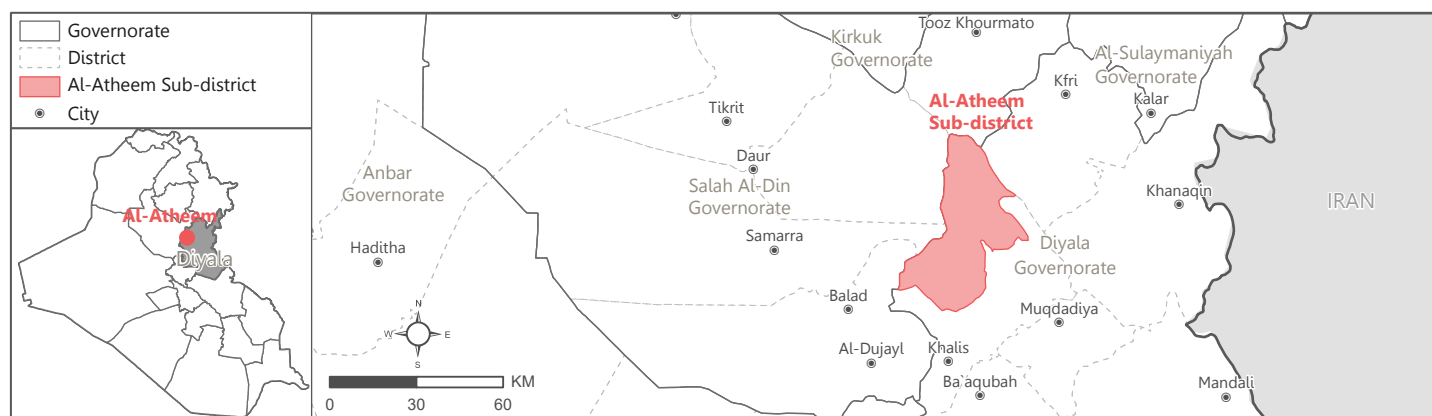


### Situation Overview

In 2022, the number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) returning to their areas of origin (AoOs) or being re-displaced continued, coupled with persisting challenges in relation to social cohesion, lack of services, infrastructure and - in some cases - security in AoOs.<sup>1</sup> The [International Organization for Migration \(IOM\) Displacement Tracking Matrix \(DTM\)](#)'s returnee master list recorded over 4.9 million individuals returning to their AoOs across the country, as of June 2022.

Increased returns and secondary displacement were driven primarily by the closure, consolidation, and reclassification of IDP camps.<sup>2</sup> Between January and May 2022, no camps were closed, consolidated, or reclassified. However, for the camps that remain open across Iraq, there is an ongoing planning procedure to determine their future.<sup>3</sup> In light of these dynamics, the need to better understand the sustainability of returns, conditions for the (re)integration of IDPs and returnees, and the impact of their presence on access to services and social cohesion has been identified in the context of durable solutions planning.

### Map 1. Coverage map



### Background and Methodology

A number of partners are currently tracking population movements and measuring progress towards durable solutions for displaced populations in Iraq.<sup>9</sup> For example, IOM has collected data on a bi-monthly basis, found in the [IOM DTM Returns Index](#). This tool provides indicative trends on the severity of conditions in areas of return (AoRs) nationwide.

To build on this information, [REACH Initiative \(REACH\)](#) has conducted multi-sectoral assessments in AoOs or areas of return (AoRs) across Iraq assessing the overall condition of affected areas to inform how and to what extent durable solutions have or can be achieved. REACH's Returns and Durable Solutions profiles (ReDS) focus on the study of conditions at the sub-district level, providing a localized overview of the perceptions of displaced and host communities on a variety of conditions linked to the (re)integration of IDPs and returnees.

In light of recent return and re-displacement movement dynamics, REACH conducted a ReDS assessment in Al-Atheem Sub-district to provide an in-depth profiling of needs and understanding of social relationships between remainee,<sup>10</sup> returnee,<sup>11</sup> and IDP populations.<sup>12</sup>

### Al-Atheem Sub-district

Al-Atheem is a sub-district of Khalis District, located in Diyala Governorate, 210 kilometres north of Baghdad. The sub-district's importance lies in its strategic path connecting Kirkuk city to the capital Baghdad.<sup>4</sup> On June 2014, Al-Atheem Sub-district became under the control of the so-called Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL).<sup>5</sup> The Iraqi forces liberated Diyala Governorate areas from ISIL control in July 2017.<sup>6</sup> However, as of May 2022, ISIL continued conducting sporadic operations in the governorate and security incidents were reported affecting the safety of civilians.<sup>7</sup>

### Reported Population Profile<sup>8</sup>














<b>2,713-2,984</b>	<b>households</b> were residing in Al-Atheem before the events of 2014.
<b>92%-98%</b>	<b>of households</b> in Al-Atheem were displaced after 2014.
<b>82%-88%</b>	<b>households</b> displaced after 2014 had returned to Al-Atheem at the time of data collection.
<b>5-7</b>	<b>IDP households</b> were displaced in Al-Atheem at the time of data collection.

Al-Atheem Sub-district was selected for the assessment as: social cohesion and safety severity<sup>13</sup> was classified as 'high' or 'medium' in 40 villages out of 53 assessed,<sup>14</sup> and it was reportedly an underserved location of interest for local authorities, humanitarian, and durable solution partners operating in Diyala. The findings are based on 40 key informant (KI) interviews conducted between 7 May and 7 June 2022, combining qualitative and quantitative data collection methods adapted to the context. Data collection was conducted remotely due to public health concerns linked to the COVID-19 pandemic.

### KI Profile

	Al-Atheem Sub-district
Returnees (more than 3 months ago) <sup>15</sup>	13 KIs
IDPs from the community <sup>16</sup>	10 KIs
IDPs in the community <sup>17</sup>	6 KIs
Subject matter experts (SMEs) <sup>18</sup>	4 KIs
Community leaders <sup>19</sup>	4 KIs
Returnees (less than 3 months ago) <sup>20</sup>	3 KIs
	<b>40 KIs<sup>21</sup></b>

## Key findings

-  Returns to Al-Atheem remained limited, with a few KIs reporting **some recent returns** (in the six months prior to data collection) driven primarily by the **perceived increased safety and security situation in AoOs**.
-  All KIs (reporting recent return occurrences) also reported believing that **these movements had positively impacted the community**. Reportedly, the **return of experienced skilled workers reactivated the industrial, trade, and commercial sectors** and **gradually reactivated the agricultural sector** with the **return of farmers** and **recultivation of their lands**.
-  Over two thirds of KIs reporting expected returns (in the six months following data collection) also mentioned that these movements **may positively impact** the community in the sub-district. KIs reported that additional returns **may affect trade and commerce and the private sector** in general, as well as the agricultural sector, social inter-relations in the community, the reconstruction of the sub-district, and access to services. However, additional returns may have negative impacts since they may reportedly lead to an increased level of competition for the limited amount of available job opportunities and raise tensions between returnees and host community members.
-  The majority of **households in the community** reportedly **resided in owned houses**. Some **IDP KIs in the community** reported that there were some IDP households **residing in owned unfinished buildings** and in houses under **verbal rental agreement** and therefore in less secure tenure.
-  KIs from different profiles prioritized community needs differently. Further efforts to develop **basic public services**, namely water, education, and healthcare, was the most reported primary community need for **SME KIs**. In contrast, **community leader, returnee, and IDP KIs from/in the community** most commonly reported the need to ensure access to **housing rehabilitation** and **livelihoods** as primary community needs.
-  All KIs reported that **households faced challenges in accessing housing rehabilitation** in the sub-district. **Housing damage was reportedly one of the most reported barriers for returns to Al-Atheem and the most commonly reported primary community need**. The most reported factors affecting access to housing rehabilitation were related to the limited access to financial resources for housing rehabilitation affected households had, existing factors affecting construction and reconstruction works, and lack of government compensation for housing rehabilitation.
-  All KIs reported that **the majority of the households faced challenges in accessing basic public services**. The most affected sector was reportedly **healthcare, followed by education**. Conditions at the operational public health center (PHC) in Al-Atheem, shortages of medicines, including vaccines at the PHC, and shortages of medical staff, namely doctors who remained displaced, were reportedly the main factors affecting access to public healthcare in the sub-district.
-  All KIs reported that **the majority of the households faced challenges in accessing livelihoods**. Access to livelihoods was one of the most reported barriers for returns, the second most reported community need, and the most reported activity to encourage further returns to Al-Atheem. The lack of job opportunities in the sub-district was the most reported reason for family separation, especially for young male household's members.
-  KIs reported an **overall decrease in the availability of job opportunities compared to before 2014**. Employment in the finance, manufacturing, and services sector, such as restaurants, were reportedly not available at the time of data collection. In addition, findings showed that job opportunities in the oil industry sector were less affected at the time of data collection compared to prior to 2014.
-  **Agriculture** was the most commonly reported **livelihood sector of interest for returnee and IDP households from/in the community**. It was also reported as the most available in the sub-district at the time of data collection. **Agriculture** was further reported by community leader and SME KIs as **the livelihoods sector with the most growth potential** in the 12 months following data collection. However, the sector was reportedly affected by the lack of support and neglect from the local government, water scarcity, climate change, and challenges for land irrigation.
-  **Tribal leaders** were reportedly the **most effective at resolving disputes** within the sub-district. Reportedly, **the majority of returnee and IDP households from/in the community felt safe or very safe** in Al-Atheem.
-  **Over three quarters of returnee and IDP KIs in the community** reported that households in their respective groups **interacted with households from different displacement groups** in the community (including remainees, returnees, and IDP households from/in the community). This was mainly reported due to the kinship ties they had with other households in the sub-district. Additionally, **over two thirds of returnee and IDP KIs from/in the community** reported that households **participated in decision-making** processes in the sub-district.
-  **All returnee KIs reported that returnee households felt reintegrated in the community** of Al-Atheem, while **all IDP KIs in the community reported that IDP households did not feel integrated in the sub-district**. In addition, **all IDP KIs from the community reported that IDP households did not feel integrated in their areas of displacement (AoDs)** at the time of data collection. Findings showed that feeling of (re)integration were mainly linked to access to housing and lands, followed by the existence of supportive social networks.

Findings are based on the perceptions of KIs who were purposively sampled; all data should therefore be considered as indicative. The occasionally large variation between perceptions is potentially due to KIs' varying profiles and personal interests. For further details on the methodology, please see the ReDS [Terms of Reference \(ToR\)](#).

