Key Issues

The second quarter of 2017 was marked by a number of adverse developments related to food security in Iraq, which is still home to one of the largest and most complex humanitarian crises in the world. Due to the unprecedented levels of displacement resulting from operations to retake Mosul and other areas of Ninewa from the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), there was a sharp increase in the number of households requiring immediate life-saving assistance.

Based on monitoring by WFP-VAM in Mosul, fewer resident households reported inadequate food consumption than in the first quarter of 2017; however, rates were still high amongst IDPs and returnees. Similarly, more displaced households reported relying on negative coping strategies, and households in general reported relying on credit or support from their social networks to purchase food. Access to the PDS deteriorated amongst Mosul residents, with IDPs facing the greatest difficulties in obtaining their rations.

Elsewhere in the country, some positive developments related to food security could be observed. Markets functionality improved and available price indices showed either modest monthly increases or decreases. Similarly positive is the fact that households have been able to potentially rely increasingly on markets as a source of food. Prices of commodities fell in re-taken areas of Mosul, particularly in the east have fallen dramatically. Markets have been adequately supplied and have quickly become a main source of food for the population in Eastern Mosul, but residents, who frequently lack access to income-generating opportunities, have been forced to rely on credit to purchase it. Based on WFP-VAM monitoring, the cost of a food basket remained significantly higher (30% higher in May) in urban Mosul than in the rest of the governorate.

While harvest figures were not yet available, agrometeorological conditions throughout the 2016-2017 growing season suggested favorable wheat and barley harvests. In areas less affected by active conflict, however, efforts to restore agricultural livelihoods lagged as resources to rehabilitate the agricultural sector remained insufficient to meet needs.

Due to displacement from Mosul, there was a sharp increase in the number of individuals needing and receiving humanitarian assistance. In April alone, the Food Security Cluster (FSC) and its partners reached over 2.2 million beneficiaries through a combination of immediate response rations, family food rations, livelihoods support, e-vouchers, cash-based transfers, cash-for-work and cooked meals. By contrast, in September 2016 (before operations to re-take Mosul began), the number of beneficiaries reached by FSC partners totaled approximately 1.5 million. Nearly 1 million of the beneficiaries reached in April 2017 were in Ninewa, versus 141,786 in September of the previous year. In addition to Ninewa, FSC partners also increased their activities in Dohuk and Anbar. Meanwhile, numbers of FSC beneficiaries fell in Salah al-Din, Erbil, Sulaymaniyah, and Babil, underscoring the gradual focus of the humanitarian response to the west of the country and as the fight against ISIL focuses on the last remaining areas held by the group.

Along these lines, conflict and displacement remain the primary sources of food insecurity in Iraq. Populations affected by displacement, whether they are still IDPs or returnees, are disproportionately affected by food insecurity. Based on monitoring conducted by WFP-VAM, rates of inadequate food consumption were highest amongst IDPs, followed by returnees and residents. For Mosul, specifically, there was a sharp deterioration amongst IDPs; as of May, 33% of IDPs had poor or borderline food consumption scores, compared with 26% in April. Even in areas less affected by conflict, the reduced functionality of services such as the PDS makes it difficult for households to obtain predictable levels of support.

In the coming months, humanitarian actors will still need to provide life-saving assistance to the tens of thousands of Iraqis that are expected to be displaced through the remainder of 2017. Displaced families will continue to require ready-to-eat food and dry-food rations. Cash transfers, cash-for-work and income-generation activities are necessary to support reconstruction, the restoration of markets, and IDP and refugee returns, and they will continue to be required until conditions change.

Risk Overview

Food Security

- Civilians living in the remaining areas controlled by ISIL will face deteriorating conditions as food stocks within them continue to dwindle and access to remaining supply chains are cut off.

- Continued conflict will likely displace another 100,000 Iraqis (based on OCHA figures) before the end of 2017, requiring the provision of immediate life-saving assistance to IDP households.

  - Operations to expel ISIL from western Anbar are expected to accelerate displacement, with IDPs fleeing to areas in the governorate inhabited by returnees, and where resources and services, particularly markets are already stretched.

  - Conditions in ISIL-held Hawiga in Kirkuk will likely deteriorate further, with residents already suffering under siege-like conditions; meanwhile, competing Kurdish and ISF efforts to recapture Hawiga raise the risk of destabilizing the governorate as a whole.

