

The Role of UNHCR in Protecting Refugees in Iraq Post-2003

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Abstract

This research focuses on assessing United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees UNHCR's extent of success in achieving protecting refugees in Iraq by analyzing the outcomes of its efforts to provide humanitarian assistance and legal protection in accordance with international treaties. The study applied qualitative and quantitative methodological approaches which included analyzing refugee and Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) data on the services provided. In addition to the financial and political challenges that hinder UNHCR's mission. The research also discusses the achievements made, such as the rights of refugees under international law, and provide recommendations to improve protection policies and enhance the effectiveness of UNHCR's work in Iraq.

Keyword: *International law, UNHCR operations in Iraq, Humanitarian protection, (IDPs), Refugee rights and policies.*

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1.1 Introduction

Since its founding in December 1950, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugee (the “UNHCR”) under its mandate has provided comprehensive protection and aid to refugees of all backgrounds, regardless of race, ethnicity, or political opinion. the Universal Recognition of Refugees 1951 establishes a robust legal framework for refugee status determination and guides governments in addressing refugee crises.

based on international instruments and conventions, the UNHCR remains as the main actor in the field of humanitarian, as a primary mandate and defend their rights. It is dedicated to guaranteeing the right of every person to seek protection in another country, in addition to the option of voluntary and safe return to the homeland.

1.2 Research Problem

Over the last two decades, wars, internal conflicts and terrorist attacks in the Middle East have led to large-scale displacement. Iraq, like many neighbouring countries, faced long-term challenges related to IDPs and refugee flows.

In this context, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has played a key role in providing protection and humanitarian assistance, in fulfillment of its international obligations.

Despite its efforts in Iraq, UNHCR has faced significant obstacles in providing an effective response to the displacement crises. These obstacles included security risks, political complexities, and lack of funding. These challenges have raised questions about UNHCR's ability to fulfill its mandate to provide protection, rights and basic services to the displaced.

This research examines the challenges faced by UNHCR in Iraq and assess its effectiveness in protecting refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) since 2003. It aims to fill the gap in understanding the practical application of international protection frameworks in conflict-affected countries such as Iraq.

1.3 Research Question

The research's main question is whether the UNHCR succeeded in achieving its goals and mandates in Iraq. The main question can only be answered if three important sub-questions are answered.

Firstly, what legal protection does international humanitarian law provide for refugees?

Secondly, how is the UNHCR is protecting refugees of different backgrounds in Iraq?

Thirdly, what is the extent to which the UNHCR has provided the refugee protection specified in international refugee law and to what extent have refugees been able to access basic services?

The hypothesis presented in this research is that the UNHCR has been effective in protecting refugees on the ground in Iraq. In other words, the core of this research argues that the UNHCR demonstrates effectiveness in protecting refugees and displaced populations within Iraq.

1.5 Research Significance

This research will take a systematic examination at the situation of refugees from various nationalities who live in Iraq. It will focus on the role of the UNHCR in intervention according to international law principles and providing humanitarian aid to them. The goal is to find out what problems the refugees in Iraq face and how well the UNHCR protects them.

This research mainly focuses on analyzing how well the leading organization, the UNHCR responsible for providing protection for refugees, follows the standards and responsibilities set by international law and treaties. These legal frameworks are set to guarantee that refugees are treated with dignity and have access to vital services. The aim of this research is to evaluate the effectiveness of UNHCR's efforts in protecting the rights of refugees in Iraq by assessing their commitment to implementing these laws and treaties

1.6 Research Methodology

I. Overview

The researcher mostly relied on fieldwork that comprises a mixture of qualitative and quantitative approaches in order to reach the bottom-line of observing and comprehending the complex reality of UNHCR activities and interactions with refugees on the ground.

Through in-depth key informant interviews, or observations that provide rich data that is contextualized and detailed. Thus, to get more insights and contextual information, a thorough examination of pertinent papers, publications, and documents from reliable sources such as reports published by the UNHCR and other entities. Not only the qualitative method chosen for this research, a quantitative method is added as well in order to create a mixed method. The reason is that quantitative method aims to generate numerical statistics through survey research to collect data.

II. Research design and methodology.

Overall, both quantitative and qualitative methods used as part of a mixed-methods approach. Official UNHCR reports and publications were among the many sources from which information was obtained for the qualitative method, and through surveys and interviews, quantitative method was implemented in order to identify patterns, trends, and correlations, the collected data was submitted to descriptive analysis, regression analysis, and correlation analysis. All these steps are taken to analyze the UNHCR 's activities in Iraq.

