## RAPID ASSESSMENT ON RETURNS AND DURABLE SOLUTIONS

Al-Amerli Sub-district - Tooz Khurmato District - Salah Al-Din Governorate - Iraq

#### **Situation Overview**

In 2022, the number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) returning to their areas of origin (AoOs) or being re-displaced continued to rise, coupled with persisting challenges in relation to social cohesion, lack of services, infrastructure and - in some cases - security in AoOs.¹ The International Organization for Migration (IOM) Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM)'s returnee master list recorded over 4.97 million individuals returning to their AoOs across the country, as of September 2022.

Increased returns and secondary displacement were driven primarily by the closure, consolidation, and reclassification of IDP camps.<sup>2</sup> Between January and September 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.

#### Al-Amerli Sub-district

Al-Amerli is a sub-district of Tooz Khurmato District, located in Salah Al-Din Governorate, approximately 100 km from the Iranian border and about 170 kilometers north of Baghdad. The population in the sub-district is predominantly Shia Turkmen. It is the centre of a farming region, famous for the production of wheat and barley.<sup>4</sup> In June 2014, Al-Amerli came under the control of the so-called Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL).<sup>5</sup> The Iraqi forces and their allies liberated Al-Amerli from ISIL control in August 2014.<sup>6</sup> As of June 2022, the <u>IOM DTM Integrated Location Assessment (ILA) VII</u> suggested that households in all assessed villages in Al-Amerli (out of 16) were somewhat concerned or very concerned about further ISIL operations in the sub-district.

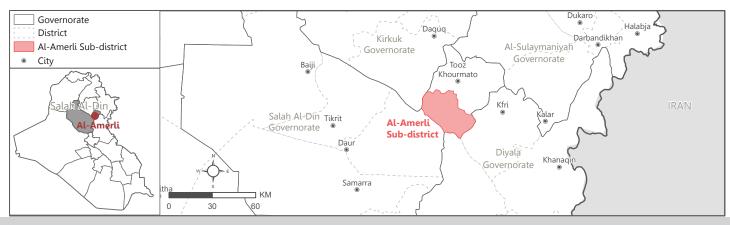
#### **\*\*\*\*** Reported Population Profile<sup>7</sup>

2,728-2,939 households\* were residing in Al-Amerli before the events of 2014.
57%-58% of households\* in Al-Amerli were displaced after 2014.

**24%-30% households\*** had returned to Al-Amerli at the time of data collection.

**IDP households\*** were displaced in Al-Amerli at the time of data collection.

## 🗣 Map 1. Coverage map



1-2

## Background and Methodology

A number of partners are currently tracking population movements and measuring progress towards durable solutions for displaced populations in Iraq.<sup>8</sup> For example, IOM has collected data on a bi-monthly basis, found in the <u>IOM DTM Returns Index</u>. 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-Amerli Sub-district to provide an in-depth profiling of needs and understanding of social relationships between remainee,<sup>9</sup> returnee,<sup>10</sup> and IDP populations.<sup>11</sup>

Al-Amerli Sub-district was selected for the assessment as: social cohesion and safety severity<sup>12</sup> was classified as 'high' or 'medium' in 16 villages out of 17 assessed,<sup>13</sup> and it was reportedly an area where evidence-based advocacy is the best approach to help in addressing the situation in the area. The findings are based on 30 key informant (KI) interviews conducted between 4 and 7 September 2022, combining qualitative and quantitative data collection methods adapted to the context. Data collection was conducted remotely by phone, which facilitated rapid access to information to be shared with implementing partners.

# Returnees (more than 3 months ago)<sup>14</sup> 8 KIs Community leaders<sup>16</sup> 8 KIs Subject matter experts (SMEs)<sup>17</sup> 6 KIs

\* Data reflects the lowest and highest estimates given by KIs.

30 KIs<sup>18</sup>





## **◯** Key findings

- Recent returns to Al-Amerli in the six months prior to data collection were not reported. Future returns may reportedly positively impact the agricultural sector, the reconstruction of the sub-district, and access to the public service sector in the sub-district.
- Additionally, a few KIs reported that **further returns** (in the six months following data collection) may reportedly have **negative impacts on the safety and security** perceptions and **access to job opportunities**.
- Damage to housing or need for housing rehabilitation in Al-Amerli were the most reported barriers for returns, the most commonly reported primary community need, and the most needed activity to encourage further returns to the sub-district. All KIs reported that households faced challenges in accessing housing rehabilitation in the sub-district.
- Reportedly, the majority of households in the sub-district resided in owned houses and had housing, land, and property (HLP) documents proving ownership. All IDP KIs from Al-Amerli (reportedly displaced in Markaz Tooz Khurmato and Markaz Kirkuk) reported that IDP households from the community did not have HLP documents to prove ownership of their houses in the sub-district.
- Families with alleged links to ISIL were commonly reported as being at higher risk of eviction compared to other vulnerable groups.<sup>19</sup>
- The **most challenging basic public service sector to access was reportedly water**. Access to piped water provision was reportedly not available in some neighbourhoods and villages due to the public water network needing rehabilitation.
- Agriculture was the most frequently reported sector with the highest growth potential in Al-Amerli for the 12 months following data collection. It was also reported to be the most available type of livelihood activity in the sub-district and the sector of most interest to work in, for returnees and IDPs, at the time of data collection.
- Agriculture was reported to be negatively affected at the time of data collection. This was mainly due to reported challenges for land irrigation and a lack of government support and compensation to farmers.
- Formal security forces<sup>20</sup> were reportedly the most effective body at resolving disputes within the sub-district and between the sub-district and other areas.
- All IDP KIs from the community reported that the majority of IDP households from Al-Amerli may feel welcome or very welcome and accepted if they return to Al-Amerli. All IDP KIs from the community reported that these households did not feel integrated in their AoDs.
- All IDP KIs from Al-Amerli reported that the majority of **IDP households from the community interacted with all population groups** (including remainees, returnees, and IDPs from/in the community) in the sub-district, mainly **through family and social bonds** and **work relationships**.
- All returnee KIs reported that the majority of returnee households felt welcome or very welcome in their AoOs in the subdistrict. The majority of returnee KIs reported that most returnee households felt re-integrated in their AoOs in Al-Amerli.
- Perceptions about interaction between returnee households and other groups reportedly varied between returnee KIs. Three quarters of returnee KIs reported that **the majority of returnee households did not interact with other groups** in Al-Amerli.

