Services and Infrastructure in Return Areas (SIRA): Shirqat Town and East Bank November 2018



Introduction

Shirqat is a district in northern Salah al-Din predominantly inhabited by Sunni Arab populations. The largest urban settlement in the district is Shirqat town, on the west bank of the river Tigris, with both banks of the river populated by urban settlements. The east bank of Shirqat is a collection of large and small villages that together form a generally continuously populated area.

On 10 June 2014, the so-called Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) took control over Shirqat, leading to the displacement of most of the approximate 210,000 residents. The Government of Iraq (Gol) declared Shirqat town on the west bank retaken on 23 September 2016, with ISIL members subsequently fleeing across the Tigris and occupying the east bank, in turn retaken a year later. As of October 2018, approximately 123,000 Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) have returned to Shirqat, although many still remain displaced across Iraq.³

Patterns of displacement and return to Shirqat reflect a broader trend across Iraq. Nationally, towards the end of 2018 the number of IDPs returning to their area of origin (AoO) began to slow down, with still approximately 1.87 million IDPs across the country as of October 2018.³ This trend has highlighted the need to explore barriers to return related to a lack of services and infrastructure; as well as the requisite conditions for safe and voluntary returns to guide the implementation of rehabilitation and reconstruction activities in areas of return. In order to fill these information gaps, REACH, in support of the Camp Coordination and Camp Management (CCCM) cluster, conducted an assessment of Services and Infrastructure in Return Areas (SIRA).

Shirqat district was selected due to operational information gaps being identified with regard to services and infrastructure, and the REACH-CCCM August 2008 Intentions Assessment identifying that only 5% of IDP households from Shirqat intended to return in the 12 months following data collection.⁴

This assessment focuses on the settlements located on the east bank of the Tigris river, due to the more recent retaking of land from ISIL, and preliminary desk research identifying major information gaps with regard to services and infrastructure. Shirqat town was also included in this assessment, due to its importance as a service hub for the residents of east Shirqat, and the wider Shirqat district.

Methodology

REACH conducted data collection for this assessment between 21 October and 22 November 2018. Data collection coverage was divided into two zones; settlements along the east bank of the river, and Shirqat town on the west bank of the river. In both areas, there was limited pre-existing information concerning defined neighbourhood or municipal boundaries. As such, areas for assessment and analysis were decided through triangulating multiple sources of data, and will be referred to as data collection units (DCUs). On the east bank, 14 DCUs were included, using neighbourhood boundaries originally provided by Terre des Hommes (TDH); a further four DCUs were covered in Shirqat town. Data was collected at the DCU level.

The first stage of data collection included key informant interviews (KIIs) with 28 community leaders, with at least one from each DCU. An additional 2 KIIs were done with community leaders in the more rural and isolated areas further from the river, in the villages of Barri Wadi Al Cheouk and Al Sura villages in east Shirqat. This was done to develop an understanding of conditions outside more populated areas, and as such these two villages are not analysed at the DCU level.

Information from community leader KIIs was complemented by KIIs with 24 subject matter experts (SMEs).⁵ These findings were analysed in order to build a snapshot of access to services at the local level relative to the status and capacity of facilities and infrastructure. This was further supplemented by participatory mapping in each DCU. To better understand community perception of services, an additional 28 community group discussions (CGDs) were conducted in 14 locations, with one male and one female CGD done in each location. CGDs were comprised of 5 to 10 participants, and were only conducted in 14 DCUs due to security access limitations.

As findings are based on qualitative data, they should be interpreted as indicative only, rather than generalizable to the municipality or neighbourhood level. In DCUs where KIIs were done with more than one community leader, results may differ. It is specified in the narrative when this is the case. Where possible, data is represented at the DCU level.

Shortly after data collection, severe flooding on 24 and 25 November caused large-scale damage to infrastructure and properties, disrupting transportation, water, and power supply in Shirqat district. This led to the evacuation of more than 5,000 residents of Shirqat district, and may have affected services and infrastructure in the assessed areas.

Key Findings

- Basic Services: During the ISIL occupation and subsequent conflict, there was significant structural damage to service and housing infrastructure. Although many houses are yet to be reconstructed or rehabilitated, the majority of water and electricity services have been restored to pre-ISIL levels of provision. This is supported by findings in the REACH-CCCM August Intentions findings, where 88% of IDP households from Shirqat reported some form of basic services being available in their AoO.⁴ Similarly, with the exception of the land registry office not reopening, legal services have also resumed to the same level as before ISIL but with an increase in the cost of issuing documentation.
- Livelihoods: A lack of livelihood and employment opportunities was consistently reported as a primary
 issue. Participants in all KIIs and CGDs reported that employment with the government and security
 forces had once been a major livelihoods source in the area, which had not returned. Additionally, many
 people who previously worked in agriculture have not been able to return to work due to a need for
 financial resources to invest in seeds and equipment, following conflict-related looting and damage.
- Markets: The cost of food and non-food items was perceived to have increased, due to the number of checkpoints and cross-border tariffs.

^{1.} Global Public Policy Institute (GPPI) Iraq after ISIL: Shirqat District (September 2017)

^{2.} Robust population data has been difficult to identify, and as such this should be considered an approximate figure.

^{3.} International Organization for Migration (IOM), Displacement Tracking Matrix (October 2018).

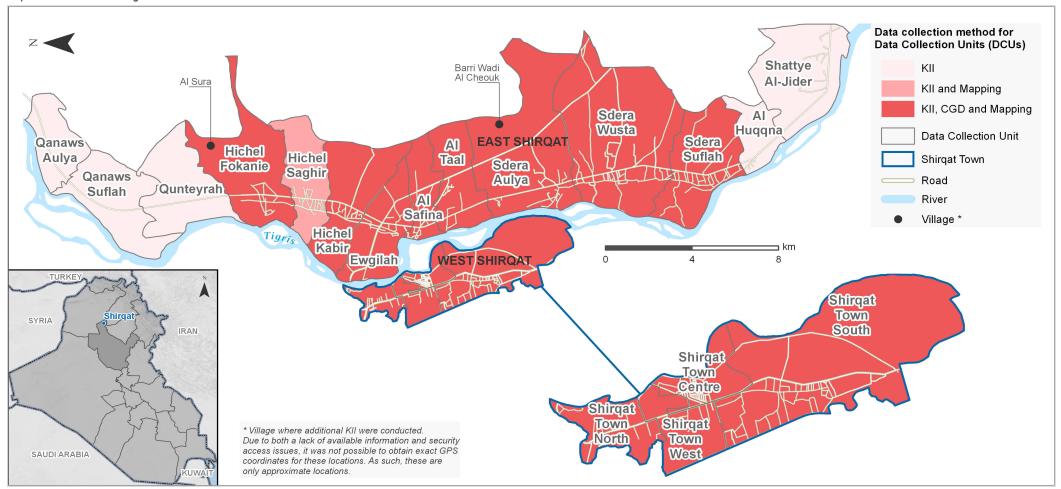
^{4.} REACH-CCCM Intentions Survey IDPs Area of Origin (August 2018).

