

Rapid Overview of Areas of Return (ROAR)

Villages south of Baquba city

Diyala Governorate, Iraq - November 2018

FOR HUMANITARIAN PURPOSES ONLY



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Overview

Baquba district is located in the southwest of Diyala governorate. The capital of the district - and the governorate - is Baquba city, which is situated approximately 60 kilometres northeast of Baghdad. The assessed area covers a cluster of villages situated between 45 and 25 kilometres south of Baquba city (see Map 1). There are no reliable estimates of the population of Baquba city or Baquba district. In 2007, estimates of the population of the district ranged from 135,291 to 627,000 individuals.¹ There is little information available about the ethnic composition of Baquba district specifically but Diyala governorate is said to be home to a mix of Sunni Arabs and Turkmen (60%), Shia Arabs and Turkmen (25%), and Kurds (15%), with Baquba city reportedly being home to a majority of Sunni Arabs.²

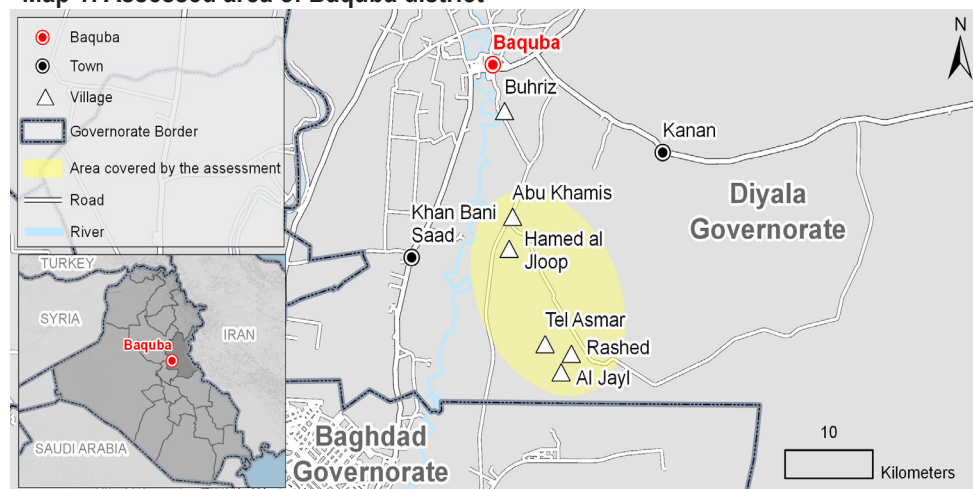
In June 2014, the so-called Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) entered Baquba district and while it carried out some attacks on Baquba city, it never established control over it.³ The Government of Iraq (GoI) declared to have re-established control over Diyala governorate in January 2015.⁴ However, at least until the end of 2015, multiple ISIL attacks took place in the country side south of Baquba city.⁵

The current assessment has focused on the rural area south of Baquba city between the cities of Buhriz, Khan Bani Saad, and Kanan, and centred around the village of Abu Khamis (see Map 1).⁶ The area is closely connected the Buhriz, just south of Baquba city, as residents reportedly travel there to access services, such as healthcare and education. One key informant (KI) estimated that there are at least 18 villages, most of which are home to one extended family. Agriculture was said to be the main source of income for these families.

This location was chosen because a significant number of individuals were said to have displaced from the assessed area in 2015 due to the presence of ISIL.⁷ As of October 2018, the IOM Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) had not recorded any returnees in Baquba district and estimated that about 1,000 families from Baquba district remain displaced. However, a KI estimated that 17,000 individuals had displaced from the assessed area and 7,000 individuals had returned at the time of data collection.⁸

Given the limited information available regarding the displacement trends inside and out of Baquba district, and the reasons IDPs remain displaced, REACH – in partnership with the Returns Working Group (RWG) – launched a Rapid Overview of Areas of Return (ROAR) assessment at the end of October 2018, which sought to inform the recovery process in order to support durable and safe returns. The ROAR assessment looks at the motivations behind return, along with the current context related to protection issues, livelihoods, and the provision of basic services in areas of Iraq that are experiencing returns.

