries-cd4d2/iraq/>

13 <https://www.startfinder.de/en/advisory-centre/iraq>

14 https://returnnetwork.eu/cpt_countries/iraq/

15 <https://www.ettc-iraq.net/>

16 <https://www.mercyhands.org/copy-of-livelihood>

Resource Availability

MoMD and its provincial branches have a database to register and monitor the status, conditions, and needs of returnees to allocate support. This database allows to register returnees and the type of support returnees need, and to coordinate with local and international organisations to administer the support. MoMD receives data on the returnees mainly from MoFA.

MoLSA has a database of unemployed Iraqis, which includes data on returnees. The database features a specific indicator dedicated to the “returning” or “non-returning” status of the unemployed person. This indicator may be used as a backup option to validate the existing data from other sources, which MoLSA has mentioned on a number of occasions during the Project CAIR Workshops. Overall, the database has had a practical impact on MoLSA’s activities, as returnees receive priority in terms of the allocation of loans. There is an ongoing collaboration between MoMD and MoLSA – namely via a committee on relief for IDPs and returnees – which could be built upon to coordinate the sharing of information and data, in order to capture a holistic picture of returnees’ needs, especially those related to employment.

MoFA registers those returnees who approach the Ministry prior to arrival. It also receives information from the MoI, where the latter supports returnees with the issuance of documents that are frequently missing. Additionally, the sectoral agencies involved in regularisation of the status of returnees collect data and have mechanisms that allow them to cross check the validity and accuracy of data collected on returnees.

In November 2021, during a Workshop organised under the framework of a Swiss-funded and ICMPD-implemented Project, *Developing the Iraqi Government’s knowledge and expertise in migration governance (IMED)*, it was highlighted that the amount of financial allocations, and financial concerns generally, hinder sustainable return in Iraq. Representatives from ministries expressed a willingness to establish a standardised system for monitoring return and reintegration, in order to foster greater formal coordination between ministries, as well as to ensure that all government counterparts had access to the same information on return and reintegration in Iraq.

IV. VISION ON SUSTAINABLE REINTEGRATION OF RETURNEES IN IRAQ



The first Project CAIR Workshop on developing a *Vision on Sustainable Reintegration of Returnees in Iraq* was held in Erbil with members of the MoLSA and MoMD on 7-9 September 2021. The workshop aimed to enhance participants' capacity and understanding of return and reintegration generally, including i) key terminology, principles, and obligations; ii) ERRIN activities in Iraq; iii) the cooperation between states and international organisations; and iv) the indicators for monitoring and evaluation in measuring sustainable reintegration. During the workshop, MoLSA and MoMD shared their unique sectorial experience in reintegration and discussed their needs as reintegration actors and service providers, addressing which would enable them to offer tailored approaches and solutions to returnees. They also deliberated on the modalities of data collection and shared their insights on maintaining data on returnees. In addition, they held a brainstorming on forward-looking actions, which included linking with development actors in Iraq, conducting a stakeholder mapping, and creating a checklist for return and reintegration in Iraq.

This workshop was followed by a second Project CAIR workshop on 7-9 December 2021, which presented the draft *Vision* to participants from MoLSA, MoMD, and MoP, as well as international partners and civil society organisations, in order to gain feedback. The workshop also aimed to enhance participants' capacity related to public-private collaboration and working with CSOs to support the implementation of actions resulting from the *Vision*.

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A joint consultation between MoMD, MoLSA, and MoP was facilitated by ICMPD in Baghdad on April 21 2022. The purpose of the meeting was to present the updated version of the *Vision* and collect the final feedback on the draft prior to the finalisation and formatting. The draft *Vision* was discussed in detail, with various alternative insertions put forward by the government counterparts - following which the text of the *Vision* was finalised. During the consultation, the ministries strongly suggested to hold an action-planning workshop that would expand on the *Vision's* priority areas, define the roles and responsibilities among the implementing ministries, and identify tentative timelines for implementation.

The third CAIR workshop held in July 2022 in Erbil was dedicated to the Action Planning associated with the *Vision on Sustainable Reintegration of Returnees to Iraq*. The Iraqi Government representatives from amongst the GSCoM, MoLSA, MoMD, MoP, and MoFA attended the workshop.



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In addition, ETTC and GMAC-GIZ in Erbil and the representative of Baghdad Chamber of Commerce attended the WS, as per usual practice.

The workshop focused on the design of the activities that are required for the priorities of the Vision, and on the identification of the main and supportive ministries/agencies to be involved for each activity, along with the timelines.

The Action Plan associated with the *Vision* is available in Annex I.



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The WS was followed by a joint Roundtable amongst the GoI and the private sector actors, with the support of the reintegration service providers. The Roundtable was dedicated to the operationalisation of the MSP. As part of this task, the participants focused on devising strategies and means for a greater - sustainable, committed, long-term - involvement of the private sector into reintegration.



V. ICMPD SPECIFIC FINDINGS BASED ON THE VISION DEVELOPMENT PROCESS IN IRAQ

1. Tailored Approaches to Specific Needs of Returnees

Highly qualified Iraqi returnees from abroad face specific challenges upon return related to job opportunities, bureaucracy-related barriers to employment, housing, reverse culture shock, lost social networks and peer support, and lack of information. Reportedly, current financial support for returnees, welcome and commendable as it is, is not sufficient to facilitate sustainable, long-term reintegration. According to MoMD, the issuance of documentation, particularly, personal IDs on returnees' proper names (rather than nicknames, as is frequently the case), represents the primary step on the part of the responsible governmental agencies as actors, and returnees as agents, to enable access to further services and assistance. Both MoMD and MoLSA emphasised that a vision for reintegration entails accounting for issues of HLP, documentation, age and generational differences, gender, learning from past policy experiences, and engaging other ministries and the private sector.