The researcher concentrated on conducting question research for two main purposes: firstly, to bridge the information gap and secondly, to examine how the research findings aligned with those of UN reports regarding the same topic.

An elaborate theoretical framework has been established to designate a clear connection between the research questions and the role of the UNHCR in refugee protection. The analysis includes pre-existing theoretical knowledge to exhibit how the empirical results either augment or dispute current comprehension of this subject case. The researcher committed to all ethical considerations throughout all phases of the research. The interviewees were provided with consent forms that they signed, and the researcher documented these forms.

This methodology affords study participants the opportunity to express their personal viewpoints on a certain subject matter. Combining qualitative and quantitative research methods through mixed methodology can be advantageous for certain research projects. This approach capitalizes on the strengths of each method and compensates for their respective weaknesses.

In terms of data collection findings and analysis, part of the primary data collection, the researcher conducted a questionnaire, with 109 responses gathered, through in person interview and online forms, Females responded to the questionnaire by 63%, which is slightly close to the numbers confirmed by the UNHCR (Appendix D). This is due to the fact that women are generally more active in terms of social participation response to research and questionnaires. The finding that women demonstrate a greater propensity for engaging in survey responses is noteworthy. Women demonstrate a tendency for active engagement and participation in several areas of interest. Therefore, the focus of the investigation should be redirected towards the methods employed for the examination and recognition of this level of engagement (Royall, 2020)

2. The UNHCR in Iraq: Functions and Activities

Military conflicts, governmental instability, and persistent carnage have all hurt the people of Iraq (Center for Preventive Action, 2023). As a result of these causes, millions of Iraqis have been compelled to evacuate their homes, either within Iraq or across international borders, in pursuit of safety. Iraq's role in addressing these people's complex demands and providing them

with the necessary safety and aid has been important. Here we will delve into the specific challenges that Iraqi affected populations and refugees fled to Iraq experience.

As a result of the American and coalition forces' war against Iraq, and the subsequent collapse of the Ba'athist government in April 2003, Iraq witnessed major changes and transformations. Due to a level of human danger that has never been seen before, more people are fleeing to Syria, Jordan, and other countries. Many Iraqis are displaced internally within Iraq, primarily to safer areas. Over the years, there has been a notable wave in the number of refugees, reaching its peak between early 2006 to early 2008 (National policy on displacement, 2008). This escalation may be attributed to various factors. On the top of these reasons is the sectarian conflict in that period economic changes, and the dissolution of the military and public sector.

According to a report by the International Crisis Group (the "ICG") (2016), "The month of Iraq", in June 2014, a major terrorist attack by ISIS invaded large areas of Nineveh and Salah al-Din governorates, followed by other areas. The emergence of ISIS and its control over these vast areas led to the largest displacement of civilians to escape oppression and violence. This left behind more than two million displaced Iraqis, fleeing their cities and villages after being invaded by ISIS.

The UNHCR response initiated the emergency plans overall affected areas in Iraq to provide essential assistance to the huge numbers of people who fled, providing food, emergency housing, drinkable water, health assistance, and other essential provisions to those who had been forcibly displaced. as the critical situation rapidly aggravated UNHCR had several challenges due to the magnitude and intricacy of the refugee crisis. The agency faced access obstacles, logistical barriers, a lack of resources, and increased security risks, notably in areas affected by ISIS, while attempting to access and assist the affected population (Abu-Ghaida, 2021). The length of the fighting and the enormous number of IDPs also make it difficult for the host communities and already-existing camps to meet the rising demand.

Despite obstacles, the UNHCR's response to the ISIS-caused displacement crisis in Iraq demonstrated the organization's dedication to safeguarding and assisting vulnerable people. The group's initiatives contributed to the provision of life-saving aid, the restoration of essential services, and the rehabilitation and reintegration of displaced Iraqis (OCHA, 2021). To meet the long-term needs and challenges of refugees and displaced populations, however, ongoing international participation and assistance are required due to the complexity and fluidity of the situation regarding the IDPs.

This part will explore the contemporary functions and significance of the (UNHCR) to refugees. especially how the UNHCR operates in Iraq, addressing the challenges of forced displacement, post conflict, and human rights violations. By studying the agency's various roles in protection, partnerships, and humanitarian relief, this chapter will examine how UNHCR contributes significantly to providing essential services and aid to refugees and (the Iraqi Displaced), Highlighting the support provided to the most vulnerable categories, women, and vulnerable

persons, and examining the access to water and sanitation, education, and health care as evidenced by the reports, data, and findings of interventions.