^{5.} SMEs were individuals with expertise in service delivery for a specific sector, as well as extensive knowledge of the sector in the assessment area. These individuals ranged from, but were not exclusive to, municipal authorities, health workers, lawyers, engineers, teachers, and business people

Key Findings

- Healthcare: Access to healthcare was noted as a major issue. A combination of destruction and theft
 of medical equipment, a shortage of medical staff, and a lack of government funding, has reportedly
 led to a reduced capacity of public healthcare services. This has resulted in increased waiting hours,
 a lack of medication being publicly available, and a significant increase in the cost of public services.
 Accessing medication is particularly problematic, with patients reportedly having to purchase from
 private pharmacies whereas previously prescribed medication was free of charge.
- Education: Although access to education was not reported as a major issue, there are concerns over the cost and quality of services. A reported lack of public resources in all DCUs has led to overcrowded classes, a lack of teaching materials, and residents now employing community members to teach classes.
- Food: A reduction in the quality, quantity and frequency of Public Distribution Systems (PDS) was
 reported in all DCUs.⁶ In the context of increased healthcare, legal and education costs, rising food
 and non-food prices, and a decrease in livelihood opportunities, it provides an additional barrier to
 maintaining a sustainable livelihood.
- Differences in services and infrastructure: Access to services and livelihood opportunities are generally similar in both east and west Shirqat. However, community leaders interviewed in the most northern and southern parts of east Shirqat, as well as in particularly isolated villages, reported a higher number of shelter, protection and service concerns.

Map 1: Assessment coverage²





冷 Returns and IDPs

 The rate of returns to Shirqat district has partially declined through 2018 compared to the high rate of returns that followed the retaking of the west, and subsequently east, sides of the district. According to findings from the REACH-CCCM August round of Intentions surveys, of the households that remain displaced, only 5% intended to return.8

Figure 1: Top five reasons for not intending to return (among IDP households that did not intend to return):8

- Fear and trauma associated with AoO
- Lack of security forces in AoO
- Home damaged or destroyed in AoO
- Fear of discrimination in AoO
- No financial means to return



 As of October 2018 there were approximately 4,400 IDPs hosted in Shirgat, with 1,890 IDPs residing in Basateen Al Sheokh IDP Camp. According to a residency survey conducted by TDH in August 2018, the majority of the remaining IDPs were living in Shirgat town and the immediately surrounding area, with a minority living in small informal camps across the district.9 During CGDs, participants reported that IDPs in Shirgat came from within Salah al-Din and from neighbouring governorates, from districts such as Baiji, Mosul and Hawija.

Shelter

- Damage to shelter was reported in most areas, with more severe damage reported in the east of Shirqat. In Shirqat town, the areas with the most significant reported damage were in the east and south of the town. In east Shirqat, KIs in all DCUs stated that some houses were completely destroyed or partially damaged. Contrast in damage between villages was reportedly due to the more intense use of aerial bombardment in certain areas of east Shirgat during conflict. In both regions, police stations were targeted by ISIL, with all police stations in east Shirgat reportedly completely destroyed.
- Many damaged and destroyed houses still require reconstruction and rehabilitation. Contextually, the August REACH-CCCM Intentions survey found that 63% of all IDP households reporting some form of damage to their home in their AoO, and 34% of IDP households who do not intend to return cited damage to their homes as a reason not to return.8 This was found to be a greater issue in east Shirgat, where more structure damage was reported; additionally, it was noted that the more recent post-conflict reconstruction had first focused on repairing damage to service infrastructure.
- In some areas, individuals with financial resources had attempted to repair damage (community leader KIIs in 11 out 18 DCUs), with the reported cost for shelter repairs being between 500,000 IQD to 20,000,000 IQD (420 to 16,780 USD), and the cost for rebuilding a home being between 40 and 60 million IQD (33,550 to 50,330 USD).10

■ Waste Management

- It was reported that there was no formal municipal waste collection service in east Shirgat. All community leaders reported insufficiency of services for addressing solid waste removal needs in their area. In some villages there is an informal waste collection system, where residents with appropriate vehicles collect the waste of neighbours and take it to designated areas along the river-bed or in the surrounding hills. However, with many vehicles destroyed or stolen during ISIL occupation, this service has a comparatively reduced capacity.
- Municipal waste collection services in Shirgat town have been adversely affected by ISIL occupation. Before the occupation of ISIL, waste collection was regular and free of charge. During the ISIL occupation many trucks and compactors were reportedly destroyed leading to a reduced capacity. Additionally, a perceived lack of municipality funding has led to complications in staff employment, leading to a reduction in staff, and residents now paying 1,000 IQD (0.85 USD) per collection to financially support employees.¹⁰ The frequency of municipal waste collection is irregular, and differs per neighbourhood, with waste collected from the main streets daily, but weekly from narrow and less central streets, or sometimes not at all. This has led to the increased build-up of solid waste in urban areas, with 5 out of 7 community leaders interviewed in Shirgat town reporting that there are areas where solid waste is accumulating in open areas.
- Most community leaders (28 out of 30) reported that households are disposing of waste themselves. This usually involves taking rubbish outside the village and either dumping it indiscriminately, or in a collectively designated area. 17 out of 28 CGDs reported that residents burnt their waste, leading to breathing problems.

* Electricity

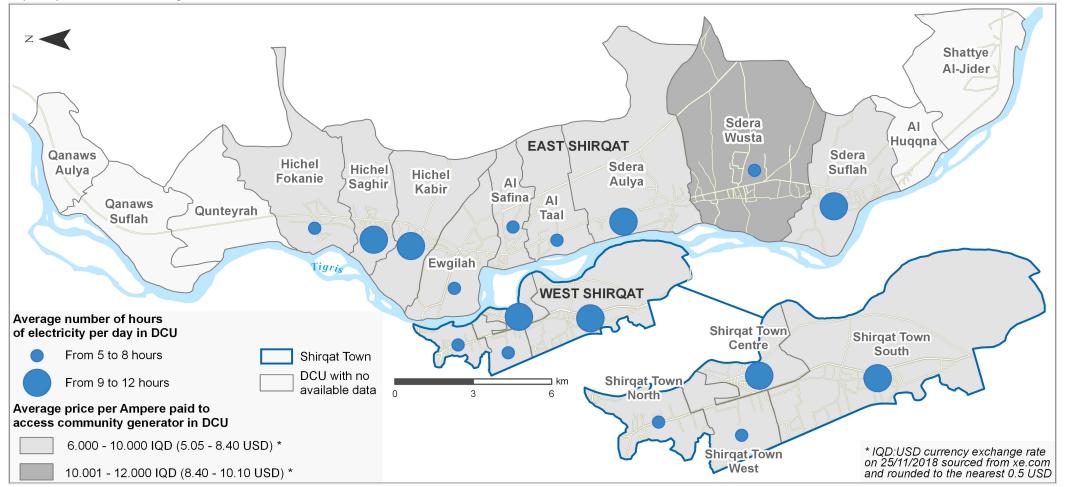
- The majority of residents had access to electricity from the public grid. However, infrequent availability and low voltage electricity were regularly cited as concerns. The number of hours per day that public electricity was reportedly available varied between 2 to 16 hours. In Shirgat town this was reported as 12 hours by all community leaders. However, on the East side this varied, with Sdera Suflah, Sdera Wusta, Qunteyrah, Hichel Fokanie and Shattye Al Jider DCUs all reported having less than 7 of hours of public electricity per day. Households reportedly pay between 6,000 and 12,000 IQD (5.05 to 10.10 USD) per month to access public electricity, depending on the amount used. 10
- Most villages and neighbourhoods had access to communal generators. Generators are used between 0 and 12 hours per day, depending on the availability of the public grid, with households reported to pay between 7,000 and 15,000 (5.90 to 12.60 USD) IQD per Ampere. 10 According to one SME KI, the cost of using communal generators had increased slightly compared to pre-ISIL levels, as there is no longer fuel provision support from the government. Community leaders in Qanaws Aulyah, Qanaws Suflah, Qunteyrah, and Al Taal DCUs, and Barri Wadi Al Cheouk and Al Sura villages, stated that their villages had no access to communal generators.