Map 1: Assessed area of Baquba district



Key Findings

Priority Needs

KIs from the assessed area were asked which services needed to be restored most urgently and reported that **the improvement of the water system, both for drinking and for irrigation, was their priority need.**

Displacement and Return, Protection Concerns

- Among KIs remaining in displacement (IDP KIs), **the main reasons given for not returning were damaged or destroyed property, a lack of basic services, and insecurity due to the presence of ISIL in the area.**
- KIs who had returned to their area of origin (returnee KIs) reported doing so because of a desire to return home, a lack of livelihoods opportunities in their area of displacement, and better livelihoods opportunities in their area of origin.
- Families with perceived affiliations to extremist groups were reportedly not allowed to return to the area; this was the reason given for why a number of villages remained empty.
- Several KIs indicated that, to their best knowledge, **the GoI had undertaken efforts to clear explosive hazards from the assessed villages and surrounding farmlands, and**

¹Note that there is a lack of clarity concerning the boundaries of Baquba district, which is likely to affect the population figures. For these two estimates see: Interagency Information Unit, 'Diyala Governorate Profile', March 2009; Knights & Mello, 'Losing Mosul. Regenerating in Diyala: How the Islamic State Could Exploit Iraq's Sectarian Tinderbox', October 2016. ²Knights & Mello, 'Losing Mosul. Regenerating in Diyala: How the Islamic State Could Exploit Iraq's Sectarian Tinderbox', October 2016. ³The New York Times, 'As Sunnis Die in Iraq, a Cycle Is Restarting', 17 June 2014. ⁴AFP, 'Iraq forces 'liberate' Diyala province from IS', 26 January 2015. ⁵Knights & Mello, 'Losing Mosul. Regenerating in Diyala: How the Islamic State Could Exploit Iraq's Sectarian Tinderbox', October 2016. ⁶REACH enumerators collected data from 24 KIs with knowledge of the villages of Sheikh Tahmi, Al-Jayl, Sheikh Abbas, Mukhtaha, Al Hamed, Tal Asmar, Hamed Al Jalub, Hosein Yasin, Abu Khamis, Taha Rashed, Hadi al-Mustag, Sheikh Samir, Buhriz, and Hatami. See Map 1 for some of the geographical locations. It was not possible to determine the geographical location of all these villages within the scope of this assessment. This does not mean that there are no other potential areas of displacement in Baquba district, as it was not possible to assess the entire district in this assessment. Multiple KIs did confirm that nobody displaced from Baquba city. ⁸At the time of data collection, it was unclear where this discrepancy comes from. It is possible that some returnees remain registered as IDPs even though they have returned but this was not assessed in the current report. IOM, 'Integrated Location Assessment III', May 2018.

was still conducting regular surveys for newly placed explosive hazards in the area.

Livelihoods

- **Livelihood opportunities were limited in the area, especially due to a lack of water for irrigating farmlands.** All KIs emphasized a sharp decline in the productivity of agricultural activities due to this and the fact that previously provided government subsidies for farmers had stopped following the arrival of ISIL, and had not since resumed.

Access to Basic Services

- **KIs spoke about a number of barriers to accessing education, such as schools having been damaged, distance to schools, and insecurity due to the presence of ISIL.** These barriers were reported to primarily affect middle and high school students.
- **The public water network was reportedly not functioning in the assessed area.** KIs cited multiple reasons for this, including damage to or bad maintenance of infrastructure, as well as low water levels in the nearby Diyala river. Consequently, families from all assessed villages were said to buy drinking water from shops.
- **KIs indicated that the area had two very small health clinics – in Al Jayl and Hamed villages – and that residents travelled to Buhriz or Baquba city for almost all treatment,** as they did before the arrival of ISIL. Due to persistent insecurity, distance to travel (between 20 and 40 km), and poor road conditions, this journey was said to be a significant barrier to accessing healthcare.
- **All assessed villages were said to be connected to the public electricity grid,** with electricity available every day at two hour intervals.
- **Municipal waste disposal services were indicated not to be available in the assessed area** and never had been.