2.1 Basic Services

According to their operations report, the UNHCR prioritizes supporting the needs of women and other disadvantaged refugees and internally displaced people (UNHCR, 2023b). It offers various programs to protect, empower, and provide crucial services to displaced women, recognizing their unique problems and hazards.

2.2 Water and Sanitation

The provision of water and sanitation services is essential in conditions of displacement and conflicts, and the UNHCR takes responsibility for providing water and sanitation services in the absence of the authorities, which is exactly what happened during this period, according to the 3RP report. (3RP Report, 2023). As part of the emergency response, the UNHCR implemented water and sanitation projects in addition to projects to facilitate access to clean water and sanitation services urgently, with the arrival of waves of people fleeing from the oppression of ISIS, in this context, (UNHCR report, 2023), mentioned:

"The UNHCR endeavors to enhance sanitary conditions in settings characterized by population movement as well. The organization allocates substantial resources towards the creation and maintenance of handwashing stations, bathing facilities, and latrines in order to meet the requirements of persons. The primary objective of these tools is to assist the adoption of behaviors that promote health and reduce the spread of illnesses" (UNHCR Report, 2023).

Based on the information provided by the UNHCR itself, it is indicated that all refugees 100 per cent surveyed have reported that they were able to access to adequate handwashing facilities. (UNHCR's Annual Result Report, Iraq 2022) (Appendix, E). The WASH Sector has emphasized implementing sustainable solutions in refugee camps and neighboring places. This includes initiatives at empowering local people and refugees and enhancing local authorities' capacities to deliver WASH services effectively. Furthermore, according to the UNHCR 3RP 2023 report, a significant majority of refugees, namely 97%, indicated that they had sufficient access to soap and disinfection. as UNHCR's senior management confirms: "...when we offer people to leave the camps, even with some incentives to integrate with the urban settings, this is not very appealing to them because the level of support in the camps is higher than what they could find in the urban setting." (UNHCR senior management, personal communication, 2023).

2.3 Education

I. General Educational support

In regards to the education, In Iraq operation, the UNHCR focused on adequate solutions to improve access to education, particularly on primary school children and adolescents. The UNHCR plans and implements the response with official authorities, the Federal Ministry of

Education, the Ministry of Education in the KRI, non-governmental organizations and schools to support the infrastructure of education in refugee camps or urban areas that receive refugees. includes supporting the schools and providing a safe environment for learning, capacity building and training for teachers to improve their skills, and evaluating the quality of the educational process in refugee communities.

II. DAFI Scholarship Programme

The DAFI (Albert Einstein German Academic Refugee Initiative) The scholarship program is a key part of the strategy to help more young women and men refugees enrol in higher education by 2030.

"We have quite a strong DAFI scholarship programme in Federal Iraq, and this year we even went a little bit out Baghdad. We have now students from Salahuddin, also in the DAFI scholarship cohort and more importantly We also have a DAFI scholarship club" (Kubanychbekova, personal communication, 2023)

In this context, the UNHCR has supported the establishment of this DAFI club, where the DAFI students assemble together and developed different initiatives, supporting their own communities. So, for example, in Baghdad we have a new Community support center and in the Community Centre we have a DAFI club space. It's a dedicated space for the scholarship, for the students to come to mix and mingle with each other, to share their experiences, to learn from each other. (Baktygul Kubanychbekova, Head of office of Baghdad- UNHCR, 2023). Within the research findings 64% of the respondents confirmed that they had enrolled in education, while 36% indicated that they had not enrolled in education, for various reasons, including taking care of a family member or other reasons.

2.4 Health Services

I. Access to health services

Ensuring access is a crucial aspect of healthcare provision. Syrian refugees possess the right to equitable access to healthcare services comparable to those provided to the host community. (DoH) is responsible for providing primary health care services, which are further supplemented by the assistance of UN agencies and International NGOs (PHCCs) located in refugee camps. Additionally, public health services at all levels are easily accessible to all refugees residing in urban areas (appendix E attached).

II. Integration of health services

Since the public health services are accessible to all Syrian refugees, the integration of the PHCCs in the camps into the existing national health system, when it's feasible, is considered a long-term and more sustainable response to refugees' health needs In the inclusion strategy, there is an ongoing process of integrating camp-based Primary Health Care Centers (PHCC) into the health services of metropolitan areas. This integration is expected to take place gradually throughout 2023 and 2024, with the aim of providing healthcare services to both

local people and refugees. The COVID-19 vaccination plan in Iraq includes refugees, ensuring that they have free access to public COVID-19 services without any restrictions. In addition to the standard primary health care services, preventive health care services are available in each camp PHC for children under five years of age through the access to Expanded Program for Immunization (EPI) and growth monitoring services. According to the 3RP UNHCR report, 73 per cent of refugees reported relying on public health care services vs 48 per cent from host communities. The (UNHCR Iraq achievements fact sheet, 2022) shows that Refugees, both inside and outside of camps, received a total of 270,000 medical consultations. Additionally, 4,400 refugees were provided with mental health and psychosocial support.

