

Cumulative Registered Population

16,038 individuals*

New Arrivals	Cases	Individuals
BARDARASH	4,670	14,031
GAWILAN	746	2,007

*Cumulative total NES population registered in camps as of 30 April 2020

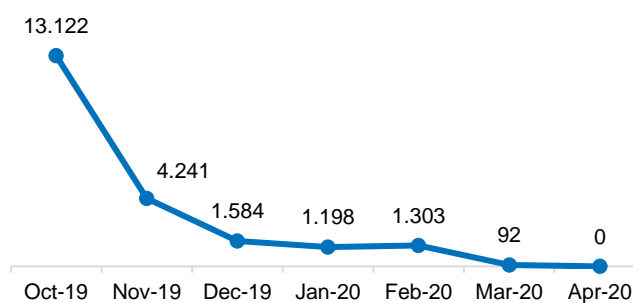
Total Arrivals

21,540 individuals entered KRI since 14 October 2019 until 30 April 2020

5,502 individuals left camps without registration and moved elsewhere in the KR-I and/or returned spontaneously to Syria

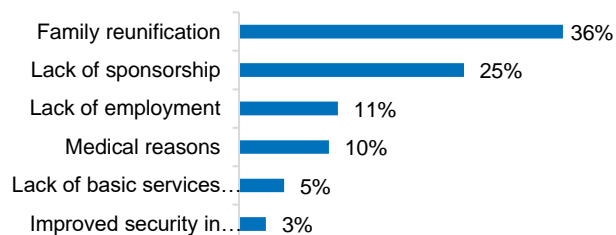
43% of new arrivals cleared by Assayesh to depart camps.

New Arrivals



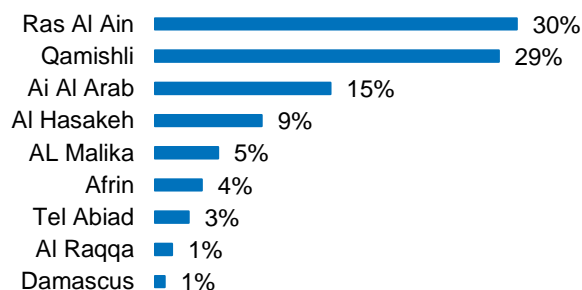
* Land borders were closed on 02 March 2020 as Covid-19 preventative measure and no arrivals have taken place since then.

Reasons for Return

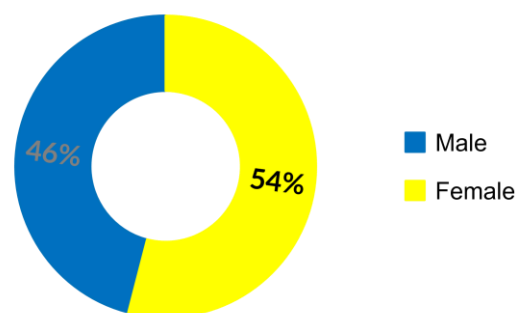


* Top reasons for return identified during return interviews at Derabon Return Centre.

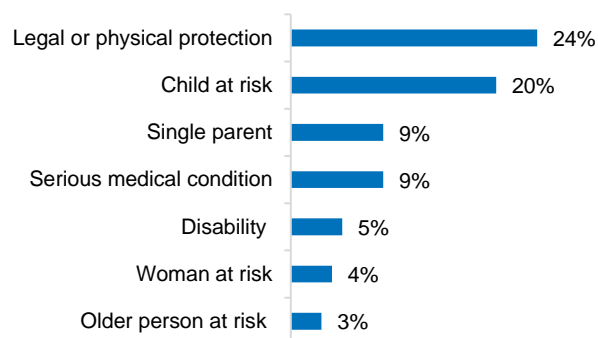
Main Areas of Origin



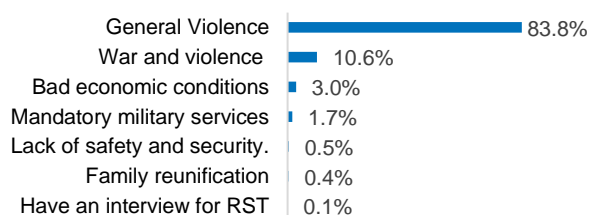
Gender Breakdown



Specific Needs



Reasons for Flight



* Top reasons for flight identified during registration interviews.