Movement Intentions

Current Trends

At the time of data collection, one KI estimated that about 17,000 individuals, the majority of the population, had displaced from the assessed area. Most individuals reportedly displaced in 2014 or 2015, to Baquba city or nearby Buhriz town, due to the presence of ISIL. At the time of data collection, the same KI reported that about 7,000 individuals had returned to their villages, while the rest remained in displacement. A number of KIs also spoke about instances of secondary displacement, mostly due to people finding their homes destroyed, or because basic services were lacking in their area of origin. Although KIs did not provide estimates, they stated that this generally concerned a small proportion of those who had returned.

Methodology

REACH enumerators collected data from 22 male and two female⁹ key informants (KIs), originating from Abu Khamis and 12 of the surrounding villages.¹⁰ These KIs include eight returnees, four KIs who originate from the area but remain in displacement, three community leaders, and nine KIs with specialist knowledge in one of the sectors covered by the assessment (see Table 1). Respondents were identified through partners operating in the area and REACH KI networks. Data collection took place from 30 October to 5 November 2018 through remote telephone interviews.

Limitations

Findings should be interpreted as indicative rather than statistically generalizable to the assessed area. Furthermore, KIs often provided estimates rather than exact figures, which should also be taken into consideration when interpreting the findings.

Table 1: Number and profession of KIs with specialist knowledge

Area	Number	Profession
Education	3	Teacher and school head masters
Water	2	Government employees
Healthcare	1	Health clinic employee
Protection	1	INGO employee
Electricity	1	Government employee
Livelihoods	1	Government employee

All returnee KIs reported having displaced within the district, with most having gone to Buhriz and some to Baquba and Khan Bani Saad.¹¹ The KIs who had returned to their area of origin said that they had made use of a rental car or their own vehicles to make the journey. Car rental costs were said to be between 50,000 and 150,000 IQD,¹² depending on the size of the rented car and the distance to the area of origin.

One KI noted that it had not been necessary to obtain a security clearance in the past but that, at the time of data collection, people needed one in order to return. Another returnee KI had needed a security clearance from the police station in Buhriz and Baquba in order to return to his area of origin. Clearance was reportedly also needed from certain unspecified armed groups operating in the area.

Why are IDPs not returning?

All four IDP KIs reported the lack of services and damaged or destroyed houses as important reasons for not returning to their area of origin. Two other KIs reported that people were not

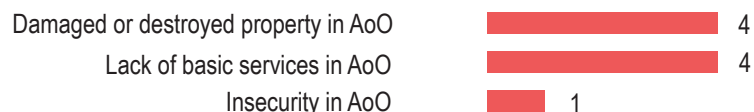
⁹The assessment aimed to have an equal number of male and female KIs. However, given the context in Muqadadiya, only two female KIs could be identified by the assessment team. ¹⁰Reach enumerators spoke to KIs with knowledge of the villages Sheikh Tahmi, Al-Jayl, Sheikh Abbas, Mukhtaha, Al Hamed, Tal Asmar, Hamed Al Jalub, Hosein Yasin, Taha Rashed, Hadi al-Mustag, Sheikh Samir, and Hatami. There are likely other villages in the area facing similar problems but the scope of this report did not allow a full assessment of all villages in the area. ¹¹This is in line with IOM DTM findings that most displacement in Diyala has taken place within the governorate: IOM, 'Displacement Tracking Matrix (Round 105)', October 2018. ¹²Between approximately 42 and 126 USD. Prices converted using www.xe.com on 8 November 2018.

returning to their villages due to the fact that a significant number of houses had been destroyed. IDP and returnee KIs also indicated that the poor condition of access roads was preventing people from returning to their villages as it was almost impossible for a car to pass in some areas.

Although these KIs referred to the low level of services in general, they emphasized the low level of water services for drinking and irrigation as a primary concern, as well as the lack of education services. Focusing on education services, one returnee KI indicated that women and children in particular had continued to remain in displacement in Baquba city and Buhriz, for the children to be able to access secondary school. Conversely, male adults had reportedly been returning, in order to generate income.

