


IRAQ

COMMUNITY RESOURCE CENTRE INITIATIVE

KEYWORDS:

AREA-BASED APPROACH, COMMUNITY RESOURCE CENTRE, ASSISTANCE / SERVICES MAPPING, INFORMATION PROVISION/ REFERRAL, COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT, SUSTAINABLE RETURN AND REINTEGRATION, GOVERNMENT COLLABORATION

CAUSE OF DISPLACEMENT	Conflict	
DATE OF EVENT CAUSING DISPLACEMENT	2013 - present	
PEOPLE DISPLACED	Total: approx. 2 million ¹ , Returnees: 4 million ²	
PROJECT LOCATION	Anbar, Diyala, Kirkuk, Ninewa and Salah al-Din	
PROJECT DURATION	December 2017- Ongoing	
NUMBER OF PEOPLE TARGETED BY THE PROJECT	9,000-10,000 beneficiaries ³	
CCCM COORDINATION MECHANISM	Cluster activated	

SUMMARY:

Centred around the strategy of Community Resource Centres (CRCs) as outreach hubs in the main governorates of return, Anbar, Diyala, Kirkuk, Ninewa and Salah al-Din. This coordination framework in partnership with the Joint Coordination and Monitoring Center (JCMC), on behalf of the Iraqi Government and in support of humanitarian and recovery/stabilization partners was charged with the establishment and operation of a network of CRCs to facilitate service delivery through information provision, referral to service providers and community engagement to support the safe, voluntary, non-discriminatory and sustainable returns and reintegration of mixed populations.





Community Resource Centre in Mosul, Iraq

CONTEXT

BACKGROUND

Following the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant's (ISIL) defeat in Iraq in December 2017, the country started to transition to a post-conflict context, characterized by recovery efforts and large-scale return and dynamic displacement trends. According to the Humanitarian Needs Overview (HNO 2019), in late December 2017, for the first time since the displacement crisis began in December 2013, there were more returnees (3.2 million individuals) than people displaced (2.6 million individuals) in Iraq. By the end of October 2018, more than 4 million displaced people returned home. Despite the scale of overall returns, more than 1.9 million individuals remain displaced, 50% of whom have been displaced for more than three years. Significant numbers of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) were women and children. A substantial majority of displaced people (71 per cent/1,5 million) reside outside of the camps, dispersed into urban and peri-urban context in informal settlements and in rented/ hosted apartments mostly within the Kurdistan Region of Iraq and Ninewa governorate. These 2 million IDPs are relatively evenly split between being displaced within their governorates of origin (49 per cent) and in other governorates (51 per cent).

CONTEXT

In general, conditions in the areas of return have dramatically affected the capacity for IDPs to return due to the widespread destruction of housing and physical infrastructure, overall conditions of safety and security in the area (including explosive remnants of war (ERW), armed groups controlling the areas), access to basic services such as shelter (including unresolved land/property issues), water and sanitation, health and education, as well as livelihoods opportunities (self-reliance).⁴ IDPs returning home to the main return governorates of Anbar, Diyala, Kirkuk, Ninewa and Salah al-Din have been identified as being particularly vulnerable and cite damage and destruction to housing (71 per cent)⁵; lack of job opportunities (54 per cent); and lack of safety in their locations of origin (40 per cent); as the main obstacles to return.⁶

PROJECT

PROTECTION COMPONENT

The HNO 2019 stated multiple pressing protection concerns remain including retaliation against people with perceived affiliations to extremist groups; ethno-sectarian violence; forced, premature and obstructed returns; a lack of civil documentation; IDPs and returnees who require specialized psychosocial support; high UXO (Unexploded ordnance) contamination of land (including private houses); as well as housing, land and property issues.⁷ People perceived to be affiliated with extremist groups are among the most vulnerable, along with women, children, people with disabilities and the elderly. The governorates of high returns of Ninewa, Kirkuk, Salah al-Din and Anbar show the highest number of conflict-affected children at risk.

CRC STRATEGY

As people return to their areas of origin, there was a need to ensure that the conditions were improved to create a conducive environment to achieve durable solutions to displacement. In response, a nationwide CRC initiative was launched in Dec. 2017.⁸ This initiative formulated a coordination framework centered around the establishment and operation of area-based Community Resource Centres (CRC) - outreach hubs - in the governorates experiencing the highest return rates⁹ to support recovery and stabilization approaches that provide longer term sustainable solutions. The CRC has been a part of CCCM's approach to camp-like and non-camp (including urban) settings,¹⁰ implementing an area-based multi-sectoral approach, to offer a service delivery mechanism that facilitates safe, voluntary, non-discriminatory and sustainable returns and reintegration of mixed populations. The CRC network supports humanitarian services and acted as a link between humanitarian and recovery activities serving as community-based coordination, information, and referral hubs where all community members (IDPs, returnees and host communities) can receive information on available services and assistance for their reintegration processes/efforts.