  - Displacement will continue in Ninewa from areas to the west of Mosul still under ISIL control, particularly Telafar, and is expected to place pressure on already stretched resources in IDP camps and Mosul City.

  - Political uncertainty and the potential for increased conflict amongst anti-ISIL groups pose a longer-term risk to stability, with areas where anti-ISIL fighting is among the most affected.

  - IDP returns may place pressure on markets that have not fully recovered their previous levels of functionality, resulting in high prices and low levels of household access, as seen in locations in Anbar Governorate, where nearly a million IDPs have returned to date.

Agriculture and Livelihoods

- Lingering insecurity in areas re-taken from ISIL will prevent IDP returns, further delaying the recovery of livelihoods and agriculture.

- While markets recovered in many areas affected by recent fighting, they have not been met by a corresponding improvement in livelihood opportunities, leaving residents and returnees dependent upon food assistance or credit.

- Crop production and grazing areas in newly liberated areas will continue to suffer from the effects of fighting, with damaged infrastructure, improvised explosive devices (IEDs), and unexploded ordnance (UXO) preventing the resumption of agricultural production.

- Lack of internal markets for the KRI’s wheat and barley surpluses will likely discourage local production in the coming season, having a negative impact on the sustainability of crop production and food security.

- Inadequate resources to rehabilitate and support agriculture threaten recovery efforts.

- Sunn Pest (Eurygaster integriceps) poses a critical threat to wheat production in the highland areas of Kurdistan region, particularly in Dohuk; Red Palm Weevil (Rhynchophorus ferrugineus) poses a threat in Anbar Governorate and Southern Iraq more generally.

- Low availability and low levels access to inputs such as fertilizers, certified seeds, and pesticides will continue to affect yields and crop production in areas that lack government support.

- Inadequate veterinary care in areas affected by conflict has the risk of livestock diseases, particularly Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD) and Peste des Petits Ruminants (PPR).

- Low levels of access to vaccinations, fodder, and feed will affect livestock production.

Recommended Early Actions:

Food Security

- Ensure the continued provision of cooked meals, immediate response rations, and family food rations in areas where displacement is likely to occur, particularly in Ninewa, Kirkuk, and Anbar.

- Scale up cash-based transfer, cash-for-work, and voucher programs in areas where markets have begun to recover, but where access to income-generating opportunities is low, particularly in Mosul.

- Ensure that the PDS remains adequately stocked, including in areas that are less affected by conflict; ensure that it recovers its geographic reach in areas retaken from ISIL.

- Markets, particularly in areas most affected by recent conflict must be continuously monitored for price fluctuations, functionality, and levels of household access.
Agriculture and Livelihoods

- Prioritize the clearing of landmines, IEDs, and UXO from crop-producing areas.

- Restore and rehabilitate crop-production infrastructure, such as irrigation canals, greenhouses, silos, and warehouses, through cash-for-work programs.

- Rebuild roads, bridges and transportation infrastructure to facilitate the rehabilitation of value chains and access to markets.

- Ensure access to adequate supplies of agricultural inputs (fertilizers, seeds, pesticides and tools), particularly in areas that have been recently retaken from ISIL.

- Invest in surveillance and management systems to detect, track, and control pest and diseases that affect crops.

- Provide training and tools on relatively neglected forms of agricultural production, including beekeeping and greenhouse vegetable production.

- Ensure access to livestock vaccinations, particularly amongst IDPs, and host community members in conflict-affected areas.

- Provide feed support to vulnerable displaced and returnee herders, female-headed households, and children that depend upon livestock and dairy products.

- Invest in the capacity of veterinary practitioners and clinics as well as in disease surveillance, and diagnostic activities for livestock herds.

CONFLICT AND DISPLACEMENT:

Operations to retake Mosul continued to be the main focus of fighting throughout the second quarter of 2017, triggering waves of displacement that were unprecedented since the city fell to ISIL three years ago. While Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) had been able to re-take Eastern Mosul by January 24, 2017, fighting for the western half of the city, particularly the old city, lasted through the end of June and into early July.

In total, nearly one million civilians fled Mosul since operations began in October 2016, according to estimates by OCHA, surpassing the worst case scenarios envisioned for the operation. Based on estimates from OCHA, West Mosul has been the worst affected with approximately 730,000 individuals fleeing between February and July (nearly 72,000 had returned as of July 11) and in East Mosul where 176,000 had fled (162,000 had returned as of July 11).  