Additionally, one IDP KI stated that the poor security situation due to the continued presence of ISIL in the area was his main reason not to return. A number of other KIs confirmed that people are not returning to their villages for this reason, with one noting that security incidents still happen every couple of months. Three returnee KIs reported that families from the area with perceived affiliations to extremist groups were not allowed to return, with one explaining that - as a result - two to three villages remained empty.

Figure 1: Reasons reported by IDP KIs (4 in total) for not returning to their AoOs



Why have people returned?

Returnee KIs were asked what factors had led them to return. The most common responses were a desire to return (reported by five out of eight KIs), a lack of livelihood opportunities or high living expenses in the area of displacement (three out of eight KIs), and better livelihoods opportunities in the area of origin (three out of eight KIs). Returnee KIs reported having no income at all in the area of displacement and having returned with the intention of generating income through farming. However, most returnee KIs indicated that they had generated very little profit, if any. One KI also reported livelihoods as a motivation, having had to return in order to retain his job.

Two KIs reported that they had returned because they had been able to use their own financial means to fix their house. Combined with the fact that many IDP KIs report damaged houses as a barrier to return, this indicates that repairing damaged housing, or promoting livelihoods opportunities for IDPs to gain the financial means to fix their houses, would enable more people to return to their area of origin.

Damage to infrastructure and housing

During the period of ISIL presence, a significant number of houses were indicated to have sustained damage in the villages of Sheikh Tahmi, Sheikh Abbas, Mukhtaha, Al Hamed, Hosein Yasin, Tal Rashed, Hamed and Hadi Al Mustag. Reportedly, the majority or all of the houses sustained damage, with at least part of the houses having been completely destroyed, primarily due to burning. This has reportedly led to overcrowding, with one KI reporting up to five families living in one house.

In addition, multiple KIs reported on the poor condition of the sole access road from Buhriz to the area, especially in winter. The road was indicated to already have been in a bad state before the arrival of ISIL, but had worsened due to conflict. One KI added that unknown armed groups had purposely dug deep holes in the road to make it more difficult for adversaries to pass. The damage was said to be inhibiting people's access to healthcare and education, as well as negatively impacting on their livelihoods opportunities. Furthermore, this was reported by three out of four IDP KIs as a reason for not returning to the area.

Lastly, two returnee KIs and an IDP KI reported that farmlands had been burned and that livestock had been killed during the period of ISIL presence in Hamed, Hadi Al-Mustag, and Tal Rashed. These KIs reported that their agricultural lands remain in a bad state and that they lacked the funds to replace livestock.

Figure 2: Reasons reported by returnee KIs (8 in total) for returning to their AoOs



How are IDPs getting information?

In terms of how KIs obtained information that influenced their decision to either remain in displacement or return to their areas of origin, the most commonly cited source among both IDPs and returnees was through directly visiting their area of origin. Secondly, IDPs and returnees reported getting information through telephone calls with relatives or community leaders in the AoO. No KI reported receiving information through official channels from international or government actors.

Protection Concerns

Perceptions of Safety and Social Cohesion

- All KIs reported feeling safe during the day, both inside and outside their villages, because they felt that sufficient security actors were present in the area. However, seven KIs also reported that they did not feel safe at night due to the presence of ISIL in the area, and that they are afraid to move between villages at night. Two KIs further reported that attacks on villagers were still occasionally taking place. However, KIs that had returned did report that they felt security had improved in the last 12 months due to an increased presence (or establishment) of armed forces. They also linked this to a perceived reduction in ISIL capacity in the area.
- KIs indicated that, to the best of their knowledge, no areas remained contaminated with explosive hazards. Three KIs reported that the Iraqi army had conducted a survey of areas potentially contaminated with explosive hazards. Two of these stated that security forces still conducted daily surveys of areas that could have been contaminated with explosive hazards during the night.
- A KI with expert knowledge on protection issues (protection KI) confirmed that ISIL was still present in the assessed area and that armed clashes between the Iraqi army and ISIL forces were not uncommon.

