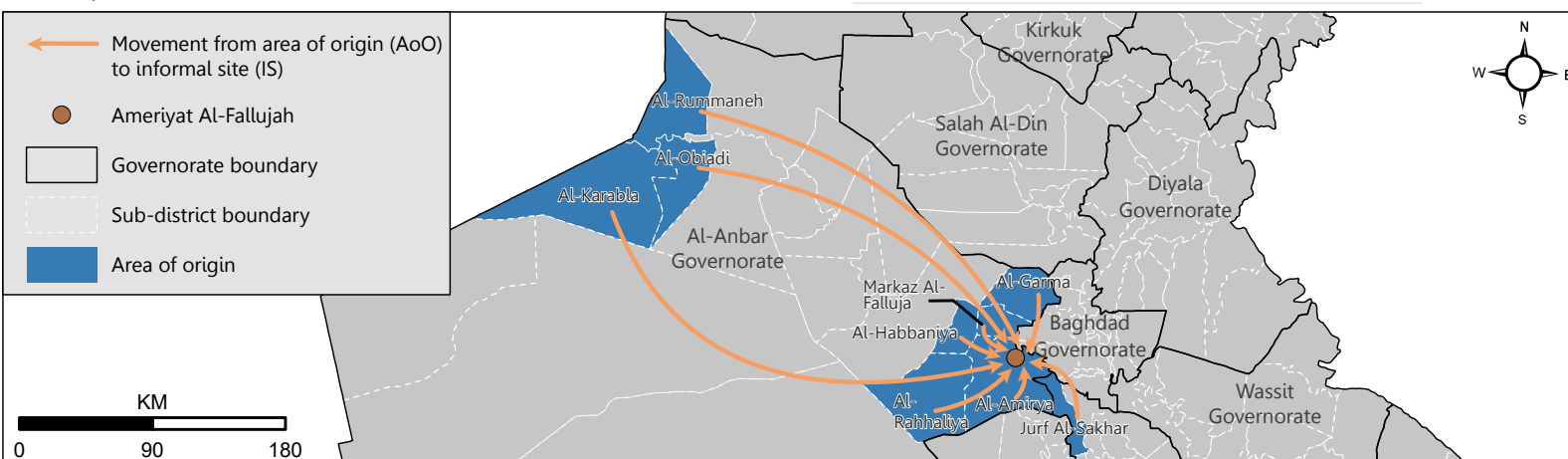


SITUATION OVERVIEW

As Iraq continues to recover from the 2014 armed conflict with the so-called Islamic State,¹ the Government of Iraq (GoI) has increasingly focused on returning internally displaced persons (IDPs) to their areas of origin (AoOs).² Part of this strategy, as explained in the GoI's National Plan to end displacement, includes the closure of the remaining IDP camps across Iraq.³

On November 10, 2021, the last remaining IDP camp in Al-Anbar governorate, Ameriyat Al-Fallujah (AAF), was closed and reclassified as an informal site.⁴ Consequently, government services, including food provisions, ceased.⁵ As a result of these changes, REACH conducted an

MAP 1. IDP MOVEMENTS



METHODOLOGY

To assess the needs and challenges faced by IDP families who remained in AAF after its reclassification, REACH conducted in-person interviews between 8 and 9 February 2022. The purpose of the interviews was to also highlight the conditions needed to enable return or relocation for families intending to leave. Qualitative and quantitative data collection methods were used for this assessment.

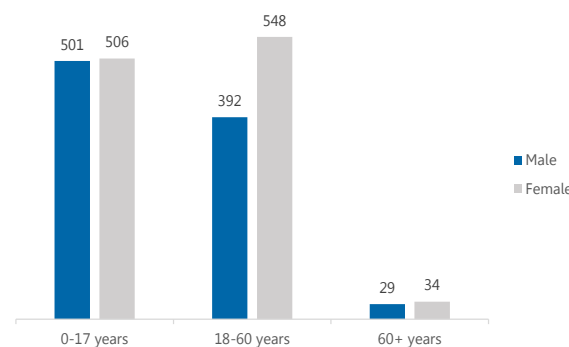
For qualitative data collection, 15 informant interviews (IIs) were conducted with 10 male and 5 female heads of household (HoHHs). Snowballing sampling was used to identify participants for IIs. Once data was collected, it was analysed using a data saturation grid.

For quantitative data collection, 41 families were randomly interviewed through a standardised survey questionnaire. These interviews were part of

assessment to identify needs and challenges faced by IDP families since camp closure to inform durable solutions policy and programmes.