* Electricity

- Community leader KIIs in 15 out of 18 DCUs reported that the provision of electricity was either
 worse or the same as pre-ISIL levels. During the occupation of ISIL and subsequent conflict, several
 power lines were damaged and transformers and generators were either stolen or destroyed. In many
 areas, this infrastructure has been repaired and replaced through a combination of government and
 collective support. Contrastingly, community leaders in Qanaws Aulya, Shattaye Al Jider and Al Huqna
 DCUs stated that damaged infrastructure had still yet to be repaired.
- However, it was consistently reported that the power, distribution, and frequency of electricity
 was already poor before the occupation of ISIL. Pre-ISIL, much of the infrastructure was already
 falling into disrepair and in need of maintenance. Additionally, the electricity network regularly
- malfunctioned in poor weather conditions, with three community leaders reporting that at the time of data collection their neighbourhood had had no electricity for several days due to inclement weather.
- The lack of electricity reportedly impeded the provision of several services in the area. Insufficiency of electricity had been a barrier for the provision of water services and consequently it had been challenging for farmers to farm their land properly.

Map 2: Reported access to electricity

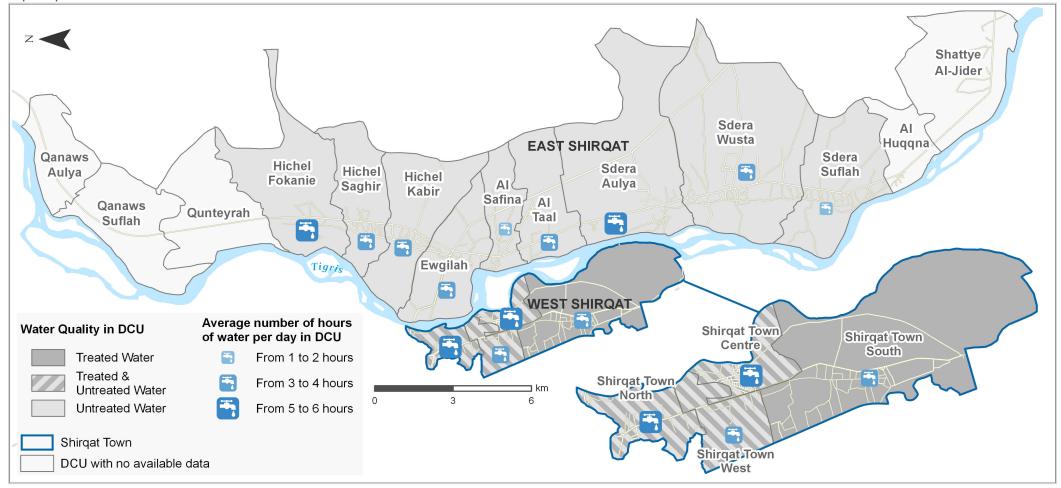




Water

- All assessed areas reportedly had access to piped water, despite only 18 out of 30 community leaders reporting that water provisions were sufficient to meet the needs of the population. The number of hours piped water was reported to be available varied from 2 to 12 hours per day, which was partly dependent on the availability of electricity. Costs ranged from 2,000 to 5,000 IQD (1.70 to 4.20 USD) per month.¹¹ Water provision was generally reported to be the same as before ISIL occupation.
- During the recent conflict, water project and water network infrastructure were heavily damaged, and pipes, pumps, water towers and treatment plants all adversely affected. The water projects in Sdera Suflah and Qanaws Aulyah had both been heavily damaged by aerial bombardment. Although much of the infrastructure had been rehabilitated to provide a minimum level of service provision, both
- community leaders and experts reported the need to repair and renew the water network infrastructure, and increase the capacity of current water projects.
- All residents reportedly relied on obtaining drinking water from water projects that pump water from the adjacent River Tigris. Only residents in the south and centre of Shirqat town were reportedly provided with treated water from Al Amlaq water project, although there were still perceived issues with the quality. Experts stated that the current treatment capacity was far worse than before, and that only a small proportion of the wealthier residents were able to use water filter systems at home. All water experts reported incidents of residents falling ill from drinking the untreated water, with illnesses including kidney problems, cholera, vomiting, stomach pain and blood in urine.

Map 3: Reported access to water

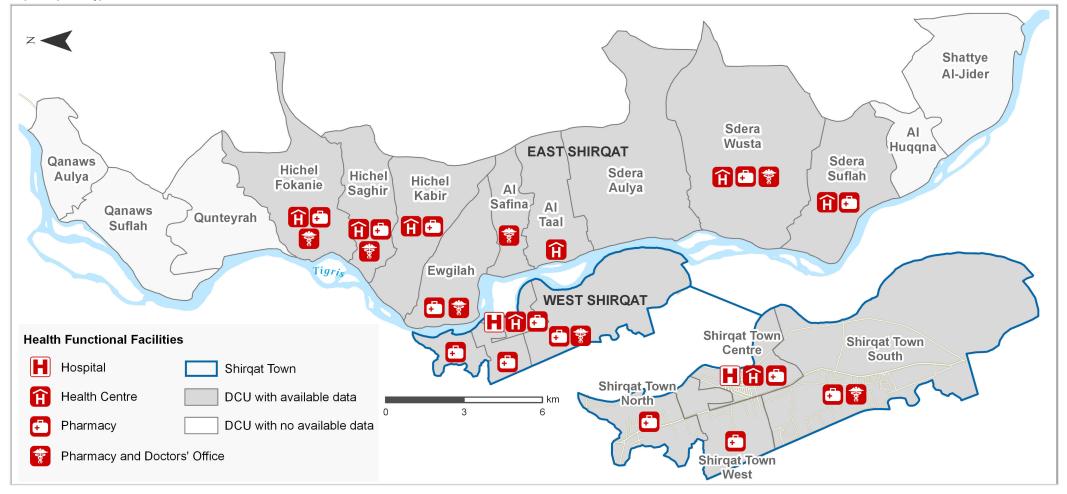




' Health

- All residents reportedly used Shirqat Hospital in Shirqat town east to access maternity and emergency services, as well as basic diagnostic and surgical procedures. For more complicated surgical procedures and healthcare for cancer treatment, dialysis or other chronic health issues, patients had to travel to Tikrit, Erbil or Mosul. Participants in all 28 CGDs reported that the cost of travel presented a considerable barrier to accessing healthcare.
- During ISIL occupation many pieces of key medical equipment were stolen in health facilities
 across Shirqat. Additionally, a reported lack of public resources had impacted the capacity of health
 facilities to provide adequate services. SME KIs reported facilities to be in need of x-ray machinery,
 surgical and diagnostic tools, beds and basic supplies such as bandages and needles. The number of
- medical staff had not returned to the same level as pre-ISIL. These factors had reportedly combined to create increased waiting times, an increase in people seeking healthcare outside of Shirqat, an increased use of private healthcare clinics, and a reduction in the quality of services. Furthermore, there has been an increase in the cost of surgical admission, maternity services and patient referral at public facilities.
- At the time of data collection, medicine that used to be publicly available was no longer being
 provided by the government, with all community leader Kls reporting shortages in critical drugs and
 medication in public health facilities. Residents were heavily reliant on private pharmacies to access critical
 medication, with public health facilities reportedly only providing antibiotics and pain relief medication. In
 CGDs, concerns were also raised over the cost and quality of medication purchased through pharmacies.