Update on Response and Achievements

Operational Context and Background

Since the start of military action in north-east Syria (NES) on 9 October 2019, some 21,540 individuals crossed into the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KR-I) seeking refuge. Unlike previous influxes of Syrian refugees into the KR-I, authorities allowed newly arrived persons entry to only two designated camps namely Bardarash and Gawilan. All refugees were transported directly from the border area to Bardarash or Gawilan Refugee camps.

Of the total number of arrivals, some 74 per cent of this population (16,038 individuals) registered, while others are believed to have spontaneously returned back to Syria or moved elsewhere to other parts of the KR-I without registering in the Duhok Governorate. The reasons for this appear to be largely attributed to the encampment policy applied to new arrivals which had not previously been applied in the KR-I and the accompanying sponsorship process to depart the camps. In the latter, only families or individuals with sponsors were permitted officially to leave the camp subject to registration with the authorities.

This situation was exacerbated by several other challenges especially during the first few weeks of the influx. They included, *inter-alia*, the relatively large number of new arrivals (720 individuals daily average or 60 per cent in October alone), pre-registration/clearance procedures by Assayesh and the Board of Humanitarian and Relief Affairs (BRHA), low registration staff capacity and the roll-out of UNHCR's proGres v4 database which required steady internet bandwidth and connectivity. While registration and connectivity issues were resolved by early November, the government's policy of encampment and required sponsorship was not. Although basic assistance and primary health care were being provided, refugees were interested to leave the camp as quickly as possible. Consequently and prior to registration, many new arrivals departed the camps without authorization and moved onwards to other parts of the KR-I while others decided to return to Syria spontaneously.

Bardarash camp was constructed by the Ministry of Displacement and Migration (MoDM) in 2015 for internally displaced persons (IDPs) and semi-decommissioned in December 2017 after the return of IDPs. It was re-opened in October 2019 as a refugee camp to receive over 3,000 Syrian refugee families from NES. In Gawilan Refugee camp, Sector F was newly established in late October to accommodate some 490 families as Bardarash Refugee camp began to reach its capacity.

By January 2020, the average daily arrival rate fell to about 42 individuals. On 2 March, the government announced the closure of all land borders including the Sahela Entry Point as a preventative measure to control the spread of COVID-19, and by doing so curtailed the movement of Syrians across the border into the KR-I.



Figure 1: Bardarash Refugee Camp in winter. UNHCR / R.Rasheed

Response and Achievements



PROTECTION

Response

■ Registration

The registration of the new arrivals from NES started on 14 October. At the same time, a Registration Centre was being equipped and set up inside Bardarash camp and necessary registration staff deployed. By early November, the centre was fully functional with stable internet capacity, electricity and active protection counselling partners. As a result, registration activities started to pick up pace. In Gawilan camp, the existing Registration Centre scaled up its activities to cover registration of new arrivals and those of the already resident population.

By the end-April 2020, **about 14,031 individuals** who had arrived since mid-October were registered in Bardarash and **2,007 individuals** registered in Gawilan camps. Some **9,368 individuals** obtained clearance to depart the camps to join family members out of camps in Duhok and in other governorates.

Females comprise just over half of the total registered population (54 per cent), the majority of whom are between 18 to 35 years of age. Some 33 per cent are young males, who reportedly fled forced recruitment by armed groups in Syria.

In furtherance of the encampment policy, a key concern, particularly in Bardarash camp, relates to withholding the issuance of UNHCR's asylum-seeker certificates to refugees even upon registration. Without a certificate, refugees cannot obtain residency documentation in the KR-I which limits their freedom of movement, inhibits legal employment and eviction by landlords. Exceptions to this policy were made only to those approved to depart the camp formally after securing sponsorship. Through continued advocacy with Assayesh, authorization was obtained to issue photocopies of UNHCR's asylum-seeker certificates to refugees which would facilitate their movement to the neighbouring municipality to purchase groceries and other basic commodities including for livelihood purposes within the camp.

