KEY INSIGHTS

- The majority of returnees from Ninewa Plains are satisfied they have returned.
- The majority of returnees from Sinjar are determined to stay.
- Post-conflict recovery in Sinjar remains significantly behind that of the Ninewa Plains.

ORDER OF NEEDS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NINEWA</th>
<th>SINJAR</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Economic opportunity</td>
<td>1. Security</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Shelter</td>
<td>2. Shelter</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Executive Summary

Purpose of the Assessment

In Iraq, the situation for returnees and internally displaced persons (IDPs), particularly among minority communities, continues to evolve in areas of origin and displacement. In order to better understand the successes and continued challenges faced by minority communities, Samaritan’s Purse (SP) conducted a follow-on assessment of communities surveyed in SP’s 2018 “Post-Conflict Assessment: Minority Communities in Ninewa.” Conducted one year after the previous assessment, this current assessment highlights changes in the perceptions and needs of minority communities in both the Ninewa Plains and the Sinjar District.

Assessment Components

The assessment includes a triangulation of methods, both quantitative and qualitative, that captures the broad experience and nuanced decision-making processes of the targeted populations. From December 2018 to January 2019, SP conducted more than 2,200 phone surveys with IDPs and returnee households (HHs) from Ninewa Governorate (representing more than 25,000 HHs). Additionally, 19 focus-group discussions (FGDs) were conducted in areas of displacement and origin, and more than 30 key-informant interviews (KIIIs) were conducted. As a result, the assessment captures the evolving perspectives and challenges of those who remain in displacement and the current experience of those who have chosen to return.

“I hope that life will be better tomorrow and the days following. I am optimistic that the security will stabilize and improve and I want to see my family living well in our homes once again.”

SHABAK RETURNEE TO BARTELLA, IRAQ
Minority Communities: Perceptions

**NINEWA PLAINS**

Displaced persons who hope to voluntarily return to their area of origin face a complex decision with many factors to weigh. Upon return, 75% of returnees express satisfaction, with only 9% unsatisfied or wishing they had not returned. The level of satisfaction remains constant even when disaggregated by ethno-religious background and town of origin.

Focus-group respondents mirrored the same sentiments as survey respondents. In FGDs, people's optimism over the present and future fluctuated between hope and discouragement. However, underneath was a relief to be home in their original community again. A female Yazidi respondent from Bashiqa summarized it well, saying, “**This is our region. Our chances are better here. We were scattered in displacement, but now we are united again. We belong here.**” Another agreed, saying, “I would stay in a tent here. It would be better than a house in a displaced area.” Despite the challenges, returnees stand by their decisions to return. Every FGD with Ninewa Plains returnees mentioned a strong loyalty to and identity with their area of origin, while also citing challenges of high rent in areas of displacement and unsuitable camp shelters.

When asked, 62% of returnees said they returned because the location of return was safe. This aligns with the premise that the Ninewa Plains has reached a tipping point for returns largely because security has improved to the necessary threshold. This allows economic push factors, like high rent in an area of displacement, and emotional pull factors, like identification with the area of origin, to draw returnees back home.

Although the data demonstrated that the initial critical barrier to return was security, other factors such as shelter, financial needs, and other essential services have become determinative factors in deciding to return or remain displaced. This result was substantiated during focus-group discussions by advice that returnees explained they would provide to IDPs considering returning. A common perception among returnees was, while it is now safe enough to return, IDPs should first consider whether they would have livelihood opportunities in their area of origin. In general, returnees did not advise IDPs to return without livelihood opportunities. One Christian respondent summarized his peers' responses by confirming that the “lack of jobs has affected us a lot. Job opportunities would
Another Christian IDP predicted, “All of us would go back to our homes if there were jobs available.” Another man explained that he had returned to Qaraqosh for seven months, repaired his home, and then gone back to Erbil because he could not find work in Qaraqosh. Highlighting once again the importance of finding livelihoods opportunities, a Christian female IDP from Qaraqosh said that “finding a consistent income would be a great motive for us to return. I really want to get back [to Qaraqosh] even though I don’t own a home there.” Despite the financial constraints of returning home, some returnees stressed that communities would be better if more people returned.