Findings are based on the perceptions of the 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 <u>Terms of Reference (ToR)</u>.





## **₹** Expected return movements

All KIs were consulted for this section (30 KIs). All consulted KIs reported **no expected returns** in the six months following data collection.

#### **Reported impact of expected returns**

The vast majority of the KIs (29 out of 30 KIs) reported that further returns to the sub-district in the six months following data collection may have an impact on the community of Al-Amerli. One returnee KI preferred not to answer to answer about the impact these movements may have in the community.

#### **Expected positive impacts**

The vast majority of the KIs reporting potential impacts of further returns (26 KIs) also reported that these movements may have positive impacts in the community of Al-Amerli. Reportedly, these movements may mainly impact the agricultural sector (15 KIs), the reconstruction of the sub-district (14 KIs), and access to the public services (13 KIs).

#### Impact on the agricultural sector

Reportedly, the return of farmers to the area may ensure the revitalization of agricultural activity by reclaiming their lands (14 KIs). Additionally, the return of shepherds will promote farming production (3 KIs). According to a few KIs, further returns may encourage investment in agricultural lands and farming projects, which consequently may increase job opportunities in the agricultural sector (4 KIs). Additionally, one returnee KI reported that further returns may encourage the return of fishing-lake owners and consequently the lakes reopening as a source of income and food for households in Al-Amerli.

#### Impact on the reconstruction of the sub-district

According to 13 KIs, expected returns to the sub-district may lead to increased job opportunities within the construction sector, especially for housing rehabilitation projects. Furthermore, one community leader KI reported that the return of skilled construction workers may increase the quality of the reconstruction work in Al-Amerli.

#### Impact on the public sector and access to basic public services

Reportedly, the return of professionals including engineers, and education and medical staff may improve the quality of basic services provided to the community (11 KIs). A few KIs also reported that the local government may focus on the rehabilitation and restoration of the public electricity and water services with the return of additional households to the sub-district (2 KIs). KIs also reported believing that the local government may emphasize efforts to reconstruct damaged schools (2 KIs).

#### Impact on the trade and commerce sector

Reportedly, the return of shop and market owners may ensure the reopening of their businesses, which may increase the availability of jobs for community members (7 KIs). Reactivating the market in the sub-district, may reportedly revitalize trade and commerce activities (6 KIs).

#### Impact on safety and security perceptions

According to 10 KIs, an increase in the population of the sub-district may increase the likelihood of reports to formal security actors about potential security concerns involving ISIL movements. Consequently, this may lead to an increased capacity of security actors to respond to security concerns, therefore increasing the feelings of safety and security. A few KIs reported believing that an increase in the population of the sub-district may support fighting potential ISIL attacks (5 KIs). Additionally, KIs reported that repopulating the empty villages in Al-Amerli (especially these in the outskirts of the sub-district) may help avoid ISIL infiltrations in the sub-district (4 KIs).

"Empty houses and neighbourhoods give space to ISIS to infiltrate, or outsiders to come to the area, so when the whole villages surrounding Al-Amerli are occupied, they can report ISIS movement if noticed or fight back when they have sudden attacks."

– Returnee KI –

#### Impact on the industrial sector

KIs reported that the return of brick and ice factory owners may increase the availability of job opportunities and access to the labour market (5 KIs). Additionally, KIs reported believing that the return of skilled workers such as carpenters, blacksmiths, and craftsmen may have a positive impact on the quality of services in the industrial sector (4 KIs).

"Returning families have money or members with experiences that the region needs to return to normal life [referring to before 2014]."

- Returnee KI -

#### **Expected negative impacts**

A few KIs reporting potential impacts of further returns (3 out of 30 KIs) also reported that these movements may have negative impacts in the community of Al-Amerli.

#### Impact on the safety and security perceptions

According to two KIs, some IDP households had alleged links to ISIL, and these were not welcomed in the sub-district. These KIs also reported the presence of outstanding intercommunal disputes, and the return of this specific household profile may reportedly increase tensions with the host communities and retaliation incidents may occur.

"Returning to the sub-district's towns, villages, and cities where they [referring to households with alleged links to ISIL] used to reside before Iraq plunged into chaos in 2014 seemed more remote than ever. For many, returning home is complex, risky, and even dangerous. For others, it is impossible because they were involved with ISIL. Therefore, they are considered as a negative influence for other community members, and they are not accepted by the host community. They are not allowed by the host community to return to Al-Amerli, and if they tried to return it will create tensions that can escalate to an armed conflict."