■ Protection Monitoring

Since October 2020, over **780** protection monitoring assessments were conducted by protection actors at the Sahela Entry Point and in both refugee camps. Following the closure of the entry point in March 2020, protection actors focused their efforts on camps and resorted to remote protection monitoring when COVID-19 movement restrictions were imposed by the government.

According to monitoring reports, the most commonly cited reasons for flight from Syria were generalized violence engendered by the escalation of conflict, indiscriminate bombardments, fear of forced recruitment by armed groups (reported mostly by young men). Others were loss of livelihoods, lack of basic services and the pursuit of better prospects in the KRI and third countries.

■ Child Protection & Prevention & Response to Sexual and Gender Based Violence (SGBV) & Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA)

Protection actors identified **520** unaccompanied and separated children (UASC) during the six-month period, the majority of whom are boys. All children were interviewed, counselled and referred to relevant services that included facilitating fast-track registration and **411** family reunifications.

Partners conducted **152** best interest assessments (BIAs) and undertook detailed case management such as arranging alternative care arrangements for unaccompanied children in the camp. Special advocacy with the Assayesh office in the Duhok Governorate was made to obtain clearances for vulnerable children, without first-degree family members in the KR-I, to join other family members or relatives in the region.

Of note is that the number of UASC identified during the influx is particularly high when compared with the total number of UASC (320) living in the Duhok Governorate prior to the influx. Unaccompanied and separated children (young males ages 15 – 17 years old) reported fleeing the threat of forced recruitment as main reason they left Syria.

At the beginning of the influx until early December 2019, child protection assessments were conducted for some 1,664 families in Bardarash and Gawilan camps to identify immediate needs. Amongst other information gathered, the assessments showed that children, who attended school prior to flight, followed various curricula with no uniformity in the language of instruction which could be Kurdish, Kurdish with Latin script, or Arabic. Thus, it would be difficult for children from NES to integrate into the local schools using Kurdish (Sorani/Kurmanji) scripts and without having school transcript and records being accredited by the Syrian government.

Three child/youth friendly spaces were established in Bardarash camp providing recreational activities for approximately 600 children aged 5 to 17 years, while the children in Sector F of Gawilan camp were integrated into the two child/youth friendly spaces already available inside the camp. Group activities were paused from mid-March 2020 due to COVID-19 prevention measures. Protection actors have provided child-friendly COVID-19 awareness-raising messages using mobile communication.

Partners provided SGBV-related services to **65** refugees (54 in Bardarash and 11 in Gawilan camps) which include mental health and psychosocial services, medical or legal assistance, and case management. The majority of the identified SGBV cases experienced psychological abuse, physical assault, mostly by family members, and denial of resources in current locations. These were exacerbated by lack of job opportunities and worsening economic situation while in displacement. All females of reproductive age between 11 – 49 years were regularly provided with dignity kits containing sanitary and hygiene items.

By April 2020, 30 SGBV cases were closed while 35 remained under case management by partners. SGBV actors held 12 awareness sessions for 258 refugees. Two sessions on the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA) were held for 11 community sector leaders and 34 newly recruited Camp Management staff in Bardarash camp.

■ **Support to Person with Specific Needs (PSNs):**

Partners identified, profiled and supported **1,138** PSNs in both Bardarash and Gawilan camps as part of the integrated protection response. Upon arrival at the Sahela Entry Point, persons with disabilities were identified and information sent to the receiving camps to prepare for their arrival. Other specific needs included persons having serious medical conditions, such as chronic illnesses, and single parent households. All individuals were counselled and referred to relevant service providers.

■ **Returns to Syria:**

Despite the steady stream of new arrivals into the KR-I from Syria since October 2019, some **1,014 spontaneous returns** to Syria (864 from Bardarash and 150 from Gawilan) were recorded at the Derabon Return Centre as of end-April 2020.