The CRCs established a physical presence within the communities in an easily accessible distance by the community. The CRCs offer workspaces and facilities to assist service delivery actors including governmental, international and non-governmental institutions to reach the dispersedly located conflict affected population. Depending on the area facilities include such as information desks and open internet access, community multipurpose rooms (separate women and men meeting rooms), as well as rooms for training and referrals.

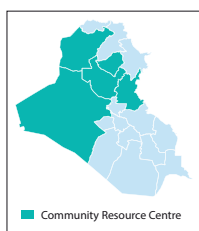
SELECTION OF BENEFICIARIES AND CRC CATCHMENT AREAS

The CRC strategy took an area-based approach to beneficiary selection through the strategical selection and location of CRCs in the most affected governorates by conflict, displacement and return. Areas were selected where high return has already been witnessed or was expected in the near future. Based on participatory assessments¹¹ neighbourhoods "catchment areas" were mapped out for establishment of CRCs. Within these catchment areas, the services of the CRCs were accessible by all individuals regardless of their status (including IDPs, returnees and host communities).

Operating under the coordination of the steering committee, each established CRC was operationalized flexibly by its implementing partner to respond to the specific needs and requests by the community, while maintaining the minimum agreed Basic Activities Set (BAS). This included the identification of locations for priority interventions, providing information, consultations and referral to beneficiaries, supporting community engagement in access to information and service provision, providing two-way information access and dissemination to affected communities (Communication with Communities (CwC); Complaints and feedback mechanisms, etc), supporting multi-sectoral coordination among humanitarian and recovery/stabilization actors and liaison with government, promoting an area-based approach to displacement management (mapping assistance and services provided in CRC catchment areas/ Monitor assistance provision and living conditions).



Community Resource Centre in Mosul, Iraq



The map is for illustration purposes only. Names and boundaries on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by IOM and the CRC Implementing Partners.

Map of Community Resource Centres (CRC) in regions of Iraq.

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IMPLEMENTATION

To date,¹² a total of 9,758 beneficiaries¹³ have participated in activities, sought advice or referrals in the 11 operational CRCs and outreach hubs. The CRCs have provided a range of services and programmes across the neighbourhoods in the five Governorates,^{14, 15} which at the time of project development hosted 97% of returnees.¹⁶ Activities in the individual CRCs have been tailored to the specific context and needs of the local population. Overall, protection¹⁷ activities, community engagement, referral, complaints and feedback mechanisms as well as livelihoods activities were prioritised. Activities included case management, legal assistance (awareness, consultation and representation), recreational and life skills activities for children, youth and adults, etc. Emphasis was placed on Gender-Based Violence (GBV) awareness sessions and women's participation through Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and awareness campaigns on topics of importance to the women in the community, such as early marriage, access to income generating activities for women and empowering adolescent girls.

Access to employment/livelihood opportunities was one of the three main concern of IDPs¹⁸ and returnees alike. To support the local population in re-establishing livelihoods activities, the CRCs offered a spectrum of livelihoods activities, such as application for grants and creation of business grants,¹⁹ internet access and computer/ IT courses, educational trainings²⁰ and vocational training and job searches.

Neighbourhood committees were established, that are (to a certain degree) representative of the population within the catchment area. These committees meet regularly with stakeholders of their choosing, receive capacity building and lead/active role on community support/improvement projects. In addition, the CRC Chairs in partnership with the National Protection Cluster and CwC task Force have worked on providing a general protection training to all CRC Staff, covering general protection concepts, protection mainstreaming accessibility, participation and empowerment and legal/humanitarian frameworks.



Coordination meeting between implementing partners, community and local authority.

ONLINE PLATFORM AND NETWORKING CRCS

As part of the CRC Steering Committee and to ensure a common approach, an online platform was developed, including a service mapping tool and referral pathway to be used by all CRC partners within their CRC catchment areas. The aim of the tool was to have a comprehensive view of which partners are operating where, and which services are available in CRC catchment areas from the humanitarian actors and government. Beyond that, the tool aimed to provide information on beneficiary eligibility criteria, the duration of the projects, contact details and other key information. This tool also aimed to support actors' capacity in absorbing referrals from the CRCs. The platform planned to create an accessible database for other service providers, Clusters and government departments, communities to make the current activities visible and facilitate strengthening of coordination of their services and established links with the CRCs as local coordination platforms, increasing the outreach of the physical centres beyond their specific locality.

IMPACTS OF THE PROJECT

To date, the CRC initiative facilitated a mechanism to work closely with the Government at the national level (JCMC) as well as the local level, with the aim to plan for an effective and sustainable hand-over of the project. The CRCs have established a platform for community engagement that targets the needs of the community holistically rather than based on displacement status or sectoral needs. Neighbourhood committees were gradually becoming the bridge between the community and humanitarian/development actors for information sharing, raising of gaps/needs and community referrals of cases. The impact of this was to gradually reduce dependence on outside support.

