

IRAQ INFORMATION CENTER

Newsletter | March 2020
UNOPS, Erbil, Iraq



Iraq Information Center staff during a field visit in Harsham camp, prior to COVID-19 outbreak in Iraq, Erbil, February 2020. © UNOPS / Abdalqadir

PROJECT OVERVIEW

UNOPS Erbil Office has been running the Iraq Information Center (IIC) since 2015.

A confidential and free of charge hotline, 800 6 9999, takes calls from internally displaced persons, returnees, asylum seekers, refugees and the members of the community to give them access to information on the humanitarian services; and enable them to provide feedback and lodge complaints.

An inter-agency accountability mechanism in Iraq, IIC promotes a two-way communication between affected populations and humanitarian actors. It aims at reducing the gap in the humanitarian assistance in Iraq.

RECENT OPERATIONAL UPDATES

IIC's working hours are reduced

Due to measures taken against the spread of the COVID-19, Iraq Information Center (IIC) has temporarily reduced the number of call center staff in March. Although the Center was temporarily closed on March 26th for 3 days, the Center promptly resumed its operations on March 29th with reduced hours; 8 am-6 pm during weekdays and 9 am-2 pm on weekends and holidays until further notice.

The IIC is committed to remain connected to the affected population to define shifts in needs and gaps considering movement difficulties. IIC calls out all partners for their collaboration to deliver this key message to the affected population via social media tiles posted on [@IICINFO](#) and a leaflet which was circulated to partners during March.

SMS campaign with the CCCM cluster

IIC has collaborated with the CCCM cluster in March for a bulk SMS campaign reach beneficiary in the camps to deliver WASH and hygiene-related key messages. The SMS key messaging aimed at increasing awareness in order to mitigate spreading of the COVID-19 among the vulnerable communities. A total of 291,542 beneficiaries were reached with the SMS campaign.

The IIC encourages interested partners to collaborate with IIC on an SMS campaign for their announcements.

WFP to collaborate with IIC on social media announcements

@IICINFO Facebook page is in preparation of collaborating with WFP on announcing programme-related updates as well as food and nutrition key messages in April. We encourage all partners to approach to the IIC to collaborate for social media campaigns to stay connected to the affected community.

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CALLS IN FIGURES

7442 calls handled

6427 incoming calls

1015 outgoing calls

Demographics of callers

27 % Women

73 % Men

76 % Non-camp

24 % Camp

63.87 % IDPs

33.04 % Returnees

2.98 % Host community and others*

0.11 % Refugees

*NGOs and government

Top reported needs by sector

Females:

Cash (74%), Food (12%), S/NFI (8%)

Males:

Cash (51%), Food (31%), S/NFI (6%)

Top areas calls are received from

Camps

As Salamiyah 2, Laylan, Chamisku

Non-camp

Erbil, Mosul, Telafar.

Monthly [Dashboard](#)

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 [@IICINFO](#)

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IIC continues to remain connected to the affected populations, © UNOPS / Kucukcelebi

IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON COMMUNITIES IN IRAQ

In March, IIC has launched a new segment to the monthly [dashboard](#) to provide analysis on the calls which were related to the COVID-19 pandemic. Out of 6718 calls handled by the IIC in March, 143 calls were related to COVID-19 between 18th February to 28th of March.

Whereas 31% of the COVID-19 calls were from females, 69% were from males. This indicates a notable increase of 4% in female callers in COVID-19 calls as compared to the gender segregation as per overall calls handled in March.

61% of the callers were located outside of camps; Erbil, Salahaldin and Ninewa being the governorates where most of the callers are located. COVID-19 calls show a tendency of increased percentage from the camps, as compared to overall calls; respectively is 39% for COVID-19 calls and 22% for overall calls. Majority of the in-camp callers are located at Salamiyah 2, Arbat and Laylan IDP camps. Additionally, IDPs seem to report more that they were affected by the pandemic, constituting 77% of the overall COVID-19 calls, followed with returnees by 19% and host community by 4%.

The top reported needs, for both females and males, in calls related to COVID-19 are: reported impact on livelihoods/seeking employment, scarcity of food and complaints regarding losing jobs due to lockdown, delays in food distribution, lack of medical supplies/ambulances and cash assistance.

ENGAGING WITH THE COMMUNITIES

IIC has halted field missions during March amid the COVID-19 breakout in the country, followed with restriction of movements. In order to stay connected to the affected communities, IIC Facebook @IICINFO page has been a pro-active tool to update followers and provide key messages regarding humanitarian assistance, as well as spreading WHO's COVID-19 prevention tips. IIC has handled 205 number of calls via Facebook in March.

Additionally, the IIC has conducted a poll on Facebook which aimed at finding out whether the pandemic had an impact on the basic needs of the followers. Out of 496 people who voted in the poll, 92% of them said the pandemic has affected their basic needs such as food, water and employment.

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