REPORTED POPULATION PROFILE

As of April 2022, there were 430 households (2,010 individuals) residing in AAF.⁶ The population demographic breakdown was as follows:



the [REACH Informal Sites Profiling and Intentions](#) survey which used the Camp Coordination and Camp Management (CCCM) Cluster [Masterlist](#) on informal sites to provide locations, site profiles, and site population sizes. IDP families interviewed for this assessment are hereafter referred to as "families".

Districts of origin of 41 IDP families interviewed for quantitative data



Taking into consideration the small sample used for this assessment, **findings should be considered as indicative.**

KEY FINDINGS

Since AAF's reclassification, **almost all HoHHs experienced changes accessing food** due to the cessation of food assistance programmes. Despite the financial challenges relayed by a few families, **most families reported no challenges accessing food**.

HoHHs reported that they were **worried about food prices**, as some did not have income sources. Other reported concerns included: **shelter conditions and access to housing in their area of displacement (AoD) and AoO; access to basic goods and services; valid documentation; and, legal assistance**.

It was reported that there were **no changes in access to healthcare** after AAF's closure. Some families, however, stated that they continued to face **challenges regarding the high cost of services and medicine**, and the **lack of medicine in both hospitals and pharmacies**.

HoHHs reported that **access to water remained unchanged** since the reclassification of AAF. Most families surveyed noted that the **quality of water was acceptable**.

HoHHs reported that **access to education remained unchanged** in AAF. However, some families reported that challenges persist. **Over half of interviewed families**, who reported having children attending school, reportedly **faced financial challenges** for their children to access education.⁷

Movements in/out of the area were reportedly **less challenging since the reclassification** of the camp.

Almost half of HoHHs interviewed reported **intentions to remain** in AAF. One frequently cited reason includes the **availability of shelter in AoD**.

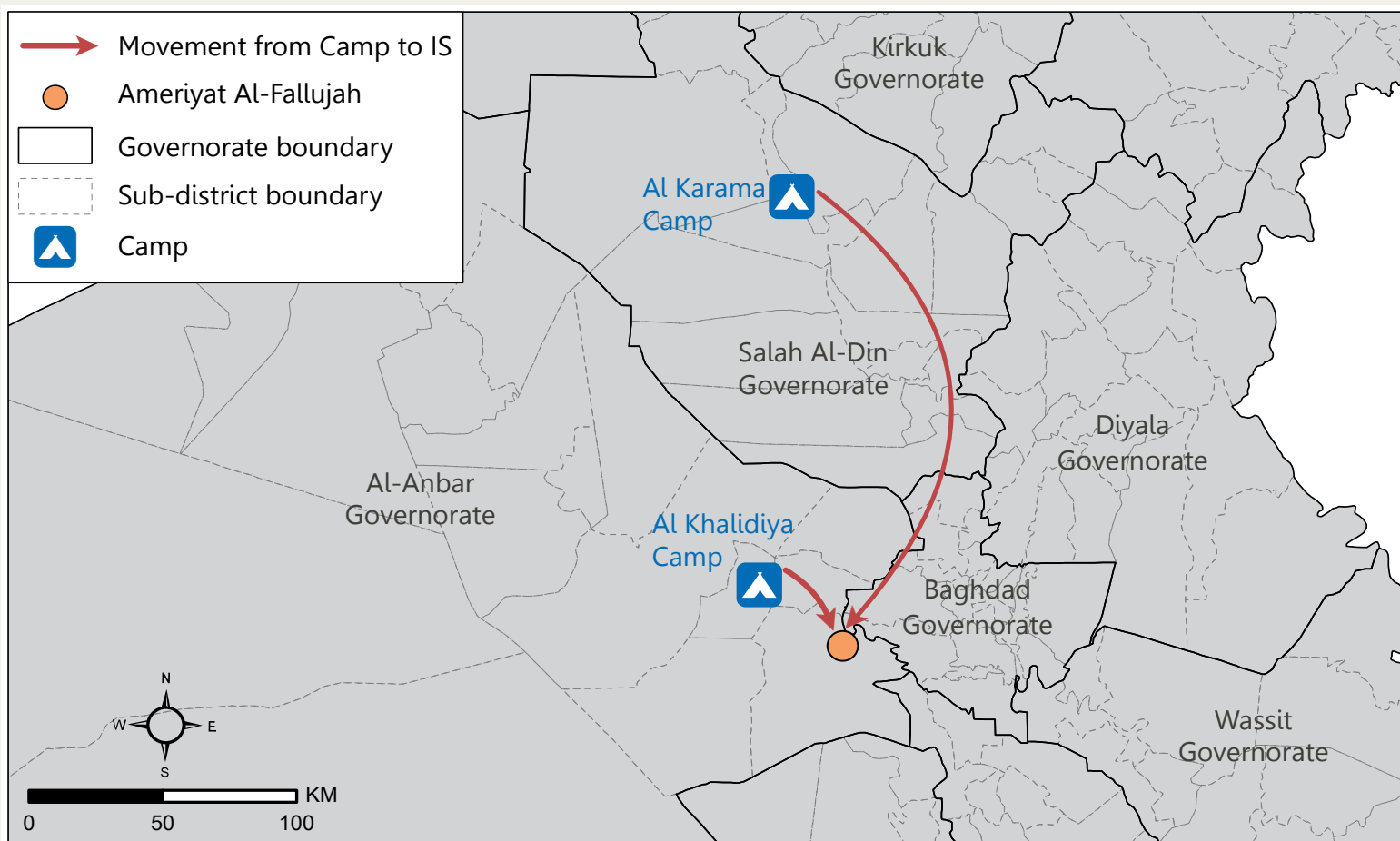
Several HoHHs interviewed reported **intentions to return to their AoOs**. The most commonly cited reasons by HoHHs included perceived **improved security** and **livelihood opportunities in AoO**.