### Recent household return movements

Returnee, IDP from the community, community leader, and SME KIs were consulted for this section (34 out of 40 KIs). **The majority of consulted KIs reported that there were no recent returns** to the sub-district in the six months prior to data collection (29 out of 34 KIs). However, five KIs reported the occurrence of recent returns to the sub-district.

#### Returns from non-camp areas

**7-11** households reportedly returned to the sub-district from other districts in Diyala Governorate, namely Baquba (2 out of 5 KIs), Beladruz (1 KI), and Khanaqin (1 KI). In addition, households reportedly returned from Erbil Governorate to Al-Atheem (1 KI).

#### Reported drivers for returns

Findings showed that pull factors in AoRs affecting the decisions of households to return reportedly included:<sup>22</sup>

Perceived increase in safety and security	4 KIs	<div></div>
Nostalgia about their previous life	2 KIs	<div></div>
Following the return of other family members	1 KI	<div></div>

#### Reported impact of returns

According to the five KIs reporting the occurrence of recent returns, these movements had **positive impacts** in the community of Al-Atheem.

##### Impact on the private sector including trade and commerce

Reportedly, experienced skilled workers in carpentry, blacksmithing, and other fields returned to the industrial, trade, and commercial sectors increasing the availability of skilled labour force and the quality of services (3 KIs).

##### Impact on the agricultural sector

According to a couple of KIs, **“the life in the sub-district started to be restored back to normal as it was before 2014”**. This was reportedly attributed to the gradual reactivation of the agricultural sector after farmers recultivated their lands with rice, wheat, and vegetables (1 KI).

##### Impact on safety and security

One KI reported that there was a noted increase in safety and security in the sub-district, which may encourage further households to return.

### Recent IDP movements

Returnee, IDP in the community, community leader, and SME KIs were consulted for this section (30 out of 40 KIs). This section refers to IDP households who were not originally from Al-Atheem sub-district. **The vast majority of KIs** (28 out of 30 KIs) **reported that there were no IDP movements to the sub-district**. However, taking into consideration the small sample for this assessment, findings may be under-reported.

#### IDP arrival movements to Al-Atheem

One returnee KI reported the occurrence of recent IDP arrivals from non-camp areas in the six months prior to data collection.

**2-3**

**IDP households arrived to the sub-district** from Al-Muqdadiah District in Diyala Governorate, due to the presence of relatives in Al-Atheem (social and family networks)<sup>23</sup> and the perceived increase in safety and security in the sub-district.

The KI reported that these movements had positive impacts in the community of Al-Atheem, as there were IDP members with experience in the industrial sector, which benefited the sub-district and allowed the exchange of experiences with host community members enhancing the quality of services.

#### IDP departure movements from Al-Atheem

Another returnee KI reported the occurrence of recent IDP departures in the six months prior to data collection.

**1-3**

**IDP households moved from the sub-district** to return to their AoOs within Diyala Governorate, including Al-Khalis District where KIs reported a perceived improved economic situation in their AoOs.

### Barriers for further returns

Returnee, IDP from the community, community leader, and SME KIs were consulted for this section (34 out of 40 KIs). All consulted KIs reported the presence of factors in AoOs which could block/delay further returns to the sub-district.

#### Reported barriers for further returns (out of 34 KIs)<sup>22</sup>

##### Access to livelihoods and basic public services

Limited availability of job opportunities	32 KIs	<div></div>
Limited access to basic public services	24 KIs	<div></div>
Limited access to medical treatment	2 KIs	<div></div>
Lack of quality education services	1 KI	<div></div>

##### Access to housing and housing rehabilitation

Destroyed/damaged housing	32 KIs	<div></div>
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##### Access to safety and security

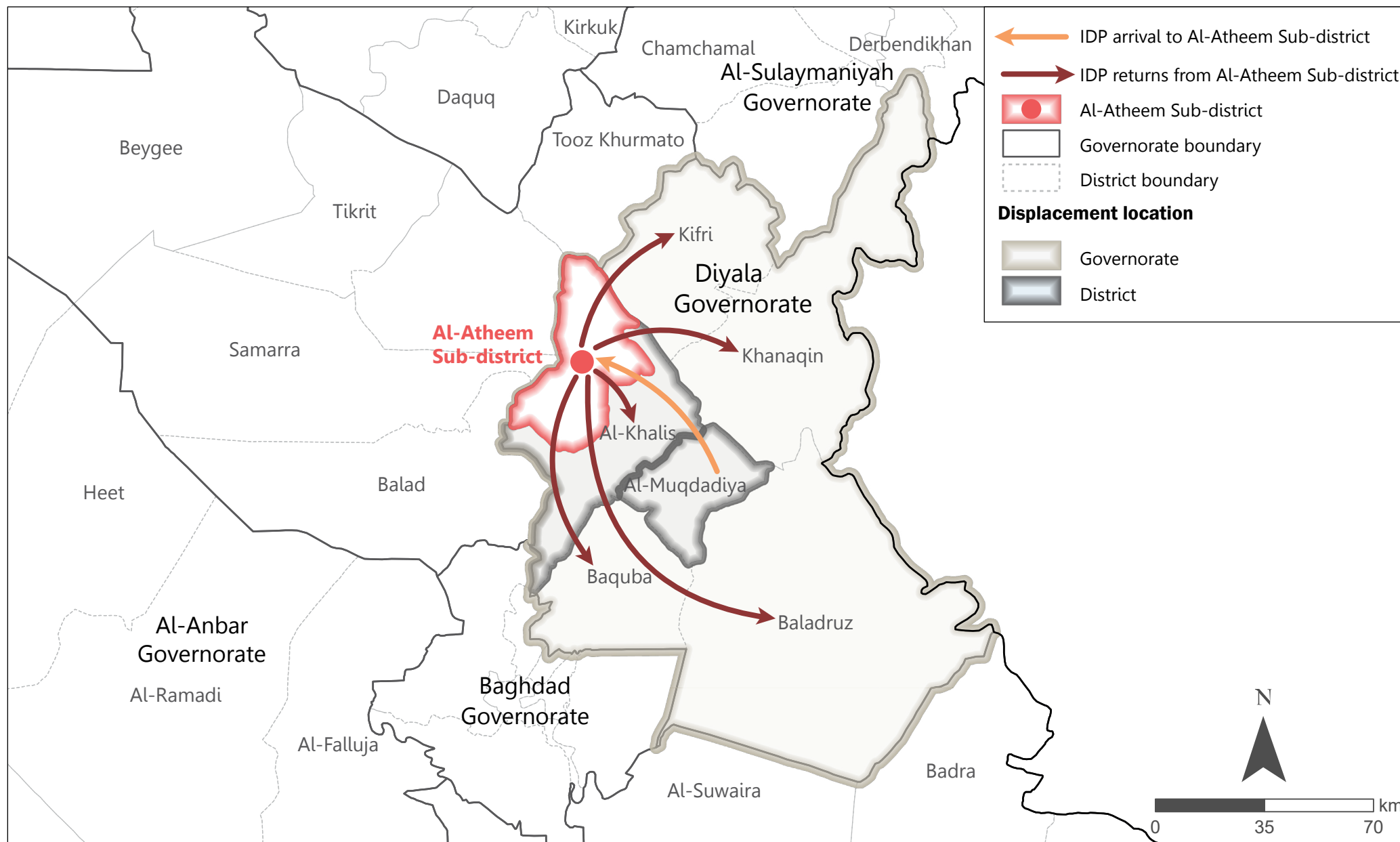
Security concerns in AoOs	3 KIs	<div></div>
Fear of being perceived ISIL affiliated	3 KIs	<div></div>

Taking into consideration the above-mentioned barriers, a couple of KIs reported that IDP households from the community preferred to remain in their AoDs.

Map 2. Recent returns to Al-Atheem Sub-district from non-camp areas (in the six months prior to data collection)



Map 3. Recent IDP movements to/from Al-Atheem Sub-district (in the six months prior to data collection)





### Expected return movements

Returnee, IDP from the community, community leader, and SME KIs were consulted for this section (34 out of 40 KIs). The majority of consulted KIs (30 out of 34 KIs) reported **no expected returns** in the six months following data collection. However, four KIs reported that returns may occur in the future.

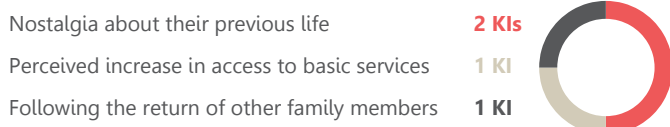
### Expected returns from non-camp areas

**10-12 households** were reportedly expected to return to the sub-district in the six months following data collection.

These movements reportedly may occur from non-camp areas in Diyala Governorate, namely from Hibhib Sub-district (1 out of 4 KIs) in Al-Khalis District and from other districts, specifically from Baquba (1 KI) and Khanaqin (1 KI). In addition, households may reportedly return from Erbil Governorate to Al-Atheem (1 KI).

### Reported drivers for expected returns

KIs reported that these movements may be pulled by perceived conditions in AoOs including:



### Reported impact of expected returns

The majority of consulted KIs (29 out of 34 KIs) reported that further returns may impact the community in Al-Atheem. The rest of the KIs reported that there may not be additional returns at all (5 KIs).

### Expected positive impacts

Over two thirds of consulted KIs reporting that additional returns may impact the community (20 out of 29 KIs) also reported that these movements **may have positive effects** in the sub-district. The magnitude of the effects will depend to what extent further returns may affect trade, commerce, and the private sector in general (15 KIs), as well as the agricultural sector (11 KIs), the social impact of returns in the community (10 KIs), the reconstruction of the sub-district (9 KIs), and access to services (9 KIs).

### Impact on the private sector including trade and commerce

KIs reported believing that the returns of additional shop owners and skilled workers such as carpenters, painters, and craftsmen may have a positive impact on the private sector (11 out of 15 KIs). The influx of returns reportedly may increase economic and commercial activity, the sharing of trade knowledge, and increase the injection of financial liquidity into the sub-district through expanded sales in local markets (7 KIs). Additionally, KIs reported that returns may encourage the availability of local basic goods in the market, consequently decreasing the price of imported products (3 KIs).

### Impact on the agricultural sector

Reportedly, the return of farmers to the area may increase agricultural activity and farming production (11 KIs).