The Derabon Return Centre serves as a processing point for Syrians who voluntarily and spontaneously choose to return to their country of origin. For newly arrived refugees from NES, return is organized by Assayesh directly from Bardarash and Gawilan camps. This process is applicable only to this group of persons due to the restricted movements of refugees compared with other Syrians who are able to reach Derabon by themselves. Each case receives pre-return counselling in the camps and again at the Return Centre to ensure that their decision to return is voluntary and well-informed. Advocacy is done for individuals who change their minds after the counselling to ensure they are able return to the camps.

At Derabon:

Key reasons cited for return were: family reunification (36%), absence of sponsors to depart camp (25%), lack of economic/livelihood opportunities (11%), medical reasons (10%), lack of basic services in-camp (5%), perceived improved security in areas of origin (3%), attend family events (2%), and other reasons (8%).

At the camps:

Key reasons cited for return were: family reunification (48%), lack of economic/livelihood opportunities (20%), medical (13%), absence of sponsors to depart camp (11%), lack of basic services in-camp (4%), perceived improved security in areas of origin (2%) and other reasons (2%).

In November 2019, when refugees first expressed interest to return, the reason cited in Bardarash camp related to the restrictive movement policy and lengthy Assayesh clearance procedures which prevented departure from camp even for short periods of time such as for employment or shopping at nearby towns. The only departure authorised was tied to having first-degree family sponsorship in urban areas. Thus, the frustration was palpable particularly for families who did not have any first-degree family members to sponsor them in the KR-I. This continued to be the key reason for returns until February 2020 when crossing points and were increasingly linked to the to the lack of employment opportunities in the camp and ability to leave the camp to seek work.

In Gawilan camp, where both UNHCR asylum-seeker certificates and residency permits were provided to NES arrivals, returning families cited family reunification and limited employment opportunities both in and outside the camp as the main reasons for going back to Syria.

Advocacy was done to enable the Residency Department to have an office inside camp but the work has been delayed due to COVID pandemic and subsequent government lockdowns. Obtaining residency documents may lead to easier movement outside camps for refugees to seek livelihood opportunities.

■ **Communication with Communities (CwC)**

With the support of Community Outreach Volunteers (COVs), 218 awareness sessions took place benefitting **11,265** refugees in Bardarash and Gawilan camps on various themes including, registration, fraud, health and sanitation and available services in the camp. After the outbreak of COVID-19, the COVs together with the Primary Health Care Centre (PHCC) community mobilizers disseminated COVID-19 awareness-raising messages through leaflets and posters reaching the whole camp population.

Through consultations with the community and camp management, Refugee Welfare Committees (RWC) were established in Bardarash camp to strengthen the meaningful participation of women in community life. Eleven community leaders, five of whom are women, were elected in January 2020. The committee members received training on leadership including on their Terms of Reference, Code of Conduct, PSEA/GBV, community participation and mobilization. Regular meetings are held with the RWC and issues of common concern are raised and solutions sought.

Protection actors established help desks in both camps for new arrivals seeking information on available services and protection related issues. Some **9,087 refugees** have been assisted and referred to services through these help desks thus far. The main services sought and questions asked ranged from those on residency permits, UNHCR registration, job opportunities, resettlement, cash assistance, health and family sponsorship to depart the camp for other areas of KR-I.

Key Observations and Outstanding Challenges

The protection response to the NES emergency has been positive. Initial challenges related to the pace of arrivals while setting up the camp were resolved relatively quickly with the support of partners. Despite repeated advocacy at various levels, restrictions preventing refugees from leaving camps except through sponsorship arrangements from individuals with residency status persist, infringing upon their fundamental right to freedom of movement.

To facilitate easier movement of refugees out of camp, a Residency Office is being established in Bardarash to issue residency cards. This office already exists in Gawilan camp and newly arriving Syrians could access the services from December 2019 onwards. Unfortunately, with the closure of all government offices mid-March due to COVID-19 preventive measures, the processing of all residency and renewal of asylum-seeker documentation have been halted. Measures have been agreed with the authorities to waive any fees for renewal of expired documentation.