While the re-taking of Mosul is a milestone in the conflict, the reconstruction process will take years to complete. In areas that have recently been re-taken from ISIL, the government and international actors need to ensure that reconstruction efforts advance quickly to restore livelihoods and markets and to allow for the return of IDPs. According to estimates by OCHA, of the 54 residential districts in western Mosul, 15 were heavily damaged, 23 were moderately damaged and 16 neighborhoods suffered light damage.

At the end of June, DTM 3, estimated that over 3.3 million Iraqis had been displaced since January 2014, a figure that has increased by nearly 300,000 individuals since the first quarter for 2017. Of this number, 1,952,868 had returned, a figure 300,000 over the first quarter. Seven of Iraq’s 18 governorates (Nineveh, Dohuk, Kirkuk, Erbil, Baghdad, Salah al-Din, and Anbar) host 86% of IDPs. Anbar has seen the largest number of returns – nearly 950,000 as of June – a figure that accounts for nearly 50% of the total. 4

While the retaking of Mosul represented a turning point in the conflict with ISIL, OCHA estimates that an additional 100,000 civilians may flee their homes by the end of this year, as Iraqi forces reclaim remaining ISIL-held areas in Nineawa, Anbar, and Kirkuk. Based on estimates from OCHA, over 60,000 additional individuals could be displaced in operations to re-take western Anbar from ISIL and that over 22,000 have fled their homes in western Anbar since the beginning of the year. According to monitoring by DTM, IDP returns to Anbar have accelerated rapidly during the past year, and with nearly a million individuals from the governorate having returned home, there has been enormous strain placed on already damaged markets and services. Food prices that are twice those found in other governorates of Iraq may continue to climb in the face of increased demand.

In the remaining areas of Nineawa under ISIL control, particularly Telafar, displacement has accelerated and will continue to accelerate as the ISF attempts to retake the city and the surrounding countryside. At the beginning of July, OCHA estimated that as many as 20,000 people remained in Telafar, with 17,000 having already fled as of mid July. IDPs from Telafar have tended to flee to the same camps as Mosul IDPs or to Mosul itself, placing additional pressures on locations

3 DTM (Displacement Tracking Matrix). IOM’s information management system
4 DTM-IOM data and reports. http://iraqdtm.iom.int/
where resources are already stretched. To the west of Mosul, an unstable situation in Sinjar has as resulted in fighting between Kurdish groups and threatens to further destabilize the area.

Kirkuk in particular will remain a potential flash point, both within the context of the current fight against ISIL and in relations between members of the anti-ISIL coalition. In Kirkuk, OCHA has estimated that 50,000-60,000 individuals have remained in ISIL-controlled Hawiga in April, where conditions have sharply deteriorated and food prices have spiked. In the past, most have gone to Salah-al Din rather than remaining in Kirkuk Governorate.

While the focus of conflict has been on ISIL, additional destabilizing waves of conflict could follow. The fight against ISIL has relied on coalition of diverse actors, but it could splinter during or after the remaining operations to re-take land from ISIL control. Remaining ISIL-held areas may be potential flash points for conflict amongst anti-ISIL coalition members. At a national level, elections for provincial governments in 2017 and parliament in 2018, have the potential to generate conflict. The Iraqi Kurdistan Independence Referendum, scheduled for September 25, which will take place in the KRI’s recognized territories as well as ones it has occupied since 2014, may raise the risk of conflict.

Beyond active conflict, generalized insecurity also plays a destabilizing role in households’ ability to return or resume their previous livelihoods. Based on data compiled by iMMAP, the largest number of security incidents took place in Nineawa, followed distantly by Baghdad. Fewer incidents were reported in Anbar and Diyala in comparison with last quarter, but the number of incidents rose in Kirkuk and Salah al-Din. Crime, improvised explosive devices, and airstrikes are the most common incidents, reflecting widespread insecurity.

The second quarter of 2017 saw a continuation of trends observed from 2016 onwards, including relatively stable prices overall and greater market functionality brought about by improvements in supply chains. Additional challenges will persist, including sporadic shortages, volatility in the prices of individual commodities, and a dependence upon imported goods. Areas affected by conflict or displacement will likely be the most affected, with consumers in these areas paying significantly higher prices than average while having fewer income-generating opportunities available to them.