Map 4: Reported type of healthcare service

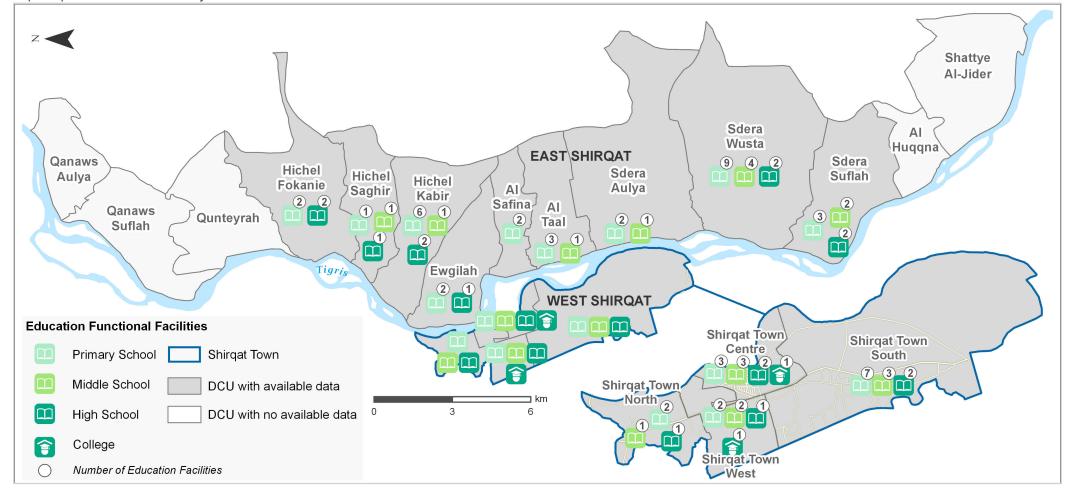




E Education

- In all DCUs it was reported that there was a functional school. However, non-functioning or partially built
 schools were also reported in 9 DCUs. Secondary school students, particularly those living on the East Side,
 were reported to commonly travel to neighbouring villages to access education. In 20 out of the 28 CGDs,
 this was reported as a financial and security barrier for students to access school, particularly in winter.
 Travel was reported as a barrier to education for both disabled and female secondary school students.
- Staff shortages were reported by all community leaders, due to many teachers having yet to return
 to Shirqat, and a reported lack of government initiative in finding replacements. To ensure that students
 were provided with teachers, parents made monthly tuition payments to members of the local area who
 acted as substitutes to government staff.
- Nearly all schools in the area reportedly had overcrowded classrooms, and lack key teaching materials. With the exception of Al Taal DCU, it was reported in all CGDs that students attended classes with 50 or more pupils. This was reportedly due to both a lack of teachers and classrooms, with many reports that enrollment rates had increased due to uncertainty over employment. It was frequently reported that students had to share desks, chairs, books, and stationary, and that much of the infrastructure had been stolen or destroyed during ISIL occupation. It was also stated that absent teaching materials previously purchased by the government, were now having to be purchased by parents. KI experts reported that the costs of tuition, materials and transport was putting increased financial pressure on families, with participants in 10 out of 28 CGDs stating that they were aware of some pupils not being able to attend school due to this reason.

Map 5: Reported educational facilities by DCU





Perceptions of Safety and Security

- Continued security concerns were reported in the district, particularly for residents in east Shirqat.
 Community leader KIIs in 9 out of 14 DCUs in east Shirqat, and both Barri Wadi Al Cheouk and Al Surah villages, stated safety as a concern, compared to 1 out of 4 in Shirqat town. The continued threat of ISIL was stated as the major reason for communities feeling unsafe, with continued skirmishes, targeted attacks on community leaders, and the planting of improvised explosive devices (IEDs); as seen by recent fatal incidents due to the detonation of an IED in Sdera Suflah and a car bomb in Shirqat town east. 12,13
- Restrictions of movement were also reported as a continued concern in Shirqat, with community leader KIs in 10 out of 14 DCUs in east Shirqat, and both AI Sura and Barri Waddi AI Cheouk villages, reporting restrictions to freedom of movement, compared to 1 out of 4 in Shirqat town. This was primarily due to the presence of ISIL at night, leading to imposed curfews, as well as concerns over land contaminated by explosive devices.
- Community leader KIs in 10 out of 18 DCUs reported the level of safety and freedom of movement to currently be better or the same as pre-ISIL. In the REACH-CCCM August 2018 intentions findings, 21% of IDP households reported security concerns in their AoO.¹⁴

⊞ Legal Services and Documentation

- It was reported that most disputes are resolved through informal mechanisms by community or
 tribal leaders, with formal court mechanisms and the police reserved for more serious breaches of civil
 conduct. One expert KI reported that high legal costs, long waiting times for police complaints to be
 filed, and lengthy court procedures, were all barriers to accessing the justice system.
- Participants in all CGDs reported being able to replace lost, stolen, destroyed or invalid documentation,
 with both the location and availability of these services reported to be the same as before ISIL occupation.
 However, certain households were reported to face access issues where security clearances could
 not be obtained. Households with less financial means, and women, particularly widows, were also
 highlighted as facing major barriers to accessing legal services and documentation.

Figure 2: Reported location where documentation is procured

District	Driving License	National ID Card*	Passport*	PDS Card	Birth / Death Certificate	Marriage Certificate	Property Documentation
Shirqat	-	-	-	Χ	Χ	Х	-
Tikrit	Х	Χ	Χ		-	-	
Baghdad		Χ	Χ				X

- It was reported that the cost of acquiring some documentation has risen, with the cost of a marriage certificate for example rising from 25,000 to 50,000 IQD (21.00 to 42.95 USD).¹⁵
- Although personal documentation was generally accessible, community leaders reported that the land registry office in Shirqat was still not functioning, limiting access to housing, land, and property rights. To obtain property ownership documents, residents reportedly have to travel to Baghdad.