Freedom of movement for refugees is further challenged by COVID-19 imposed measures across the KR-I, although there were some relaxation measures towards end-April. Monitoring and advocacy were conducted to ensure that fresh food supply into the camps could continue e.g. shopkeepers' movement into Bardarash urban areas to avoid relying on intermediaries resulting in increased prices and that prices would not become inflated as compared to those in the local markets. The impact of these measures on new arrivals in Bardarash and Gawilan camps is being closely monitored.



SHELTER AND NFIS

Response

All refugees arriving at the border crossing point were assisted with essential core relief items (CRI) such as blankets, heaters, and mattresses during their overnight stay. Upon arrival in camps, refugees were assigned shelters and given basic CRI kits based on family composition. A multitude of partners regularly provided complementary items including scarves for women, winter clothes and shoes for adults and children, kerosene for heating and blankets amongst others. Gas cookers and cylinders were provided to all households in both camps and refilled regularly. Winter linings for tents and insulation mats were also provided and installed to provide protection from the cold, rain and snow.

Starting in December, all refugees residing in camps were entitled to receive IQD 480,000 as winter cash and settling in assistance to support their purchase of essential items during the cold months. For the new arrivals, everyone who registered by 5 December 2019 received the financial assistance. Those registered since then until 31 March 2020 received their entitlement together with the cash supplement provided to support during COVID-19. In total, **4,364 refugee households** in Bardarash and Gawilan (Sector F) Refugee camps received winter and COVID cash assistance. Other partners provided varying forms of additional cash assistance especially for vulnerable and/or single parent households.

Bardarash, a former IDP Camp that had been semi-decommissioned in December 2017, was reopened on 15 October 2019 to host refugees arriving to the KR-I from north-east Syria. Shelter plots were extended, tents pitched, tall grass removed and the internal roads cleared of debris. Four Rubb halls were established – two were used as Reception Centres and the others as storage facilities. Partners worked around the clock to make sure that shelters were set up and connected to the electricity grid in time for arriving refugees to move into.

Warehousing, distribution facilities and other suitable areas were identified for partners working inside the camp to set up their office spaces. Camp Management, Police and Assayesh facilities were rehabilitated and the perimeter fence repaired. In the first quarter of 2020, heavy snow and rainstorms damaged shelters and core relief items. These were swiftly replaced following damage assessments. A new Residency Office is being established to facilitate the issuance of residency cards aimed at expediting movements out of camp.

In Gawilan camp, a former transit site was re-established, the grounds prepared, water and electricity networks connected and tents set up. The transit site, now called Sector F, was further improved to construct open channels, compacted internal roads and set-up first communal and then individual WASH facilities.

To support partners receiving refugees at the border points, four Rubb halls were set up, and additional reception areas were rehabilitated and improved to host incoming persons especially in preparation of the rainy and cold winter months.

Key Observations and Outstanding Challenges

While partners tirelessly worked to make sure that basic infrastructures are available and maintained in camp, the transient nature of its population, the unclarity of the camps' lifespan or the authorities' evolving position vis-à-vis allowing persons of concern to enter the KR-I make it difficult to plan comprehensive rehabilitation works. Basic shelter, road and open channel upgrades are necessary, especially with a view to the next winter season. Tents may need to be repaired, replaced or even removed as refugees depart to other locations including back to Syria.



WATER AND SANITATION

ACTIVITY	BARDARASH	GAWILAN
Water Supply	2,200 households received water tanks	310 households received water tanks
WASH Facilities	Rehabilitation of latrines/shower units for 2,852 households	Combined toilet/shower units in Sector F for 366 households
	Distribution of 900 garbage bins	50 communal latrines and 45 communal bath units (gender segregated) installed
WASH Items	3,700 kits Hygiene Kits distributed in November-December 2019	600 kits distributed in November-December 2019
Hygiene Promotion	Ongoing hygiene promotion campaigns conducted at the household level	Ongoing hygiene promotion campaigns conducted at the household level
COVID 19	1,661 COVID-19 hygiene kits distributed in April 2020 in Gawilan and Bardarash.	