2. Maintaining Databases and Data Sharing

Databases represent a convenient and useful tool for storing and sharing information on returnees to inform programming at the government level, as well as for coordinating relevant responses with development partners. Participants highlighted their efforts to collect data on returnees in Iraq, to the extent possible. The need to identify the different categories of returnees was emphasised – with several participants suggesting that more data and cooperation with the Iraqis abroad is required. Additional parameters for the inclusion into the databases were: aspirations of returnees upon their arrival to Iraq, reasons for migrating. The participants agreed that a website and/or comprehensive database with functions that allow to better match returnees' skills with the needs of the job market would garner benefits for the stakeholders and beneficiaries alike. To this end, MoLSA spoke about its database of unemployed Iraqis, which includes returnees. The existence of this database represents an opportunity for an increased coordination and joint work between MoMD and MoLSA, as MoMD is responsible for registering returnees within their own database. Thus, information collected on the needs and status of returnees could be cross-referenced with MoLSA's database on unemployment in order to better capture the status of returnees.

3. Linking with Development Actors in Iraq on Reintegration Programming

Two of the key priority areas identified during the workshops were i) the need to differentiate responses for urban and rural areas, and ii) better link employment / Technical and Vocational Education Training (TVET) programmes to the needs of the job market, especially in rural areas. One of the recommended responses to address these gaps is via linking with development actors already present in Iraq. In particular, participants mentioned FAO, UNDP, and USAID as development partners, supporting farmers in Iraq with loans, grants, and seeds. Additionally, it was recalled that the World Bank Group developed a Country Partnership Framework (CPF) for Iraq for the period FY2022-FY2026, which aims to support a more inclusive economy, including by helping to de-risk the private sector, to mobilise finance for development, and to create markets through innovative financing tools and public-private partnerships.¹⁷ This demonstrates the importance of mapping the existing programmes and actors, with which the GoI could potentially link in the future in order to formulate return and reintegration responses targeted at returnees' needs. This could include thinking about how migration and rural stakeholders, as well as stakeholders active in commerce and industry, could work more closely together in the Iraqi context.

4. Public-Private Collaborations and Role for the Private Sector

Participants agreed that the private sector in Iraq had a greater role to play in reintegration, especially via the establishment of public-private collaborations. The Government of Iraq can use these collaborations as a tool to deliver livelihoods and social services for returnees. The private sector can be engaged at several points in the reintegration process, including i) supply-side mapping to identify returnee characteristics, including skills, knowledge, and needs; ii) demand-side mapping to identify enterprises with the capacity to provide jobs, internships, trainings, expertise, and in-kind support; iii) identifying business cases to link company contributions to individual returnees and developing a private sector engagement roadmap to determine how efforts can be maximised.

Under Project CAIR, there is a private sector engagement component (PSE). This component has been developed most strongly in 2022, based on the preparatory work carried out since the onset of the project launch, and involved multilateral and bilateral streams in the engagement of private sector. ICMPD has also launched a Multi-Stakeholder Platform on 5 April 2022, which connects the Government of Iraq, reintegration service providers, and the private sector with each other, (and eventually) with returnees, with the common objective of facilitating long-term reintegration support of returning migrants. In essence, the Platform brings together public and private sector entities, which are either mandated or willing and interested to partake in coordinated activities and dialogue contributing to sustainable reintegration of returnees in their homeland.

¹⁷ World Bank 2021 - FY2022-FY2026 Country Partnership Framework (CPF) for the Republic of Iraq, available at <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/36107/Iraq-Country-Partnership-Framework-for-the-Period-FY2022-FY2026.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>

5. Stakeholder Mapping

Throughout the workshop, the participants emphasised the value they place upon conducting a mapping of stakeholders, programmes, and needs in reintegration. Such a mapping would greatly inform the actions associated with the implementing of the Vision for reintegration, on the one hand, and allow monitoring the progress linked to reintegration programming and actions, on the other. To this end, ICMPD started conducting the mapping of capacities and resources related to reintegration amongst relevant Ministries, namely MoMD, MoLSA, and MoP, and of the private sector entities, which have partaken in the consultative Roundtables of the Multi-Stakeholder Platform. The outcomes of the mapping represent a supporting reference tool in the process of conceptualisation of concrete responses under the Action Plan, associated with the *Vision*.

In conclusion, the *Vision* and its associated Action Plan represent a result of joint efforts of the Iraqi governmental entities, in consultation with non-governmental actors and service providers working on reintegration, supported by ICMPD, and builds upon relevant programmatic documents dedicated to steering sustainable reintegration efforts in Iraq forward.

Vision on Sustainable Reintegration of Returnees in Iraq

A flexible system of support services and referrals to sustainable reintegration solutions, enabling the Iraqi returnees to achieve their personal, social, and professional goals, and contribute to the development of their homeland

REINTEGRATION GOAL

Creation of a positive environment and provision of high quality services towards achieving sustainable reintegration – including economic, social, and psychosocial – for Iraqi returnees, individuals as well as families, in their communities of return. Reintegration is considered to be achieved when returnees no longer require specific assistance or protection linked to their return.

PRINCIPLES¹⁸

- **Voluntariness of participation** - Returns to Iraq should be voluntarily, and this should extend to their participation in reintegration-related programmes, activities, data collection, and communication.

¹⁸ The Principles have been gathered, collated, and broken-down based on consultations with and feedback received from MoMD, MoLSA, and MoP.