Livelihoods

- A lack of employment and livelihood opportunities compared to the pre-ISIL situation, was reported as a major issue in Shirqat district, with all community leader KIIs in all DCUs stating that those who have a source of income find it insufficient, and that residents in all neighbourhoods face barriers in accessing employment. Increased use of coping mechanisms such as selling assets and borrowing money was reported by three out of four expert KIs. This was further supported by REACH-CCCM Intentions findings, where 72% of IDP households from Shirqat reported that there were a lack of livelihood opportunities in their AoO.¹⁴
- According to all community leader KIs, agriculture was previously a major livelihood source, particularly
 for those living on the East bank. However, a lack of adequate capital for initial investment, a lack of
 government support, and damage to infrastructure had reportedly caused a large reduction in the
 number of people working in agriculture. During the ISIL occupation, important heavy machinery
 was damaged, destroyed or stolen, with people also leaving their livestock behind when they fled the
 area. There were also reports of agricultural lands being contaminated with explosive devices, meaning
 people were unable to return to farming. Furthermore, shortages in availability of electricity had made
 it difficult to water farmlands regularly.
- A significant reduction in the number of jobs available in government and security sectors had led to many households losing their primary income source. The reduction in employment opportunities across Shirqat had led to an increase in the number of people looking for employment as daily workers. However, a weak local economy meant there were insufficient jobs in typical daily worker roles such as construction, hospitality and general labour. With many unemployed residents previously dependent on work in security and agriculture, it was reported that they face challenges in accessing employment due to a lack of appropriate skills.
- Due to the significance of agriculture as a source of livelihoods, REACH conducted additional analysis
 using satellite imagery. This was used to compare changes in vegetation health and density, and landuse, between 2014 and 2018. Please refer to Annex I for more information.





^{12.} IED Incidents Summary, Country Improvised Explosive Devices Centre of Excellence (C-IED COE), April 2018

^{13.} Car Bomb Detonates in Norhtern Tikrit, Kurdistan 24, (04/11/2018).

^{14.} REACH-CCCM Intentions Survey IDPs Area of Origin (August 2018)

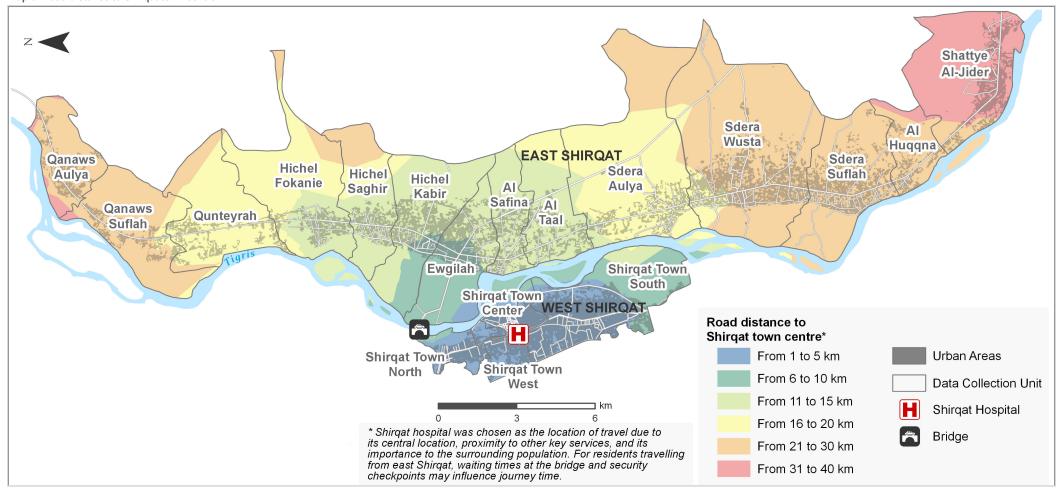
^{15.} IQD:USD exchange on 25/11/2018 from: xe.com. Three figure and larger numbers rounded to the nearest 10, two figure numbers and below to 0.5.

^{*} Depending on security clearance, it was reported that some residents may have to travel to Baghdad to access this documentation.

Food and Markets

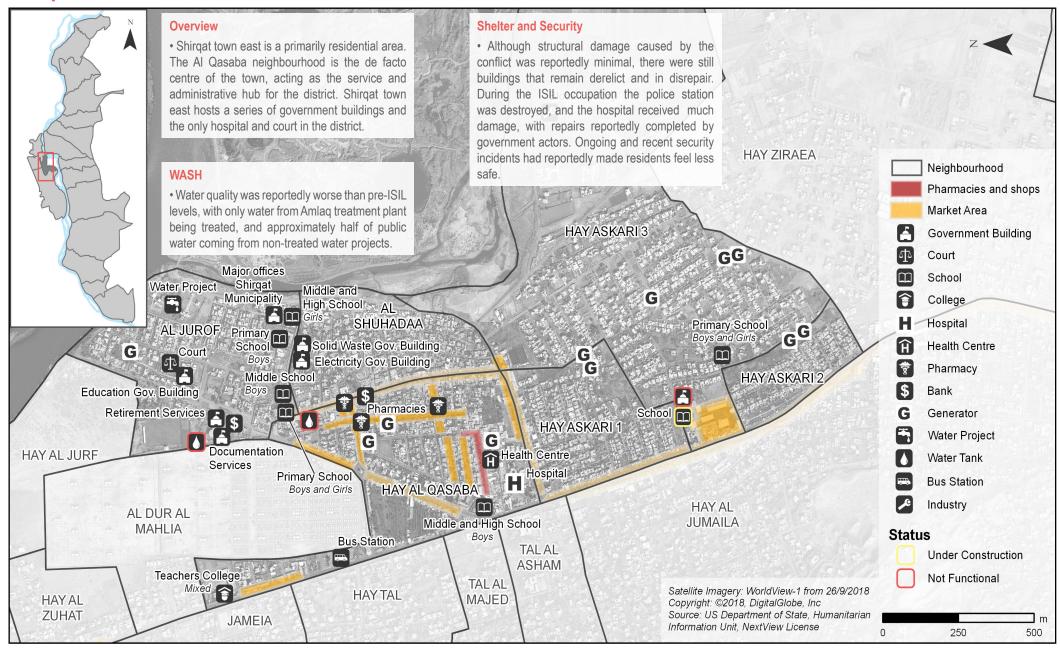
- Community leader KIs in 17 out of 18 DCUs stated that adequate quantities of basic food and non-food items were available in markets in their community. In smaller villages KIs reported that this was not the case, residents had to travel to neighbouring villages or to Shirqat town to purchase basic items. According to all SME KIs, nearly all shops in the assessed areas that closed during ISIL occupation had re-opened, with additional new shops also opening as an alternative livelihoods source for some.
- However, participants in 26 out of 28 CGDs reported that the price of market goods has increased in comparison to the pre-ISIL period. This was attributed to increased tariffs on imported goods and additional costs in transporting goods through check-points.
- In most DCUs there were complaints over the quality, quantity and frequency of PDS distributions.
 Although all community leaders reported that all households received PDS, there were frequent reports in CGDs that only sugar, flour, oil and rice were now provided, whereas pre-ISIL this included additional items. Additionally, whereas distributions were previously monthly, at the time of data collection they had become more sporadic, with the quality of food also reported to be lower.