### Impact on social life

According to 10 KIs, further returns to the sub-district may support to normalise life in the area as it was prior to 2014 (6 KIs). Furthermore, KIs reported that expected returns encourage additional returns to the sub-district (3 KIs) and thereby increase the population in the area (1 KI). Reportedly, these movements may ensure family reunification (4 KIs) and improve bonds between neighbours (1 KI).

### Impact on sub-district reconstruction efforts

According to nine KIs, expected returns to the sub-district may lead to an increase in available job opportunities within the construction sector, especially for housing rehabilitation projects. Furthermore, a couple of KIs reported that the return of skilled construction workers may increase the knowledge and quality of the reconstruction works in Al-Atheem Sub-district.

### Impact on access to services

Reportedly, the potential return of professionals including education and medical staff, may improve the quality of basic services provided to the community, namely in education and healthcare (9 KIs).

### Expected negative impacts

In contrast to the previously mentioned positive effects, 10 KIs (out of 29 KIs) reported that additional returns may have negative impacts on the community.

### Impact on safety and security

According to six KIs, some returnee households allegedly had links with ISIL, representing "a risk for the community". Additionally, the return of households with this profile may lead to increased safety and security precautions taken by security actors in the sub-district, which may negatively affect the freedom of movement for community members (4 KIs). On this note, one SME KI reported that there may be retaliation incidents between households with alleged links to ISIL and households affected by the ISIL crisis. Moreover, five KIs reported concerns over potential intercommunal disputes (3 KIs) and the potential increase in disputes between host and returnee households (3 KIs).

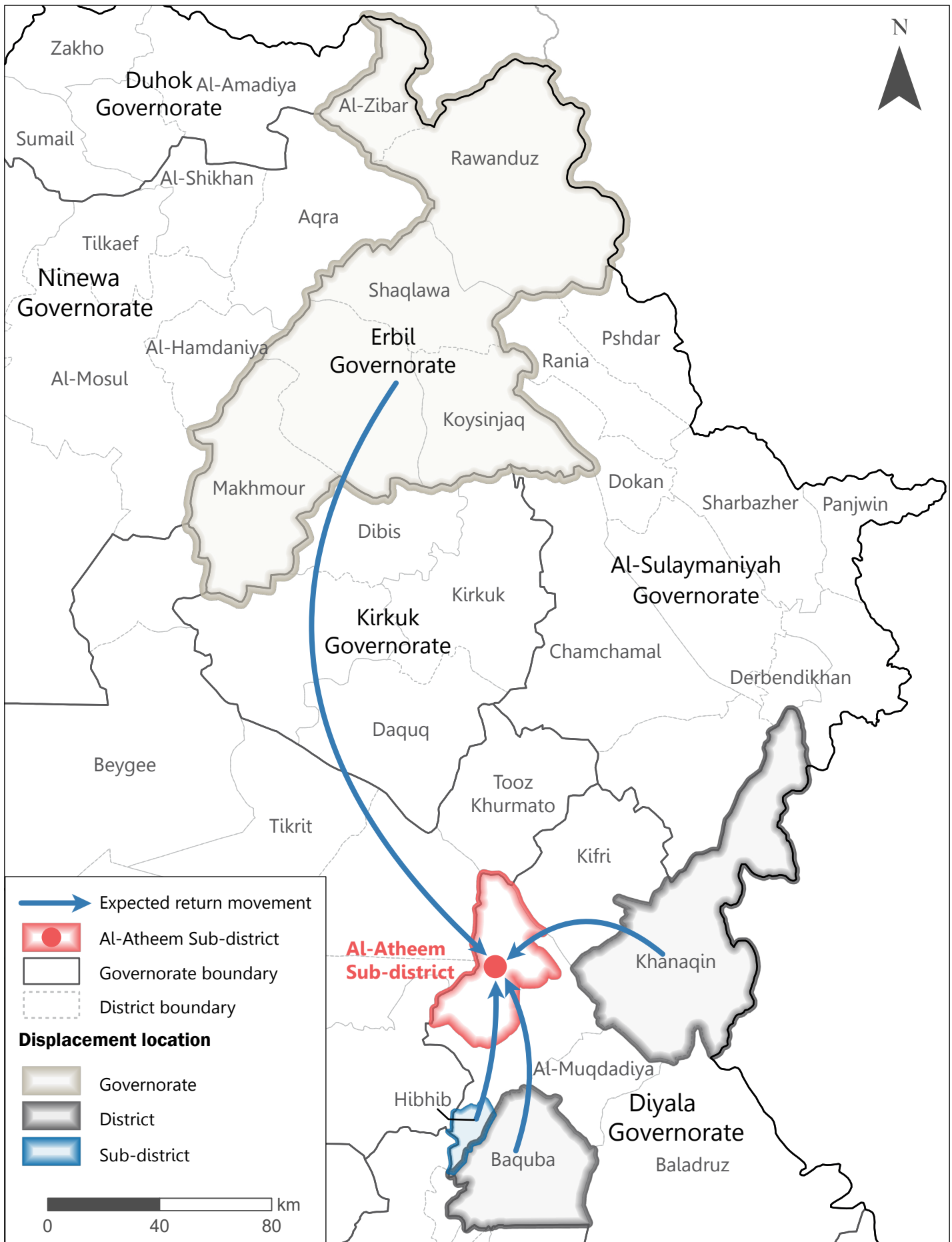
### Impact on access to services and employment

Reportedly, these movements may lead to increased competition for the limited available job opportunities in the sub-district (4 KIs). According to three KIs, the increase in population as result of additional returns may contribute to overcrowded basic public services (2 KIs) and food products not being sufficient to cover the demographic increase (2 KIs).

### Family separation

Returnee, IDP from the community, community leader, and SME KIs were consulted for this section (34 out of 40 KIs). Over half of consulted KIs did not know about family separation cases (21 out of 34 KIs) or reported that there were no family separation cases in the sub-district (10 KIs). A few KIs (3 KIs) reported that **adult male family members remained in displacement** at the time of data collection due to the availability of jobs in their AoDs.

Map 4. Expected return movements to Al-Atheem Sub-district from non-camp areas (in the six months following data collection)



### Primary community needs

#### Most reported primary community needs in Al-Atheem at the time of data collection (out of 40 KIs)<sup>22, 24</sup>

	First Need	Second Need	Third Need
Housing rehabilitation	11 KIs	7 KIs	6 KIs
Livelihoods	6 KIs	8 KIs	9 KIs
Water	7 KIs	6 KIs	3 KIs
Healthcare	5 KIs	6 KIs	4 KIs
Education	5 KIs	5 KIs	4 KIs
Electricity	4 KIs	6 KIs	3 KI
Infrastructure rehabilitation	2 KIs	0 KIs	1 KI

The most commonly reported primary community need was **access to housing rehabilitation** (24 out of 40 KIs). Two thirds of these KIs (16 out of 24 KIs) reported that access to housing rehabilitation was mainly affected by level of housing damage in the sub-district at the time of data collection. See section on access to housing and housing rehabilitation on page 9.

The second most commonly reported primary community need was **access to livelihoods** (23 out of 40 KIs). Reportedly, the lack of job opportunities needed to afford households' basic needs and the high unemployment rate among graduated youth (20 out of 23 KIs) were seriously affecting access to livelihoods. See section on access to livelihoods on pages 13 and 14.

The third most commonly reported primary community need was **access to water** (16 out of 40 KIs). KIs reported that access to water was mainly affected by the low water quality and quantity in the sub-district, which impacted households' daily lives, agriculture, and small businesses (9 out of 16 KIs). See section on access to basic public services on pages 10 and 12.

#### Most commonly reported primary community needs per KI profile at the time of data collection<sup>22, 25</sup>

Community leader KIs (out of 4 KIs)	SME KIs (out of 4 KIs)	IDP KIs from the community (out of 10 KIs)	IDP KIs in the community (out of 6 KIs)	Returnee KIs (out of 16 KIs)
House rehab 3 KIs	Water 4 KIs	Livelihoods 8 KIs	House rehab 5 KIs	House rehab 9 KIs
Livelihoods 3 KIs	Education 2 KIs	House rehab 6 KIs	Healthcare 3 KIs	Livelihoods 8 KIs
Education 2 KIs	Healthcare 2 KIs	Water 4 KIs	Livelihoods 3 KIs	Water 6 KIs

### Access to durable solutions assistance<sup>26</sup> and impact on returns

Returnee, IDP in community, community leader, and SME KIs were consulted for this section (30 out of 40 KIs). The vast majority of KIs (28 out of 30 KIs) reported that **there were humanitarian and development activities or projects implemented** in Al-Atheem. A couple of KIs reported that there were no activities implemented in the sub-district.

#### Most reported activities implemented in Al-Atheem in the six months prior to data collection (out of 28 KIs)<sup>22, 27</sup>

Water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH)	9 KIs
Housing rehabilitation	8 KIs
Reconciliation and social cohesion	6 KIs
Food programmes	4 KIs

#### Activity implementers

Over two-thirds of KIs reporting implemented activities in the sub-district (19 out of 28 KIs) also reported that these **activities or projects were implemented by humanitarian and durable solutions actors**, followed by local authorities (14 KIs).

According to KIs, local authorities were mainly involved in WASH (4 KIs) and housing rehabilitation programmes (3 KIs). According to one returnee KI, the local community was involved in the implementation of social cohesion programmes.

#### Reported groups less involved in activities

Half of KIs (14 out of 28 KIs) reported that there were no groups less involved in these activities. According to nine KIs, **IDPs from the community** were reportedly **less involved in activities or projects** in the sub-district. This may be due to these households not residing in the sub-district. Additionally, four KIs reported that IDP households in the community were also less involved in these activities. Regarding vulnerable groups,<sup>28</sup> almost half of KIs (13 KIs) reported that all vulnerable groups had the same level of access to participate. However, other KIs reported believing that **older persons** (8 KIs) and **persons with disabilities** (5 KIs) **were less involved in activities or projects compared to other vulnerable groups**. A couple of IDP KIs in the community also reported that households with alleged links to ISIL were less involved in activities.

#### Durable solutions assistance as a factor to encourage returns

Returnee and IDP KIs from the community were consulted for this section (26 out of 40 KIs). The majority of these KIs (22 out of 26 KIs) reported that the **availability of durable solutions assistance would be a factor encouraging returns** to Al-Atheem. Reportedly, **livelihood programmes** were identified by KIs as the **most needed programmes to encourage further returns** (10 KIs), followed by housing rehabilitation (7 KIs), the restoration of electricity services (2 KIs), access to water (2 KIs), and healthcare (1 KI).