ACHIEVEMENTS, CHALLENGES AND LESSONS LEARNED

ACHIEVEMENTS

- Communities have begun to regain/ establish trust in humanitarian actors, through the CRCs presence, continued services/activity provision²¹ and prompt actions on complaints and referrals.
- Neighbourhood committees have been strengthened and were actively involved in programme design and activity implementation.²²
- Good working relationships have been established by the CRCs operating agencies with other humanitarian actors,²³ who have shown goodwill to operate from the CRCs or receiving referrals from the CRCs.

CHALLENGES

- Availability of funding to establish and sustain current CRC as well as the short funding cycles of 12 month has been a challenge. Donors had limited understanding of the scope and strategy of CRCs and the need for multi-year, multi-sectoral funding in areas of intervention in order to achieve a sustainable impact.
- Setting up effective referral pathways was hindered by a lack of available services as well as service providers operating in the predominately urban CRCs' catchment areas. Service providers have specific beneficiary criteria,²⁴ that need to be clearly understood and communicated to the community to avoid miscommunication and undermining of carefully built trust relationships.
- Development of a sustainable hand-over strategy of the CRCs to the JCMC or other local NGOs/CBOs was challenging in respect of capacity as well as securing longer-term funding to maintain the CRCs facilities, staffing, as well as established activities.

LESSONS LEARNED

- Careful selection of catchment area for CRCs was essential to coincide with ongoing analysis of whether or not other humanitarian/NGO actors were present in the area, as opening a CRC in areas with no other organizational presence or plans could result in a lack of referral partners and service provision; ultimately undermining the core objective of building trust with the community and handing over the centres to the government/ local communities or local organizations.
- CRCs were structures that link humanitarian interventions with development initiatives and are not to be implemented as emergency, one-off or stand-alone. It has become clear that an ongoing dialogue with the donor community was required to allow for multi-year and multi-sectoral funding for the establishment for a meaningful community participation and build capacity of the community and government representatives to work towards a sustainable hand-over of the CRCs from the beginning. Humanitarian and development donors need to speak more clearly to each other as well as be transparent towards actors on the ground regarding future plans, so that early recovery programming such as the CRCs does not fall through the humanitarian – development crack.
- **Managing expectations** of communities from the onset was vital for the effective functioning of the CRC in the community. Key messaging and referral timeframe setting were developed and coordinated with the wider humanitarian community (e.g.: Iraq IDP Information Centre, relevant Clusters, etc.).
- **Increased information sharing of the CRC catchment areas' activities with the wider humanitarian and development community**, emphasized the CCCM responsibility of monitoring and advocacy as well as the CRC SC Chairs' role to advocate with recovery, stabilization and development actors outside of the scope of the cluster system. The CCCM background proved important to the CRC initiative to advocate other service providers to improve their community engagement and communication with communities.
- **Continuous close working relationship with government and local authorities** was essential to ensure government services were provided, and referrals can be accepted and sustainable handover processes are achieved.

¹ HNO 2019

² As above

³ Estimated number of beneficiaries coming to the 11 operational CRCs at time of writing.

⁴ Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM), sector specific assessments, in agreement with the JCMC. [DTM Return Index](#)

⁵ Anbar, Kirkuk, Ninewa and Salah al-Din

⁶ ILA III. Intentions surveys conducted by CCCM Cluster and REACH in August 2018 with 94,000 households in 128 formal camps confirm the key findings of ILA III (conducted through key informants) on livelihoods, safety and shelter, but provide more granularity on the issues related to safety, among them fear of discrimination, fear or trauma associated to returning, contamination with explosive hazards and lack of security forces.

⁷ HNO 2019

⁸ PCRC steering Committee established.

⁹ Anbar, Diyala, Kirkuk, Ninewa and Salah al-Din

¹⁰ [Urban Displacement and Out-of-Camp \(UDOC\) review](#)

¹¹ Either organization-specific or through the Area Based Assessment from the REACH Initiative.

¹² February 2019

¹³ Monthly CRC report feb. 2019

¹⁴ As of Dec 2018

¹⁵ namely Anbar, Ninewa, Salah-al-Din, Kirkuk and Diyala.

¹⁶ IOM Iraq Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM), Round 83, November 2017.

¹⁷ Except GBV and other sensitive protection services. These are referred outside of the CRCs.

¹⁸ IOM Integrated Location Assessment (ILA) Round III, 2018.

¹⁹ Pitching under EOI (Expression of Interest of Enterprise development Fund).

²⁰ Courses on improving handwriting in Arabic language, catch up classes for high school.

²¹ The attendance rates to the centres has remained high, not witnessing the expected dramatic drop-off after the initial month after opening.

²² E.g.: Women's Committee in NRC's center in West Mosul, who regularly raise community concerns and influence programming.

²³ The CRC operating agencies has building strong relationships among actors operating within the CRCs catchment areas and through the coordination of different meetings and building good working relationships with Sectors, Clusters and governmental departments.

²⁴ Or lack of funds and capacity to accept referrals.