- Returnee KI -





Expected Returns Impact, Family Separation, Barriers for Returns, and Primary Community Needs

"Difficult life and suffering, they [referring to households with alleged links to ISIL] cannot return to their homes for fear of revenge, so they asked for help from the Iraqi government. As a result, these families fear that they will be harmed by the relatives of those who were killed by ISIL. Some families are not welcome to return, so their return is very negative."

- Returnee KI -

#### Impact on access to job opportunities

According to one returnee KI, further returns may negatively affect access to job opportunities with increased competition for the limited available jobs.

## **\*\*\*** Family separation

All KIs were consulted for this section (30 KIs). The majority of consulted KIs (26 out of 30 KIs) reported no cases of family separation in the sub-district (21 KIs) or did not know about family separation (5 KIs).

However, four KIs reported that some household had members, mainly youth, who temporarily moved to other areas in Kirkuk, Tooz Khurmato, Khalis, Baquba, Karbala, Najaf, Baghdad, and Basra seeking jobs, which caused family separation.

## **%** Barriers for further returns

All KIs were consulted for this section (30 KIs). All KIs reported the presence of factors in AoOs which could block/delay further returns to the sub-district. Housing damage was the most reported barrier for returns, according to all KIs.

#### Reported barriers for further returns (out of 30 KIs)<sup>21</sup>

#### Access to housing and housing rehabilitation

Destroyed/damaged housing	30 KIs

#### Access to livelihoods and basic public services

-	
Limited availability of job opportunities	26 KIs
Limited access to basic public services	24 KIs
Limited access to medical treatment	4 KIs
Access to safety and security	

## Α

Fear of being perceived ISIL-affiliated	3 KIs	
Security concerns in AoOs	1 KI	ĺ

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

## Primary community needs

#### Most reported primary community needs in Al-Amerli at the time of data collection (out of 30 Kls)21,22

	First Need	Second Need	Third Need
Housing rehabilitation	22 Kls	3 KIs	1 KI
Water	4 KIs	13 KIs	2 KIs
Livelihoods	0 KIs	6 KIs	4 KIs
Electricity	1 KI	3 KIs	5 KIs
Education	2 KIs	2 KIs	4 KIs
Healthcare	0 KIs	1 KI	6 KIs
Waste collection, disposal, and management	1 KI	2 KIs	0 KIs

The most commonly reported primary community need was access to housing rehabilitation (26 out of 30 KIs). The majority of reporting KIs (22 KIs) also reported that access to housing rehabilitation was mainly affected by the high 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 5 for further details.

The second most commonly reported primary community need was access to water (19 out of 30 KIs). KIs also reported that access to water was mainly affected by the lack of rehabilitation of the water complex, which also needed to be expanded for higher storage capacity (14 KIs). See section on access to housing and housing rehabilitation on page 6.

The third most commonly reported primary community need was access to livelihoods (10 out of 30 KIs). Reportedly, the lack of job opportunities and the high unemployment rate among graduated youth (6 KIs) was affecting access to livelihoods. See section on access to livelihoods on pages 10 for further details.

#### Most commonly reported primary community needs per KI profile at the time of data collection<sup>21, 23</sup>

Community lead (out of 8 KIs)	ler KIs	SME KIs (out of 6 KIs)		IDP KIs from the (out of 8 KIs)	community	Returnee KIs (out of 8 KIs)	
Water	7 KIs	House rehab	6 KIs	House rehab	8 KIs	Education	4 KIs
House rehab	5 KIs	Electricity	3 KIs	Livelihoods	4 KIs	House rehab	4 KIs
Livelihoods	3 KIs	Livelihoods	2 KIs	Water	4 KIs	Waste disposal	3 KIs
Healthcare	2 KIs	Healthcare	2 KIs	Electricity	2 KIs	Water	3 KIs





Perceptions on Access to Durable Solutions Assistance and Basic Public Services

## Access to durable solutions assistance<sup>24</sup> and impact on returns

Returnee, community leader, and SME KIs were consulted for this section (22 out of 30 KIs). The vast majority of consulted KIs (21 KIs) reported that there were humanitarian and development activities or projects implemented in Al-Amerli in the six months prior to data collection. One SME KI reported that there were no activities implemented in the sub-district.

#### Most reported activities implemented in Al-Amerli in the six months prior to data collection (out of 21 Kls)<sup>21, 25</sup>

Infrastructure rehabilitation	13 KIs
Livelihoods	9 KIs
Cash assistance	8 KIs
Reconciliation and social cohesion	4 KIs
Sanitation	3 KIs
Housing rehabilitation	2 KIs

#### **Activities' implementers**

All consulted KIs reporting the implementation of activities in the sub-district (21 KIs) also reported that these activities or projects were implemented by humanitarian and durable solutions actors, followed by local authorities (14 KIs). KIs reported that local authorities were mainly involved in infrastructure rehabilitation projects (13 KIs) and cash assistance programmes (8 Kls).

#### Reported groups' participation<sup>26</sup> in activities

More than half of consulted KIs (17 KIs) reported that there were no groups less likely to be involved in activities or projects in the sub-district. However, five KIs reported that IDPs from the community were least likely to participate in these activities or projects.