2.5 Protection Services (Child, Women, GBV)

As part of the legal and protection response, the UNHCR protection team is working to ensure the prevention of refoulement, arbitrary detention and legal assistance for refugees and asylum seekers, to find durable solutions. The UNHCR employs a rights and community-based approach to address the protection needs of vulnerable groups. It also places importance on inclusion in national child protection efforts and collaborates with education providers to safeguard children. As children make up over half of those under its mandate, UNHCR recognizes child and women protection as a top priority. The agency is dedicated to ensuring the effective protection of these categories. UNHCR works through the intentional standards and tools to provide the various approaches of protection, (appendix F attached).

The efforts of UNHCR in the field of protection continue to achieve a sustainable impact on the refugee and Iraq displaced condition and ability to access their rights; based on that UNHCR is advocating more effective legislations, as UNHCR efforts with the Iraqi government on the National Strategy to Combat Violence against Women (2018-2023). Despite that, the National GBV and CP legal framework remains weak. (UNHCR senior management personnel, personal communication, 2023). Since the start of 2022, the Agency has announced that over seventy-four thousand civil documents to IDPs and returnees were issued. (UNHCR Iraq factsheet, 2022). Furthermore, UNHCR was advocating for the most important legislation bill of refugee in Iraq;

“...the other advocacy that we are doing, we're working on the refugee bill and the administrative instructions both for KRI and Federal Iraq This advocacy that you are referring to that just items sequencing refugees should be recognized by the government and should have the right to work and the basic social economic rights.” As per Baktygul Kubanychbekova, Head of office of Baghdad-UNHCR. (Kubanychbekova, Personal communication, 2023)

It is evident that the UNHCR is making serious efforts to establish a strong legal framework for the protection of refugees in Iraq. Despite the challenges faced so far, the Agency stays committed to prioritizing this objective.

3. Challenges Faced by the UNHCR in Iraq

I. Security Challenges and Humanitarian Access

The scale of challenges facing the UNHCR has rapidly increased with the rise in waves of refugee at the globally and regionally, in addition to the conflicts and attacks that have caused the displacement of nearly two million people inside Iraq. Security concerns and the difficulty of humanitarian access are considered a major challenge, as Iraq has suffered in recent years from conflicts. And battles and security disturbances, which made it difficult for the UNHCR to reach some areas of need. Security risks not only threaten the safety of UNHCR staff and its partners, but also threaten their ability to help those in need (UNHCR, 2023a). The UNHCR has been forced to stop or postpone some operations in troubled areas due to serious security concerns.

II. Funding Shortage

Due to multiple waves of displacement in Iraq, there has been a rise in the number of groups demanding aid. The current funding is insufficient to cover to the growing needs of the millions of displaced (UNHCR, 2023a). the lack of adequate resources has increased pressure on UNHCR 's ability to meet the needs of refugees and displaced persons.

III. Political Complexities

The difficulty of dealing with the political complications in Iraq, with the multiplicity of parties that control the cities, the cause of additional challenges to humanitarian access and additional problems for the displaced, some of which are of a political nature, all of these factors affected the possibility of a better response, access to some areas requires coordination With multiple parties that may not respond to government approvals in the first place, which takes a longer time for negotiation, political and security restrictions have contributed to the complexity of the UNHCR 's mission in humanitarian access, support for the rights of refugees and displaced persons, or the implementation of government-approved return projects for the displaced.

IV. Protracted Displacement and Complex Needs

The challenges facing the UNHCR are intensified by the protracted humanitarian catastrophe in Iraq. Security instability and protracted displacement, with many people living in overcrowded camps or informal settlements (UNHCR, 2023a). Meeting the long-term needs and sustainable solutions of the displaced need plans, resources, organization, serious government cooperation and various partnerships with the actors. UNHCR must negotiate to smooth over obstacles, endorse a participatory approach and plan for long-term options such as voluntary return, local integration, or resettlement.

V. The 2014 Displacement Crisis

In fact, 2014 is considered as the most difficult year for Iraq, as the country faced waves of a serious displacement crisis after the rise of the ISIS and the collapse of Iraq's security forces in

many governorates, which pushed millions of Iraqis to flee and leave their homes, towns looking for a safe place, the UNHCR formed a comprehensive urgent response to the humanitarian crisis. to provide Aid and assistance to the displaced people.