National price indices measured only slight changes in prices during the second quarter of 2017. The Joint Price Monitoring Initiative (JPMI) measured slight month-on-month decreases in the cost of the Survival Minimum Expenditure Basket (SMEB) across the districts assessed by the partners of the Iraq Cash Working Group: -1.5% in April, -0.2% in May, and -1.7% in June. These decreases reverse a trend observed in the first quarter of 2017, in which the JPMI measured relatively small month-on-month increases in the cost of a basket of items that includes food commodities as well as non-food items such as cooking fuel. During the quarter, WFP-VAM recorded national increases in the cost of a minimum food basket. 6 While the price

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of a food basket fell by -1% in April and a rise of +2% for each month respectively. While the consumer price indices for Iraq as a whole were not publicly released as in the past, figures for the KRI showed a -0.7% decrease in prices April, followed by a decline of -0.5% in May, and -0.2% decrease in June. 7

Markets assessed through the JPMI showed similar indicators of functionality as last quarter. Shortages were geographically isolated and short term, with reports of specific commodities missing from markets in Telafar, Erbil, and Kirkuk during individual months in which prize data was collected. As in previous months, the JPMI recorded a high level of dependence upon imported items (95% of all items or more throughout the quarter).

WFP-VAM monitoring showed that wages remained lower in hotspot governorates compared to other governorates nationally, resulting in less favorable terms of trade. Terms of trade are now better in parts of urban re-taken Mosul than in the rest of the governorate. Daily wages for unskilled labour in hotspot governorates in June was unchanged in comparison with three months before (19,375 Iraqi dinar (IQD) per day). By comparison, daily labor wages in other governorates rose over the same period (23,164 IQD/day in March, versus 24,286 IQD/day in June).

AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION

Crop Production:

With Iraq experiencing largely favorable growing conditions throughout the last wheat and barley planting seasons, the greatest challenges confronting crop production have been and will continue to be related to conflict. Ongoing armed conflict in rural areas has had an immediate impact on household resettlement and the economic viability of crop production. In the longer term, damaged and destroyed infrastructure will continue to affect crop production in newly liberated areas with the presence of IEDs and UXOs in arable lands, will place major constraints rehabilitation efforts.

Information gathered by remote sensing suggested that agrometeorological conditions during April and May were largely favorable. Significantly lower-than-average rainfall levels were observed in Dohuk, Anbar, and Ninewa, with corresponding moisture stress. At the same time, High rainfalls and low temperatures in other northern governorates during the first quarter delayed

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8 WFP defines the following governorates as hotspot areas: Anbar, Ninewa, Salah Al-Din, Kirkuk, Diyala, and Baghdad.
harvests and lowered outputs, adding to the effects of the conflict in these areas on productivity. Conflict in Ninewa, the traditional breadbasket of the country, is likely to have a severe impact on cereal production, despite the fact that production

The conflict has made crop production vulnerable to biological hazards, limiting the capacity and resources of authorities to detect, control and monitor pests and diseases. Sunn Pest (Eurygaster integriceps) poses an urgent threat in the highland areas of Kurdistan region, particularly in Dohuk, while Red Palm Weevil (Rhynchophorus ferrugineus) threatens Anbar Governorate and Southern Iraq. Sunn Pest infestations, which have reached a critical stage in Dohuk, have the potential to severely affect production, yielding losses of 90% in wheat and 20 to 30% in barley.

Political instability not directly linked to the fight against ISIL has and will continue to affect production. Due to disputes with the central government, wheat sales from the KRI to the rest of the country have been blocked, and the region now faces difficulties marketing and storing its harvests. Levels of demand in the KRI itself are insufficient and the potential for international exports are low; imported bread wheat flour from Turkey has been more competitive than the region’s own production. The KRI government has placed a strong emphasis on encouraging wheat and barley production, primarily through boosting yields. In 2016, for example, reported production figures for wheat were nearly 141% higher than five years previously, while barley figures had increased by 197%. In the upcoming planting season, the current impasse may do much to discourage domestic production.