Actors providing services

Most KIs reported that neither government or humanitarian actors were providing services in their village. However, two KIs indicated that the GoI had distributed school books to some local schools in the last twelve months and provided some financial support to farmers. Only two KIs reported the presence of humanitarian actors, who were said to have undertaken the following activities:

- Assessment of the water infrastructure (Sheikh Tahmi)
- NFI distribution (Sheikh Abbas)

The protection KI indicated that the international organization he was working for did not have access to the area because of security concerns.

Freedom of Movement

- Almost all KIs stated that movement between villages was not permitted at night due to the presence of ISIL. Checkpoints were reportedly closed at night and security forces would send people on the road back to their houses. Two KIs from different villages reported that movement was not permitted within their village at night.
- Multiple KIs reported that these restrictions on movement had negative effects in cases of a medical (or other) emergency. Although some KIs spoke about the possibility to be accompanied by a member of the security forces in case of emergencies at night, other KIs indicated that this was not always possible, or caused significant delays.

Legal Concerns

- KIs reported needing to go to Baquba city to access courts. Baquba city was said to have two courts, one for civil cases and one for criminal cases, which were adequately staffed with judges, lawyers, and prosecutors.
- In addition, residents were also able to file criminal complaints at police stations in Abu Khamis and Buhriz, or at checkpoints close to their village.
- Multiple KIs reported that roughly 50% of people had lost civil documentation when their houses were burned but that it had been easy to replace these documents at the police station or the court. At the time of data collection, all residents were said to have replaced their documentation.
- Two community leaders KIs mentioned that informal dispute resolution mechanisms had been used before or instead of official procedures. The mechanisms named were mediation between heads of families or dispute settlement by the Mukhtar. One KI indicated that the use of these mechanisms had decreased, with residents preferring to utilise the formal legal system in such cases.
- Almost all KIs stated that individuals whose houses were damaged or destroyed did not receive compensation from any sources, nor did any actors provide rehabilitation assistance. Where they had the financial means, residents had reportedly payed for fixing their houses themselves, while those who did not have the means were said to remain in displacement. One community leader KI reported that no compensation had been paid out even though the government had undertaken an assessment of damages to houses. Consequently, damaged housing remains an important barrier to return, especially in light of the lack of livelihoods opportunities or other financial means.

Livelihoods

- The majority of returnee and community leader KIs stated that the lack of livelihood opportunities was a considerable problem in the area. Even though some returnees reported coming back due to perceived livelihoods opportunities in their area of origin, this was relative to a lack of income in their area of displacement. Most returnees indicated that since returning they had only been able to generate a very small amount of income. A KI with specialist knowledge of agriculture in the area (livelihoods KI) indicated that the majority of households did not have sufficient income to meet their needs.
- The main reported sources of income of households in the assessed villages were agriculture and animal husbandry, mostly sheep. Almost the entire population was said to rely on agriculture, as before the arrival of ISIL, but they were generating significantly less income from these activities. The main cited reason for this decline in revenue was the fact that the system for irrigating farmlands had stopped working.¹³ As such, KIs indicated only being able to use rainwater for irrigation. Moreover, the amount of annual rainfall was said to have decreased in recent years, further limiting farming capacity.
- In addition, the livelihoods KI indicated that, at the time of data collection, farmers were receiving much smaller government subsidies, around 25% of the amount received before the arrival of ISIL. Two KIs stated that government support for farmers had stopped completely, with one adding that it was especially difficult to obtain fertilizer and pesticides because of high prices. Multiple KIs reported that all their sheep had been killed or lost when they displaced, with one KI adding that they did not have the financial means to buy new animals.
- In addition, two returnee KIs indicated that the security situation had at times prevented them from selling their harvest in nearby towns or cities, especially with roads sometimes being closed by security forces. One of those KIs did indicate that road closures had reduced in recent months.
- After agriculture, KIs reported daily work as an important source of income, with two KIs stating that residents in their villages had started relying more on daily work because they could not generate enough income from agricultural activities. At the same time, other KIs reported that there was a lack of daily work opportunities, that wages were lower than before ISIL, and that the travel to towns to do daily work was often too long or too expensive. Residents were said to travel to Abu Khamis and mostly to Buhriz for daily work.
- The main financial burdens reported were said to be day-to-day living expenses, the reconstruction of houses, and health care costs. As a primary coping mechanism for a lack of

income, individuals were reportedly resorting to community support, with one KI adding that residents did not have many possessions to sell.