Following the 2014 crisis, the UNHCR kept working to support IDPs and vulnerable people. The agency initiated various initiatives and projects to assess the urgent and durable requirements of displaced people. And design the solutions accordingly, furthermore, the agency highly engages with International and local NGOs in coordination with the Iraqi government and the KRG, to ensure an effective response, The priority for addressing the displaced people's urgent needs was finding shelter, providing basic relief supplies, and providing access to healthcare.

VI. Ongoing Response and Coordination

The coordination of the UNHCR 's reaction with other organizations and partners was crucial. To plan measures, share information, and allocate resources, the organization actively collaborated with the Iraqi government, local authorities, and humanitarian players. To fully help those who have been displaced, collaboration was expanded to encompass protection, water and sanitation, health, and education (UNHCR, 2023a). Additionally, the UNHCR collaborated with civil society groups to create community-based initiatives to ensure that impacted communities were included in the response.

VII. The Impact of UNHCR assistance

The assistance of the UNHCR was essential during the 2014 crisis in Iraq. The organization had a vital role in protecting the rights of the displaced, offering assistance to those in need of humanitarian aid, and supporting vulnerable communities. (UNHCR, 2023a). as a result of the UNHCR efforts in Shelter, water sanitation, and education, the essential services including water, sanitation, education, and healthcare are now more readily accessible in camps and other informal settlements as a result of UNHCR initiatives, which improved living conditions. The organization plans to encourage host community initiatives that would aid in displaced people's social integration.

UNHCR faced significant obstacles while carrying out their activities due to the complexity of the crisis. Additionally, there was a shortage of funding and access concerns. Access issues made it difficult for the agency to assist everyone who needed assistance in multiple conflict-affected areas. Additionally, given the duration of the issue surrounding displacement, continued assistance and long-term solutions were required in addition to emergency humanitarian relief (UNHCR, 2023a).

4. The impact of USA administration decision on the international organizations and UNHCR

The US President Donald Trump's decision to suspend or terminate the US funds provided to the international organization and UN agencies, is considered as shock to the international

community, as the United States consider as the main donor for humanitarian efforts. (Focus 2030, 2025).

This decision represents a turning point in humanitarian work, it has placed international organizations before a major challenge to restructure their programs to adapt to the new situation. According to the UNHCR report 2023, the total fund by the United States to the UNHCR were 1.7 billion dollars (UNHCR,2023) If this funding is suspended, primary health care, education, and legal protection programs that benefit millions of refugees around the world are expected to be affected (Human Rights Watch, 2024).

The secretary general of the United Nations expressed serious concern about the information indicate that many humanitarian and development organization has minimize its operations due to critical cuts in funding by the United States. As the decision impact a wide range of critical programmes. Starting from lifesaving aid, to support for vulnerable communities recovering from conflict or disasters. the consequences will be especially devastating for vulnerable people around the world. In Afghanistan, more than 9 million people will miss out on health and protection services, with hundreds of mobile health teams and other services suspended. In north-east Syria, where 2.5 million people need assistance, the absence of US funding means programmes are leaving large populations even more vulnerable. (United Nations Secretary-General, 2025)

The consequences of the funding suspension have already begun to reflect on main sectors. the suspension of funding is already impacting key sectors, health services in refugee camps, education programs for Syrian children, resettlement programs and legal aid for Iraqi internally displaced all affected by reductions. UNHCR plans to cut 30% of its staff by year's end, a move that will severely affect vulnerable categories dependent on these crucial services (Senior Programme Officer, UNHCR, personal communication, 2025). Based on that the international organization and the UNHCR specifically should aim to raise funding from other sources to adapt this critical situation, furthermore humanitarian organizations are expected to face difficulties in implementing relief operations, which could lead to increased poverty rates, affecting humanitarian conditions in refugee camps. As a result, the international community should hold the responsibility to mobilize the efforts to provide the lifesaving funds to the humanitarian agencies immediately.

5. Conclusion

This research was about the role of the UNHCR in protecting the refugees and the IDPs in Iraq. The main question was whether the UNHCR succeeded in achieving its goals and mandates in Iraq.