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- ▶ **Returnee-centred, wide-ranging responses** - Returnees are at the core of reintegration programming. Returnees and their families are consulted in the process of designing services that contribute to the wellbeing of individuals, as well as their communities of return.
- ▶ **Reliable communication cycle** - Communication and feedback systems facilitate information and knowledge sharing among the Government, service providers, and returnees. The information sharing cycle includes economic, social, psychosocial, and safety/security dimensions concerning returnees and communities of return.
- ▶ **Dialogue, cooperation, and partnerships** - Collaboration is fostered within the Iraqi Government, as well as with development actors and the private sector, with the aim to supply durable solutions to the returnees.
- ▶ **Evidence-based programming and follow up** - Reintegration programmes and services in Iraq are based on evidence of international best practices on sustainable reintegration worldwide. Follow up and evaluation mechanisms are elaborated and spearheaded by national institutions and departments, jointly with reintegration actors, international partners, and service providers. Measuring levels of reintegration via established indicators assist in the identification of specific vulnerabilities, which different groups of returnees face across time and space, and elaboration of tailored responses.

RECOMMENDED PRIORITY ACTIONS

- ▶ **PRIORITY 1:** Increase capacity and awareness on return and reintegration at the national, local, and community levels.
- ▶ **PRIORITY 2:** Uphold, support, and develop a flexible system of reintegration services (with contributions of external partners) that facilitate the immersion of returnees into community life by providing tailored assistance and support in a manner that enables their personal, professional, and social agency.
- ▶ **PRIORITY 3:** Enhance the existing referral mechanism and implement the same mechanism involving a Whole-of-Society Approach, to include provinces, municipalities, local communities, and local and international stakeholders.
- ▶ **PRIORITY 4:** Support data management and database development on reintegration in Iraq to capture the differences amongst cohorts of returnees and respond to the specific needs of each category (highly skilled, low skilled, female heads of households, etc.).
- ▶ **PRIORITY 5:** Increase the cooperation within and between the Iraqi Ministries in order to improve coordination, communication, and dialogue on reintegration efforts in Iraq. In doing so, strengthen coordinated reintegration programming and responses for Iraqi returnees through a Whole-of-Government Approach (allowing for the establishment of High-Level coordination bodies on reintegration in Iraq).

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- ▶ **PRIORITY 6:** Develop indicators for measuring levels of implementation of reintegration programmes and activities, including measuring the progress achieved by beneficiaries.
- ▶ **PRIORITY 7:** Establish and encourage public-private collaborations to strengthen the involvement of the private sector at all stages of the reintegration process, including pre/post-departure, especially related to returnees' livelihoods, social cohesion, and psychosocial support.

V. CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS

The findings of the Project CAIR's consultative meetings recommend to continue to build upon discussions with MoLSA, MoMD, MoP, MoFA, and GSCoM that occurred during the process of elaborating the *Vision*, in lieu of enhancing the WoG approach to return and reintegration with a wide range of Ministries and Institutions contributing to the joint cause of sustainable reintegration. Additionally, the support provided to the GoI on the part of non-governmental organisations, service providers, and ICMPD in its capacity of an international partner, in the identification of relevant priorities and context-specific actions represent a fertile ground for expanding and strengthening the Whole of Society approach to reintegration.

In this vein, Project CAIR provides new avenues for strengthening the ongoing efforts directed at enhancing both the reintegration framework and the capacity of GoI by conducting capacity building trainings, consultative workshops, and specialised information sessions dedicated to good practices on reintegration in the Silk Routes region and beyond.

The *Vision* itself aims to advance Iraq's existing return and reintegration framework. To achieve this, future consultations with the relevant GoI entities are envisaged to foster capacity building, service provision, and referrals, leading to sustainable reintegration of Iraqi returnees. The Action Plan (available in the Annex 1) constitutes a basis of the forthcoming work in the short, medium, and long term by outlining specific action areas and responsible line ministries as well as supporting entities.

ANNEX I. ACTION PLAN FOR THE *VISION ON SUSTAINABLE REINTEGRATION OF RETURNEES IN IRAQ*: PRIORITY ACTIONS, RESPONSIBILITIES, AND TIMELINE

Based on the findings of the 3rd Consultation Meeting with the Government of Iraq organised by Project CAIR

Priority	Priority actions	Leading and supporting responsible entity within the Government	Extended support (CSOs, NGOs, iNGO, private sector, academia, other)	Timeline <i>short-term up to 2 years</i> <i>medium-term, within 3-4 years</i> <i>long-term, from 5 years onwards</i>	Note
PRIORITY 1: Increase capacity and awareness on return and reintegration at the national, local, and community levels.	A. Increase capacity building efforts for GoI specific to return and reintegration <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Conduct specific and focused capacity building activities for government institutions that are engaged (directly and indirectly) in the area of return and reintegration *focused trainings for: MoLSA, MoMD, MoI, MoP ▶ Develop Train the Trainer (ToT) programmes to deliver direct support and capacity building to returnees 	Lead: MoLSA MoMD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ GSCoM ▶ NGOs and INGOs ▶ Academia ▶ Private Sector ▶ ICMPD, other IOs ▶ MoFA ▶ Min of Culture ▶ Min of Transportation ▶ Private sector 	Short term (Actions A, B C) Medium to long term (Action C)	Link with Priority 3 (cooperation), 7 (services)