Other

Al Waleed Reception Centre:

Two prefabricated latrines were installed, the drinking water pipeline extended and drinking water storage taps and stands set up .

Sahela Entry Point:

Four prefabricated latrines, prefabricated latrines were installed, the drinking water pipeline extended and drinking water storage taps and stands set up. In addition **ten** pre-existing latrines were rehabilitated.

Key Observations and Outstanding Challenges

During October-December 2019, **five** water tankers were hired to supply emergency water in the camps (three for Bardarash and two for Gawilan). In the later stages Gawilan camp also benefitted from the installation of a water network which provides water at the household level.

Setting up a WASH response coordination mechanism specific to the new refugee influx was essential to properly respond to the rapidly evolving needs of the emergency. Moreover, the large number of partners involved in the initial response led to some confusion regarding responsibilities and overlaps in activities. This was effectively resolved through the development of an implementation matrix and streamlining the response into long-term partners decreasing the activity overlap.

Longer term rehabilitation of the WASH infrastructure and water networks are desperately needed in Bardarash camp, however due to the transient nature of its population and uncertainty of the future of the camp, such interventions are challenging to plan and justify. With the summer months started, careful management of water provision and use including ensuring regular solid waste management and desludging are essential.

Several WASH actors have also reported significant challenges in finding donors to fund and invest in durable WASH solutions such as household latrine rehabilitation or concrete block installation which provide greater dignity to refugee families and decrease long-term costs of care and maintenance of communal facilities. Additionally, the spread of COVID-19, has increased the criticality of water boilers to ensure proper hygiene practices. The lack of access to hot water increases the risk of lice, scabies, and skin conditions.



HEALTH

Response

- **13,101** consultations provided at camp primary health care centres.
- **706** cases referred for emergency care outside camp.
- **140** mental health and psychosocial services (MHPSS) consultations provided.

Comprehensive primary health care services were provided to new arrivals and included curative and preventive services. Mental health actors provided immediate Psychological First Aid to all refugees upon arrival. The Primary Health Care Centre (PHCC) in Bardarash camp is open 24/7 with a morning-shift providing medical consultations, referrals, laboratory services, immunization, nutrition and growth monitoring, reproductive health services, and MHPSS. Emergency services are also available at night with an ambulance, nurse and minibus for transportation of cases to secondary and tertiary health facilities in the surrounding cities.

In response to COVID-19, health actors in coordination with the Department of Health (DoH) led health awareness campaigns on COVID-19 preventive measures through outreach teams and camp management.

In Gawilan camp the existing PHCC covered the needs of the newly arriving refugees. The Department of Health supported the centre with provision of additional medicines. Regular consultations were held to identify gaps in assistance and ensure that the entire population of the camp has access to the services.

Key Observations and Outstanding Challenges

Despite the availability of the above services, many remain inadequate to cover all needs and most refugees lack a stable income to afford prescription costs not covered by PHCCs. These concerns have been raised during health coordination meetings and recommendations to engage more camp residents in sustainable livelihood activities have been shared. Other actors note that the response could also have benefitted from more comprehensive support to persons of concern experiencing psychosocial difficulties and a fast-track referral pathway to ensure timely access to out-of-camp specialized services in collaboration with camp management.

EDUCATION

Response

■ Access to primary education:

A formal school in Bardarash was constructed and handed over to the Directorate of Education in Duhok in late 2019. It is equipped with 12 classrooms, 150 desks and whiteboards. Education kits for students were procured to be distributed once formal education starts in the camp. Unfortunately, the approval from the Ministry of Education (MoE) for formal schooling to commence has not yet been granted.

■ Access to informal education:

Temporary learning spaces (TLS) were established in both Bardarash and Gawilan camps providing over 1,500 refugee children in both camps with informal education activities such as basic literacy, numeracy, science and reading classes. Some 1,500 education kits were provided for the children attending the TLS.

■ Other child-friendly educational activities:

Sports and recreational activities and non-structured psychosocial support sessions such as art therapy, child/youth resilience activities were also provided in the child/youth friendly spaces in the camps.