Regarding vulnerable groups, 19 according to 16 KIs, all vulnerable groups had the same level of access to participate. However, several KIs reported believing that persons with disabilities (4 KIs) and older persons (2 KIs) were less involved in activities or projects compared to other vulnerable groups.

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

Returnee and IDP KIs from the community were consulted for this section (16 out of 30 KIs). Over two thirds of consulted KIs (11 out of 16 KIs) reported that the availability of durable solutions assistance would be a factor encouraging returns to Al-Amerli. Housing rehabilitation was reportedly the most needed activity or project to be implemented in the sub-district to encourage further returns (11 KIs).

The rest of the KIs reported that the availability of durable solutions assistance was not a factor encouraging returns to the sub-district (3 KIs) or did not know about factors enabling returns (2 KIs).



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

Returnee, community leader, and SME KIs were consulted for this section (22 out of 30 KIs). All consulted KIs reported that the majority of households in Al-Amerli resided in owned houses.

#### **Risk of eviction**

According to six KIs, households with alleged links to ISIL were more at **risk of eviction** than other vulnerable groups.<sup>19</sup>

#### Access to HLP documentation

All KIs reporting that households owned houses in the subdistrict (22 KIs) also reported that these households had HLP documents to prove housing ownership.

Regarding IDP households from the community, all IDP KIs (8 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 Markaz Kirkuk Subdistrict.

#### Access to housing rehabilitation

Returnee, community leader, and SME KIs were consulted for this section (22 out of 30 KIs).

60%-70%

of houses in Al-Amerli remained destroyed or damaged at the time of data collection, according to all consulted KIs.

#### Challenges to access housing rehabilitation

All KIs (30 KIs) reported that the majority of the households faced challenges in accessing housing rehabilitation in the subdistrict. KIs reported that access to housing rehabilitation was mainly affected by the limited access to financial resources (28 KIs), factors affecting construction and reconstruction works (25 KIs), and the lack of government compensation for housing rehabilitation (17 KIs).

#### Limited access to financial resources housing rehabilitation

According to 23 KIs, affected households did not have sufficient financial means to rehabilitate their damaged houses. Reportedly, most of the affected households were farmers who had low incomes and were the most financially vulnerable<sup>27</sup> (19 KIs). Additionally, the financial situation of other affected households had reportedly deteriorated due to the lack of job opportunities in the sub-district (16 KIs). One IDP KI from the community also reported that the majority of households in the sub-district did not have access to government salaries or pensions, and therefore had less stable income sources.<sup>28</sup>

#### Challenges for construction and reconstruction works

- High level of housing damage in the sub-district (22 KIs),
- Lack of reconstruction projects led by the local or central government and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to rehabilitate damaged houses in the sub-district (17 KIs),





#### Perceptions on Housing, Housing Rehabilitation, and Compensation Mechanisms

» High construction/reconstruction prices influenced by the high level of housing damage, inflated prices for construction materials (namely bricks, blocks, and cement) and their limited availability to the sub-district (2 KIs).

#### Lack of government compensation for housing rehabilitation

According to 17 KIs, compensation claims were not processed, or payments were not delivered to affected households even if claims were presented to relevant entities. One returnee KI reported believing that challenges in accessing government compensation mechanisms for housing rehabilitation were the result of the neglect by the local government of the sub-district affairs.

Additionally, a few KIs reported other factors affecting access to government compensation mechanisms (4 KIs). These reportedly included the:

- » Lack of awareness among affected households about government compensation mechanisms (4 KIs),
- » Perception that compensation processes are long and complex (4 KIs), and
- » Lack of legal assistance or representation provided to affected households to present their compensation claims (4 KIs).

#### Limited NGOs support for housing rehabilitation

A few KIs reported that NGOs' support with housing rehabilitation projects was not enough to cover the needs of the affected households in the sub-district (3 KIs). In addition, one returnee KI reported the lack of loans from NGOs for housing rehabilitation at the time of data collection.

# Strategies adopted by affected households to cope with the damage to their houses

Over three quarters of the KIs (23 out of 30 KIs) reported that most affected households decided to remain in displacement due to damage to their houses and their inability to rehabilitate them.

#### KI recommendations to enhance access to housing rehabilitation

All KIs (30 KIs) reported that some initiatives can be considered to enhance access to housing rehabilitation. These reportedly included:

- » Providing financial support to affected households for housing rehabilitation (30 KIs),
- » Establishing government monitoring mechanisms for compensation processes and ensuring affected households receive their transactions (17 KIs),
- » Launching reconstruction projects for housing rehabilitation led by the local government and/or NGOs (16 KIs), and
- » Providing legal support to affected households to prepare and present their compensation claims (1 KI).

## Perceptions on access to basic public services

All KIs (30 KIs) reported that the majority of households in the sub-district faced challenges in accessing basic public services. **Public water service** was reportedly **the most challenging** to access (28 out 30 KIs).

#### Reported affected basic public services (out of 30 KIs)<sup>22</sup>

Water	28 KIs	
Healthcare	26 KIs	
Education	18 KIs	
Electricity	18 KIs	
Waste disposal	9 KIs	

#### Challenges to access basic public services

All KIs (30 KIs) reported that the majority of households faced challenges in accessing basic public services in the sub-district. General challenges affecting households' access to basic public services were reportedly related to the high level of public infrastructure damage in the sub-district (26 out of 30 KIs). In addition, a few KIs reported that main and secondary roads needed rehabilitation to facilitate movements and access to services, especially in winter when roads become muddy and it is difficult for children to access schools (3 KIs). One returnee KI reported believing that the lack of NGOs providing basic services in the sub-district and the lack of budget allocation from the local government to the public services negatively affected households access to basic public services.