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Priority	Priority actions	Leading and supporting responsible entity within the Government	Extended support (CSOs, NGOs, iNGO, private sector, academia, other)	Timeline <i>short-term up to 2 years</i> <i>medium-term, within 3-4 years</i> <i>long-term, from 5 years onwards</i>	Note
	<p>B. Increase capacity building for returnees by GoI</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Develop and implement needs-responsive and specific skills, vocational, educational and other training for returnees by Government institutions ▶ Match skills and vocational training with psycho-social, legal and financial support programmes for returnees with the support of national and international partners <p>C. Increase awareness raising on the area of return and reintegration</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Increase the scope of the Migrant Resource Centre (MRC) to include reintegration of returnees ▶ Expand MRC to areas of high return: 5 new MRCs to be established 4 Provinces across Iraq: 2 in Baghdad, 1 in KRG, 1 in Basra, 1 in Middle Euphrates ▶ Increase technical support to develop, print and distribute information, education and communication materials (brochures, flyers, advertisements, etc.) for comprehensive and sustainable reintegration 	<p>Development of programmes for returnees (including psycho-social support):</p> <p>MoHE¹⁹ MoE²⁰ MoH²¹</p> <p>MoLSA</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ National Satellite Channel ▶ Telecommunication companies ▶ Municipalities ▶ CSOs ▶ Tribal Leaders ▶ Community Leaders Civil Aviation 		

¹⁹ Ministry of Higher Education

²⁰ Ministry of Education

²¹ Ministry of Health

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Priority	Priority actions	Leading and supporting responsible entity within the Government	Extended support (CSOs, NGOs, iNGO, private sector, academia, other)	Timeline <i>short-term up to 2 years</i> <i>medium-term, within 3-4 years</i> <i>long-term, from 5 years onwards</i>	Note
<p>PRIORITY 2: Uphold, support, and develop a flexible system of reintegration services (with contributions of external partners) that facilitates the immersion of returnees into community life by providing tailored assistance and support in a manner that enables their personal, professional, and social agency.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Set up a system of categorisation of returnees by e.g. financial qualifications, educational background and skills, vulnerabilities if present, interests. Make the services available online. Automate case response and referral to ensure timely, efficient and comprehensive delivery of services to returnees and their families as maybe relevant. (see activities in Priorities 2 and 4) ▶ Conduct organisational needs assessment for the relevant institutions especially MoMD, MoLSA, MoP. ▶ Collect input and contributions from the private sector via the roundtables of the multi-stakeholder platform. (see activity in Priorities 5) ▶ Ensure continuous capacity building of service providers and frontliners; solicit support from development agencies and international organisations for both tangible (e.g. funds) and intangible (e.g. advice, technical support) to capacitate service providers and frontliners. ▶ Increase allocation of grants and other services to returnees through regular government funding and appropriation, and with development support from donors, private sector and international organisations. 	<p>Lead: MoMD MOLSA</p> <p>Support: ▶ MoP ▶ MoI ▶ MoFA ▶ MoH ▶ MoJ ▶ MoY</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ ICMPD ▶ CSOs/ NGOs/ INGOs/ Private Sector 	<p>Short and medium term, continuous</p>	<p>Link with Priority</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ 1 (capacity) ▶ 2 (referral, e-governance) ▶ 3 (cooperation) ▶ 4 (database, quality management) ▶ 5 (private sector)

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Priority	Priority actions	Leading and supporting responsible entity within the Government	Extended support (CSOs, NGOs, iNGO, private sector, academia, other)	Timeline <i>short-term up to 2 years</i> <i>medium-term, within 3-4 years</i> <i>long-term, from 5 years onwards</i>	Note
<p>PRIORITY 3:</p> <p>Enhance the existing referral mechanism and implement the same involving a Whole-of-Society Approach, to include provinces, municipalities, local communities, and local and international stakeholders.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Develop a standard template/case form for capturing information on returnees; this will include basic personal information, needs and interests, etc.; template will be used by all government institutions involved in return and reintegration ▶ Conduct a comprehensive mapping of reintegration actors and services, responsive to the needs and interests of returnees. To ensure quality in mapping, develop standard forms and flowchart to standardise contents, and link response and referral processes. Established general methodology to oblige all government institutions and partners/stakeholders to follow. (see activity in Priorities 2 and 4 on service catalogue and categories) ▶ Make the service catalogue accessible through the e-governance platform. (see activity in Priority 2) ▶ Prepare a general criteria or categories of services (e.g. legal, social, psychological, economic, etc.) to facilitate mapping of services and eventually, case response and referrals; the catalogue of services is organised to allow tailored and timely responses to returnees' needs and interests ▶ Organise a pathway and timeline (reintegration plan) for a returnee to benefit from various reintegration services based on his/her needs and interests (e.g., what are the services needed and reintegration plan 6 months, 2 years, 5 years, etc.) ▶ Improve existing referral mechanism to an e-governance system using standard templates and catalogue of services (see above); database should be regularly and continuously updated 	<p>Lead: MoMD</p> <p>Support: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ MoLSA ▶ Mol ▶ MoP ▶ MoFA </p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Academia ▶ All service providers ▶ Local authorities ▶ Legal units within other Ministries (MoFA, Mol) 	<p>Short-medium term, continuous</p>	<p>Link with Priority 3 (inter-ministerial or high-level committee)</p>

