RAPID NEEDS ASSESSMENT, TOOZ DISTRICT, SALAH AL-DIN GOVERNORATE
Overview:

While movement trends in Iraq have generally remained stable since early 2018, there has been a considerable shift since August 2019 with increasing numbers of internally displaced persons (IDPs) returning to their area of origin (AoO) or being displaced for a second time. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM)’s Emergency Displacement Tracking recorded over 4,320 households returned to non-camp locations between 30 June and 31 August 2020, 10% of which were recorded in Tooz Khurmato District (22% for Salah Al-Din Governorate). In light of increased returns, coupled with persisting challenges in relation to lack of services, infrastructure and, in some cases, security in areas of origin (AoO), there is an identified need to better understand the sustainability of returns as well as their impact and conditions in AoO.

Tooz Khurmato District, located in the east of Salah Al-Din Governorate. The district fell under the control of the so-called Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) in 2014, leading to the displacement of the majority of families from Salah Al-Din.

Salah Al-Din is the governorate with the highest number of returnees living in high severity conditions in terms of access to services and livelihoods and perception of safety and social cohesion in Iraq. As reported by IOM DTM, 30% of the governorate’s total returnee population (200,000 individuals) are living in severe conditions, with Tooz Khurmato district highlighted as one of the five hotspots of severe return conditions.

Population Profile

- 87,691-89,400 families were reported by KIs to be residing in Markaz Tooz Khurmato before the events in 2014.
- 71% of the pre-2014 population residing in Markaz Tooz Khurmato was reportedly displaced since 2014.
- 99% of the population displaced since 2014 have returned to Markaz Tooz Khurmato at the time of data collection, as reported by KIs.
- 13,585-13,883 IDP families (AoO not specified) are reported to reside in Markaz Tooz Khurmato settlements.

The Humanitarian response plan (HRP) faced many challenges to respond to Tooz including the access issues to the area which was the main challenges for humanitarian actors to respond to return or the IDPs, as this district was difficult to access in 2020 and 2021 specially for the international actors, as Iraqi Law forces requested several permissions and letters from the international actors to operate in the area while was less restricted with national actors, in the meantime the COVID-19 restrictions was one of the challenges, which increased the vulnerability of the people living in the district especially the IDPs and returnees, after the forced camps closures.

While this assessment was conducted with Key informant’s interviews (KII)s from Tooz including the mayor of Tooz to stand on the recent needs and Strengthen the previous assessment conducted in the District.

Aid Gate Organization (AGO) conducted the Rapid Needs assessment through KIIIs to stand on the needs of the community (IDPs and Returnees ) and to propose the MPCA project to parallel the Livelihood intervention funded by IHF in the district, in the meantime AGO has a strong presence in the District and had all the coordination and collaboration to implement comprehensive and integrated approaches in the region.
Study Objectives:
The needs assessment will be the key method to understand the basic needs of IDPs and Returnees of Tooz district, moreover, the assessment will be used to advocate for the need of MPCA project that will be proposed to IHF in December 2021.

Methodology
In order to ensure that the proposed intervention and proposal for IHF has evidence-based on community needs and approaches, AGO deployed 4 staff for 2 days under the supervision of the MEAL department to ensure the quality of the assessment considered.

The assessment was conducted in one type of community approach through (KII) due to time limitations

Study area: the assessment has been conducted in the Tooz district – Salah Al-din governorate.

Survey period: The survey was conducted during the 1st and 2nd of Dec – 2021

Survey Design: The survey combined a quantitative and qualitative approach.

- Quantitative data: The quantitative data was collected through KIIs. This aims to inform the indicators of the programs.
- Qualitative data: To support the understanding of the quantitative data collected and will focus on whole community levels through interviews with different Key informants from different community types (IDPs, Returnees).

Sample and Sampling Procedure:
The survey targeted 9 Key informants including the mayor of the Tooz district. Coordination done with key informant a head of time to ensure that they had the time and the availability for the interviews

Data Quality:
The data was being uploaded on electronic data devices through Kobo by assessment team during the data collection and checked by the MEAL team. Feedback was given to assessment team every day before departure for the next day’s data collection. All team received briefing instructions on the survey to ensure interviews are conducted correctly and in an appropriate manner. Also, the following measures has been done:

- Back checking of 10% of interviews;
- Daily checking of all interviews by MEAL Manager.

Key Findings:
AGO selected different background key informants from different location in Tooz district, on Key informant reported that, in average of 44,000 HHs living in their Tooz in around 9180 HHs are returns to the district.

Key informant refer to the three main reason of returns are 100% Improved sense of security in the area of origin, 67% the Cost of living in area of displacement is too high and the HHs are not able to afford it, while 44% reported improved access to services in the area of origin.
44% of the key informant the three are IDPs living in their area most of them from villages and areas around Tooz and they are not able to return to their area of origin due to the lack of services and security reasons especially ISIL hiding in the mountain near some of their villages. Key informant reported between 5000 to 7000 HHs living in their area and they are in need for Humanitarian and Governmental assistance, specially the need for durable solution to ensure their safe return to their area of origin.

Key informant reported that 100% of IDPs living in informal settlement and unfinished houses and while 33% reported that IDPs been hosted by other families in the Tooz including their relatives.

The key informant reported that the main three reasons for displacement are, 89% lack of livelihood opportunities, 56% damaged houses, and lack decent shelter for the HHs members, while 44% reported that there are no services, including infrastructures, schools, and basic services in the area of origins.

22% of Key informants reported that the IDPs are caring at least one of their HHs members has disability or chronic disease which increase their vulnerabilities.