Despite all challenges including the funding and political issues, the UNHCR 's efforts improved the situation of refugees and IDPs in Iraq, these include innovative approaches to register refugees, providing access to basic services, and create long-term solutions for displaced persons. In addition to that, the research showed that the UNHCR is crucial to Iraq's

refugee and IDP crises for the reason that the agency still functions well, despite challenges, in further ensuring refugees and Iraqi displaced population with shelter, health care, education, and other protection including fundamental requirements and their basic rights. That is why it has significant and effective roles in Iraq. Building on these efforts, the UNHCR in Iraq, succeeded in achieving its goals and mandates in Iraq and effectively established an integrated system aimed at protecting refugees and displaced individuals. Being achieved through various basic services provided such as primary healthcare provision, integration into national education system, and access to water and sanitation services. Furthermore, efforts are made towards strengthening both community-based and nationwide protection mechanisms resulting in progress when it comes to durable solutions while promoting resilience among those affected communities.

Research Findings

1. Humanitarian actors, government institutions, and other interested parties need to know what the UNHCR does in Iraq and how it affects refugees and the IDPs. The research emphasizes how important it is to keep helping UNHCR meet the needs of refugees and people who have been forced to move.
2. Policymakers were not very supportive nor they denied the rights of protecting refugees and make sure they are doing well while making decisions based on research findings. The work of the UNHCR in Iraq shows how important it is to put the rights of refugees and IDPs at the top of the priority, as well as to deal with the reasons why people are forced to displaced. This knowledge could help policymakers come up with policies for the refugee problem that cover everyone, give them enough funds, and make it easier for people from different countries to work together, for instance, the absence of a unified refugee policy between Iraq and Syria has hindered coordinated responses, particularly when refugees cross borders or require legal status in both countries.
3. People around the world at the ground level work together and treat newcomers with dignity. However, at the decision-making level, countries are not working together to solve refugee problems and how important it is for them to keep working together. The results show how important it is to follow the rules set out in international refugee protection treaties and make sure that these laws are actually followed.
4. The UNHCR employed a unique approach that involved collaborating with local authorities aims provide integrated services for refugees, displaced individuals, and the host community. This approach focused on establishing a protection system and essential services in partnership with humanitarian organizations, resulting in a successful transition towards sustainable responses. The statistics presented in this research highlighted the effectiveness of this approach and its possibility to apply in other countries or similar future cases. The ultimate goal was to promote community resilience and support integration efforts.
5. The research specifically presented the challenges and obstacles facing the UNHCR in implementing its humanitarian programs and achieving more sustainable solutions. In its recommendations, the study highlighted practices to address these problems specifically and pragmatically, and the opportunities to collaborate with the Federal Government, the KRG, and international and local partners. which will ensure a better response to the needs of refugees and facilitate the voluntary return of displaced individuals.

6. The UNHCR worked with the Iraqi government and federal legislative bodies, in addition to the KRG, to find legislative solutions for refugees in Iraq. The agency provided the necessary consultations to formulate administrative orders and regulatory instructions for refugee affairs in the KRI. The agency also provided technical and advisory support to support the draft a bill for a potential refugee law in Iraq in alignment with international law, as the 2020 attempt to pass a refugee law was suspended due to political resistance, related to naturalization and concerns over its impact on Iraq's demographic.
7. The UNHCR succeeded in achieving a smooth transition from the initial aid stage to durable solutions for refugees, this transition can be considered a strategic shift to improve the lives of refugees. The two most major aspects are resettlement in a third country and local integration. The UNHCR, in cooperation with host countries and international partners, has successfully resettled refugees in third countries, providing them with a new start. With regard to local integration, the UNHCR led to strengthen and support local service institutions that contribute to providing basic services such as (primary health care, education, and civil service institutions), as indicated in these results of analysis.

Recommendations

The following recommendations is aiming to address the challenges and obstacles that the UNHCR faced in Iraq operations and to assist the agency in its impact in the country:

1. The Federal Iraqi Government, KRG, policymakers, humanitarian organizations, and other stakeholders need to determine and acknowledge the obstacles and collaborate with the UNHCR for better response. Moreover, to ensure sustainable solutions for refugees and the IDPs, Iraq must effectively admit these challenges. The key findings of this research can offer valuable insights that will assist decision-makers in making practical decisions and enhancing their efforts to provide support for refugees.
2. The experience of the UNHCR in Iraq could be helpful for humanitarian actors that want to improve their work in similar situations. can't emphasize enough about how important results are for better planning and delivery of emergency aid.
3. Strengthening and supporting sustainable solutions: Given that the emergency phase has concluded, the current situation can be evaluated as the initial stage of the recovery process, more focus should be placed on promoting sustainable solutions, and this requires working with international and local partners, the Iraqi Federal government and the KRG. Focusing on sustainable solutions voluntary return, resettlement, and local integration ensuring long-term response and solutions while respecting the needs and rights of refugees.
4. Strengthening cooperation with local and international partners in Iraq. To benefit from the successful experiences in Iraq, the UNHCR should improve its cooperation with international partners, including governments, institutions, international and regional organizations in addition to local governments, non-governmental organizations and activists from the host community. Experience has proven that this cooperation has a high ability to increase coordination and organization of efforts and interventions, sharing of resources, exchange of information and participation in decision-making, and as a result this leads to effective solutions.
5. Strengthening the protection of vulnerable categories UNHCR should be direct intensive focus towards vulnerable groups, including women, children, the elderly, those with disabilities, and survivors of gender-based violence. This necessitates providing customized solutions that cater to their distinct requirements, encompassing domains such as healthcare, education, and employment