IDP families, both those who reported intentions to return and those who reported wanting to remain, commonly reported **not wanting to integrate into the local community in the AoD**.

It was reported by HoHHs that if their families were to leave the informal site, **support to secure livelihood opportunities** was **needed**. HoHHs further noted that availability of livelihood opportunities would **improve daily life for IDP women and children**.

To facilitate life outside AAF, HoHHs suggested the provision of **cash assistance, basic services, support for access to shelter, and assistance with access to valid documentation**.

MAP 2. MOVEMENT FROM CAMPS TO AAF REPORTED BY IDP FAMILIES



ACCESS TO BASIC GOODS AND SERVICES

ACCESS TO BASIC GOODS AND SERVICES

All 15 HoHHs participating in IIs reported that their families were **concerned about not receiving food, non-food items, and basic services, such as healthcare and education**, after the reclassification of AAF.



ACCESS TO FOOD

Almost all HoHHs cited that their families **experienced changes in accessing food** due to the cessation of food assistance programmes. With decreased food provisions, most HoHHs reported an increase in household expenditure as they had to manage their incomes to purchase food at *"inflated prices"*.

"Since AAF became an informal site, there have been challenges accessing food as it used to be provided by Ministry of Migration and Displacement (MOMD), but now this aid has been discontinued"

Reported methods used by families to purchase food in the seven days prior to data collection (out of 41 interviewed families):

Purchased with own cash	22	
Purchased on credit (debt)	12	
Purchased with food voucher	3	
Food assistance from UN/NGO	2	
Cash assistance	1	
Own production	1	

Despite reports of financial challenges, most families interviewed (39/41) reported not having faced challenges in accessing food in the site. A minority of interviewed families (6/41) reported facing financial challenges to access food despite reports from 12 families that they purchasing food by taking on debt.

Number of families reporting having access to at least two meals per day (out of 41 interviewed families):

Yes, all the time (100%)	28	
Nearly all the time (75%-99%)	8	
Most of the times (50-74%)	5	



ACCESS TO HEALTH SERVICES

Healthcare remained **one of the most frequently reported priority needs** for IDP families in the site (25/41), although HoHHs in IIs reported that there had been **no change with regard to access to healthcare** after the camp's closure.⁸ In terms of physical access, all families interviewed reported that the closest functioning hospitals⁹ were located between 2 and 5km from AAF. While health facilities are reported to be functioning and available, financial barriers and limited availability of medicine seem to prevent families from receiving healthcare, if needed. According to most families, challenges accessing primary healthcare were due to:

High cost of services	28	
High cost of medicine	15	
No medicine in pharmacies	9	
No medicine in hospitals	9	



ACCESS TO WATER

Most HoHHs reported that there were no changes in water services after AAF's closure.¹⁰ Regarding access to water, one HoHH stated that this service was not affected due to *"the presence of water tanks in the site."* The three most frequently cited primary sources of water for domestic use were:

Piped water into compound	28	
Bottled water connected to tap	8	
Bottled water	5	

Regarding water quality and its suitability for drinking, most families reported that the **colour, smell, and taste were acceptable** (27/31).¹¹



ACCESS TO EDUCATION

The majority of HoHHs reported **no change in access to education**.¹² Almost two thirds of families surveyed (25/41) reported having school-age children attending education programmes 12 months prior to data collection. The three most reported challenges for children to access formal education were: limited economic resources (4/25), logistical constraints (4/25), and not enough schools/classrooms available (3/25).