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Priority	Priority actions	Leading and supporting responsible entity within the Government	Extended support (CSOs, NGOs, iNGO, private sector, academia, other)	Timeline <i>short-term up to 2 years</i> <i>medium-term, within 3-4 years</i> <i>long-term, from 5 years onwards</i>	Note
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Set-up an inter-ministerial committee for coordinating referral mechanisms involving all relevant stakeholders, local and national governments and communities, and international partners ▶ Conduct regular digital surveys to register migrants and returnees (that will involve Iraqi missions and representations in other countries as well as the Iraqis abroad) 				
<p>PRIORITY 4: Support data management and database development on reintegration in Iraq to capture the differences amongst cohorts of returnees, and respond to the specific needs of each category (highly skilled, low skilled, female heads of households, etc.).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Maintain up-to-date, comprehensive and accessible databases within each Ministry on returnees, synced and harmonised with relevant information systems from other agencies; activities for this will include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Developing a standard template/case form (see activity in Priority 2) ▶ Standardising nature and categories of information: e.g. demographic, social status, employment needs and qualifications, gender and health specific concerns, vulnerabilities if present, needs and interests (see activity in Priority 2) ▶ Involving Iraqi missions abroad at the onset of data collection (missions being the first point of contact and service provider in the return process) and other Iraqi representatives abroad such as commercial attaché and honorary consuls ▶ When possible, designing surveys for returnees with the involvement of Iraqis abroad in data collection (see activity in Priority 2) ▶ Ensure quality control and assurance in data collection, analysis and access (using existing Iraqi laws on quality management) 	<p>Lead: MoMD</p> <p>Support: ▶ MoFA ▶ MoI ▶ MoLSA</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ ETTC ▶ GMAC ▶ Research departments of Governmental entities ▶ Research departments of private sector entities 	Short term, continuous	Link with Priority 2 (referral pathways, especially on items related to developing templates, e-governance, service catalogues)

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Priority	Priority actions	Leading and supporting responsible entity within the Government	Extended support (CSOs, NGOs, iNGO, private sector, academia, other)	Timeline <i>short-term up to 2 years</i> <i>medium-term, within 3-4 years</i> <i>long-term, from 5 years onwards</i>	Note
<p>PRIORITY 5:</p> <p>Increase the co-operation within and between the Iraqi ministries in order to improve coordination, communication, and dialogue on reintegration efforts in Iraq. In doing so, strengthen coordinated reintegration programming and responses for Iraqi returnees through a Whole-of-Government Approach (allowing for the establishment of High-Level coordination bodies on reintegration in Iraq)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Establish a High-Level Committee for the coordination of return and reintegration frameworks, programmes, and services in Iraq <p>The Committee will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ coordinate reintegration efforts among ministries to ensure synergies and complementarities ▶ coordinate reintegration efforts among international partners and INGOs ▶ oversee overall return and reintegration framework in Iraq (including stats, census, databases) – with the aim to propose the development of specific policies on the matter ▶ attempt at fundraising for reintegration support in Iraq, with the aim to include reintegration in the annual budget for Iraq ▶ act as a rapid response body to timely address return and reintegration challenges faced by Iraqis (such as the Belarus issue) <p>During the inception phase, it was agreed that ICMPD would serve as the Secretariat of the High Committee. Once established, it would be the prerogative of the Committee to allow additional support from IOs in Iraq.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ To set-up the High-Level Committee, the following are actions needed: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Issue an order/instruction by the President, Prime Minister of Council of Ministers to approve HLC ▶ Develop a terms of reference for the HLC, which will include membership, mandate, duties and responsibilities, meetings, agenda, business arising, etc. 	<p>Lead:</p> <p>MoMD</p> <p>Support:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ MoLSA ▶ Mol ▶ MoP ▶ MoFA ▶ GSCOM ▶ MoH ▶ MoJ ▶ Ministry of Youth ▶ KRI (MoLSA, Mol, MoP) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ INGOs ▶ Donors ▶ MoE ▶ MoHE ▶ Private sector ▶ Other relevant government institutions as may be necessary, either as regular or adhoc member of the HLC 	<p>Short-term, continuous</p>	<p>Link with Priority 1 (capacity), 2 (referral pathways), 7 (services)</p>

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Priority	Priority actions	Leading and supporting responsible entity within the Government	Extended support (CSOs, NGOs, iNGO, private sector, academia, other)	Timeline <i>short-term up to 2 years</i> <i>medium-term, within 3-4 years</i> <i>long-term, from 5 years onwards</i>	Note
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Conduct capacity building for members of HLC, in particular the Secretariat ▶ Develop a documentation system or knowledge management to record HLC meetings, recommendations, actions, policy recommendations, etc. ▶ Organise, coordinate and support meetings of the HLC based on an agreed schedule with HLC member ministries 				
PRIORITY 6: Develop indicators for measuring levels of implementation of reintegration programmes and activities, including measuring the progress achieved by beneficiaries.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Appoint qualified staff to carry out quality control and ensure their continuous training and capacity building on quality management. Reopen and support the offices of general inspectors. ▶ Set up a quality management system, with special forms to monitor and assess the performance of the institutions and service providers and their programmes and services. ▶ Elaborate a tailored form on evaluation of reintegration services, based on the experience of MoP's specialised department on evaluations. 	Lead: MoP Support: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ MoLSA ▶ MoMD 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ ICMPD ▶ Academia 	Short and medium term, continuous	Link with Priority 2 (referral, e-governance), 4 (database, quality management), 7 (services)

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Priority	Priority actions	Leading and supporting responsible entity within the Government	Extended support (CSOs, NGOs, iNGO, private sector, academia, other)	Timeline <i>short-term up to 2 years</i> <i>medium-term, within 3-4 years</i> <i>long-term, from 5 years onwards</i>	Note
<p>PRIORITY 7: Establish and encourage public-private collaborations to strengthen the involvement of the private sector at all stages of the reintegration process, including pre/post-departure, especially related to returnees' livelihoods, social cohesion, and psycho-social support.</p>	<p>Strengthen the Multi-Stakeholder Platform⁴ for Private Sector engagement into reintegration</p> <p>To ensure partnership, cooperation and contribution from the private sector, the MSP will help:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Develop a strategy to exempt the private sector from taxes, tariffs, customs fees, etc. for services provided to returnees ▶ Propose incentives for the private sector financially and in other forms ▶ Support production and patronage of national products of the local private sector compared to exported products ▶ Advocate for a safe, conducive and inclusive environment for investment in Iraq 	<p>Lead: MoLSA MoP</p> <p>Support:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ MoFA ▶ Min. of Trade ▶ Min. of Industry ▶ Min of Electricity ▶ National Investment Commission ▶ Min. of Finance ▶ Min. of Oil ▶ Min. of Agriculture Central Bank of Iraq 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ INGOs ▶ NGOs 	<p>Short-term, continuous</p>	<p>Link with Priority 3 (cooperation) and 7 (services)</p> <p>See separate action plan for Private Sector Engagement under CAIR Project</p>

