
FACT SHEET

Strategies for Improving Health Services for Internally Displaced Persons in Iraq

More than two and a half million Iraqis are considered Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) by the Ministry of Displacement and Migration (MODM), highlighting the extent of forced or coercive movement of Iraqis from their homes as a result of ongoing sectarian strife, terrorism, and insurgency. Especially over the last ten years, Iraq has experienced a severe pattern of population displacement and emigration. Despite persistent efforts made by national authorities, these populations continue to face critical health challenges related to limited or intermittent access to health and sanitation services, poor nutrition, and injuries or disabilities resulting from their movement in conflict zones. A key objective of USAID/PHCPI is to strengthen and expand availability of primary health care (PHC) services to ensure that vulnerable and at-risk populations, such as children under five, pregnant women, and IDPs and their host communities, are able to routinely access high quality health services.

Address the Health Needs of the IDPs: USAID/PHCPI is collaborating with the Ministry of Health (MOH) to identify clinics serving population areas with high volumes of IDPs. The project is also working with district and clinic staff to identify additional services requirements to meet the needs of IDPs for health and social services within each clinic's catchment area. USAID/PHCPI is working with community partners at the district level and patients' representatives from the IDP communities to help reduce access barriers for IDPs, improve IDP satisfaction with PHC services and strengthen linkages between clinic and community services.

Improve Access to PHC: Stronger access to preventive and curative health services are needed to assist in long term stabilization and growth for Iraqi IDP communities. An essential component of this strategy is to improve information gathering on access to and usage of health services by displaced Iraqis and to strengthen the nutritional and health surveillance systems to monitor and address health risks and threats. Through its HMIS and mobile health strategies, USAID/PHCPI is working to gather information on IDPs and using this information to better tailor its project interventions.

Enhance the Quality of PHC Services provided to IDPs: USAID/PHCPI is working with the MoH to strengthen patient records systems and carry out more selective surveys focusing on the areas where the majority of displaced Iraqis are living. In addition, the project is working with service providers to ensure that appropriate interpersonal communication and referral skills are developed to tackle the specific challenges related to working with patients of heightened vulnerability such as women and IDPs.

Strengthen coordination and collaboration: Inter-ministerial coordination and collaboration is vital in order to identify unmet needs and information gaps and to improve the services and support provided to IDPs. USAID/PHCPI is assisting the MoH and other stakeholders, including the Ministry of Displacement and Migration (MODM), Ministry of Trade (MoT), UNHCR, IOM, and community assistance projects (CAPs) to foster multi-sector integrated development initiatives and interventions in IDPs areas. In addition, twinning arrangements with established regional and global primary health care institutions will empower PHC centers in Iraq to play a greater role as functional health entities.

Maximize Health Literacy among IDPs: USAID/PHCPI aims to increase awareness of health service availability among IDPs and other vulnerable groups. Working with community partners and IDP leaders, the project will promote awareness raising activities around key health messages, especially related to improving maternal and newborn health behavioral patterns. The project team will ensure that partners at the national, provincial and facility levels are well placed to integrate approaches and messages to increase coverage for IDPs within the PHC setting.