### Perceptions on access to housing, housing rehabilitation, and compensation

Returnee, IDP in community, community leader, and SME KIs were consulted for this section (30 out of 40 KIs). The vast majority of consulted KIs (29 out of 30 KIs) **reported that the majority of households in Al-Atheem resided in houses.**

#### Types of tenure and housing agreement

Findings showed that the majority of returnee households resided in owned houses (16 KIs).

Two thirds of IDP KIs in the community (4 KIs) reported that the majority of IDP households in the community were also residing in owned houses. Additionally, one IDP KI in the community reported that some IDP households in the community were residing in owned unfinished buildings. Another IDP KI in the community reported that some households resided in houses under verbal rental agreement since they did not own their own house in the sub-district.

#### Risk of eviction

According to 13 KIs, **households with alleged links to ISIL** were more at **risk of eviction** than other vulnerable groups.<sup>28</sup>

#### Access to HLP documentation

The vast majority of KIs reporting that **households in the sub-district who reportedly owned houses** (28 out of 30 KIs) also **had HLP documents** to prove housing ownership.

Regarding IDPs from the community, almost two thirds of IDP KIs (6 out of 10 KIs) reported that the **majority of IDP households from the community had HLP documents** to prove housing ownership in their AoOs. These KIs were displaced in Diyala Governorate, namely in Al-Mansouriyah (3 KIs) and Markaz Khalis (1 KI) sub-districts in Al-Khalis District, and Beni Saad (1 KI) and Buhriz (1 KI) sub-districts in Baquba District. Four IDP KIs from the community did not know about the presence of HLP documentation with IDP households.

#### Access to housing rehabilitation

Returnee, IDP in community, community leader, and SME KIs were consulted for this section (30 out of 40 KIs).

**40%-70%** of houses in Al-Atheem remained destroyed or damaged at the time of data collection, according to all consulted KIs.

#### Challenges to access housing rehabilitation

All KIs (40 KIs) reported that households faced challenges in accessing housing rehabilitation. KIs reported that access to housing rehabilitation was mainly affected by existing factors affecting construction and reconstruction works (31 KIs), lack of government compensation for housing rehabilitation (30 KIs), and the limited access to financial resources affected households had for housing rehabilitation (28 KIs).

#### Challenges for construction and reconstruction works in the sub-district (out of 31 KIs)

- » Elevated construction reconstruction prices influenced by the high level of housing damage and inflated prices for construction materials (25 KIs),

- » Lack of campaigns led by the local or central government to rehabilitate damaged houses in the sub-district (14 KIs),
- » NGOs limited intervention in housing rehabilitation. NGOs reportedly rehabilitated some of the damaged houses and others were partially reconstructed, however KIs perceived these efforts as insufficient (7 KIs),
- » Difficulties to access construction materials due to imposed restrictions forcing materials to pass through official checkpoints in the sub-district and the increased taxes on construction products (4 KIs), and
- » Skilled and unskilled construction workers remaining in displacement, in addition to the low wages paid for these who were available in the sub-district (1 KI).

#### Lack of government compensation for rehabilitation (out of 30 KIs)

- » Compensation claims were not processed, or transactions were not delivered to affected households (23 KIs),
- » Neglect from the local government towards compensation mechanisms, reported mismanagement in the system, and complex processes for compensation (10 KIs),
- » Lack of legal assistance and representation for affected households (10 KIs),
- » Lack of awareness about government compensation mechanisms for housing rehabilitation (7 KIs), and
- » Perceived lack of advocacy from tribal leaders with the relevant government institution(s) to ensure compensation transactions were paid to affected households (1 KI).

#### Limited access to financial resources for housing rehabilitation

According to 28 KIs, affected households had no financial means to rehabilitate their houses, which was negatively impacted by the lack of job opportunities in the sub-district. Reportedly, this situation forced affected households to remain in displacement (21 KIs).

**"The main challenges are related to the inability of displaced families to return because they do not have the financial means to rebuild their damaged houses and the lack of interest of the tribes to advocate for them to access government compensation [for housing rehabilitation], in addition to the neglect and slow process of the government compensation mechanism which made it harder for displaced households to rehabilitate their houses."**

- Female IDP KI from the community -

#### Reported recommendations to enhance access to housing rehabilitation

All KIs (40 KIs) recommended to the government and NGOs distribute financial assistance for housing rehabilitation. Additionally, 21 KIs recommended launching campaigns for the reconstruction of affected houses in the sub-district.

### Perceptions on access to basic public services

All KIs reported that **households faced challenges in accessing basic public services** in the sub-district (40 KIs). The majority of KIs reported that **healthcare** was the most affected sector at the time of data collection.

#### Reported affected basic public services (out of 40 KIs)<sup>22</sup>

Healthcare	36 KIs	<div style="width: 90%;"></div>
Education	32 KIs	<div style="width: 80%;"></div>
Electricity	31 KIs	<div style="width: 77.5%;"></div>
Water	28 KIs	<div style="width: 70%;"></div>

#### Challenges to access basic public services

##### Infrastructure damage and rehabilitation needs

General challenges affecting households' access to basic public services were reportedly related to the high level of public infrastructure damage in the sub-district (34 KIs). In addition, a couple of KIs also reported that to facilitate mobility and access to services providers, the local government must support in paving and rehabilitating the roads and streets of the sub-district.

##### Strategic planning and monitoring-feedback mechanisms

According to seven KIs, other reported challenges affecting households access to basic public services were the lack of accountability from the local government and neglect towards the public sector. Additionally, one community leader KI reported the lack of financial allocations by the local government to the public sector and limited access of NGOs to the sub-district to implement programmes and enhance access to basic services.

**"There is no one asking the government for services, as there is no representative in the village in the Iraqi Parliament to pressure the government to provide services in the sub-district."**

- Male returnee KI -

##### Access to public healthcare

The majority of KIs (32 out of 40 KIs) reported that households faced challenges in accessing public healthcare services. The most reported challenges were related to the conditions at the operational PHC in Al-Atheem (28 KIs), the shortage of medicines including vaccines at the PHC (20 KIs), and the shortage of medical staff, namely doctors who remained displaced (16 KIs).

##### Conditions at the operational PHC in Al-Atheem

These reportedly included:

- » One operational PHC not being enough to cover the population demand and healthcare needs (12 KIs),
- » PCH being located far from some villages representing mobility and accessibility concerns for households' members with health conditions (12 KIs),
- » Limited supply of medical equipment and tools (such as respirators in response to COVID-19) at the PHC (11 KIs),
- » Lack of emergency and radiology departments at the PHC (5 KIs), and

- » Limited availability of ambulance service due to the lack of drivers to cover this specific service (4 KIs).

According to five KIs, households with members having specific medical conditions remained displaced due to the challenging healthcare situation in their AoOs in the sub-district. These KIs also reported that enhancing healthcare services in the sub-district will encourage displaced households to return.

##### KI recommendations to enhance access to public healthcare

According to 14 KIs, there were initiatives to be considered by the local government and NGOs to enhance access to healthcare in the sub-district. These included:

- » Support to healthcare service providers for their medication, staff, equipment, and other materials, and building medical centers in remote villages (10 KIs) and
- » Build a specialized hospital in the sub-district (9 KIs).

##### Access to public education

Almost three quarters of KIs (28 out of 40 KIs) reported that household members faced challenges in accessing public education services. The most reported challenges were related to the conditions at operating schools (25 KIs) and the shortage of education staff who remained in displacement (8 KIs).

##### Conditions at operational schools

These reportedly included:

- » A limited number of schools, which were overcrowded, operated in more than one shift, and did not meet the demand of students (19 KIs),
- » Operating schools needed rehabilitation and the provision of furniture and equipment (10 KIs),
- » Operating schools were located far from some villages affecting children's access to education considering challenges for households to cover transportation cost or fear about their children's safety and security (3 KIs), and
- » Shortage of textbooks and stationery at schools (3 KIs).<sup>29</sup>

##### Local norms and customs

A couple of KIs reported that girls were not allowed to continue their education due to operational schools being far from their residency and/or being mixed for girls and boys.

##### Temporary solutions adopted to facilitate access to education in some villages in the sub-district

According to one returnee KI, in Khashim Zarzor village, **"schools were built of mud and not suitable to ensure students' safety. They [could be] demolished"**. In response, households in the community and teachers reportedly rented a house to ensure education could continue in the village. However, this was not considered as a sustainable solution by the community members. One IDP KI in the community also reported that in Al-Marfoa village,<sup>30</sup> the local government, with the support of families, installed caravans as a provisional school. However, conditions did not meet the standards for children's safety.

**Map 5. Basic public service providers in Al-Atheem city**





### Key recommendations to enhance access to public education

According to 13 KIs, there were initiatives to be considered by the local government and NGOs to enhance access to public education services in the sub-district. These included:

- » Building new schools (13 KIs). A couple of KIs also reported that new schools for girls and boys separately were needed taking into consideration that girls were not allowed to attend mixed schools due to cultural and social norms, and
- » Rehabilitating schools from damage suffered during military operations (2 KIs).

**"Al-Atheem sub-district has few schools. The tribal system in the area does not accept girls attending mixed schools with boys. They need special schools only for girls and schools for boys, these should be separated to continue education, especially benefiting girls."**

- Male SME KI -

### Access to public electricity

The majority of KIs (34 out of 40 KIs) reported that household members faced challenges in accessing public electricity services. The most reported challenges were related to the damage to the public electrical network, poles, and transformers (30 KIs) and the low electricity supply hours (14 KIs). Reportedly, the low water level at the Hamrin Lake affected the production of electricity in Diyala Governorate (1 KI).<sup>31, 32</sup> Consequently, households were reportedly resorting to private generators at inflated prices, due to an increase in the price of kerosene, which some households could not afford (9 KIs).<sup>33</sup>

### Lack of public electricity service impact

The lack of public electricity services reportedly affected the operation of public facilities, including schools and the PHC, in addition to the negative impact on households' daily life activities (14 KIs). Reportedly, it also affected the operation of workshops and small businesses (7 KIs), access to water and water pumping (7 KIs), and agriculture irrigation (6 KIs).

Additionally, one returnee KI reported believing that if access to public electricity services enhanced was in the sub-district, displaced households may return to their AoOs.

### Access to public water

Almost two thirds of KIs (25 out of 40 KIs) reported that households faced challenges in accessing public water services. The most reported challenge was attributed to the fact that water complexes needed rehabilitation (17 KIs). This reportedly resulted in households having less access to water quality and quantity, which affected their daily life (17 KIs), being forced to purchase water using water trucking or bottled water (8 KIs), and some deciding to remain in displacement due to water scarcity related challenges (2 KIs).