CONCERNS AND PROVISIONS TO SUPPORT FAMILIES

MAIN CONCERNS

Access to Humanitarian Assistance

"Our family is concerned because we cannot access humanitarian assistance anymore"

All 15 HoHHs reported being concerned about no longer having access to humanitarian assistance, with findings suggesting these perceptions mainly pertained to access to food provisions in particular. To this end, reported **impact in accessing food** was also affected by the **lack of job opportunities and limited access to income** for the families in the site.

Household Finances and Expenditure

"There are changes in family expenses because of [the reclassification of AAF into an] informal site, and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) stopping basic assistance e.g. food ... All families are forced to buy basic need items from the markets, this is one of the reasons why household expenditure is increasing."

With reduced humanitarian assistance, almost all HoHHs reported **concern over their household finances**. Some HoHHs also reported not having a source of income or livelihoods.

Additionally, families experienced an increase in their monthly expenditures as access to food assistance had reportedly stopped. A few HoHHs reported that the reduction or suspension of food assistance did not affect their families' expenditure.

OTHER CONCERNS

There were other factors of concern for the families residing in AAF. These reportedly included:

Housing condition in AoD/AoO	5	■
Access to basic goods ¹³	4	■
Access to basic services ¹⁴	3	■
Access to legal assistance	1	■

Movement Restrictions

Almost all HoHHs reported **no safety concerns** when leaving the site for final departure or travel. The majority of HoHHs shared that movement restrictions were lifted, and movement in and out of the site was easier than before closure. Furthermore, according to some interviewed HoHHs, their access to services became easier as a result. This feedback from respondents may be referring to the easing of severe, temporary restrictions that are sometimes implemented.¹⁵

ASSISTANCE TO SUPPORT IDP FAMILIES

"My family needs financial support because no one is working"

"My family needs financial support ... to purchase medication as prices are high... [And] very expensive in private clinics"

"[We need access to] job opportunities, humanitarian aid, food assistance, and shelter rehabilitation because all the tents we live in are damaged due to weather conditions"

In order to overcome some of the challenges reported since the reclassification of AAF, HoHHs recommended the following solutions:

Provision of financial support	11	■
Ensure livelihood opportunities	5	■
Distribution of food assistance	4	■

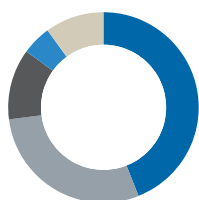
Furthermore, some HoHHs also shared that access to basic services, particularly healthcare, would support their families to overcome some of the challenges they were facing. One HoHH shared that *"older and sick IDPs face difficulties [with regard to healthcare] because there is no qualified health center in the site."*

Other types of needed assistance reportedly included shelter rehabilitation for IDP families either in their AoD or AoO, legal assistance, and distribution of household items.

MOVEMENT INTENTIONS

RETURN, RELOCATE, REMAIN

Movement intentions in the 3 months following data collection (out of 41 interviewed families)



18 Return to AoO
12 Remain in AAF
5 Move within governorate
2 Move to another location
4 Do not know

Movement intentions in the 12 months following data collection (out of 41 interviewed families)



19 Return to AoO
9 Remain in AAF
5 Move within governorate
2 Move to another location
6 Do not know

Similarly, almost half of interviewed HoHHs reported that they intended to return to their AoO while some HoHHs reportedly intended to remain in AAF. The reasons for these movement decisions are shown in graphs below.

Return to AoO (out of seven HoHHs reporting intention to return)

Improved safety and security in AoO	7
Job opportunities available in AoO	6
AAF being classified as an informal site	4
No more aid from MOMD	2
Family reunification	2
Access to basic services in AoO	1

Remain in current location (out of seven HoHHs reporting intention to remain)

Available shelter in AoD/not in AoO	4
Lack of finances to rebuild house in AoO	3
Livelihood opportunities in/near site	1
Inability to pay rent in AoO	1
Lack of financial means to return	1
Need time to think	1

One HoHH reported that their family had intentions to relocate near the informal site. The reasons cited for this included their house in their AoO being destroyed, and availability of livelihood opportunities near AAF.¹⁶

Facilitating Safe and Dignified Return

According to families who shared intentions to return or re-displace in the next 3 to 12 months (28 families), Al-Amiryia and Jurf Al-Sakhar were frequently reported sub-districts for return.