prospects. Ensuring the gender sensitivity and inclusivity of protection systems is of utmost importance, as it facilitates the active engagement and empowerment of individuals within refugee and IDP groups.

6. Necessities of approving the refugee law in Iraq: the UNHCR needs to advocate for legislate the refugee law bill In cooperation with NGOs, activists, and civil society, The UNHCR must work mainly and give priority and provide technical and advisory support to the Iraqi government and Parliament in order to pass this law, guarantee the rights of refugees, and provide them with the necessary protection .Strengthening advocacy also requires maintaining contact with local and international media, civic events, and influencers to raise awareness of refugee rights.
7. Initiation a diplomatic advocacy campaign, in cooperation with international stakeholders, to urge the Iraqi government to fulfil its obligations including returning the properties and homes of the IDPS and imposing the rule of law, to follow up and evaluate the work plan for the return of the displaced (Sinjar Agreement) , as this will contribute to the return of hundreds of thousands of displaced people, especially concerning the displaced from Sinjar, and to maintain communication with the IDP's representatives and community committees.
8. Enhance data collection and analysis: The accurate and updated data is essential for UNHCR to successfully plan, make decisions, and monitor activities. To get full and disaggregated data on refugees and internally Displaced Persons, the organization should invest in robust data collection techniques and processes. This includes demographic statistics, protection needs, resource access, and designing sustainable solutions. analysis of this data regularly will provide essential insights for evidence-based programming and focused actions.
9. Strengthen advocacy and diplomatic efforts: The UNHCR should engage in proactive lobbying and diplomacy to remove political hurdles to its activities in Iraq. Fostering dialogue and partnership with host governments, advocating for the rights and protection of refugees and internally displaced people, and raising awareness about challenges confronting displaced people are all part of this, Strong diplomatic intervention may help remove legal and legislative hurdles, promote international humanitarian and human rights laws, and mobilize key parties.

By implementing these recommendations, the UNHCR can improve its operations in Iraq and raise the desired outcomes for refugees and internally displaced people. These recommendations emphasize the importance of collaboration, resource mobilization, vulnerable group protection, sustainable solutions, data-driven decision-making, diplomacy and advocacy efforts. by addressing the issues raised and building on the organization's achievements, UNHCR will be able to better fulfil its mandate and contribute to the well-being and rights of refugees and Iraq's displaced people.

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APPENDIXES

APPENDIX A

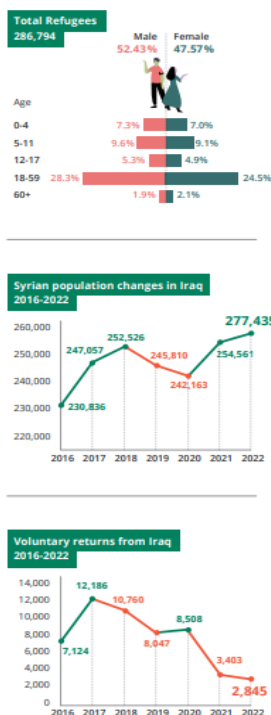
Section form the Iraq Country Chapter 2023-2024 showing the Context of the refugee situation in Iraq

Context



As of 31 January 2023, 258,471 Syrian refugees reside in Iraq, of which 94.5 per cent reside in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI). Iraq also hosts 28,323 refugees from amongst others Türkiye, Iran and Palestine. Most Syrian refugees (64 per cent) reside outside of camps, included in local communities, and share public services with local and/or other displaced communities, covering their living expenses and contributing to the local economy while 36 per cent resides across the nine refugee camps established by the KRG at the onset of the influx. Local authorities and host communities remain very accommodating towards the refugee population; less than two per cent of refugees reported feeling unwelcomed by host communities in both 2020 and 2021 MSNA, indicating high levels of social cohesion and acceptance.