ANNEX II. RETURN CONTEXT - IRAQ

Outward Migration

Following the fall of Saddam Hussein's 24-year dictatorship in 2003 – which included marginalisation of the Kurdish and Shi'a minorities, war against Iran, UN sanctions, and the two Gulf Wars against the USA in 1990 and 2003 – Iraq experienced frequent instability, including the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) control over large territories in northern and eastern Iraq.²² Given these factors, Iraqis have migrated abroad since 1980 in search of sanctuary, especially those from religious and ethnic minorities, as well as for political reasons. UNHCR has reported over 530,000 refugees originating from Iraq in 2001,²³ thereby constituting the third largest group in the cohort of 12 million refugees recorded that year worldwide, and the largest group among asylum seekers in the industrialised countries.²⁴ Since 2003, Iraq has experienced waves of outward migration movements towards its neighbouring countries, including Jordan, Syria, Egypt, Lebanon, and Turkey. These movements included both those Iraqis fleeing armed conflicts and those in search of better economic opportunities abroad.²⁵ Furthermore, a notable share of Iraqi immigrants had previous migration experiences prior to their migration abroad – either forced, via internal displacement, or voluntary, as a result of their decisions to migrate internally. Iraqi migration into Europe has increased since 2014: approximately 92,000 Iraqis migrated to Europe irregularly in 2015 arriving through the Eastern Mediterranean route alone, with the majority migrating to Germany, Denmark, and Sweden. Their employment rates were registered at approximately 44%, which notably differed compared to, for example, Iranians (55%) or Afghans (57%).²⁶ Over half of these migrants originated from the Baghdad and Ninewa Governorates, and over a third of migrants had previously been IDPs prior to their migration to Europe.

Economic Iraqi migrants tended to settle in the GCC countries (including Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and UAE), as well as in Jordan, Egypt, European MSs, the UK, Australia, and the United States - with many migrating with their families and working in various sectors, including entrepreneurship.²⁷

Protracted conflict in Iraq engendered large numbers of immigrants,²⁸ with the Migration Policy Institute estimating a net migration rate of -0.68 migrants per 1,000 people in 2021.²⁹ The Migration Data Portal estimated 365,800 Iraqi immigrants abroad in 2020 alone.³⁰

In 2020, the Iraqi Research Foundation conducted a needs assessment for Analysis and Development (IRFAD) for ICMPD's Migrant Resource Centre (MRC) in Baghdad, in order to understand the information required for communities on migration. This included identifying the tools and means to reach both

²² DELMI (2021), Those who were sent back: Return and Reintegration of rejected asylum seekers to Afghanistan and Iraq.

²³ UNHCR (2003). 2003 UNHCR Population Statistics, available at <http://www.unhcr.ch>

²⁴ Ibrahim Sirkeci, "Iraqi International Migration: Potentials for the Postwar Period," Population Review (Jan 2004).

²⁵ REACH (2017), Iraqi Migration to Europe in 2016: Profiles, Drivers, and Return (June 2017).

²⁶ How are refugees faring on the labour market in Europe? A first evaluation based on the 2014 EU Labour Force Survey ad hoc module. OECD Working Paper 1/2016.

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

²⁸ United Nations (2017), International Migration Report 2017.

²⁹ Migration Policy Institute, "Iraq: Country Resources," accessed September 13, 2021.

³⁰ Migration Data Portal, "Total number of International Migrants at mid-year 2020," accessed September 13, 2021.

rural and urban communities. Overall, the assessment found that the majority of potential Iraqi migrants prefer to migrate outside of Iraq - as opposed to migrating internally. Top migration countries include neighbouring countries such as Turkey and Jordan, as well as countries in Western Europe and North America. The most commonly cited push factors for potential Iraqi migrants included insecurity, instability, deteriorating economic conditions, saturated labour market, and the general lack of job opportunities. Conversely, pull factors in countries of destination included stability and peace, human rights, education and income-generating opportunities, and public services.³¹

In 2019-2020, MoMD carried out a comprehensive national migration profile for Iraq, which found significant changes in migration and displacement patterns within the country since 2003. The changes identified included i) larger numbers of Iraqi migrants abroad, ii) new countries of destination for Iraqi migrants, iii) continued presence of migrant workers within Iraq, and iv) new challenges and opportunities related to changes and evolutions in the security, economic, and environmental situation.³² The aforementioned trends have taken place within a national context of significant internal displacement due to the conflict with the ISIL. The situation is exacerbated by the demographic developments of the past two decades, which have contributed to a larger working age population. Currently, the population of Iraq is estimated at nearly 44.5 million people, which represents nearly a double increase compared to 2000.³³ The stable growth rate of over 2.3% per year results in additional increase of the population by approximately 1 million persons each year, characterised by the median age of 20 years old and the youth unemployment rate at 35.8%.³⁴ In the situation of steadily and rapidly growing young and working age population, the lack of employment opportunities for returnees as a specific category of the Iraqi population contributes additionally to the existing labour underutilisation in the country. In response to the general understanding of the extent of the unmet employment needs, the government of Iraq identified economic reintegration of returnees - both IDPs and from abroad - as a key policy concern, reflected in Goal 21 of the Global Compact on Migration (GCM). They highlighted in both the Iraqi National Review of the GCM³⁵ and the 2020 National Strategy for Migration Management in Iraq, prepared as a result of efforts of national and international migration stakeholders, that support for reintegration of Iraqis should be coordinated with existing national economic, employment, and labour market policies to ensure policy coherence.