Ninewa Plains: IDP/Returnees: Most Mentioned Hopes for 2019

Ninewa Plains: IDP/Returnees: Most Mentioned Fears for 2019

Although the security situation has improved, people remain unsettled by perceived or actual tensions with neighbors and fear of another ISIS-like group returning. A female Yazidi returnee from Bashiqqa said “We lost trust in our security when ISIS attacked. We still feel they can come back again. I think they are back each time I hear a noise outside.” A Shabak woman from Bartella agreed, saying, “We have returned, but we are still afraid of what will happen later.” Ninewa Plains KILs and focus-group respondents reaffirmed these sentiments, highlighting the need for social cohesion and a desire for an international or American military presence to ensure the long-term viability of minority communities.
**SINJAR DISTRICT**

Aligning with results from the Ninewa Plains, 87% of returnee focus-group respondents from Sinjar District affirmed that, despite the difficulties of returning, they would not go back to camps or areas of displacement. This determination to stay in their area of origin is somewhat surprising when compared to the fact that only 35% reported that their situation had improved in the past year. Despite the difficulties faced upon returning, Yazidi returnees from Sinjar District would overwhelmingly prefer to be in the district than in their former area of displacement. Focus-group respondents frequently expressed strong loyalty to Sinjar as a physical location. Statements such as “I am the son of Sinjar,” “I am the daughter of the mountain,” and “This is the land of my grandfather” illustrate the pull towards Sinjar as a key source of identity and the idea of home.

Generally, those who have returned to the Sinjar District are in the best spirits, according to key informants. A sense of hope comes from being on their ancestral lands. Confidence comes from being in proximity to Sinjar Mountain, a refuge for the Yazidi people and a place where they have survived many genocide attempts in the past. According to key informants, the hardest part of being a returnee is the anxiety and loneliness caused by the absence of family members and neighbors who have not returned or who were lost to ISIS.

---

**Sinjar District: Returnee Desire to Stay**

- **Stay**: 87%
- **Return to displacement**: 11%
- **Inconclusive**: 2%

---

**NINEWA, IRAQ | POST-CONFLICT ASSESSMENT - ONE YEAR LATER - FEBRUARY 2019**
Sinjar District: North and South Divide

Returnee experiences in the Sinjar District differ depending on the geographic location in relation to Sinjar Mountain. 53% of FGD respondents from Snuni, located north of the mountain, responded that their situation had improved in the past year, as compared to only 17% of respondents from Sinjar Town, south of the mountain. What is more, the majority of Snuni FGD respondents thought their lives would improve in the coming year, whereas the majority of Sinjar Town respondents said their lives would remain the same.

The majority of respondents from Sinjar Town said they hoped security would improve and that they would receive help rehabilitating their homes in the coming year. In contrast, the majority of respondents in Snuni hoped to find work. Sinjar Town respondents also mentioned the need for improved services, something notably absent from Snuni respondents’ feedback. In an interview with the mayor of Snuni, he explained that the services in Snuni are currently better than they were before the displacement.

With the relatively stable security situation in the north, many key informants mentioned that shelter and livelihood interventions would be well received and would encourage more families to return north of Sinjar Mountain. According to the mayor, 60% of current Snuni residents are returnees to Sinjar District, but are not originally from Snuni; choosing to return to the district, they resettled in Snuni due to its stability and infrastructure.

Respondents in the IDP focus-group discussions consistently shared their hope to return to Sinjar District, but concerns of security, multiple military and militia actors, and lack of basic services prevented them from returning. Many of these IDPs also mentioned a desire to move abroad. One of the greatest points of consensus among IDP respondents was their disdain for the camps, even though basic services were provided. The most commonly
cited complaint of camp residents was the poor tent conditions and consequent number of fires, either intentional or unintentional. Numerous FGD participants knew someone who had lost relatives in tent fires. A female Khanke Camp resident retold the account of a woman who was burned in her sleep. She shared that she was afraid the same would happen to her children while they were asleep or while she was away. Similar fears are held by those residing outside formal camps. Respondents declared that “there is no life here in the tents.” Key informants stated that there is far less hope in the IDP camps, where the poorest from the Sinjar District remain, unable to finance a return.

Despite improving conditions in Sinjar District, security remains a key concern. When speaking with key informants from in and around Sinjar Town, a prominent point was that improvement in both the security situation and livelihood opportunities would catalyze returns. Having a better understanding of the security context, many key informants from the Snuni area placed lesser emphasis on improved security, and instead highlighted the importance of shelter and livelihood interventions. These would encourage more families to return north of Sinjar Mountain. The Mayor of Snuni remarked that people would leave the camps to come back to the region for something as simple as five chickens.
Minority Communities: Intentions of Return

NINEWA PLAINS

For the Ninewa Plains, data indicates that the majority of those who intend to return hope to do so in the next 12 months. As shown in the chart Ninewa Plains IDP: Future Expectations, 40% of current Ninewa Plains IDPs expect to return in the next 12 months. When the timeframe to return is extended to five years, this percentage only increases to 46%. These findings support the theory that the primary tipping point for returns to the Ninewa Plains has been met and the majority of remaining returns are imminent.