#### **Access to public water**

The majority of the KIs (25 out of 30 KIs) reported that most of the households faced challenges in accessing public water services in the sub-district. According to 18 KIs, access to water was not available for some neighbourhoods and villages due to the public water network needing rehabilitation and to be extended to other areas in the sub-district. KIs reported believing that the above-mentioned was related to the neglect by the local government of public services in the sub-district (17 KIs).

## Coping strategies adopted by households to enhance access to water

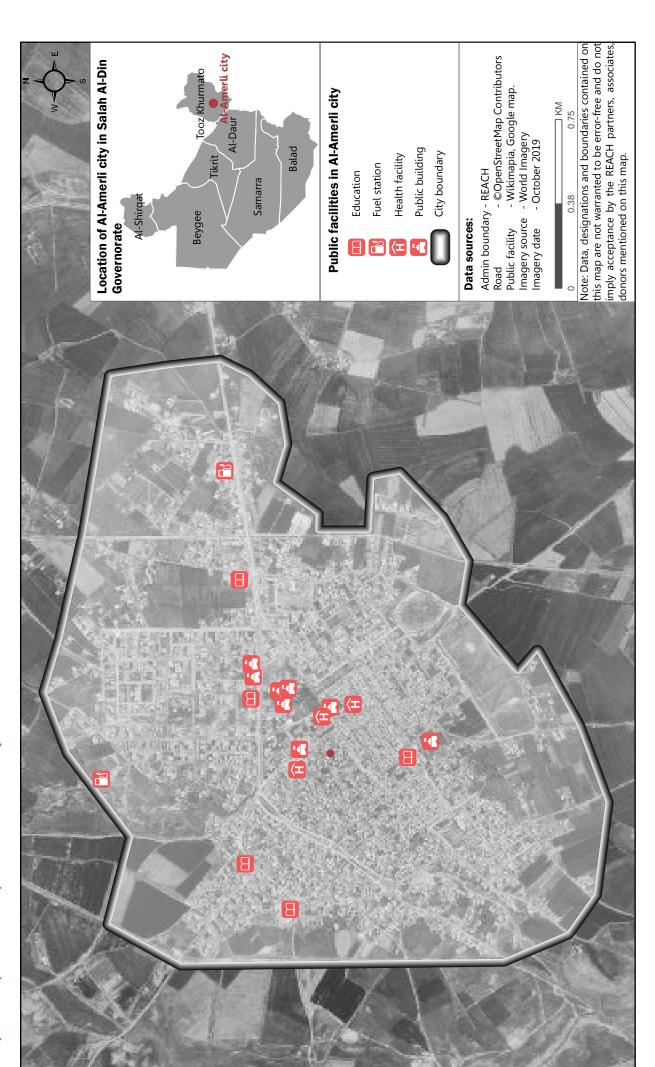
According to 17 Kls, households in the sub-district adopted different strategies to cope with the limited access to public water. These reportedly included some households:

- » Depending on water wells for domestic use only, since water from these sources was reportedly not suitable for drinking purpose (12 KIs),
- » Resorting to water trucking for domestic use, mainly transported from Markaz Tooz Khurmato (11 KIs), and
- » Purchasing bottled water for drinking purposes due to public water supplies being perceived as unsuitable for drinking purposes (9 KIs).

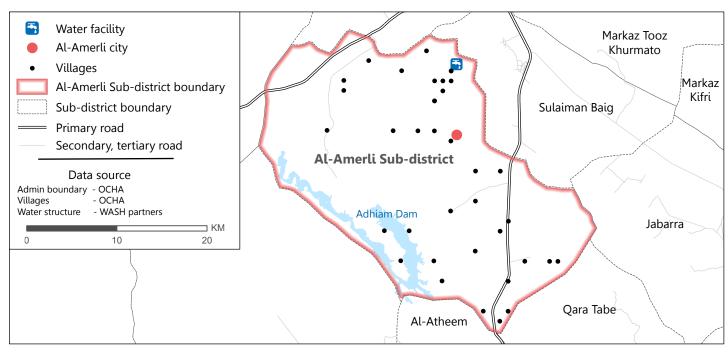
In addition, a few KIs reported that the lack of public water services negatively affected the decision of IDP households to return to their AoOs in the sub-district (3 KIs).







Map 3. Water facilities supplying Al-Amerli Sub-district



#### KI recommendations to enhance access to public water services

Almost three quarters of the KIs (22 out of 30 KIs) recommended to the local government and NGOs the:

- » Rehabilitation of the existing water complex and its expansion to increase its water storage capacity and cover the demand of the population in the sub-district (17 KIs),
- » Rehabilitation of the existing public water network and its expansion to facilitate access to all villages and neighbourhoods in the sub-district (12 KIs),
- » Replacement/maintenance of the existing water pumps and to install additional ones to increase the distribution capacity to cover the demand of the population in the sub-district (12 KIs),
- » Temporary water distribution to affected households in the sub-district (4 KIs), and
- » Rehabilitation of the existing water treatment plants and building new ones to ensure access to quality water at household level (3 KIs).