- The above findings point to the fact that people are struggling to generate income, which is particularly problematic in light of their aforementioned financial needs to repair damaged houses and restart farming activities. People are thus likely to benefit from financial support in the area of agricultural equipment and infrastructure.

Improvements Suggested by KIs

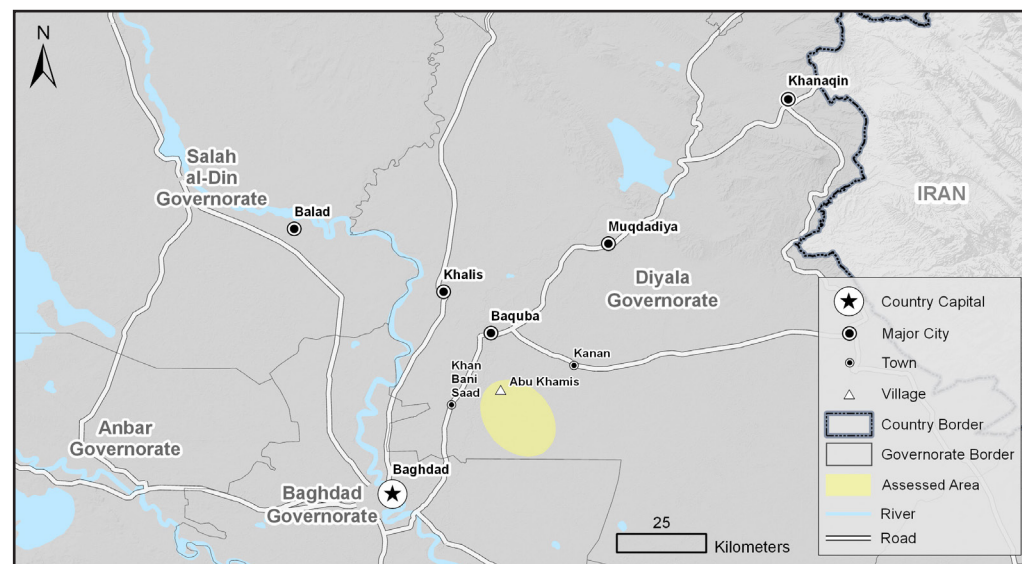
Almost all KIs reported the need to restart the water system for irrigating their farmlands. In addition, KIs reported the need for the condition of the road to be improved. .

Basic Services

Education

- KIs reported having reduced access to primary schools due to damage and insecurity, limited access to middle schools due to distance and insecurity, and almost no access to high schools due to distance and overcrowding.
- A KI with expert knowledge of education services in the area (education KI) stated that about eight to ten schools in the area had been damaged to the point that they were not being

Map 2: The assessed area in relation to Baquba, Baghdad, and Muqdadia



¹³ See below for more information on the causes of this lack of water.

used, and still needed fixing. Primary schools in Sheikh Tahmi and Sheikh Abbas villages had reportedly been burned during the presence of ISIL in the area. In addition, education KIs mentioned that the security situation was preventing some residents from letting their children travel between villages to go to school, as they did before the arrival of ISIL.