Map 6: Road distance to Shirgat town centre



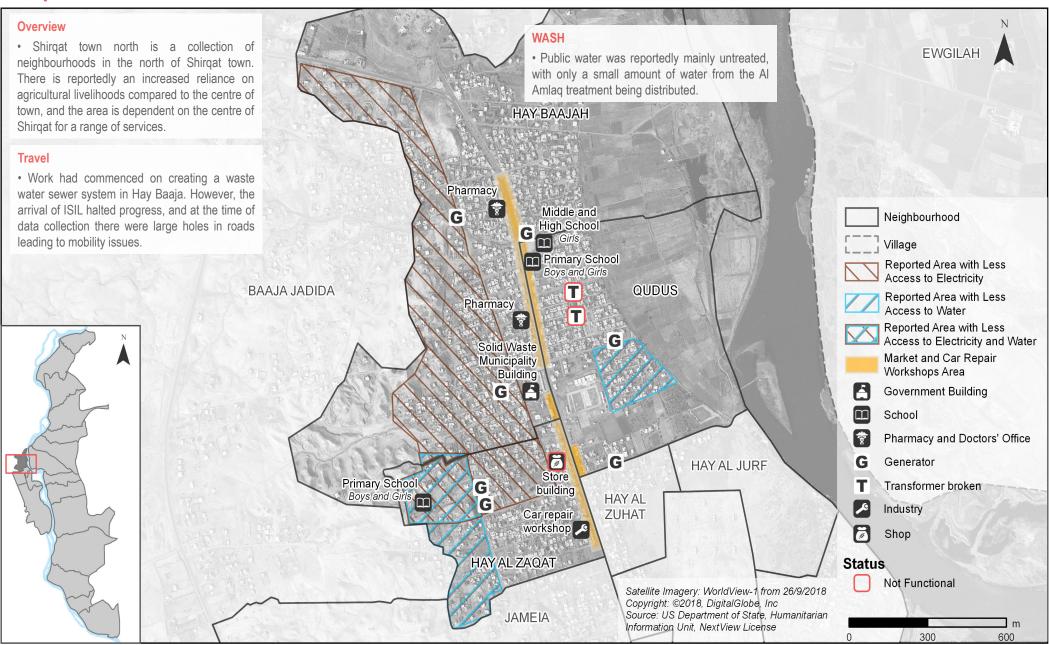


Neighbourhood Profile Shirqat Town East



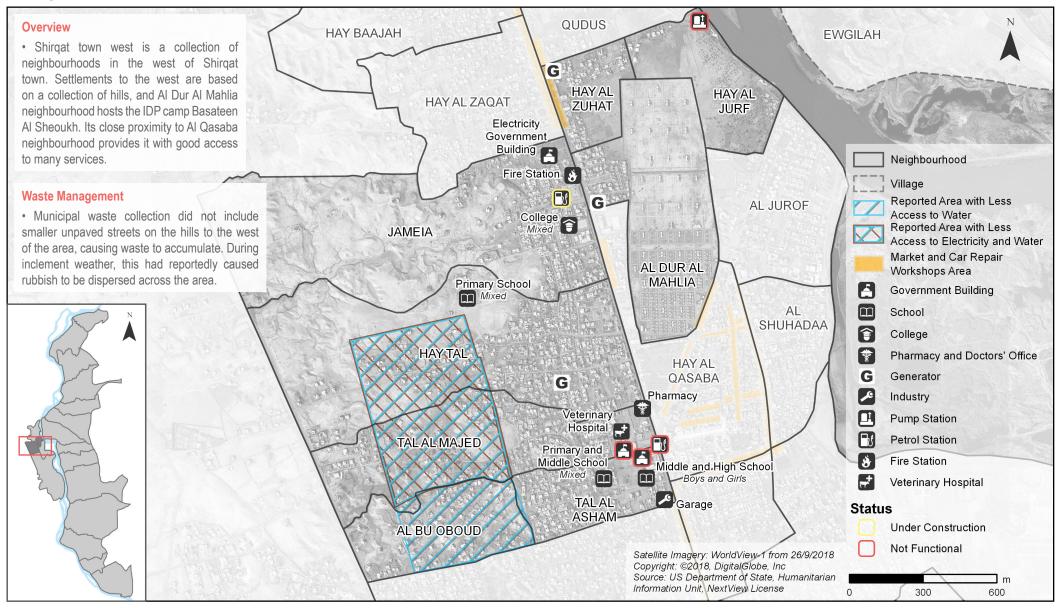


Neighbourhood Profile Shirqat Town North



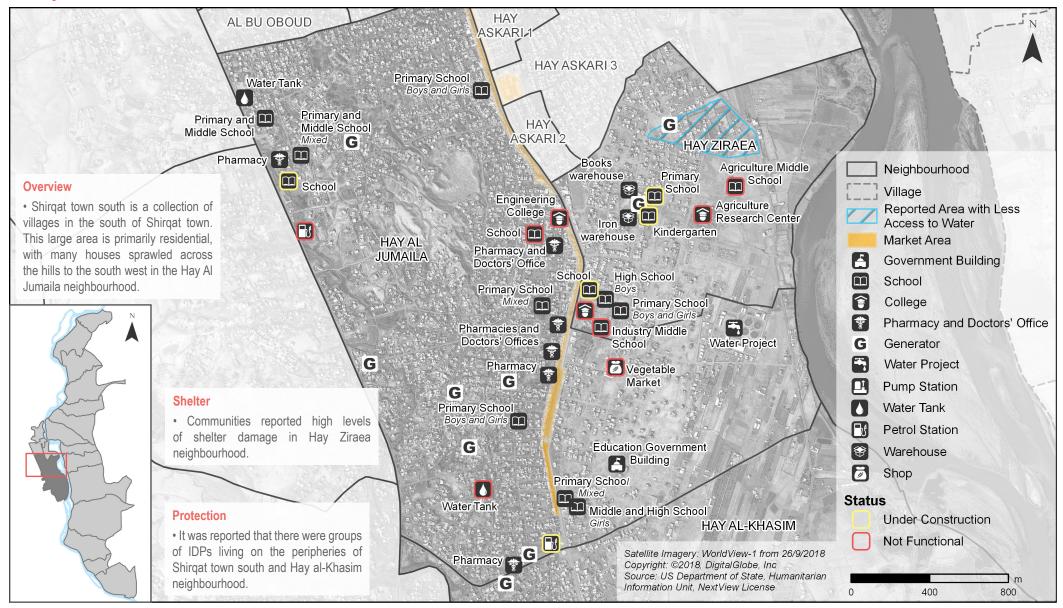


Neighbourhood Profile Shirqat Town West



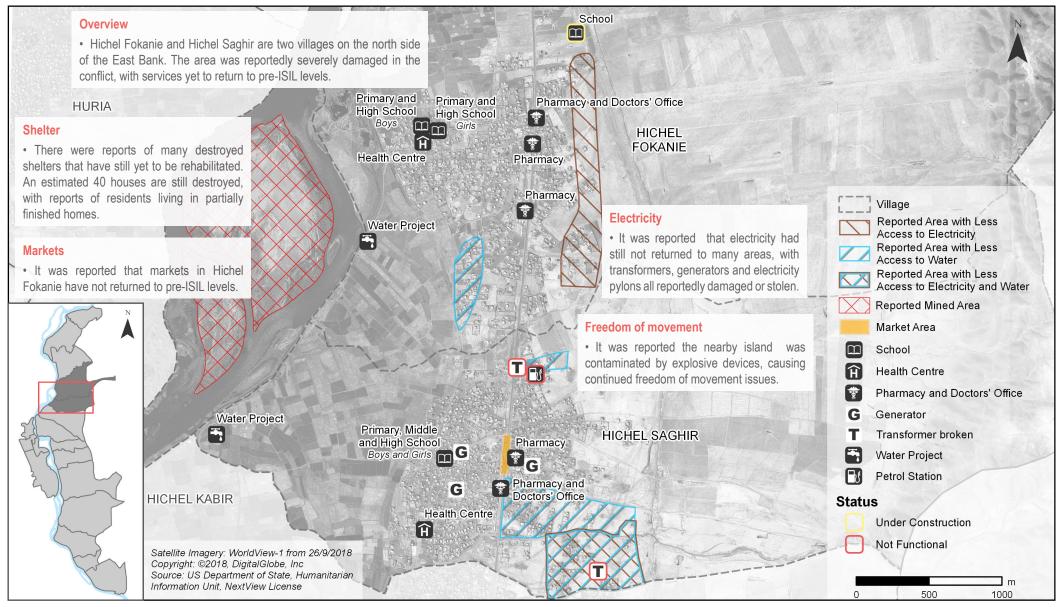


Neighbourhood Profile Shirqat Town South



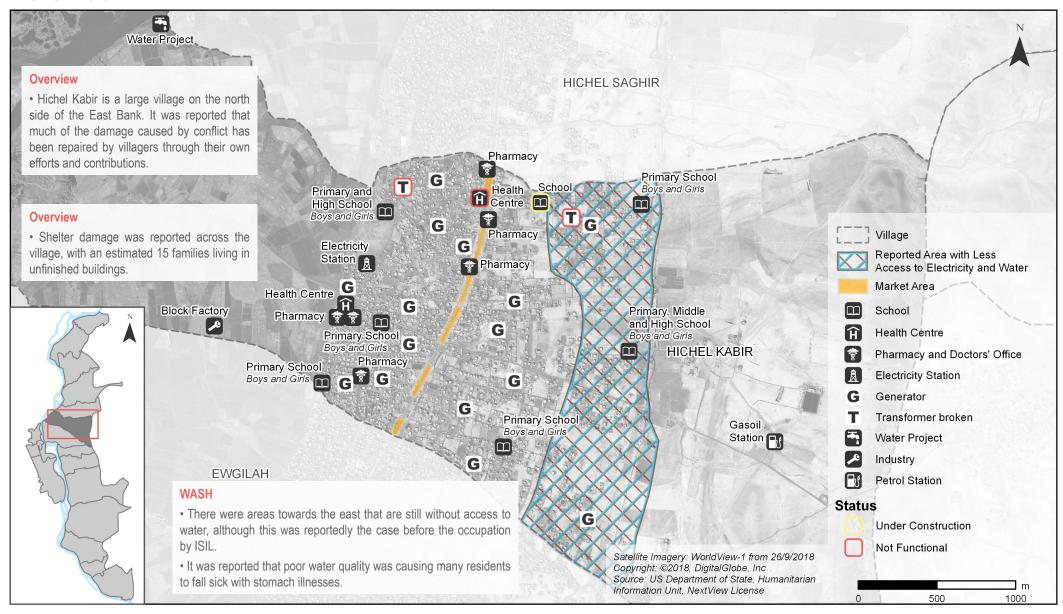


Neighbourhood Profile Hichel Fokanie and Hichel Saghir



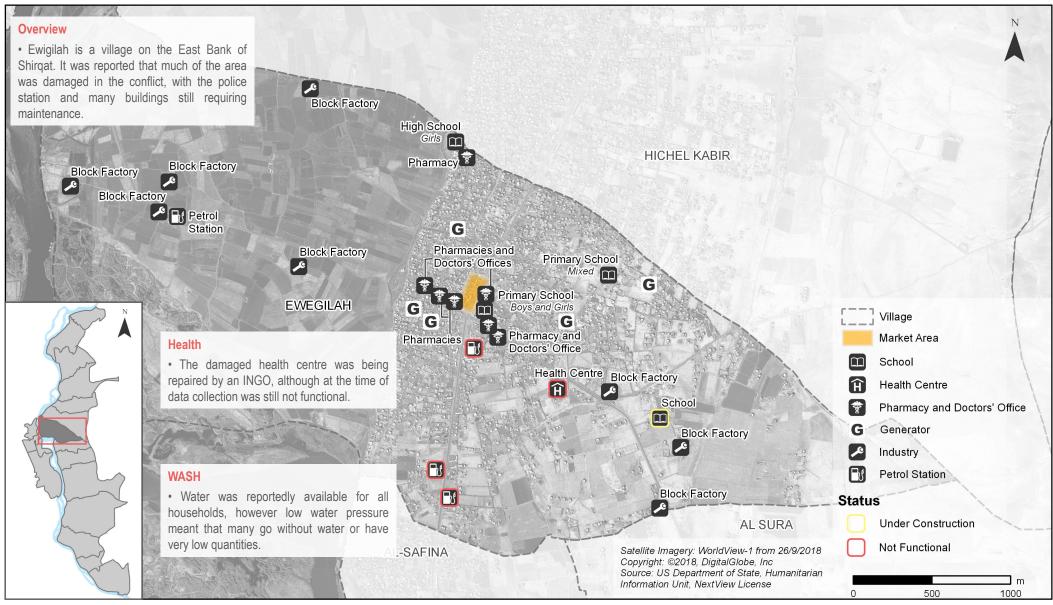


Neighbourhood Profile Hichel Kabir



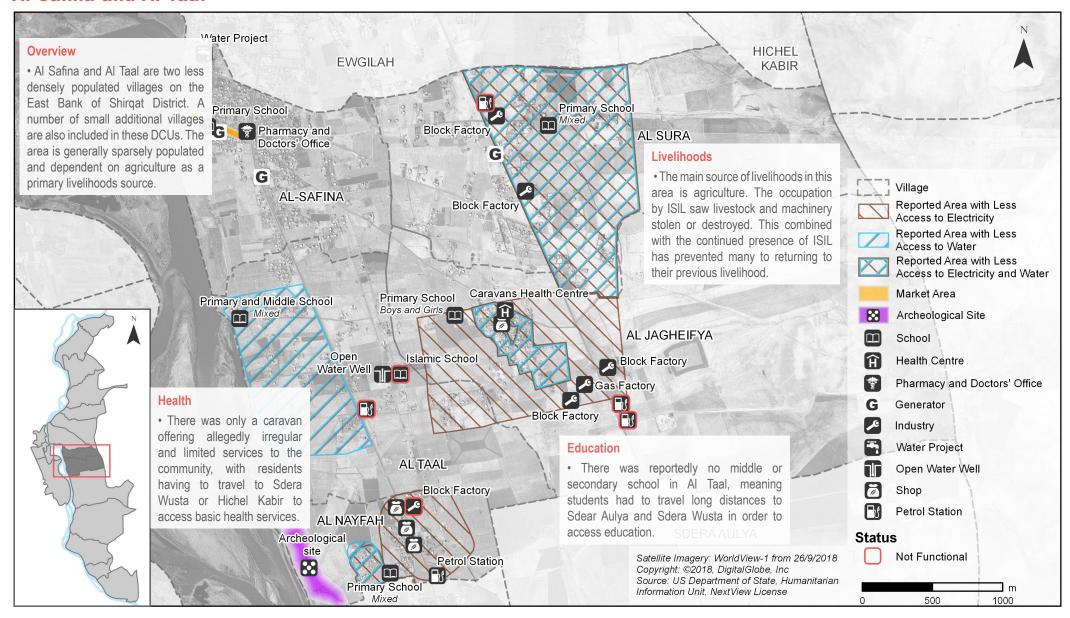