#### **Access to public healthcare**

The majority of the KIs (25 out of 30 KIs) reported that most of the households faced challenges in accessing public healthcare services in the sub-district. According to four KIs, the public healthcare sector was neglected by the local government. Conditions at the operating public healthcare centre (PHC) were reportedly the main factor affecting access to quality services (18 KIs).

#### **Conditions at operating PHC**

These reportedly included:

- » Operating PHCs needed rehabilitation due to damage from military operations (11 KIs),
- » Shortage of medical staff (including specialists) due to them continuing to live in displacement (9 Kls), and
- » Shortage of medications for proper treatment of patients

According to one SME KI, available PHCs were not sufficient to cover the demand of the population for healthcare while several PHCs in some villages were destroyed (1 KI). In addition, one returnee KI reported believing that the available staff in the PHCs lacked experience to treat complex medical cases.

## Coping strategies adopted by households to enhance access to healthcare

Reportedly, households resorted to different strategies to overcome the above-mentioned challenges. These reportedly included patients traveling to Markaz Tooz Khurmato medical centres for medical treatment (8 KIs) and households resorting to purchasing medicines at private pharmacies which were expensive (1 KI). According to one SME KI, households with members having specific medical conditions remained displaced due to the limited access to healthcare in their AoOs in the sub-district.

# KI recommendations to enhance access to public healthcare services

According to 19 KIs, there were initiatives to be considered by the local government and NGOs to enhance the situation related to access to public healthcare services in the sub-district. These reportedly included the:

- » Rehabilitation of damaged operating PHCs and reopening the closed ones (11 KIs),
- » Allocation of medical staff (including doctors) by the local government to the medical facilities in the sub-district (9 KIs),
- » Provision of medicines to available PHCs in the sub-district (8 KIs), and
- » Construction of a specialised hospital in the sub-district (5 KIs).

Additionally, two KIs recommended that the local government and NGOs focus on the recovery of the healthcare sector in Al-Amerli by ensuring a planned allocation of funds.





#### **Access to public education**

Almost two thirds of the KIs (18 out of 30 KIs) reported that household members faced challenges in accessing public education services. The most reported challenges were related to the conditions at operating schools (16 KIs), including the shortage of education staff who reportedly remained in displacement (9 KIs).

#### **Conditions at operational schools**

These reportedly included:

- » Limited number of operating schools, which were overcrowded and did not meet the demand of students (15 Kls),
- » Operating schools did not meet the minimum standards for the safety of the students (2 KIs), and
- » Some existing schools remained closed due to the high level of infrastructure damage and the lack of rehabilitation (2 KIs).

## Temporary solutions implemented to facilitate access to education in the sub-district

According to two SME KIs, a residential building was used for schooling purposes in Zangali village.

"There are no schools in some of the villages since these were destroyed. Here, education activities are implemented from a house provided by one of the sheikhs to run the school with few education personnel from the older school."

- SME KI -

## Coping strategies adopted by households to enhance access to education

According to one IDP KI from the community, some IDP households with children of school age decided to remain in displacement to facilitate the children's access to education which was more available in their AoDs.

## KI recommendations to enhance access to public education services

According to 15 KIs, there were initiatives to be considered by the local government and NGOs to enhance the situation related to access to public education services in the sub-district. These reportedly included:

- » Rehabilitating existing schools from damage suffered during military operations. KIs reported that some schools were built from mud which remained without maintenance and were also damaged by the military operation around 2014 (13 KIs), and
- Building new schools using modern construction techniques (8 KIs).

#### **Access to public electricity**

Almost two thirds of the KIs (18 out of 30 KIs) reported that the majority of the household members faced challenges in accessing public electricity services in the sub-district. The most reported reasons were the damage to the electrical network, poles, and transformers (17 KIs), which led to limited access to public electricity supply hours (7 KIs).

#### Impact of lack of public electricity services

Lack of public electricity services reportedly affected access to water pumping for domestic use at household level (3 KIs). According to two KIs, the lack of electricity negatively impacted the agricultural sector and farmers' access to water for irrigation purposes (1 KI) and the operation of workshops and small businesses, such as carpentry and blacksmith work (1 KI).

# Temporary solutions adopted by households to facilitate access to electricity

Reportedly, households resorted to private generator services in most of the villages in the sub-district (3 KIs).

"Households in the village [Sayyad village] do not have access to public electricity. The security actors present in the village have a private generator and sell electricity to the households."

- IDP KI from the community -

"If the security actors remove their generator, households in the village will have no electricity."

- SME KI -

## KI recommendations to enhance access to public electricity services

According to 17 KIs, there were initiatives to be considered by the local government and NGOs to enhance the situation related to access to public electricity services in the sub-district. These reportedly included the:

- » Rehabilitation of the existing electrical network and its extension to cover all villages and neighbourhoods in the sub-district (17 KIs) and
- » Replacement of electrical transformers and installation of additional ones to meet the community demand (3 KIs).

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

Several KIs reported that the majority of the households faced challenges in accessing public waste collection, disposal, and management in the sub-district, which was reportedly considered not a priority area within the district (9 KIs). This was reportedly due to the limited days for waste collection – done once per week – by the municipality (8 KIs). KIs reported believing that villages in the outskirts of the sub-district were underserved in terms of waste collection services (7 KIs).