- KIs from almost all assessed villages indicated that residents were using rooms in private houses to provide primary education, either because the school building had been damaged or because they could not send their children to schools in other villages due to insecurity. These schools were reportedly staffed with a sufficient amount of government teachers. Some of these schools were said to have enough supplies, while schools in the villages of Al Jayl, Sheikh Abbas, Abu Khamis, Al Jalub, and Mukhtah were said to be missing desks and blackboards.
- For middle schools, students reportedly travelled to Abu Khamis by private cars or by bus. The costs for this transportation were estimated between 15,000 and 40,000 IQD per person per month.¹⁴ Multiple KIs indicated that the cost of transportation and the bad state of the road were preventing students from going to middle schools, which was said to affect girls more than boys.
- For access to a high school, most KIs reported that students had to travel to Buhriz or to Baquba city, although one education KI reported the presence of a high school in Abu Khamis.¹⁵ KIs indicated that the distance was too far to travel daily. As such, students had to stay with relatives in the city or not attend high school.
- Two education KIs did report improvements to education services in the past 12 months, with more books having been distributed, more teachers being present, and the security situation having improved.

Improvements Suggested by KIs

Education KIs indicated the need for school buildings to be rebuilt and for more awareness to be raised among the population about the importance of education, as some families do not see the need to send their children to school. In addition, KIs indicated still having to use a very outdated curriculum due to new books not being distributed, and spoke about the need to update this.

Water

- The majority of assessed villages were reportedly not connected to the public water network; this was the same situation prior to the arrival of ISIL. In the five assessed villages that were reported to have had a connection to the public water network, the provision of water through this network was said to have stopped or to have been reduced. For instance, KIs indicated that water was not reaching Muhktaha and Husein Yasin because water treatment plants (WTP) or pumps had been damaged by ISIL. In Hamed village the public water network was said to reach only a small number of houses due to the generators in the WTP not working adequately. The

provision of water through the public network in Tal Rashed had reportedly stopped for unknown reasons, while in Abu Khamis the network was estimated to reach only half of the houses for unknown reasons.

- In addition, a KI with expert knowledge of water services in the area (water KI) stated that where water was accessible through the public network, it was not clean to drink due to a lack of supplies for water treatment. Furthermore, in recent years, the one source of water, the Diyala river, had become severely polluted by sewage water and salinity.
- As such, all assessed villages were said to rely on other sources of drinking water, primarily by buying it from shops or private trucks. The price of drinking water was stated to be either 500 IQD¹⁶ for a 20-litre jug in a shop or between 5,000 and 10,000 IQD¹⁷ for 1,000 litres of trucked water. Although all assessed villages reportedly have multiple wells, the water from these wells was said not to be potable due to its high salinity. However, people in Tal Rashed and Mukhtaha were said to use filters to clean well water for drinking.
- The water KI indicated that government trucks are supposed to supply water to the assessed villages but only one KI confirmed the possibility to buy water from trucks. He added that the trucks came very rarely due to the poor condition of the road and that they pay 15,000 IQD¹⁸ for 3,000 litre of water.
- According to both water KIs, the aforementioned lack of drinking and irrigation water¹⁹ was caused by several factors. Most importantly, the water level in the Diyala and Qrasan rivers, the main water sources for the area, had significantly reduced in recent years. This was said to be caused by people using wells and taking water from the river directly.²⁰ Secondly, the aforementioned pollution of the Diyala river was said to be so severe that at times the entire water provision had to be cut off. Lastly, four out of eight water pumps in the area were reportedly not functional due to maintenance issues.

Improvements Suggested by KIs

A water KI reported the need for more WTPs in the area to address the levels of pollution from the Diyala river.

Healthcare

- Most assessed villages were reported not to have any healthcare facilities. KIs indicated that there were small public clinics in Al Jayl and Hamed village, which were a maximum 10 km from the other surrounding assessed villages. However, for most treatments, residents were said to travel to Buhriz or Baquba city. KIs stated that Buhriz had at least two to three public clinics and that Baquba had two hospitals and a large number of clinics. Several KIs also reported going to Baghdad for medical treatment.
- The clinic in Al Jayl was said to only provide treatment and medication for very basic illnesses,

¹⁴ Approximately 13 to 33 USD. Converted using www.xe.com on 12 November 2018. ¹⁵ This high school was reportedly severely overcrowded. ¹⁶ Approximately 0.50 USD. Price converted using www.xe.com on 8 November 2018. ¹⁷ Approximately 4 and 8 USD. Prices converted using www.xe.com on 8 November 2018.