Reported sub-districts IDP families intended to return in the 3 to 12 months following data collection (out of 28 interviewed families)

Al-Amiryia	7
Jurf Al-Sakhar ¹⁷	7
Al-Garma	4
Al-Karabla	3
Al-Obiadi	2
Markaz Al-Falluja	2
Al-Rahhaliya	1

Additionally, two IDP families (out of 28 interviewed) reported that they would re-displace in Markaz Al-Falluja sub-district.¹⁸

In terms of how much time families needed to plan to leave the informal site, a few HoHHs reported that their families needed **less than one week**,¹⁹ while others reported that their families needed **between one to five months** (half of whom needed at least three months).²⁰

PERCEPTIONS ON INTEGRATION IN AOD

Number of IDP families reporting willingness to integrate into the local community in the AoD (out of 41 families interviewed)

No	25
Do not know	13
Yes	3

The unwillingness to integrate in the community in the AoD was found both among families with the intention to return as well as among families who reported not having any return intentions for the next 3²¹ to 12²² months. Moreover, among families who reportedly intended to remain in AAF in the 3 to 12 months following data collection, there were a few who allegedly were unwilling to integrate into the local community in their AoD.

POTENTIAL NEEDS FOR FAMILIES OUTSIDE OF AAF

NEEDS FOR FAMILIES OUTSIDE AAF

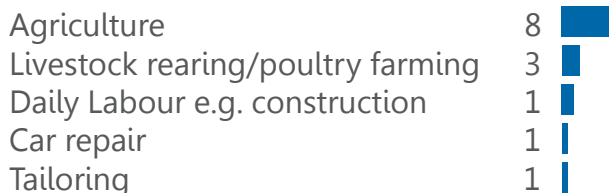
Given that some IDP families and HoHHs interviewed reported their intention to leave AAF, HoHHs relayed that assistance to access livelihoods, basic services, shelter and housing rehabilitation, documentation, and cash assistance would be essential to facilitate return or re-displacement of families to another area.

Number of families reporting assistance provisions for returnees in AoO (out of 41 interviewed families)



LIVELIHOODS

Some HoHHs relayed that they required assistance to secure livelihoods outside the site. Before displacement, HoHHs reported having worked in:²³



The majority of HoHHs reported that if they decided to return to their AoO, they would return to their previous livelihood occupations.

Most HoHHs shared that they had the necessary skills needed to find a job in:²⁴



When HoHHs were asked about the impact on daily life for women and children if they left AAF, some reported that there would be a positive change. This was reportedly attributed to the perceived availability of job opportunities outside the site which may enhance the families' access to their basic needs.

CASH ASSISTANCE

While some HoHHs reported perceiving that their savings could cover their family's need for about **two to three months** following data collection, **most HoHHs** reported that their family **did not have enough savings** to support their stay outside AAF. This was noted to be due to spending savings during displacement, reliance on loans, begging, and dependence on humanitarian assistance. Also, when HoHHs were asked about how women and girls would be affected if they left AAF, they relayed that the lack of savings would negatively affect their access to basic needs. In line with this, the majority of HoHHs reported that **cash assistance** would facilitate their stay outside the informal site.²⁵

BASIC SERVICES

While some HoHHs reported that women and children may have better access to basic services outside the site, almost all stated that their families required healthcare, education, WASH, electricity, food, and housing to leave AAF.

SHELTER AND HOUSING

Most HoHHs noted that they **required shelter rehabilitation** in their AoO given that for some, their houses were reportedly *"completely destroyed because of the war"*. Consequently, damaged housing may negatively impact women and children if they left the site, according to some HoHHs. To this end, a few HoHHs reported that financial compensation was required since their homes were reportedly *"uninhabitable"*.