The erosion of input markets poses both an immediate and long-term threat to production. For the crop sector, inputs are unavailable or inaccessible, particularly in areas affected by conflict. There is a lack of certified wheat and barley seeds and organic and chemical fertilizers. These items, as well as pesticides, herbicides, and irrigation equipment are too expensive for many households to obtain. Austerity measures will make it more difficult for small-scale farmers to obtain these items; however, they are particularly important for the rehabilitation of the sector in newly-liberated areas, where crop production has relied on low-quality seeds and suffered from a lack of fertilizers. Related challenges include the rehabilitation and reconstruction of irrigation canals, greenhouses, silos and warehouses and the restoration of value chains.

Livestock Production:

Livestock is the main asset for Iraqis in rural areas, and to some extent, urban neighborhoods as well, serving as means of generating income and as a source of food. Recent conflicts have adversely affected production, and the sector faces a number of challenges. Most significantly, these include access to grazing areas, availability of feed and fodder, and veterinary care.

Livestock production has become increasingly untenable for a number of herding households. Most significantly, animal fodder and feed is either unavailable or too expensive for households to afford. Newly displaced households have not been able to relocate to camps and herders who are unable to feed their livestock have been forced to abandon or sell their animals, pushing down prices. At the same time, the cessation of breeding and genetic improvement programs in the country, diseases, and a lack of veterinary care has led to deterioration in remaining stocks. Combined, these pressures will make the sector increasingly unsustainable over time.

An assessment conducted by the Ministry of Agriculture in Ninewa estimated that there has been a 60% reduction of sheep and goats and a 45% reduction of cattle in the governorate in the last six months. To restock sheep and goat herds, an estimated 30 million USD will be necessary, while 15 million USD will be necessary to restock cattle. For existing stocks, 5.1 million doses of different vaccines will be necessary to combat Pox, Brucellosis, Enterotoxamia, Black Leg Disease, and Lumpy Skin Disease. 5

The livestock sector in areas under ISIL control suffered heavy losses and the existing herds have not been vaccinated for years and are likely to carry contagious diseases. These problems have been exacerbated by transhumance grazing patterns in which nomadic households moving their herds across the Syrian border when the seasons change. Because of the collapse of veterinary programs in Syria, unvaccinated Syrian sheep and goats cross into Iraq, raising the risk of diseases.

the end of the quarter. Similarly, acute diarrhea made up an increasingly large proportion of medical consultations cases in June. Nearly 9% of consultations during June 11-17 were for acute diarrhea. By contrast, in April, acute diarrhea cases comprised between 2%-4.5% of total medical consultations.

In the coming months, adequate access to safe drinking water supplies will continue to present a challenge and households will remain susceptible to outbreaks of waterborne diseases. Challenges related to accessing adequate drinking water extend beyond camps and may be especially prevalent in areas where heavy levels of destruction occurred. Infrastructure such as water supplies for agricultural and domestic use has been damaged or destroyed in urban and rural areas alike.

Since January 2017, UNICEF has been supporting the Ninewa Department of Health and NGO partners to identify and treat malnourished IDP children in areas affected by the Mosul operation. Out of 221,920 children aged 6-59 months who were screened using Mid-Upper Arm Circumference (MUAC) measurements since January until end of May 2017, 4,192 children were detected as MAM (1.98%) and 1,003 children were SAM (0.45%), resulting in a total GAM rate of 2.34%. Rates for Western Mosul were much higher, reflecting the siege-like conditions the city suffered. Of 4,295 newly-displaced children from West Mosul, a GAM rate of 9.39% was observed, with 8.3% of children exhibiting MAM and 1.09% exhibiting SAM.

NUTRITION AND HEALTH:

The Mosul response placed levels of stress on Iraq’s health sector not seen in the past several years, with actors focusing their resources on the provision of primary health care services to the affected population in newly accessible areas, care in newly established camps, and the management of trauma cases. Shortages of drinking water and food in Mosul were reflected in high rates of waterborne and foodborne diseases.

A shortage of safe water supplies in areas affected by conflict and rising temperatures made waterborne diseases, particularly acute diarrhea, a major health concern during the second quarter of 2017. Populations in West Mosul were particularly affected by damaged infrastructure and severed supply lines. Mosul IDP camps were also affected by high rates of waterborne and foodborne illnesses. Cholera remained a major concern across IDP camps, with authorities examining several suspected outbreaks and confirming two cases in Wasit and Najaf governorates in May.

Based on rates of consultations reported in the Early Warning Alert and Response Network (EWARN), treatment of acute diarrhea rose steadily throughout April, May, and early June before falling again towards