¹⁸ Approximately 13 USD. Price converted using www.xe.com on 15 November 2018. ¹⁹ See also the livelihoods section. ²⁰ Secondary sources suggest that the cause may be in dams being build upstream and more erratic rainfall. See, for instance: The Independent, 'Catastrophic drought threatens Iraq as major dams in surrounding countries cut off water to its great rivers', 2 July 2016.

such as the flu, and only to be staffed with a doctor's assistant and nurses. This is reportedly the same as before the arrival of ISIL. The clinic was said to be missing an X-ray machine, a laboratory, and dentistry equipment. KIs indicated that adults pay 2,000 IQD per visit, while it was free for children.²¹

- KIs stated that there was a lack of emergency services in the area. Medical emergencies at night were said to pose a particular challenge because transport costs to Buhriz or Baquba city were extremely high, residents were afraid to go out due to ISIL presence, and they needed to organize a security escort to travel through checkpoints. One KI reported that this had resulted in the death of multiple people, while another said that a number of children had died during birth. It was noted that emergency services had not been available in these areas before the arrival of ISIL.
- A KI with expert knowledge of healthcare issues in the area (healthcare KI) reported that the most common health problems were diabetes, high blood pressure, and heart problems.
- In terms of access to medication, KIs stated that all required medication being available in Buhriz or Baquba city but not in the village clinics, which created challenges due to the poor road conditions and the distance. Two KIs reported that the price of medication had gone up since the arrival of ISIL.

Improvements Suggested by KIs

A healthcare KI reported that the health clinics in the assessed villages needed more supplies and equipment. In addition, there was a need for water access points in the clinics for use in treatments and cleaning.

Electricity

- All KIs reported that residents in their village had access to electricity from the public grid. However, these KIs also indicated that the supply was not sufficient, with the power usually coming on every other two hours. Supply was reportedly particularly challenging in summer and winter months due to people requiring more electricity.
- A KI with expert knowledge on electricity in the area (electricity KI) confirmed the availability of electricity reported by other KIs. He added that the quality of electricity provision was similar to before the arrival of ISIL and that there was no conflict-related damage to the electricity network in the assessed area. He explained that the electricity supply in Diyala governorate came from two main cables, one from Iran and one from Baghdad. The provision through the cable coming from Iran sometimes failed, in part due to attacks on the infrastructure, at which point the cable from Baghdad could not cope with the demand in the governorate. In addition, he reported that

the electricity infrastructure, such as cables and transformers, in the district needed replacing as they could not handle high voltages and were affected by bad weather.

- Only residents from Sheik Tahmi village were reported to have access to community generators, with one KI stating that many villages were too small to make a community generator profitable. A small number of residents in the assessed villages were said to have access to private generators.
- All KIs reported having to pay for electricity, the average amount depending on family size and the season. Estimates ranged from 10,000 to 50,000 IQD per month.²²

Improvements Suggested by KIs

The electricity KI reported a need to replace existing infrastructure, specifically transformers and wires, in order to improve the amount and voltage of electricity supplied.

Waste Disposal Services

- KIs reported that there was no centralized waste disposal system in the assessed villages and that there never had been one. All assessed villages reported dumping their solid waste outside of their village and some burning it on an ad hoc basis. One KI reported individuals falling ill as a result of this manner of disposing of waste, but did not specify which type of diseases this was causing.

About REACH

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About the Returns Working Group (RWG) Iraq

The Returns Working Group (RWG) is an operational and multi-stakeholder platform on returns, which was established in line with Strategic Objective 3 of the 2016 Iraq HRP "to support voluntary, safe and dignified return" of IDPs; to monitor and report on conditions in return areas, and determine to what extent durable solutions have been achieved- or progress made- for returnees.

The key objective of the group is to establish coherence of information, data and analysis, strengthen coordination and advocacy, give guidance on activities related to the key areas, and enhance complementary action among its partners with the overall goal of supporting and reinforcing the national response to Iraq's coming reintegration challenge.