PERSONAL DOCUMENTATION

Some HoHHs shared that their family members **did not have valid personal documentation**, at the time of data collection. Reportedly, this was mainly attributed to the high cost for transportation to the operating offices, which were perceived to be far from the site. Some HoHHs reported that their personal documentation needed to be updated, as having proper documentation was reportedly necessary to leave the site.²⁶

ENDNOTES

¹ The 2014 conflict refers to the nationwide conflict that took place between the Iraqi Security Forces, and affiliated forces, on the one hand, and the armed group known as the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), on the other. Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI). [Report on the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict in Iraq: 6 July – 10 September 2014](#). 2014

² OCHA Iraq. [Humanitarian Bulletin](#). November/December 2021

³ OCHA Iraq. [Humanitarian Bulletin](#). May 2021

⁴ OCHA Iraq. [Humanitarian Bulletin](#). November/December 2021

⁵ According to OCHA, the GoI used to provide food and non-food items including kerosene as winterization assistance for IDPs in AAF. This has ended with the reclassification of AAF into an informal site - *ibid*

⁶ Data received from CCCM Cluster Iraq and International Organization for Migration (IOM) Iraq/ IOM Iraq DTM [Masterlist Datasets](#)

⁷ Families reported "limited financial resources" as a barrier to access formal education for children in their families. Some of these economic resources were used to pay for school fees, uniform, transport, books, etc.

⁸ "IOM continues to support primary health care services in AAF, however there are challenges in access to medication due to MoH shortages. Services at the primary health care facilities are free of charge." Reported by IOM health Unit. June 2022

⁹ Please note that the term "hospital" could have been interpreted by families in a more generic way to mean any type of health facility.

¹⁰ As of June 21, 2022 "The United Nations International Children's Fund (UNICEF) was providing WASH assistance in AAF. The continuity of this support beyond July 2022 has yet to be confirmed." Reported by CCCM Cluster Iraq. June 2022

¹¹ Only 31 families (out of 41) responded to the question on whether drinking water was acceptable.

¹² The CCCM Cluster reported that there are government operated primary schools in AAF. Furthermore, in the Returns Working Group (RWG) meeting on June 28, 2022 it was shared by programme implementing partners that there were "three formal functioning schools" in the informal site. RWG - Iraq. [Meeting Minutes](#). June 2022

¹³ Some basic goods that HoHHs reportedly needed included detergent, fuel, and winter clothes.

¹⁴ Basic services noted by HoHHs were healthcare and education.

¹⁵ "The status-quo movement procedures from AAF were still extensive and restrictive, and required written permission from camp leaders and handing over of personal identification." Reported by CCCM Cluster Iraq. June 2022

¹⁶ One HoHH who reported their family's intention to remain, shared that if they were to leave AAF, they would relocate near the informal site due to availability of livelihood opportunities.

¹⁷ As of June 28, 2022 Jurf Al-Sakhar sub-district continues to be blocked for return, and although some IDP families have stated their intention to return to the sub-district, their responses may reflect a wish more than a plan. Reports shared in the June 28, 2022 RWG meeting. RWG-Iraq. [Meeting Minutes](#). June 2022

¹⁸ Two families from Al-Habbaniya sub-district reported intentions to re-displace in Markaz Al-Falluja in the 3 to 12 months following data collection.

¹⁹ For HoHHs who reportedly needed less than one week to leave, the majority reported intending to return to their AoO. One HoHH reported their family wanted to relocate to a place near AAF.

²⁰ For HoHHs who reportedly needed between one to five months to leave, half of families interviewed stated their intention to return to their AoO while the other half stated their intention to remain in AAF.

²¹ Out of 25 families who reported that they were unwilling to integrate into the local community of displacement: 15 families stated their intention to return to their AoO; 6 families reported that they intended to remain in AoD; and 4 families reported secondary displacement either within the governorate or outside the governorate of displacement in the three months following data collection.

²² Out of 25 families who reported that they were unwilling to integrate into the local community of displacement: 16 families stated their intention to return to their AoO; 4 families reported that they intended to remain in AoD; and 4 families reported secondary displacement either within the governorate or outside the governorate of displacement in the three months following data collection. One family did not disclose their movement intentions for the twelve months following data collection.

²³ One HoHH reported receiving pension as their main source of income in their AoO.

²⁴ One HoHH reported having a physical disability, and therefore, are not able to work.

²⁵ "On 1 December 2021, cash grants were announced by the Governor of Al-Anbar, the Minister for Migration and Displacement, and the Sunni Endowment Fund to incentivize camp departures and returns to areas of origin." IDP families were not obligated to leave, and since the reclassification of AAF into an informal site, thousands of IDPs remained. - OCHA Iraq. [Humanitarian Bulletin](#). November/December 2021

²⁶ *ibid*

About REACH

REACH is a leading humanitarian information provider that uses primary data collection and in-depth analysis as tools to enhance the capacity of aid actors to make evidence-based decisions in emergency, recovery and development settings.