Internal Displacement and Return

A considerable share of Iraqis returned post-Saddam, despite structural, political, and security issues hindering sustainable reintegration. At the time of ISIL's takeover in late 2013, approximately 2.1 million Iraqis were already internally displaced due to previous conflicts and disasters. Significant efforts to promote returns to Iraq, with specific policies and programmes, were temporarily put on hold due to the rise of ISIL. ISIL's subsequent capture and control of considerable portions of Iraq between 2014 and 2017 created one of the largest humanitarian crises in the nation's history - including the displacement of

³¹ IRFAD (2020), *Needs Assessment Study on Migration Information in Iraq - Migrant Resource Centres*.

³² MoMD (2020), *First National Review of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration in Iraq*, Sept 2020.

³³ <https://www.macrotrends.net/countries/IRQ/iraq/population>

³⁴ ILO (2021), *Iraqi Labour Force Survey 2021*, https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---arabstates/---ro-beirut/documents/publication/wcms_850359.pdf

³⁵ MoMD (2020), *Ibid*.

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over 6 million people,³⁶ resulting in the peak number of IDPs at 4.1 million in 2016 alone.³⁷ The majority of IDPs and returnees were found in Ninewa province, which accounted for nearly 2.6 million out of Iraq's over 6 million displaced persons.³⁸ Furthermore, displacement in Iraq was often not linear: a 2018 joint Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre/Norwegian Refugee Council (IDMC/NRC) study found that the majority of IDP respondents had been displaced more than once, with many IDPs crossing borders in the absence of durable solutions, as well as due to administrative barriers in their host communities.³⁹ Additionally, IDP returnees were found to be less informed about the current situation in their communities of origin, compared to other returnees. Overall, IDPs are among the most vulnerable before and after displacement.

Voluntary returns of Iraqi asylum seekers have increased in the post-ISIL period.⁴⁰ This process was paralleled by a return on IDPs to their areas of origin, with an estimated 4,857,050 persons returned as of April 2021.⁴¹ Still, according to 2021 data, nearly 1,2 mln individuals remained internally displaced throughout the country - with Nineveh, Dahuk, and Erbil Governorates accounting for over 60 percent of the total Iraqi IDP population.⁴²

The Iraqi government, supported by the United Nations agencies - notably the IOM and the UNHCR - and other international partners such as GIZ and development foundations such as European Technology and Training Centre (ETTC) have dedicated large amounts of resources to facilitate the return of individuals and families, as well as the reconstruction of conflict-impacted areas. In 2019, the Iraqi government initiated a plan to close IDP camps and facilitate returns to their areas of origin. UN and NGOs have participated in this process, supporting the government through the Iraq Camp Coordination and Camp Management (CCCM) Cluster strategy, to ensure minimum standards are being met. Yet, some Iraqi IDPs are either unwilling or unable to return to their communities of origin - citing finances, lack of housing, and/or restrictions on their movement.⁴³

Security and the economy remain the main drivers of migration in Iraq, as found by the Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance, International Security Sector Advisory Team – ISSAT. Specific drivers of migration and displacement included internal armed conflict; external intervention; political, ethnic and religious oppression; and natural disasters.

³⁶ UNDP (2021), Pathways to Reintegration IRAQ: Families Formerly Associated with ISIL.

³⁷ Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance - International Security Sector Advisory Team (ISSAT), "Iraq - Current Critical Security Issues," March 2020.

³⁸ IOM (2021), "DTM Return Overview."

³⁹ IDMC/NRC (2018).

⁴⁰ R. Davis, G. Benton, M. Al-Dairani & S. Al-Shami (2018), Home after ISIS: A study of return as a durable solution in Iraq. *Journal of Peacebuilding & Development*, 13(2), pp. 1-15.

⁴¹ IOM (2021), "DTM Return Overview."

⁴² IOM (2021), "DTM Displacement Overview."

⁴³ IDMC/NRC (2018), Nowhere to Return to: Iraqis' search for durable solutions continues

Return from Europe and Reintegration

In April 2021, the European Commission adopted the first EU Strategy on Voluntary Return and Reintegration, which promotes voluntary return and reintegration as part of the common EU system for returns.⁴⁴ There is a growing interest in addressing questions of how, when, and under what conditions migrants, including rejected asylum seekers, return to their home countries and rebuild their lives within the communities of return. European states have moved towards adopting a Whole of Government (WoG) approach to return, with interdepartmental coordination emerging in most return and reintegration policies, and increasingly diverse actors involved in migration policy. Switzerland introduced the new Swiss Asylum System, which reduced the asylum process to 100 days, in order to eliminate lengthy procedures. Relatedly, Germany passed a set of 8 bills on immigration in 2019, including the “Orderly Return Law”, which includes clauses to facilitate the return of rejected asylum seekers.⁴⁵ Several other countries, such as Denmark,⁴⁶ have amended their legislation by introducing wider access to withdrawal of residence permits categories of migrants, increased penalties for breach of entry ban and breach of residence, and other provisions relevant to the presence of foreign nationals on their territories. These changes indicate a moving focus from integration to self-support, return, and reintegration in the countries of origin, once conditions allow for it. Additionally, many European-assisted voluntary return and reintegration (AVRR) programmes have linked pre-departure and post-arrival reintegration support. This has included international coordination and cooperation between European destination countries, as demonstrated by platforms such as the European Return and Reintegration Network (ERRIN) and the European Migration Network Return Expert Group (EMN REG).⁴⁷ Destination countries work with a broad range of actors as implementing partners on return and reintegration, including CSOs, European Reintegration Support Organisations (ERSOs), IOM, ERRIN, Origin country institutions, and destination country bodies abroad.