Other reported challenges to safely and timely access waste collection, disposal, and management included the:

- » Limited number of waste collection vehicles assigned to the sub-district (6 KIs),
- » Presence of high amounts of rubble as a result of military operations (2 KIs),
- » Lack of waste disposal containers (1 KI), and
- » Lack of sanitation workers employed by the municipality (1 KI).

According to four KIs, the above-mentioned conditions resulted in waste accumulation in residential and public areas in the sub-district, representing an environmental concern for the





## Perceptions on access to livelihoods

#### Challenges to access public judicial mechanisms

All KIs (30 KIs) reported that the majority of the households faced challenges in accessing livelihoods in the sub-district. Almost two thirds of the KIs (19 out of 30 KIs) reported that there was a general lack of livelihood opportunities in the sub-district. Additionally, one IDP KI from the community reported believing that the local government focused more on job provision and project implementation in big cities, instead of giving attention to rural areas which were reportedly neglected. Moreover, findings showed that households faced challenges in accessing several livelihood sectors at the time of data collection.

#### Challenges in the agricultural sector

Al-Amerli Sub-district is the centre of a farming region, famous for its wheat and barley production. During the military operation in 2014 the sub-district witnessed the destruction of farming lands, food stores, and agricultural lands, ruining the livelihoods of the households in the sub-district and making the prospect of return even harder. According to 19 KIs, the majority of the households in Al-Amerli Sub-district depended on agriculture and livestock raising. Findings indicated that the agricultural sector was negatively affected at the time of data collection. The most reported reasons were related to challenges for land irrigation (19 KIs) and the lack of government support and compensation to farmers (18 Kls).

#### **Challenges for land irrigation**

According to 13 KIs, the lack of electricity affected water pumping for irrigation purposes, negatively impacting agriculture and livestock raising. Additionally, eight KIs reported that the lack of availability and inflated prices of fuel negatively affected the operation of private generators used for land irrigation. On the other hand, KIs reported that farmers lacked financial resources to build water wells for land irrigation, which were reportedly expensive (9 KIs). Three community leader KIs also reported that the sub-district witnessed water scarcity due to the lack of rain in 2022, compared to previous years, which negatively impacted on agriculture.

#### Lack of government support and compensation to farmers

Challenges in accessing government support and compensation reportedly included:

- Lack of government support to farmers to purchase seeds and fertilizers, which were available in the local market at inflated prices (18 KIs),
- Damage to agricultural lands, orchards, fields, agricultural machinery, and irrigation systems, and the lack of government compensation to affected farmers (9 KIs), and
- Inflated prices for animal feed, when it is available, negatively affected livestock raising (4 KIs).

In addition to the above-mentioned challenges, one returnee KI reported that agriculture was also negatively affected by the extended displacement of skilled agricultural workers and the security measures imposed by security actors in the sub-district preventing farmers from accessing their lands and making livestock grazing challenging.

"The inability of the people to cultivate due to the presence of some harassment by influential parties and not allowing them to access their lands led to a lack of agricultural workers and an increase in unemployment. Now the area is under the control of informal security forces, which somewhat blocked the return of households to some villages due to the problems that occurred during the conflict with ISIS. Al-Amerli and its villages are fully under the control of informal security forces, security wise. These security forces are the ones that hold [protect] the land, but in in certain locations they prevent farmers from cultivating their lands, specifically near to their headquarters or when the lands are too far from the villages in remote open areas. Usually, people do not know about the reasons why they were prevented [from accessing their lands]."

- Returnee KI -

#### Strategies adopted and practices implemented by farmers

Reportedly, farmers resorted to building water wells in an unplanned and illegal manner to ensure access to water for agricultural lands irrigation (2 KIs). Additionally, one returnee KI reported that some farmers abandoned agriculture due to the lack of government support and the inflation of prices of agricultural and farming materials including seeds, fertilizers, and animal feed.

#### Challenges in the construction sector

Over half of the KIs (17 KIs) reported a lack of infrastructure and housing construction and reconstruction projects in the subdistrict, the presence of which could ensure access to a higher number of jobs.

#### Challenges in the governmental or public sector

KIs reported that the main factors affecting households' access to public employment were the lack of government appointment for jobs in the public sector<sup>29</sup> assigned to recent graduates (5 KIs) and the necessity of dealing with intermediaries to be employed in the public sector (1 KI).

#### Challenges in the industrial sector

Reportedly, the damage to the existing factories, namely bricks and ice factories, negatively affected access to jobs (3 KIs).

#### Challenges in the private sector, including services and trade and commerce

According to one returnee KI, jobs in trade, commerce, and shops and markets were negatively affected due to several businesses being closed while their owners remained in displacement. A second returnee KI reported that the sub-district witnessed a lack of investment in projects to ensure youth access to jobs, especially in the rural areas. The KI also reported believing that the reason for the lack of investment in Al-Amerli was because the sub-district is not located in a touristic area and there were no restaurants and hotels that could ensure employment for several community members.





#### Livelihood interventions by NGOs

According to one community leader KI, the sub-district had a lack of NGOs livelihood projects, such as cash for work programmes, that could ensure job opportunities for a high number of community members including youth and women.

## Coping strategies adopted by household members to enhance access to livelihoods

Reportedly, households resorted to different strategies to cope with the above-mentioned challenges (8 KIs). These reportedly included:

- » Whole household remaining displaced due to a lack of job opportunities in the sub-district (4 KIs) and
- » Household members, mainly youth, resorting to temporarily move to other areas in Kirkuk, Tooz Khurmato, Khalis, Baquba, Karbala, Najaf, Baghdad, and Basra seeking jobs causing family separation (4 KIs).