As displayed in the chart Ninewa Plains Returnees: Expectations and Long-Term Hopes, returnees overwhelmingly expect to remain in their places of origin, underlining the deep satisfaction held by the majority of returnees.
Rates of return in the Sinjar District prove less encouraging than those projected for the Ninewa Plains. Based on data gathered by REACH Initiative in January 2018, only 13% of IDPs from the Sinjar District intended to return within the next 12 months. This number increases to 56% at the five year mark, based on data collected for the current assessment. This increase between 12 months and five years could indicate that despite the prevailing desire to return home, people do not expect to be able to do so within a 12-month timeframe. Internally displaced persons do not believe that necessary conditions, such as security, livelihoods, or shelter, will be present in the short-term. Over the span of five years, this perception changes to one that anticipates a return home.

### Sinjar IDPs: 5-Year Expectations

- **Area of origin**: 56%
- **Move abroad**: 2%
- **Voluntarily stay in current location**: 22%
- **Involuntarily stay in current location**: 2%
- **Move to new location within country**: 18%

The following section summarizes several notable changes and consistencies between the data collected by SP in 2017 and that collected in 2018/2019.

**NINEWA PLAINS**

**Primary Obstacle to Return: Economic Opportunity and Shelter**

In 2017, more than 57% of IDPs cited security as the primary obstacle to return. The 2019 responses reveal a significantly reduced concern about security, while highlighting a focus on livelihoods and financial concerns. This reduced concern over security is not met with an increased desire to return amongst IDPs. This appears to be linked to the lack of livelihoods opportunities in the place of origin or the financial constraints of relocating back home.

**Ninewa Plains IDPs: Most Commonly Shared Obstacle to Return**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Obstacle</th>
<th>2017</th>
<th>2019</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Area of return is insecure/unsafe</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of money</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>House destroyed/rehabilitation costs</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of livelihoods in area of origin</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Property inhabited in area of origin</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of services</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Changed ethnoreligious composition</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

![Image showing a street scene with people and shops]
SINJAR DISTRICT

Primary Obstacle to Return: Economic Opportunity and Shelter

As with the Ninewa Plains, security is now of lesser importance to IDPs from Sinjar District. Concern for security has been replaced, in part, by an increased emphasis on shelter, financial, and livelihood needs. Key informants highlighted that while the security situation is not solved, it has reached a stabilization point, even south of Sinjar Mountain.

Sinjar IDPs: Primary Obstacle to Return

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Obstacle</th>
<th>2017</th>
<th>2019</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Area of return is insecure/unsafe</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>House in place of origin is destroyed</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of livelihoods</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of money</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Absence of services</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Changed ethnoreligious composition</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: the 2017 survey did not contain livelihoods in area of origin as a response option.
Creating Sustainable Communities: Shelter and Livelihoods

NINEWA PLAINS

The prominent obstacles to return noted by Ninewa Plains IDPs are lack of livelihood opportunities in place of origin, no money to return, and prohibitive shelter-rehabilitation costs. A key shift since last year is the decreased importance of shelter cited by Ninewa Plains IDPs.

Shelter Considerations

When compared to IDP respondents, returnees reported increased number of homes that were already rehabilitated, or that had no damage or only light damage, and significantly fewer homes that were heavily damaged or destroyed. This difference can be explained by shelter-rehabilitation efforts conducted over the last two years in these communities. The difference in damage categories between IDPs and returnees is also attributable to the fact that those with more heavily damaged homes must find a way to fund the rehabilitation efforts themselves, as there has been significantly less assistance available.

The damage level of IDPs’ homes is spread fairly evenly across the various categories, underscoring the reality that shelter is no longer the primary obstacle to return. Of returnees who returned to their area of origin, but not their house of origin, 60% owned homes in damage categories 3, 4, and 5, as opposed to only 41% of IDPs who reported owning homes in categories 3, 4, or 5. More returnees (who did not return to their house of origin) own homes with significant damage than do IDPs.

This distinction indicates that those who want to return, even if their house has suffered greater damage, will find alternative shelter solutions – whether living with family or friends, or renting at another location. This aligns with the...
fact that renting in a town like Qaraqosh is cheaper than renting in a large city, such as Erbil. While shelter still keeps some people from returning, as shown in the Most Commonly Shared Obstacle to Return graph, it is not the primary concern.