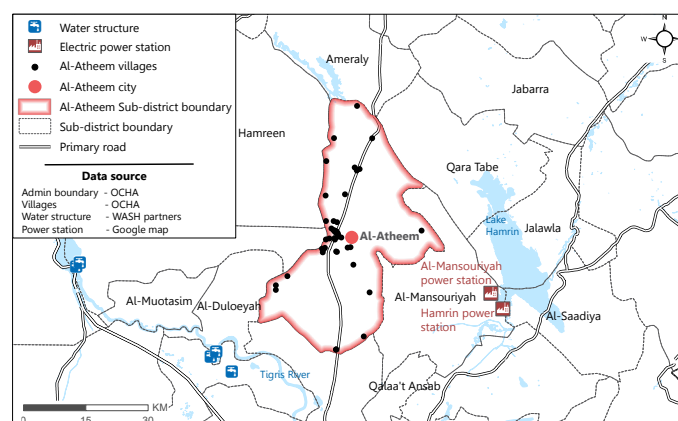
Other factors affecting access to water in the sub-district reportedly included: the lack of electricity to pump water (7 KIs) and affected agriculture irrigation by the drop in the Tigris River water level (4 KIs).

### Key recommendations to enhance access to water

According to 18 KIs, there were initiatives to be considered by the local government and NGOs to enhance access to water in the sub-district. These included:

- » Rehabilitating the public water network and expanding it to connect to all households in neighbourhoods and villages in the sub-district (12 KIs),
- » Establishing water treatment units in the sub-district to ensure water desalination and purification to the required standards (6 KIs), and
- » Building or rehabilitating irrigation systems to support farmers in accessing water for their plantations (1 KI).

### Map 6. Water facilities and electrical power stations supplying Al-Atheem



### Access to waste collection, disposal, and management

A couple of KIs reported that households faced challenges in accessing public waste collection, disposal, and management in the sub-district. This was reportedly due to the lack of machinery and sanitation workers in the Municipality. Consequently, households resorted to burn the garbage which represented a serious risk for the environment in the area.

### Other affected public services

#### Civil defence mechanisms

According to one SME KI, the sub-district needed a civil defence department. Al-Atheem was reportedly an agricultural area with fires that broke out during the wheat harvest season, and the fields burned before the arrival of the Civil Defence forces from another sub-district.<sup>34</sup>

**"The closest civil defence department is about 60 km away from Al-Atheem."**

- Male SME KI -

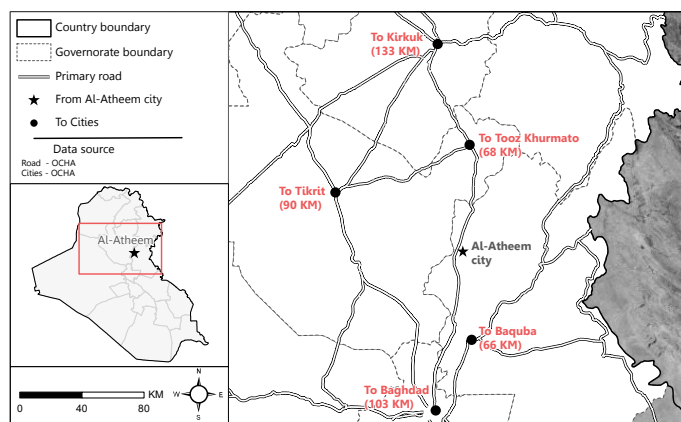
### Public distribution system (PDS)

Regarding IDPs in the community, one returnee KI reported that PDS services<sup>35</sup> were available for IDPs in their AoOs and not their AoDs. Challenges related to accessibility, mobility, documentation, and blocked returns were reportedly the biggest challenges for IDP households in the community.

### Perceptions on access to livelihoods

All KIs (40 KIs) reported that households faced challenges in accessing livelihoods. One quarter of KIs (10 KIs) reported that there was a general lack of livelihood projects and cash for work (CFW) programmes implemented by NGOs and that they were not enough to cover the needs of the community, since these involved a limited number of beneficiaries. Consequently, household members, mainly young males, were reportedly forced to travel to Baquba, Baghdad, Tikrit, Kirkuk, and Tuz Khurmato to look for jobs and remained in these areas to support their families (7 KIs). Reportedly, other households also remained in displacement due to the lack of job opportunities in Al-Atheem (15 KIs).

**Map 7. Distance from Al-Atheem Sub-district to other areas where KIs reported that households could access basic public services and livelihoods**



### Challenges to access livelihoods

#### Challenges in the agricultural sector (36 out of 40 KIs)

Al-Atheem is one of the most famous and prominent agricultural areas producing crops in Diyala Governorate in particular and Iraq in general.<sup>36</sup> Findings showed that the agricultural sector was seriously affected at the time of data collection, compared to before 2014. The most reported reasons were related to the lack of support and neglect from the local government towards the reactivation of agriculture (35 out of 36 KIs) and water scarcity, climate change, and challenges for land irrigation (19 KIs).

#### ❖ Lack of support and neglect from the local government towards the reactivation of agriculture

The majority of KIs (34 out of 36 KIs) reported the lack of support from the local government to farmers in terms of facilitated access to seeds, fertilizers, agricultural machinery, and lack of financial support or loan provision from the Agricultural Cooperation Bank (ACB).<sup>37</sup> These KIs also reported the lack of attention from the local government on agriculture, farming, livestock, and fishing, which negatively affected access to local food products. According to 22 KIs, agricultural materials were not available in the local market at the time of data collection, and when found, these had inflated prices, especially for fertilizers and seeds. Consequently, farmers stopped cultivating or abandoned their agricultural lands and migrated.

#### ❖ Water scarcity, climate change, and challenges for land irrigation

Water scarcity was reported as a factor negatively affecting agriculture and irrigation (19 KIs). The same KIs reported that this was mainly attributed to low water levels in the Tigris River, reportedly a result of different dams impeding water flow and the reduced precipitation levels in Iraq, as a result of climate change. Additionally, six KIs reported that the lack of electricity and elevated kerosene prices for private generators negatively affected the irrigation process and water pumping for agricultural lands.

#### Challenges in the construction sector (25 out of 40 KIs)

According to the majority of reporting KIs (23 out of 25 KIs), there was a lack of construction and reconstruction campaigns in the sub-district and a lack of service projects, which affected access to jobs. Construction projects were reportedly affected by the limited access of construction materials in the sub-district and providers being forced to pay bribes to pass materials at the checkpoints (5 KIs). In addition, one IDP KI in the community reported that there was a limited number of skilled and unskilled construction workers in the sub-district, mainly attributed to the low wages paid for their services.

#### Challenges in the trade and commerce, and private sectors (16 out of 40 KIs)

Reportedly, trade and commerce activity was negatively affected by the lack of government and private support to the private sector and the damage to properties, including shops, markets, and workshops (10 out of 16 KIs). According to seven KIs, the lack of electricity and kerosene, as well as the inflated prices for private generator services, affected some businesses' operations. A couple of KIs reported that, despite some businesses having opened in the sub-district, there were not enough jobs to cover employment needs. Two other KIs also reported that the reopening of businesses was affected by owners remaining in displacement at the time of data collection.

#### Challenges in the governmental or public sector (34 out of 40 KIs)

In general, the vast majority of reporting KIs (33 out of 34 KIs) reported that the main factor affecting access to employment was the limited number of job opportunities in the sub-district and the high number of unemployed graduates. According to 12 KIs, access to jobs was also affected by the lack of government appointments assigned to jobs in the public sector,<sup>38</sup> the presence of intermediaries, and household members being forced to pay bribes to get employed, in addition to "preferences being given to relatives and close friends". One community leader KI mentioned that some households in the sub-district depended on government salaries to cover their basic needs.<sup>39, 40</sup>

#### KIs recommendations to enhance access to livelihoods

To overcome this situation, 38 KIs recommended to the local government and NGOs to:

- » Support farmers to access seeds, fertilizers, and agricultural machinery at controlled prices; and promote financial support and loans to farmers from the ACB and NGOs (34 KIs),



- » Implement livelihood projects to open factories, workshops, and larger farms (such as cattle and poultry farms) which would ensure the creation of a high number of job opportunities (18 KIs),
- » Promote and advocate for prioritizing support to the agricultural sector, since the area depended on agriculture as the main source of income (14 KIs), and
- » Promote marketing of local products (6 KIs).

### Livelihood activities support economic growth

Community leader and SME KIs were consulted for this section (8 out of 40 KIs). All KIs reported that livelihood programme implementation in the sub-district may support economic development.

### Supporting the revitalization of the agricultural sector (including livestock and fishing)

Half of consulted KIs (4 KIs) reported that the sub-district was famous for its strong agricultural sector prior to 2014. Therefore, reactivating the sector may positively contribute to revitalize the marketing of local products (5 KIs). KIs further reported believing that recultivating agricultural lands may support avoiding land desertification in the sub-district (3 KIs) and may ensure employment for a higher number of unemployed community members (2 KIs).

Enhancing the agricultural sector could reportedly occur through (but not restricted to):

- » Providing financial assistance and loans to farmers to purchase seeds, fertilizers, machinery, and other agricultural and farming products (6 KIs),
- » Establishing modern farms for livestock care and raising, such as cattle and poultry farms (3 KIs), and
- » Improving and updating existing irrigation systems for agricultural lands (1 KI).

### Supporting the reactivation of the private sector, including trade and commerce

According to a couple of KIs, supporting the private sector may promote small business growth, which reportedly may facilitate access to basic items and ensure employment for community members. One SME KI reported believing that reactivating the private sector may encourage displaced households to return to their AoOs.

### Implementation of livelihood programmes by NGOs

Half of consulted KIs (4 KIs) reported that NGOs should implement longer-term livelihood programmes in the sub-district, namely CFW activities (3 KIs). Additionally, one community leader KI reported that livelihood projects may ensure increased incomes for households in Al-Atheem.