In the meantime Key informant reported in average of 2800 HHs living in informal settlements including damaged houses and tents and they are facing the cold winter without proper shelter for their families, and they are not able to cover the cost of renting shelter due to lack of income and livelihood opportunities. Key informant reported increase the child labor, dropout the schools and early marriages among the IDPs children. Key informant elaborated that the COVID-19 situation increased the vulnerabilities among IDPs, returnees, and Host community and impact their livelihood.
The majority of Key informant reported that IDPs, Returnees facing challenges accessing the food and they refer to limited economic resources and the need of Cash assistance for the HHs to provide their families, lack of the job and livelihood opportunities is one of the reasons to have challenges accessing the food.

67% of Key informant reported that the most vulnerable group facing this problem are IDPs while 33% reported host community facing the same problem in their neighborhoods.

56% of Key informant reported that the families who are facing food accessing challenges having less than 2 meals a day while 44% reported that they have 3 meals a day and using as coping for food access issues a negative coping mechanism including selling property, houses and send their child to work to provide for other HHs members this was reported among the women, widows who are not able to work due to the social norm in the district, Key informants reported that the women are able to work from home only and doing some small job such as sewing and knitting and handcrafting.

67% of Key informant reported that the main source of in the last 30 days is the assistance from public distribution system (PDS) while 11% reported in each of bought with Cash, local charity and community members, and own production, in the meantime Key informant that many families in their community are not receiving assistance from PDS because they font have PDS card from the government while other reported that there are not enough food items in PDS and they need to buy most of the product by cash from the local market, and they elaborate that the community in need for CASH to able to buy the food for their HHs and coping with life and displacement.

44% reported that the PDs are not functional in their area, out of the 44% reported 75% access to items be late m and 25% reported it comes late and there is no quality in the products and some parts of materials which should be distributed are missing and if it came with bad quality and not met people expectations.
100% of Key informant reported that their community including IDPs, Returness are not reciving the PDS assisstance monthly, the majority of the key informants reported that the community in Tooz recing the once every 2 months and missing many part that should be included based on the MoT guidances.

Key iformants reported the main copin mechanism used to cope with situation ,89% reported support from friedns and rrelatives , 44% reduce spending on NFI , 56% depending on charitable donations , 33% borrowed money ,33% selling assets.

89% of the Key informant reported that there are education needs among the IDPs and returnees specially that education system In need for support including rehabilitation of schools and education staff and prevention to schools drop out , while 78% of Key informants reported that there are high needs for clean water in district and water treatment plants in needs for rehabilitations, 56% reported that there is need for electricity as its not regular and impacted the living population negatively and community depending on private electricity generators which is costly for IDPs and retunes , and 33% reported that there are needs for CASH to cover the cost of houses rental , and 22% needs for hygiene kits , and 11% reported needs for public transportation system in the districts.

100% of the key informants reported that the total expenditure of the HHs are more than 300$ per month and that he HHs needs for more job opportunities and CASH assistance to cope with displacement and returns
Summary of Findings:

- Contradictory responses were reported related to the returns of families to Tooz Khurmato. On the one hand, returns reportedly resulted in perceived reduced access to services and assistance, and increased competition on the job market and consequently less available job opportunities. On the other hand, returns reportedly resulted in family reunification and a perceived increase in services and the availability of job opportunities due to the return of business owners.
- IDP families are expected to be departing from Tooz Khurmato district in the six months following data collection due to the lack of assistance and job opportunities. The expected reasons for IDP departures were the same as the main reported barriers to return, with additional reporting of destroyed/damaged housing and lack of access to healthcare as barriers to return.
- NGOs were reportedly implementing activities in Tooz Khurmato at the time of data collection including AGO. The availability of humanitarian assistance was perceived as a factor to encourage sustainability across respondent groups. Livelihoods projects were reported by the majority of KIs as the most needed assistance followed by housing rehabilitation and to generate income for the most vulnerable people to be able to cover their expenditures.
- At the same time, gaps in services and ongoing needs were reported in Tooz Khurmato, with the top reported needs similar for the different KI respondent groups. Healthcare was cited as a common priority need for all KI groups. Further priority needs reported by community leaders were, Cash assistance, infrastructure for water and sanitation, electricity, education and projects for housing rehabilitation. Returnees highlighted livelihoods, education and housing rehabilitation as the main community needs. IDPs mostly shared the same priorities as returnees but also noted water and sanitation. Remainees reported electricity, waste disposal and education.
- There were no challenges reported to obtain necessary documentation. However, individuals without documentation were reportedly more at risk of eviction and lack of documentation was reported as a barrier to access livelihoods. In addition, access to documentation was reportedly linked to the freedom of movement and essential for the identification of individuals giving evidence that there is no error or forgery.
- There are reported differences in access to services across different groups, with IDPs persistently reported to have less access to housing and housing rehabilitation, livelihoods and basic public services, largely attributed to the lack of relationships and connections in the community. This is along with vulnerable groups such as female-headed households, child-headed households, UASC, large families, elderly-headed households and people with disabilities.
- Cash assistance highlighted by key Informants as main concerns of the IDPs and returnees specially that they are not able to afford to pay rental, food, health services for the HHs members.
- There are protection risks among the marginalized women who are living in unfinished/damaged houses, highlighting harassments and other negative coping mechanisms.

Recommendations:

- Implementing Cash assistance program to reduce the vulnerabilities among IDPs returnees.
- Implementing Education program to reduce the schools drop out and support the formal and non-formal education.
- Implementing Protection program to prevent and response to the protection risks the children and women face in the Tooz district.
- Implementing WASH program to response to wash needs in the district.
- Implementing Health program to response to the basic health needs and support PHCCs and NCDs to treat the chronic diseases.
- Implementing comprehensive livelihood program including providing vocational training to improve the livelihood opportunities in the districts while focusing on short term employment through cash for work activities and supporting small business damaged due to war with ISIL through assets replacements activities.