Livelihoods

Both IDPs and returnees focus on the need for livelihoods in the survey and FGD responses. The most commonly shared obstacle amongst IDP survey respondents was the lack of livelihood opportunities in their place of origin. This does not mean the majority of people are unable to conduct their former livelihoods. More than 70% of respondents indicated that their primary livelihood is the same as it was before displacement. Frustration with the livelihood situation not only stems from an inability to restart livelihoods, but also from the quality of the livelihood once restored. Additionally, people who were day laborers before displacement have the greatest chance of being able to serve in that capacity now, whereas those who owned small businesses are less likely to be able to restart.

Ninewa Plains: HH Primary Livelihood Previously

- Day laborer: 47%
- Small business: 21%
- Government/public service: 20%
- Military/militia: 9%
- Agriculture/livestock: 3%
SINJAR DISTRICT

As the Sinjar District begins to heal from the deep wounds inflicted upon it, many issues must be addressed, including security, shelter, and livelihoods. The security situation remains more stable north of Sinjar Mountain than south of it, and the level of damage to shelter is more pronounced in the south.

Shelter Considerations

Unlike in the Ninewa Plains, where more reconstruction activities have occurred, the Sinjar District has seen few reconstruction interventions. Only 13% of returnees with partially or fully rehabilitated homes reported receiving support in the process. In focus-group discussions, IDPs from Sinjar District expressed hopes that in 2019 their homes would be rehabilitated – a sentiment that was less prominent amongst the Ninewa Plains IDP respondents.

The charts representing house damage levels summarize the damage categories of IDP and returnee houses in Sinjar District. The majority of respondents came from Sinjar Town itself, so the damage categories are more representative of that location and should not be broadly extrapolated to the entire district. Another point worth noting is that 59% of Sinjar home owners reported owning a concrete house and 38% owned a mud house.
As seen in the graphs, there is no significant difference in damage levels between IDP and returnee houses in Sinjar District. As in the Nineveh Plains, the exact state of damage of the individual’s home is not usually the primary obstacle to return, as alternative shelter solutions are available. In the case of Sinjar returnees, many choose to live in unoccupied homes that belong to people (often Sunni Muslims) who will likely never return due to past ethnic and religious tensions in the region. Also, 55% of returnee respondents reported having other families living with them as a temporary shelter solution. Returnees to Sinjar District are less likely to return to their house of origin than Ninewa Plains returnees. Responses indicate that 74% of returnees surveyed did not return to their house of origin. Factors that explain this include inability to repair extensive damage on their original house, safety in the town of origin, and the prevalence of militia members squatting in their homes.

Sinjar property rights have always been a contentious issue. The KIIs and FGDs all confirmed that Yazidis had not previously been granted permission to own property. The survey results demonstrated that 72% of Sinjar land owners report having evidence of property ownership, but the proof of ownership is often informal in nature and could be contested. For this reason, the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN Habitat) has launched a program to supply thousands of Yazidi landowners in the Sinjar District with certificates of land ownership, the first real step to gaining full legal privileges to their land.

Livelihoods

Livelihoods in Sinjar are restarting, to a degree, but not as much as returnees would like. The primary livelihoods prior to displacement are summarized in the graph Sinjar Returnees: Primary Livelihoods Before Displacement. Only 41% of returnees reported having returned to the same primary livelihoods as before displacement. Those with military or militia jobs were the most likely to be able to return to the same livelihood as before displacement, and those who worked in agriculture and livestock were least likely to do so.
Methodology

Samaritan’s Purse conducted an assessment from December 16, 2018 to January 24, 2019. This assessment represents a target population of 25,000 households located in sub-districts of Namrud, Hamdaniya, Bartella, Bashiqqa, Telkaif, Al Qosh, Sinjar, and Snuni. The target areas include Christian, Kakai, Muslim, Shabak, and Yazidi religious and ethnic groups. Samaritan’s Purse employed a mixed method approach. For quantitative data, stratified random sampling was applied. Data was collected via household questionnaires and conducted by telephone. A total of 2,200 households were surveyed (including a 15% buffer). Sample size for each location was determined based on 95% confidence level and five per cent margin of error. Qualitative data was gathered from 30 key informant interviews (KII) and 19 focus-group discussions (FGD). Participants for KIIs were identified using the snowball sampling technique. Participants for focus-group discussions were selected using SP caseworkers who identified returnee and IDP participants. Caseworkers ensured that multiple members of the same family did not attend group discussions, giving an accurate illustration of individual households.