Key Observations and Challenges

Education is a major challenge for newly arrived children from north-east Syria. The Ministry of Education in the KR-I has not granted refugee children access to formal education. Secondary education remains a gap in the response as there is also no official clearance for refugees in Bardarash camp to attend host community schools in the surrounding urban areas. This is in part due to challenges in integration as a result of different languages and curricula followed by the children while still in Syria. As part of COVID-19 prevention measures, the MoE has requested all education actors to close all learning spaces and cease all education-related activities involving group gatherings. To support activities that can be conducted at home, education actors have distributed home-learning kits.



FOOD SECURITY AND NUTRITION

Response

Upon arrival at the Sahela Entry Point, refugees received hot-meals. Hot meals continued to be provided to newly arrived families in the initial three days upon their arrival to camps or until dry ration distributions started. Many other partners and charities also contributed to the food security and nutrition of newly arrived refugees by providing complementary food items such as rice, bread, canned foods and vegetables.

From October 2019 to February 2020, ready-to-eat food packages (IRRs) were provided to all newly arrived families to cover them for initial two-weeks inside the camps. This was followed by the distribution of family food rations (FFR) which covered food for each family for a month. Starting in March 2020, the full food rations was graduated to a “hybrid” food assistance comprising of one part cash and another part in-kind dry rations.

Starting in May 2020, monthly cash assistance is provided to all registered refugees in Bardarash and Gawilan camps (IQD 22,000 per person per household). In addition, canvas shopping bags are distributed containing healthy eating, hygiene and physical exercise advice, which share helpful messages to stay healthy around COVID-19 and as a useful item to carry purchases from the market. Awareness sessions on precautionary measures around COVID-19 and staying safe were also provided to the population.

Key Observations and Challenges

Due to restrictive movement of refugees in Bardarash camp, prices of food and other commodities inside camp were slightly higher than in the nearby town. Through concerted advocacy, refugees are now allowed to temporarily leave camp upon receiving daily clearance from Assayesh for daily shopping or other necessary trips.



CAMP COORDINATION AND CAMP MANAGEMENT

Response

- In Bardarash camp, new camp management and coordination structures were established and the new camp management authority provided with detailed guidance. At the initial inception, the camp was managed by the Duhok Governorate’s Bureau of Relief and Humanitarian Affairs (BRHA) with the Ministry of Interior’s Joint Crisis Coordination Centre (MoI/JCCC) taking over camp management responsibilities from November 2019 onwards.
- Camp management for Gawilan Sector F was integrated into the existing structure and support mechanism.
- Support to the development and streamlining of referral processes, registration and deregistration procedures, including tracking of shelter occupancy and monitoring of activities in the camp was provided.

Key Observations

Due to the transient nature of Bardarash camp, updated information and statistics on the camp profile, such as number of vulnerable families, departures and arrivals of camp residents are a long and laborious process. As the camp management team in Bardarash is new and requires closer technical support, there is a plan to provide comprehensive training to all camp administrators and management staff on their roles and responsibilities.

Outstanding Challenges and Advocacy

■ Freedom of Movement

To date, Assayesh clearance to depart Bardarash camp remains limited to those with a family sponsor outside of the camps and having a first-degree relationship. Those without any such family ties are unable to officially depart the camp. Advocacy with authorities is needed to ensure that newly-arrived refugees from NES are provided similar treatment as previous groups of refugees who were not subjected to an encampment policy.

Advocacy related to the expedited clearance procedure by Assayesh for new arrivals who desired to leave the camps and reside in other parts of the KR-I presented numerous challenges due to unclear and overlapping reporting structures among the various Assayesh branches. There has been advocacy with relevant Duhok government authorities to end the encampment policy. While the Duhok Assayesh authorities sought only a brief encampment of new arrivals for observation purposes, the reality is that unless refugees have a sponsor or express the desire to return to Syria, the policy remains by-and-large in place permanently. A further complication is that Bardarash town falls under the auspices of the Akre Assayesh office which reports to the General Assayesh office in Erbil. Thus any discussions on the policy requires agreement from three branches of Assayesh, those at the border, in Duhok and in Akre/Erbil.