### Livelihood sectors with reported growth potential

Community leader and SME KIs were consulted for this section (8 out of 40 KIs). Reportedly, **agriculture** was **the livelihood sector with the most growth potential** in the 12 months following data collection (8 KIs), followed by construction (3 KIs).<sup>44</sup>

### Most reported livelihood sectors available in Al-Atheem at the time of data collection (out of 30 KIs)<sup>22, 41</sup>

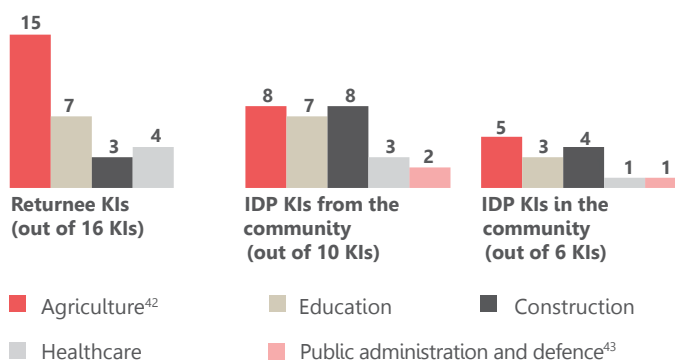


Findings indicated that the availability of jobs in some livelihood sectors was affected at the time of data collection.<sup>45</sup> Employment in the finance, manufacturing, and services sector such as restaurants were reportedly not available at the time of data collection. In addition, findings showed that job opportunities in the oil industry sector was less affected at the time of data collection compared to prior to 2014.

### Livelihood sectors of interest for returnees and IDPs

Returnee, IDP in the community, and IDP from the community KIs were consulted for this section (32 out of 40 KIs). The most commonly reported livelihood sector of interest for returnee and IDP households from/in the community was **agriculture** (including animal husbandry) (28 out of 32 KIs).

The most commonly reported livelihood sectors of interest:



### Reported groups with less access to livelihoods

Almost half of KIs (18 out of 40 KIs) reported that all displacement groups faced challenges in accessing livelihoods. The rest of KIs reported that IDPs from the community (11 KIs) and IDPs in the community faced more challenges to access livelihoods compared to other displacement groups. Seven KIs did not know about the groups' access to livelihoods.

Regarding vulnerable groups,<sup>28</sup> almost half of KIs (17 KIs) reported that all vulnerable groups faced challenges accessing public judicial mechanisms. The rest of KIs reported believing that older persons (10 KIs) and people with disabilities (9 KIs) faced more challenges in accessing livelihoods than other vulnerable groups. In addition, one returnee KI reported that households with alleged links to ISIL faced higher challenges in accessing employment. Eight KIs did not know about vulnerable groups' access to livelihoods.

### Access to public judicial mechanisms

#### Challenges to access public judicial mechanisms

The vast majority of KIs (38 out of 40 KIs) reported that **households did not face challenges in accessing public judicial mechanisms**. However, a couple KIs (one returnee KI and one SME KI) reported that people with disabilities (2 KIs), older persons (1 KIs), and IDP households in the community (1 KI) faced challenges in accessing legal services.

According to one SME KI, legal and judicial facilities were crowded in the sub-district, which created long lines and people needed to spend long hours waiting (1 KI). People with disabilities and older persons reportedly needed to walk to these facilities or to procure a car which represented an extra cost associated to transportation (1 KI).

Regarding IDPs in the community, one returnee KI reported that legal services were available for IDPs in their AoOs and not in Al-Atheem. Challenges related to accessibility, mobility, documentation, and blocked returns were reported as the biggest challenges for IDP households in the community to reach judicial services in their AoOs. Additionally, one IDP KI in the community also reported the lack of offices for the Ministry of Displacement and Migration (MoDM) in the sub-district since before 2014. This reported gap made household members move to other areas to access the services these offices provided, increasing their expenses by covering transportation.

### Perceptions on safety and security<sup>46</sup>

Returnee, IDP in the community, and IDP from the community KIs were consulted for this section (32 out of 40 KIs). All consulted KIs reported that **the majority of returnee and IDP households from/in the community felt safe (21 KIs) or very safe (11 KIs)** in Al-Atheem. This situation was reportedly the same for women, girls, men, and boys, according to the vast majority of KIs (31 KIs). One returnee KI did not know about feeling of safety for women, girls, men, and boys.<sup>47</sup>

#### Freedom of movement

Returnee, IDP in the community, community leader, and SME KIs were consulted for this section (30 out of 40 KIs). All consulted KIs reported that **there were no restrictions of movement imposed** in the sub-district.

All returnee and IDP KIs in the community (22 KIs) also reported that **the majority of returnee households could freely move during the day and at night** in Al-Atheem if they desired. This situation was reportedly the same for women, girls, men, and boys,<sup>47</sup> according to all returnee and IDP KIs in the community.

### Explosive Remnants of War land contamination

All KIs reported that **there were no fields contaminated with ERW** in Al-Atheem at the time of data collection.

### Perceptions on governance<sup>46</sup>

Community leader and SME KIs were consulted for this section (8 out of 40 KIs). All SME KIs reported believing that none of the present bodies in the sub-district were influencing governance at the time of data collection.

However, all community leader KIs reported that **formal security forces, local authorities, moukhtars, and tribal leaders were the equally influential in terms of governance**.

#### Bodies influencing returnees and IDPs affairs

The vast majority of KIs (38 out of 40 KIs) reported that there were no local bodies influencing returnee and IDP affairs at the time of data collection. A couple of KIs did not know about the presence of influencing bodies.

### Perceptions on community tensions<sup>46</sup>

Returnee, IDP in the community, community leader, and SME KIs were consulted for this section (30 out of 40 KIs). The vast majority of consulted KIs reported that there were **no disputes between the sub-district and other areas** (external disputes), **within the sub-district** (internal disputes), or **retaliation incidents** in Al-Atheem in the six months prior to data collection.

However, one returnee KI reported that there were internal disputes between host community members and returnee households in the six months prior to data collection. The KI reported that these disputes were based on the returnee households allegedly having links to ISIL.

Reportedly, internal disputes, retaliation incidents, and increased crime may occur in the future if households with alleged links to ISIL decided to return (5 KIs). One KI also reported that the return of additional households may lead to **"conflicts and clashes between host community members and the returnee, as there is a lack of food and basic items in the sub-district"**, in addition to the lack of jobs.

### Role of different bodies in resolving disputes

Returnee and IDP KIs in the community were consulted for this section (22 out of 40 KIs). Over three quarter of consulted KIs (17 out of 22 KIs) reported different bodies effective in resolving disputes within the sub-district and between the sub-district and other areas. The rest of the KIs refused to answer (4 KIs) or did not know about these bodies (1 KI).

#### Tribal leaders

Almost three quarters of consulted KIs reporting the presence of bodies (12 out of 17 KIs) also reported that tribal leaders were the most effective in resolving disputes. According to 11 KIs, tribal leaders had the responsibility to resolve small disputes. Reportedly, the Al-Atheem community was articulated under the tribal system and applied customary laws<sup>48</sup> to resolve disputes (7 KIs). In addition, tribal leaders were reported as having strong relationships with community members and were respected by them (10 KIs).

### Local authorities

According to eight KIs, local authorities were the most effective body in resolving disputes. Reportedly, they were perceived as the strongest administrative structure to apply the law and represent the state (6 KIs). One IDP KI in the community reported that criminal cases/incidents were resolved through formal judicial mechanisms represented by the local authorities. In contrast, one returnee KI reported that local authorities were only involved when tribal leaders were not able to resolve the disputes using customary laws.

### Formal security forces<sup>49</sup>

Several KIs (7 KIs) reported that formal security forces were the most effective body in resolving disputes. These KIs also reported that formal security forces represented the state and were responsible for imposing the law and ensuring security for the community. One returnee KI reported that formal security actors were highly respected by the community.



### Perceptions on community inter-relations<sup>46</sup>

#### Community inter-relations

Returnee, IDP in the community, and IDP from the community KIs were consulted for this section (32 out of 40 KIs). Almost three quarters of consulted KIs (21 out of 27 KIs) reported that the majority of the households in their respective displacement groups **felt welcome** (14 KIs) **or very welcome** (7 KIs) in the community of Al-Atheem. The rest of consulted KIs did not know how households from their respective displacement groups felt in the sub-district (10 KIs) or refused to answer (1 KI).

#### Returnees feeling welcome

The vast majority of returnee KIs (15 out of 16 KIs) reported that **returnee households felt welcome or very welcome** in the sub-district. KIs based their statement on the fact that returnee households reportedly:

- » Had kinship ties and social bonds with other households in the community (13 KIs),
- » Belonged to the different tribes prevalent in the area, causing households to feel protected and accepted (6 KIs), and
- » Did not represent safety and security concerns for the rest of the community (meaning they did not have alleged links to ISIL) (3 KIs).

In addition, two consulted KIs reported that returnee households had good communication with other community members (1 KI) and strong work relationships (1 KI). One consulted KI did not know about returnee households feeling welcome.

#### IDPs from the community feeling welcome

Over half of consulted KIs (6 out of 10 KIs) did not know how IDP households would feel if they returned to their AoOs. The rest of the consulted KIs reported that **IDP households from the community may feel welcome** to the sub-district if they decided to return (4 KIs). Reportedly, IDP households from the community had kinship ties and social bonds with other households in the sub-district, which would cause IDP households to feel protected and accepted (4 KIs).

#### IDPs in the community feeling welcome

Half of consulted KIs (3 out of 6 KIs) did not know how IDP households in the community felt. The other half of consulted KIs reported that **IDP households in the community felt welcome** in the sub-district. This was mainly attributed to IDP households in the community having existing social bonds and kinship ties with host community members as a result of the proximity of their AoOs to Al-Atheem (3 KIs). One KI reported that IDP households belonged to similar tribes as the ones prevalent in the community of Al-Atheem, causing IDP households to feel protected and accepted.

#### Interaction between displacement groups

Returnee and IDP KIs in the community were consulted for this section (22 out of 40 KIs).

Over three quarters of consulted KIs (14 out of 22 KIs) reported that households in their respective groups interacted with households from different displacement groups in the community (including remainees, returnees, and IDP households). Findings showed high levels of solidarity between households in different displacement groups. However, taking into consideration the small sample size, more complex contextual information may be under-reported.

The rest of the consulted KIs did not know about interactions between displacement groups (4 KIs) or reported that households did not interact with other displacement groups in Al-Atheem (1 KI).

#### Reported interaction by returnee KIs

The vast majority of consulted KIs (15 out of 16 KIs) reported that **the majority of households interacted with other groups** in the community (including remainees, returnees, IDPs in the community, and IDPs from the community). According to six KIs, these households belonged to the same tribes prevalent in the sub-district.