Border crossings for the sake of seeking asylum in Iraq/KRI remain closed to date, and limited arrivals are expected through irregular means given these are dangerous routes and, in some instances, complications to regularise the stay after such entry. The situation in North-East Syria (NES) remains volatile and will continue to be monitored for a possible influx of refugees. Spontaneous voluntary returns to Syria, via the Peshkhabour border in Duhok, have been in steady decline since early 2020, mainly due to the overall deterioration of the security, human rights, and economic situation in NES, temporarily influenced by border restrictions due to COVID-19.



Source: The 3RP report UNHCR 2023

APPENDIX B

IMPACT AREA: SECURING SOLUTIONS

By 2024, forcibly displaced and stateless persons are able to secure sustainable and adequate solutions that guarantee their rights and allow them to realize their potential.

Indicators	Population Type	Baseline (2022)	Actual (2022)
4.1 Number of refugees who voluntarily return in safety and dignity to their country of origin. [RF/GCR 4.2.1]	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	4,000	2,845
4.2a Number of PoC who departed on resettlement. [GCR 3.1.1]	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	1,000	835
4.2b Number of PoC who departed through complementary pathways	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	10	137
4.3a Number of stateless persons for whom nationality is granted or confirmed.	Stateless Persons	500	160

Source: (UNHCR's Annual Result Report, Iraq 2022)

APPENDIX C

Forcibly displaced and stateless persons enjoy non-discriminatory access to effective protection in Iraq, including through identification, quality registration, and timely issuance of documentation.

Indicators	Population Type	Baseline (2022)	Target (2022)	Actual (2022)
1.1 Proportion of refugees and asylum seekers registered on an individual basis.	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	98.44%	100.00%	100.00%
1.2 Proportion of children under 5 years of age whose births have been registered with a civil authority. [SDG 16.9.1 - Tier 1]	IDPs	0.83%	70.50%	0.53%
1.2 Proportion of children under 5 years of age whose births have been registered with a civil authority. [SDG 16.9.1 - Tier 1]	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	85.21%	87.00%	85.21%
1.3 Proportion of PoC with legally recognized identity documents or credentials [GCR 4.2.2].	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	98.77%	100.00%	98.77%

Source: (UNHCR's Annual Result Report, Iraq 2022)

APPENDIX D

Forcibly displaced and stateless persons enjoy non-discriminatory access to effective protection in Iraq, including through identification, quality registration, and timely issuance of documentation.

Indicators	Population Type	Baseline (2022)	Target (2022)	Actual (2022)
1.1 Proportion of refugees and asylum seekers registered on an individual basis.	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	98.44%	100.00%	100.00%
1.2 Proportion of children under 5 years of age whose births have been registered with a civil authority. [SDG 16.9.1 - Tier 1]	IDPs	0.83%	70.50%	0.53%
1.2 Proportion of children under 5 years of age whose births have been registered with a civil authority. [SDG 16.9.1 - Tier 1]	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	85.21%	87.00%	85.21%
1.3 Proportion of PoC with legally recognized identity documents or credentials [GCR 4.2.2].	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	98.77%	100.00%	98.77%

Source: (UNHCR's Annual Result Report, Iraq 2022)

APPENDIX E

By 2024, the people we serve are able to access quality services in Iraq that meet their basic needs and reduce their vulnerability.

Indicators	Population Type	Baseline (2022)	Actual (2022)
2.2 Proportion of PoCs residing in physically safe and secure settlements with access to basic facilities	IDPs	100%	68.01%
2.2 Proportion of PoCs residing in physically safe and secure settlements with access to basic facilities	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	100%	69.44%
2.3 Proportion of PoC with access to health services	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	100.00%	100.00%

Source: (UNHCR's Annual Result Report, Iraq 2022)

APPENDIX F

Gender-sensitive and inclusive protection including gender-based violence prevention, mitigation, and response services, are progressively expanded and improved to address needs of the people we serve.

Indicators	Population Type	Baseline (2022)	Target (2022)	Actual (2022)
4.1 Proportion of PoC who know where to access available GBV services	IDPs	Unknown	80.00%	71.61%
4.1 Proportion of PoC who know where to access available GBV services	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	24.02%	80.00%	88.26%
4.2 Proportion of POCs who do not accept violence against women.	IDPs	Unknown	20.00%	85.27%
4.2 Proportion of POCs who do not accept violence against women.	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	Unknown	20.00%	92.21%
4.3 Proportion of survivors who are satisfied with SGBV case management services.	IDPs	Unknown	85.00%	99.71%
4.3 Proportion of survivors who are satisfied with SGBV case management services.	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	Unknown	85.00%	98.47%

Source: (UNHCR's Annual Result Report, Iraq 2022)