In total, **9,368 individuals**, including **411** vulnerable children, departed the camps and/or were reunited with family members in other parts of the KR-I. Advocacy continues to allow others, who so desire, to exercise their fundamental right of freedom of movement as other similarly situated refugees in the KR-I, consistent with refugee and human rights law and in the absence of any national legislation to the contrary. UNHCR is also supporting the Residency Department to construct an office in Bardarash camp to facilitate the issuance of residency cards. This will facilitate their departure and enhance free movement and access to livelihoods within the KR-I.

■ Education

The Ministry of Education (MoE) in the KR-I has not granted access to formal education to this group of people. While discussions are ongoing on the curriculum and language of study, the COVID-19 pandemic has slowed down this process as most governmental offices were closed or working at reduced hours. In the interim, only non-formal education is available in the camps.

Fortunately, when refugee children depart the camps they are able to access education as per MoE procedures. If they have official documentation from Syria confirming their level of education this can be submitted to the nearest Directorate of Education for equalization and admission to urban schools. In the absence of official certification, children can register for a replacement test to determine their grade before the start of the academic year.

Advocacy is needed to apply the same procedure to refugee children living in the camps. Without such formal education or ability for children to enrol in nearby schools outside of camp, children are at risk of being out of school for a prolonged period of time leading to delinquency and other negative coping mechanisms.

■ COVID Response

COVID -19 and related measures enforced by authorities to prevent the spread of the virus, presented a host of challenges and risks to the response and to persons of concern. Regular interventions in camps were reduced and essential activities such as food and cash distribution were amended to ensure they complied with social distancing precautions.

The liquidity of financial service providers (FSPs) has been a concern for all cash-based initiatives and many delays were experienced. For example, organisations were able to work with Money Transfer Agents who provide direct cash which reduces the pressure on the banking system. Initially, FSPs were not cleared by the authorities for movement during the curfew as they were not classified as humanitarian actors, but partners worked to secure approvals and the situation improved in April. While liquidity is still an issue, at least FSPs have access to camps and can provide cash albeit at a slower pace due to COVID-19 preventative measures.

Protection actors noted an increase in reported domestic violence cases after the implementation of lockdown measures. The inability to conduct group activities affects the number of psychosocial support and recreational or educational activities that can be provided as actors resort to individual psychosocial support through the phone or sharing materials for activities or awareness through social media. Mental health actors have also observed increasing trends in depression and anxiety and continue to follow-up remotely on their clients while the psychiatrist is available at the Primary Health Care Centre on a weekly basis.



Figure 2: A newly arrived Syrian refugee with his child in Gawilan Refugee camp. UNHCR / R.Rasheed

Thank you to partners participating in the response

Action Against Hunger | ACTED | AISPO | Arbeiter Samariter Bund | Assayesh | Barzani Charity Foundation | Board of Relief and Humanitarian Affairs | CARE | Directorate of Health | Directorate of Labour and Social Affairs | Directorate of Water Outskirts | Escape from Darkness | GOAL | German Red Cross Society | Harikar | Heevie Organization | ICRC | IOM | Iraqi Red Crescent Society | IVY | Joint Crisis Cell Committee (JCCC) | Khalsa Aid | Lotus Flower | Lutheran World Federation | Malteser International | MedAir | Médecins Sans Frontières - Switzerland | Mercy Corps | Norwegian Refugee Council | Peace Winds Japan | Plain Compassion Crisis Response | Polish Humanitarian Action | REACH Initiative | Reach Iraq | Samaritan's Purse | Save The Children | Seed Foundation | Sewan Women | Spirit of America | Solidarités Internationale | SOSD | SWEDO | Triangle Génération Humanitaire | UNFPA | UNHCR | UNICEF | WFP | WHO | World Vision | ZOA

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**Canada | Denmark | Estonia | European Union | France | Germany | Ireland | Italy | Japan | Kuwait
Netherlands | Norway | Private Donors | Sweden | Switzerland | United Kingdom | United States of America**

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