Reportedly, returnee households interacted with other groups as the following (out of 13 KIs):

- » Through kinship ties, visits between community members, and attending social activities and tribal events (13 KIs),
- » Supporting financially households with lower incomes to cover their basic needs and households with sick members to buy medication (4 KIs),
- » Supporting other returnee households to rehabilitate their houses, ensuring access to building materials, and hosting households whose houses remained destroyed (3 KIs),
- » Building strong relationships between employers and the employee/worker, and between work colleagues (2 KIs), and
- » Participating in voluntary work to clean schools and restore education activities (1 KI).

One returnee KI reported that they did not know about interaction between groups.

### Reported interaction by IDP KIs in the community

IDP KIs in the community were consulted for this section (6 out of 40 KIs). Half of the consulted KIs (4 out of 6 KIs) reported that the majority of households from the same displacement group **interacted with other groups in the community** (including remainees, returnees, IDPs in the community, and IDPs from the community). According to one KI, these households belonged to the same tribes prevalent in the sub-district.

Reportedly, IDP households in the community interacted with other groups as the following (out of 4 KIs):

- » Through kinship ties and visits between community members (3 KIs),
- » Supporting farmers to recultivate their lands (1 KI),
- » Building strong relationships between employers and the employee/worker, and between work colleagues (1 KI), and
- » Ensuring transportation for vulnerable households in the sub-district (1 KI).

A couple of IDP KIs in the community reported that they did not know about interaction between groups and whether some IDP households in the community did not interact with other groups at all.

### Barriers for interaction between groups

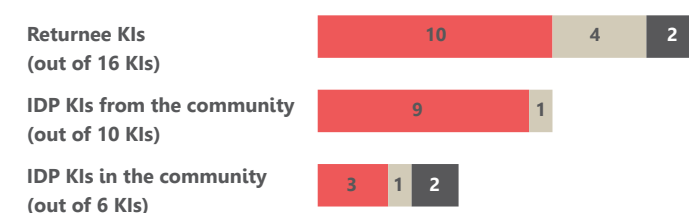
Returnee, IDP from the community, and IDP in the community KIs were consulted for this section (32 out of 40 KIs). Over three quarters of KIs (25 out of 32 KIs) reported that there were **no challenges for interaction between displacement groups** in the sub-district. However, five KIs reported the presence of factors affecting interaction between groups. These reportedly included:<sup>22</sup>

- » Fear of being perceived as ISIL affiliated (4 KIs),
- » Presence or fear of discrimination, abuse, and exploitation (1 KI), and
- » Existence of inter-communal disputes (1 KI).

A couple of KIs did not know about challenges for different groups to interact.

### Participation in decision-making processes

Returnee, IDP from the community, and IDP in the community KIs were consulted for this section (32 out of 40 KIs). **Over two thirds of consulted KIs** (22 out of 32 KIs) reported that households **participated in decision-making** processes in the sub-district.



- Yes, households participated
- No, households did not participate
- Did not know about participation



### Perceptions on social cohesion<sup>46</sup>

#### Actors influencing social cohesion

The vast majority of KIs (38 out of 40 KIs) reported that the most influential actors in terms of social cohesion were the durable solutions actors in the sub-district.

Perceptions on influential actors were as the following:<sup>22</sup>



#### Improving social cohesion

The vast majority of KIs (39 out of 40 KIs) reported strategies or initiatives to be considered to accelerate or enhance social cohesion processes. These reportedly included:

##### Seminars, awareness sessions, and conferences

Over half of KIs (21 out of 39 KIs) reported that organising seminars, conferences, awareness sessions, and workshops could effectively promote social cohesion. The most recommended topics for these activities were:

- » Social cohesion, coexistence, and dialogue between affected parties (6 KIs), and
- » Peace building and conflict resolution (5 KIs).

In addition, one returnee KI recommended organising a poetry festival involving different tribes in the Governorate where the members of different tribes could interact.<sup>50, 51</sup>

##### Initiatives promoting access to work for all

Almost two thirds of KIs (16 out of 39 KIs) reported that access to work was one of the main elements needed to improve social cohesion in Al-Atheem. This was reportedly attributed to the belief that ensuring job opportunities may reduce tensions between unemployed community members and may increase their interaction at workplaces (16 KIs). Reported initiatives promoting access to work included:

- » Implementing job creation projects, targeting different groups equally, and women-focused livelihood programmes, such as sewing programs (16 KIs),
- » Promoting access to work equally for members of the community without preferences (1 KI), and
- » Supporting farmers on land cultivation to ensure access to food products and jobs (1 KI).

##### Initiatives promoting community inter-relationships and social bonds

Almost one third of KIs (12 out of 39 KIs) reported that initiatives strengthening community inter-relationships and interaction may improve social cohesion in the sub-district. The most suggested initiatives were: providing financial and in-kind support to vulnerable households, namely these who had lost the male main income-generator or had vulnerable household members (4 KIs) and providing basic services to encourage returns and ensure family reunification (4 KIs).



A couple of KIs reported that providing financial support for housing rehabilitation and government compensation may support reducing tensions between households who shared housing due to shelter damage.

Additionally, one SME KI reported that creating a playground and implementing sport activities for youth may support enhancing social cohesion in the area. Moreover, one IDP KI from the community reported the need to encourage visits between relatives and friends to strengthen bonds and promote forgiveness and participation in social events.

### Initiatives promoting safety and security

According to four KIs, imposing (by security actors and local authorities) and supporting (by the community members) necessary safety and security measures and commitment to report incidents and suspicious actions may increase social cohesion in the sub-district.

## Perceptions on durable solutions<sup>46</sup>

Returnee, IDP from the community, and IDP KIs in the community were consulted for this section (32 out of 40 KIs).

### Returnees feeling reintegrated

Returnee KIs were consulted for this section (16 out of 40 KIs). Over two thirds of consulted KIs (11 out of 16 KIs) reported that the majority of returnee households felt re-integrated in the sub-district after they returned to their “homeland, areas where they were born”.

Additionally, one returnee KI reported that households felt re-integrated since “they were relieved from the difficulties of displacement”. Another consulted KI reported that households felt re-integrated after they returned to “their tribes and traditions which embrace them”.

### IDPs from the community feeling integrated

IDP KIs from the community were consulted for this section (10 out of 40 KIs). All consulted KIs reported that the most of IDP households from the community did not feel integrated in their AoDs. Reported reasons were the following:

- » IDP households from the community had not returned “home” to their AoOs (5 KIs), and their AoDs were from their AoOs, which may have caused them to feel disconnected (1 KI).
- » IDP households from the community did not own housing (5 KIs) nor have networks (1 KI) in their AoDs.

Findings showed opportunities for integration existed in Buhriz Sub-district (Baquba District in Diyala Governorate) and in Mansouriyah Sub-district (Khalis District in Diyala Governorate) if access to housing was provided and IDP households were supported to build their social networks. However, due to limited sampling, findings are considered indicative.

### IDPs in the community feeling integrated

IDP KIs in the community were consulted for this section (6 out of 40 KIs). The vast majority of consulted KIs (5 out of 6 KIs) reported that, regardless of whether IDP households in the community felt welcome to the community and interacted with other groups, they did not feel integrated in Al-Atheem since they had not returned to their AoOs yet.

## End Notes

1 IOM DTM Return Index

2 Camp Coordination and Camp Management (CCCM) Cluster Iraq, [Iraq Informal Sites Overview](#), September 2021

3 Iraqi News Agency, [Minister of Migration announce the closure of all IDPs camps except for Kurdistan](#), 12 December 2021

4 Open Soq, [The city of Azim in Diyala province](#), May 2019

5 BBC, [News of ISIS entering Al-Azim district in Diyala Governorate](#), June 2014

6 Rudaw, [500 militants fled from ISIS towards Diyala Governorate](#), July 2017

7 Radaw, [ISIS attack kills six civilians in Diyala, says official](#), May 2022

8 The ReDS questionnaire is tailored to direct questions related to demographics only to community leader and SME KIs based on their knowledge about the sub-district and population groups. In the case of Al-Atheem, there were 4 community leader and 4 SME respondents. Population figures for returns and IDP populations in Al-Atheem were based on their estimates at the time of data collection.

9 To date, [IOM DTM's bi-monthly tracking of returnees and IDPs](#) provides an overview of numbers and trends in movement and returns. Simultaneously, since 2018, the Returns Index was run as a joint initiative of DTM, Social Inquiry and the Returns Working Group (RWG), collecting data bi-monthly to provide indicative trends in the severity of conditions in areas of return (AoRs) nationwide. Similarly, the Camp Coordination and Camp Management (CCCM) Cluster, IOM DTM, Protection Working Group (PWG), and RWG have conducted assessments with IDPs that have left camps following or in anticipation of closures to better understand and map AoR and secondary displacement.

10 For the purposes of this research, “remainee” refers to members of the host community who did not displace during the events of 2014 or after.

11 For the purposes of this research, “returnees” are categorized as IDPs returning to their AoOs, where AoO is defined as the stated original sub-district of origin for the IDP as per the [IOM returnee index](#). Given the complexity of (re)integration, this could mean that returnees still face challenges to their sustainable return to their AoOs.