Neighbourhood Profile Ewigilah



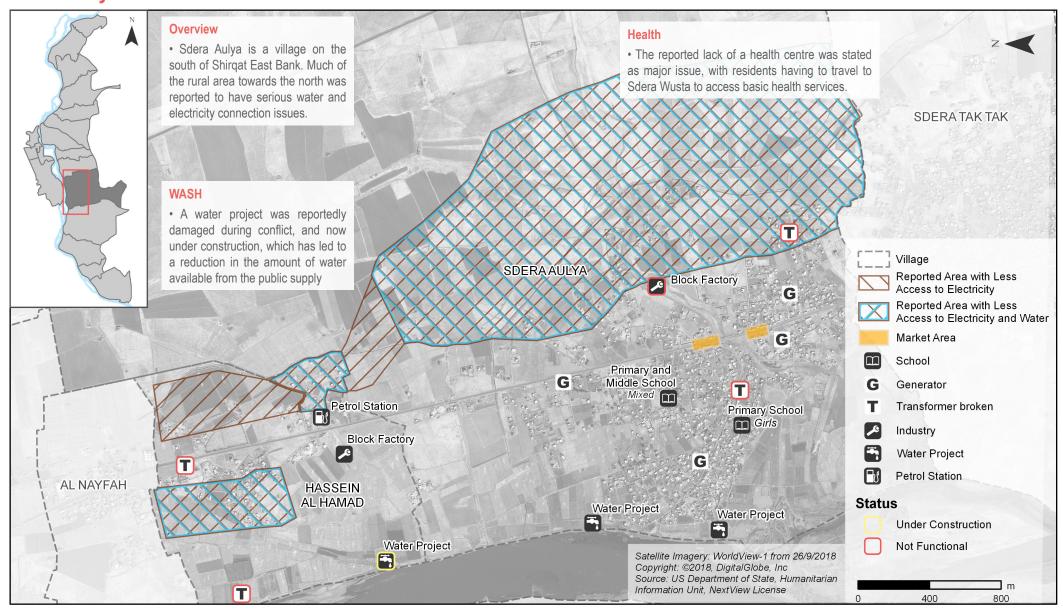


Neighbourhood Profile Al Safina and Al Taal



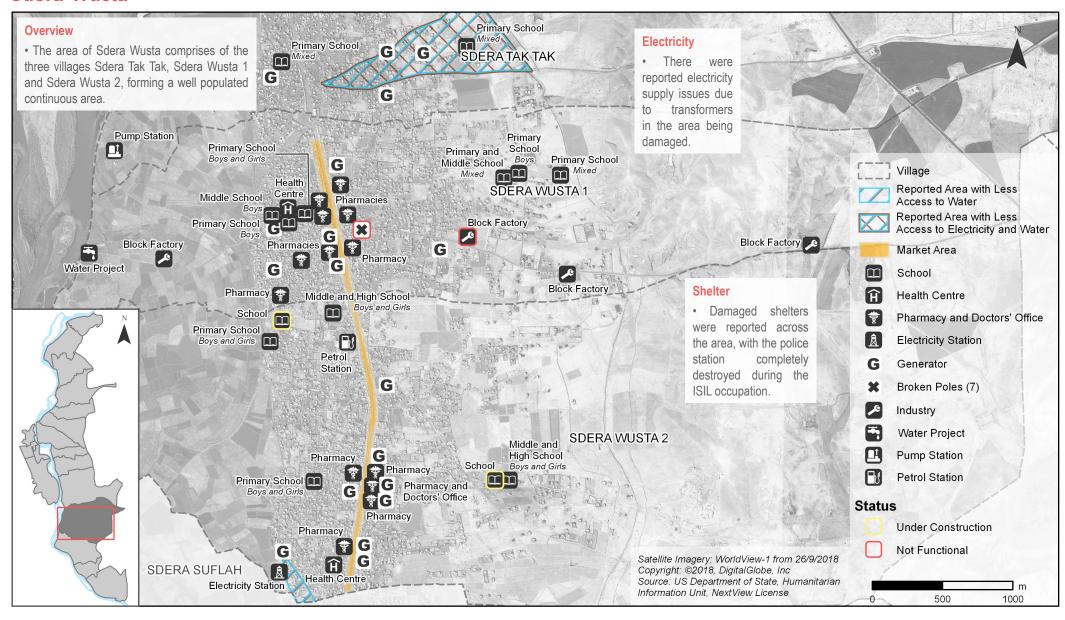


Neighbourhood Profile Sdera Aulya



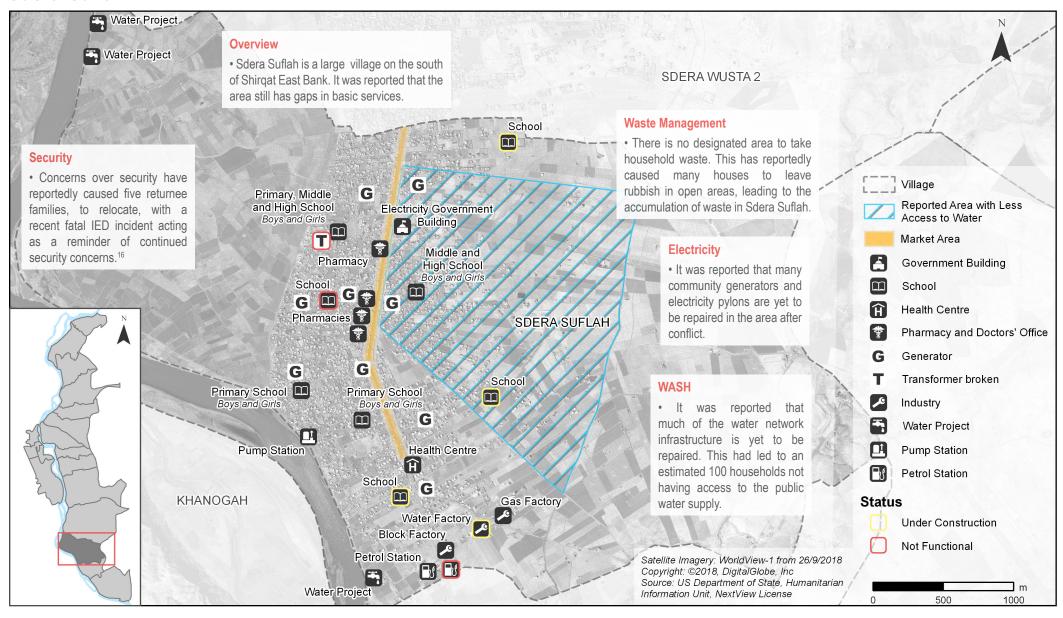


Neighbourhood Profile Sdera Wusta





Neighbourhood Profile Sdera Suflah





Annex I: SIRA Shirqat Town and East Bank, Map of Changes in Agricultural Land-use from 2014-2018

Due to the reported importance and decline of agriculture as a key livelihood source, REACH used satellite imagery to compare changes in agricultural output over the five previous harvesting seasons. As was to be expected, agricultural output was far higher on the fertile low-lying river bed in east Shirqat, with urban areas and land further away from the river, less productive. Agricultural output was

identified to have been higher before the arrival of ISIL, in comparison to the first post-ISIL harvest. Agricultural output and land-use remained at a similar level during the ISIL occupation. When drawing conclusions from this data is it important to also consider that external factors may have influenced changes in agricultural output, such as seasonal fluctuations in rainfall and changes in plant type.