Research on the asylum process has found that it puts a strain on asylum seekers in general, due to lengthy asylum procedures and the continuous threat of forced return during the waiting period. Managing the two possibilities – acceptance or denial – is difficult for many asylum seekers, as while they await a decision on their application; they are often caught between the parallel goals of integrating within their host country and preparing for potential return to their country of origin, if their application is denied.⁴⁸ Furthermore, failed asylum seeker returnees – much like irregular migrant returnees – often have higher psychosocial needs upon their return to their country of origin.⁴⁹

In 2021, Swedish government-funded independent committee, Migration Studies Delegation (DELMII), conducted a study on returned asylum seekers from Iraq and Afghanistan. The study found that Iraqi returnees in the last decade have been met with a sectarian and post-conflict environment, with limited economic recovery. Returning Iraqi asylum seekers heavily relied on family and friends for immediate as-

⁴⁴ European Commission, “Migration management: New EU strategy on voluntary return and reintegration,” 27 April, 2021.

⁴⁵ OECD (2021), “Institutional context of return and reintegration,” in Sustainable Reintegration of Migrants: A Better Homecoming.

⁴⁶ The full text of the 2019 law: <https://www.retsinformation.dk/eli/ta/2019/174>. An overview of governance of integration in Denmark: https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/country-governance/governance-migrant-integration-denmark_en

⁴⁷ <https://returnnetwork.eu/>, https://emnbelgium.be/sites/default/files/publications/emn_reg_directory_-_1st_edition_-_18122014.pdf.

⁴⁸ DELMI (2021), Those who were sent back: Return and Reintegration of rejected asylum seekers to Afghanistan and Iraq.

⁴⁹ A. Woodward, N. Howard & I. Wolfers (2014) Health and access to care for undocumented migrants living in the European Union: a scoping review. Health Policy Plan 29(7), pp. 818-830

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sistance upon their return to the country, compared to seeking out assistance from the government or reintegration programmes. Many returnees reported feelings of shame or frustration, but generally seemed to get help and support from personal networks.⁵⁰ Additionally, the gender perspective was found to play a role, both in terms of men's responsibilities towards their families and of women's experiences in return. In data collected for the study, the majority of Iraqi women migrated together with their families and were mostly dependent on their partners, and their social contacts, and feeling vulnerable when these were absent. They spoke openly about their psychological difficulties and tended to blame themselves for choosing to return, especially due to the impact on their children's education.⁵¹ In response to these and other findings, Sweden has adopted a Strategy for Sweden's development cooperation with Iraq 2022-2026, one of the objectives of which focusing specifically on return and sustainable reintegration.

As emphasised during the first workshop under the framework of Project CAIR, held with representatives of MoLSA and MoMD on 7-9 September 2021, the different stages and experiences of returnees along the migration cycle - including before the migratory movement, during migration, arrival, return, and reintegration phases - impact the ways, in which returnees are able to integrate economically, socially, and psychologically after their return to their countries and communities of origin. These findings resonate with the 2021 DELMI study on return and reintegration of rejected asylum seekers from Iraq, which demonstrated that reintegration is a complex process occurring at various dimensions - including economic, social, psychosocial, and security. Successful reintegration assumes that returnees are integrated - at least at some level - in the aforementioned areas in their communities of return. However, often resources and services facilitating economic reintegration are not sufficient for sustainable reintegration, especially if a returnee lacks social networks, through which information can be delivered and relationships built, or experiences psychological difficulties associated with the return. The study underlines the importance of understanding the varied experiences of specific groups, such as female returnees, who require tailored support as they experience the economic, social, and psychosocial impacts of return differently than men. This echoes other research findings on the specific needs of children in reintegration, which led to the development of a child reintegration Monitoring Toolkit and accompanying study outlining good practices for supporting children reintegration, coordinated by the EU-IOM Knowledge Management Hub (KMH) with the financial support of the European Union (EU). The latter Toolkit and Hub aim to address current gaps in age-disaggregated and child-focused reintegration data.⁵² As mentioned above, the overall mandate of Project CAIR is to facilitate the creation of conditions for sustainable reintegration of Iraqi returnees with a specific focus on returnees from Europe. However, during the discussions that occurred over the course of the 2.5-day Project CAIR workshop in September 2021, MoLSA and MoMD counterparts highlighted that the conditions of return and difficulties for ERRIN beneficiaries and IDPs often overlap. Based on the thoughts shared by the ministries, it is evident that they view returnees from Europe as a subcategory of returnees and prefer a more holistic approach to return and reintegration, rather than a segmented approach by a sub-category. Thus, the proposed *Vision on Reintegration of Returnees in Iraq* follows the government's preference – which includes strategies for addressing the needs of all categories of returnees, including rejected asylum seekers, qualified returnee nationals, migrant workers, etc. – from Europe, as well as IDP returnees. These findings were echoed during the second CAIR workshop in December 2021, in which MoLSA and the MoP and non-governmental actors and reintegration service providers active in reintegration joined MoMD.

⁵⁰ DELMI (2021), pp. 131-133.

⁵¹ DELMI (2021), p. 72.

⁵² EU-IOM Knowledge Management Hub (2021), Child Reintegration Monitoring Toolkit, available at <https://returnandreintegration.iom.int/en/resources/kmh-research-study-study/research-study-1-development-monitoring-toolkit-and-review-good>