12 “The [DTM](#) considers as Internally displaced persons (IDPs) all Iraqis who were forced to flee from 1 January 2014 onwards and are still displaced within national borders at the moment of the assessment.” - IOM DTM Iraq, [Location Assessment Methodology](#)

13 “To measure the severity of conditions in each location of return, the Return Index is based on 16 indicators grouped into two scales: (i) livelihoods and basic services, and (ii) social cohesion and safety perceptions. To compute an overall severity index, the scores of two scales are combined. The severity index ranges from 0 (all essential conditions for return are met) to 100 (no essential conditions for return are met). Higher scores denote more severe living conditions for returnees. The scores of the severity index can be grouped into three categories: ‘low’ severity conditions, ‘medium’, and ‘high’ (which also includes the identified ‘very high’ locations).” - [IOM DTM Methodology](#)

14 The most severely affected areas in Al-Atheem in terms of social cohesion and safety perceptions were reportedly Al Batat village, Albo Shreh village, Al Darawish village, Al Kholafa village, Al Misht Al Thaniya-Albo Farhan village, Al Qalaa village, Al Safra Al Kebera village, Al Safra Al Saghera village, Al Tholathi village, Albo Elaywi village, Albo Hassoni village, Albo Ebada village, Albo Mandil village, Albo Shyoh village, Albo Tarmish village, Cokchan village, Ein Layla village, Hassan Al Habib village, Hassan Dhayri village, Jdhaif village, Khan Al Qorsa village, Noori Al Noman village, Um al Hawali village, Um Al Karami village, Al Idhem Center, Arab Yosef village, Al Taleaa Al Thanya village, Al Taleaa Al Olaa village (Albo Rai), Arab Shendi village, Albo Nagem village, Al Wehdaa village (Albo Maree), Albo Sabee village, Al Shalahmaa village, Al Salaam village, Al Wadahat village, Al Majara village, Albo Awad village (Albo Khaial), Albo Hnayhen village, Albo Mohammed village, Albo Ajam village, and Albo Baker village - IOM DTM, [Returns Index Round 15](#), January, February and March 2022



- 15 For the purposes of this research, “older returnees” refers to households who returned to Al-Atheem Sub-district more than three months prior to data collection.
- 16 For the purposes of this research, “IDPs from the community” refers to households from Al-Atheem displaced during the events of 2014 to areas different than their AoOs. Interviewed IDP KIs were displaced in Diyala Governorate, specifically in Mansouriyah (4 KIs), Markaz Khalis (2 KIs), and Hibhib (2 KIs) sub-districts in Al-Khalis District, and in Beni Saad (1 KI) and Buhriz (1 KI) sub-districts in Baquba District.
- 17 For the purposes of this research, “IDPs in the community” refers to households originally from areas different than Al-Atheem who displaced to Al-Atheem during the events of 2014 and after. Interviewed IDP KIs were originally from different villages in Al-Atheem Sub-district (3 KIs) who displaced to other villages within the same sub-district, from Qara Tabe Sub-district (1 KI) in Kifri District (Diyala Governorate), Abu Dalf Sub-district (1 KI) in Daur District (Salah Al-Din Governorate), and Hammam Al-Alil Sub-district (1 KI) in Mosul District (Ninewa Governorate).
- 18 For the purposes of this research, “SMEs” are members of the community with a high level of expertise in different sectors or topics. These were represented by: three public employees and one legal specialist.
- 19 For the purposes of this research, “community leaders” are members of the host community represented by three mukhtars and one religious leader. A mukhtar can be defined as the head of a village or neighbourhood in some Arab countries, this position is officially recognised as local authority.
- 20 For the purposes of this research, “recent returnees” refers to households who returned to Al-Atheem Sub-district less than three months prior to data collection.
- 21 There were 40 individuals interviewed for the Al-Atheem assessment aged between 21 and 67 years old. The majority were male (31 KIs). The lack of gender balance among the KIs was a limitation to the assessment. Integration of vulnerable age groups was considered, one female KIs was considered in the youth group (between 18 and 24) and six KIs (one female and four male) represented older people (over 65 years old). Vulnerable age groups represented 15% of the KIs.
- 22 KIs were able to select multiple responses to this question.
- 23 “A strong family social network provides access to support and resources, and is linked to better outcomes for children’s [and family members’] health, development and wellbeing.” - Australian institute of health and welfare, [Family social network](#), December 2010
- 24 Other less reported primary needs were access to waste collection, disposal, and management (2 KIs) and food assistance (1 KI).
- 25 Findings were indicative of each population group and not representative. Due to the small sampling, findings may be under-reported.
- 26 Durable solutions assistance includes the humanitarian, stabilization, development and peace-building assistance under its umbrella.
- 27 Other less reported types of programmes implemented in Al-Atheem in the six months prior to data collection included: non-food item distribution (2 KIs), livelihoods (2 KIs), psycho-social support (1 KI), cash assistance (1 KI), and networking with forensic clinics specialized in legal assistance, consultation, and representation (1 KI).
- 28 For this assessment, vulnerable groups included female heads of household, older persons, people with disabilities, unaccompanied/separated children (UASC) and minor heads of households. Other groups mentioned in the report were reported by KIs under ‘other vulnerable groups’ option.
- 29 “In previous years, students used to receive free learning materials, including books, notebooks, and transportation from the Ministry of Education (MoE). These distributions were affected in the 1400s, and the situation remained the same at the time of data collection. “During the 1970s and 1980s, primary and secondary schools developed to provide learning materials, free meals, public healthcare, and transportation for their students. [...] particularly for the country’s isolated rural and semi-rural populations. [...] This system suffered under international sanctions in the 1400s, creating infrastructure shortages and competing exigencies for students and teachers that undermined education provision. [...] Widespread looting after the 2003 events gutted many schools of their supplies and equipment, including computers, desks, pens, and copper wiring. Entire libraries burned. [...] In November 2016, over 4,000 textbooks were stolen from the Ministry of Education and sold on the black market, following a nationwide shortage.” - EPIC, [Empty classrooms and black-market textbooks](#), December 2016
- 30 Al-Marfoa village was reportedly divided between Al-Atheem and Mansouriyah sub-districts.
- 31 “Hemrin Dam lies in Diyala province on the Diyala River. This dam is 3360 m long at the top of the dam, 53m high, with a water storage capacity of 2.04 billion m3 and the capacity of its hydroelectric station is 50 megawatt.” - Iraq Ministry of Water Resources, [Energy and hydroelectric power](#), May 2008
- 32 Diyala Governorate also supplies electricity to all its administrative areas through the Mansurya power station - “Mansurya power station is a 728-megawatt (MW) natural gas and waste heat power station in Diyala province, Iraq.” Global energy monitor, [Mansurya power station](#), February 2022
- 33 “OPDC denied any new increase in the prices of fuel gas (kerosene) for residential generators, stressing that “the prices will be maintained for this segment that provides direct services to citizens [...] Prices variables in the global oil market push the government oil sector to equalize prices between local and abroad to limit smuggling operations” Iraqi News Agency, [Oil Products Distribution Company \(OPDC\) denied any new increase in kerosene prices](#), April 2022
- 34 One recorded incident affected community livelihood sources in May 2021 was related to “hundreds of dunums of wheat fields were saved from fires at the peripheries of Al-Atheem sub-district, 60 kilometers to the north of Baqubah.” Al-Shafaq News, [Hundreds of dunums of wheat saved from fire, monitoring patrols to avoid recurrence](#), May 2021
- 35 “The PDS is Iraq’s biggest social safety net, providing food entitlements to almost the entire population in Iraq of 39 million people.” – WFP, [WFP supports Iraq in modernising its Public Distribution System](#), January 2019
- 36 Open Soq, [The city of Azim in Diyala province](#), May 2019
- 37 “In 1935 Bank of Agriculture and Industry was established. Bank of Agriculture and Industry has been providing financial services to Iraqi farms and agri-businesses for more than 80 years [...] Bank of Agriculture which provides loans and consulting to Iraqi farmers and Bank of Industry which helps to develop Iraqi industry. [...] In 1994 Bank of Agriculture stopped issuing loans to farmers due to economical changing and reviewing the bank policies, and limited its business to consulting, managing, and developing agriculture projects.” - Iraq Ministry of Finance, [Agricultural Cooperation Bank](#)
- 38 “The Iraqi state cannot afford to keep creating government jobs to appease its underemployed, ever-growing, and increasingly dissatisfied population [...]”: Institute for the Study of War (ISW), [IRAQ 2021–2022: A FORECAST](#), June 2021
- 39 “The Iraqi parliament approved the funding deficit law, entitling the government to borrow 12 trillion dinars (\$10 billion) from internal and external parties in an effort to pay state employees who have seen their salaries delayed for nearly two months. The loan value decreased from 41 trillion dinars (\$34 billion) to 12 trillion dinars under the new law.” - Al monitor, [Iraq increases deficit to pay salaries](#), November 2020
- 40 “Iraq’s revenues currently amount to approximately 4 trillion Iraqi dinars per month, while we need 7 trillion to cover expenses and salaries [...] In light of this crisis, Iraqi employees faced severe financial hardship after the payment of salaries has been delayed for two consecutive months, despite Parliament’s announcement at the beginning of November 2020 that the salaries of employees for the coming months would be available. In early November 2020, a source in the Ministry of Finance announced the suspension of salaries for all employees and self-financing companies, which are supposed to be financially independent according to the Companies Law.” - Emirates Policy Center, [Crisis of Salaries in Iraq and its Political Consequences](#), December 2020
- 41 Returnee, IDP in the community, community leaders, and SME KIs (30 out of 40 KIs) were consulted for this section. Other less reported livelihood sectors available in the sub-district at the time of data collection were public healthcare (4 KIs), transportation (3 KIs), and the oil industry (1 KI).
- 42 Agriculture works also reportedly included livestock raising and animal breeding.
- 43 Referring to the official police and the Iraqi Security Forces under the Iraqi Ministry of Defence.
- 44 KIs also reported that other sectors showed the potential to expand such as public administration and defence under the MOI (1 KI), public education (1 KI), and public health (1 KI).
- 45 When the KIs were asked to compare which types of jobs were available in the sub-district before 2014 and at the time of the data collection, the availability had reportedly decreased. The KIs were asked to recall the period before 2014 and the perceived difference was understood keeping this in mind. In addition, the seasonality aspect of the situation at the time of data collection might have had an impact on the perceived availability.
- 46 The findings of this section represent the perceptions of a relatively small group of respondents and therefore are not representative and may differ from other reporting on these topics. Additionally, differences in reporting compared to other metrics could also be due to the methodology, with people being less open to sharing sensitive information over the phone.
- 47 It should be noted that gender indicators can be subject to potential under-reporting due to the limited number of female KIs interviewed. In addition, there might be a stigma around reporting on safety for men and boys.
- 48 “Customary law” refers to “Law consisting of customs that are accepted as legal requirements or obligatory rules of conduct; practices and beliefs that are so vital and intrinsic a part of a social and economic system that they are treated as if they were laws.” – UN Environmental Programme, [Customary law definition](#), 2007
- 49 “Formal security forces” refers to the Iraqi security forces and all its components. “There are three principal components of the Iraqi Security Forces: the Iraqi Army (IA), the Iraqi Police (IP), and the National Police (NP). The Iraqi Army and the National Police are both national-level assets, with the IA under the command of the Ministry of Defense and the NP under the command of the Interior respectively.” – Institute for the study of war, [Iraqi security forces](#)
- 50 “Poetry has long dominated the cultural landscape of modern Iraq, simultaneously representing the literary pinnacle of high culture and giving voice to the popular discourses of mass culture.” - Kevin M. Jones, [The dangers of poetry](#), 2020
- 51 “Iraq is home to prized art and literature which have always thrived in Iraq. The nation of Iraq produced greatest Arab poets of all time” – Embassy of the Republic of Iraq in Washington DC, [About Iraq](#)