"Most of the youth work there [outside the sub-district] and stay permanent to help their families in Al-Amerli and visit the sub-district from time to time in their vacation leaves."

- SME KI -

#### KI recommendations to enhance access to livelihoods

To overcome this situation, 18 KIs recommended to the local government and NGOs to:

» Implement mega projects, especially in construction, to ensure a larger number of job opportunities in the subdistrict (13 KIs),

- » Implement livelihood projects, namely cash for work programmes (10 KIs),
- » Provide financial support for businesses development (2 KIs), and
- Provide special focus on revitalizing the agricultural sector by providing financial support to farmers led from the local government (1 KI).

#### Livelihood activities support economic growth

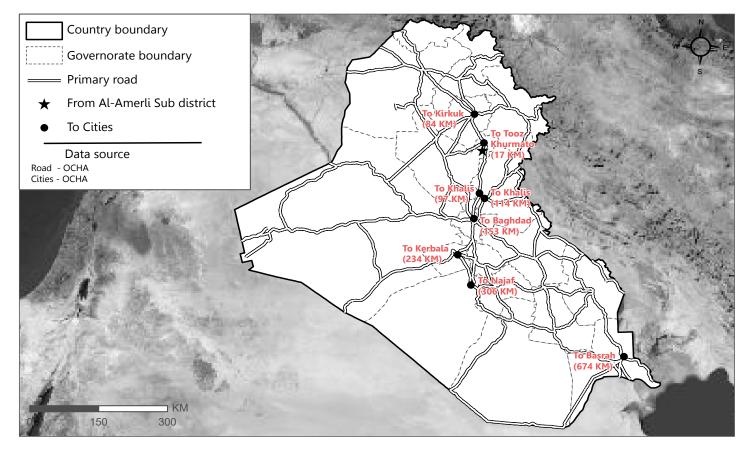
Community leader and SME KIs were consulted for this section (14 out of 30 KIs). All consulted KIs reported that livelihood programme implementation may support economic development in the sub-district with special focus on the revitalization of the agricultural sector (14 KIs).

# Supporting the revitalization of the agricultural sector (including livestock farming)

According to all consulted KIs, revitalizing the agricultural sector could reportedly be encouraged by (but not be restricted to):

- Providing financial assistance and loans to farmers to purchase seeds, fertilizers, machinery, and other agricultural and farming products (14 KIs),
- Ensuring access to water for land irrigation by improving and updating the existing irrigation systems for agricultural lands and digging water wells (7 KIs),
- » Providing/distributing fuel to run generators for water pumping destined to irrigation (6 KIs),
- » Supporting farmers to restore livestock farms and ensure animal feed distribution (4 KIs),

Map 4. Distance from Al-Amerli Sub-district to other areas where KIs reported that households could access basic public services and livelihoods



## **Perceptions on Access to Livelihoods and Public Judicial Mechanisms**

- » Providing electricity or extending the electrical network to agricultural lands to facilitate irrigation (2 KIs), and
- » Supporting farmers to reclaim their lands (1 KI).

# Supporting the reconstruction of the sub-district (construction sector)

According to nine KIs, livelihood activities supporting the reconstruction of the sub-district may ensure access to job opportunities in the construction sector. The KIs reported that this may be achieved by implementing large construction projects.

#### NGOs implementing livelihood programmes

Seven KIs reported that NGOs should support livelihood programmes in the sub-district as well as related projects. Activities recommended by KIs to be implemented included:

- » Cash for work programmes, which may increase households' incomes and consequently may increase commercial activity (7 KIs) and
- » Providing loans for start-ups (1 KI).

#### Marketing local products outside the sub-district

A few KIs recommended supporting the marketing and exporting of local products to markets outside the sub-district, which may promote local production and ensure an improvement in the economy of Al-Amerli (2 KIs).

#### Supporting the revitalization of the industrial sector

According to one SME KI, another way to support economic growth in Al-Amerli would be opening workshops and factories, such as sewing workshops, benefiting men and women.

#### Livelihood sectors with reported growth potential

Community leader and SME KIs were consulted for this section (14 out of 30 KIs). According to all consulted KIs, **agriculture** was **the livelihood sector with the most growth potential** in the 12 months following data collection, followed by public education (9 KIs).<sup>30</sup>

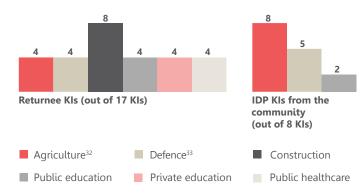
# Most reported livelihood sectors available in Al-Amerli at the time of data collection (out of 30 KIs)<sup>21, 31</sup>



# Livelihood sectors of interest for returnee and IDP households

Returnee and IDP KIs from the community were consulted for this section (16 out of 30 KIs). The most commonly reported livelihoods sector of interest for returnee and IDP households from the community to work in was **agriculture** (including animal raising) (12 KIs). Construction was the most reported sector of interest for returnees to work in (8 KIs). It may be due to the availability of jobs in the construction sector following efforts in the reconstruction of the sub-district.

The most commonly reported livelihood sectors of interest:21



#### Reported groups with less access to livelihoods

Over half of the KIs (16 out 30 KIs) reported that **all displacement groups** and **vulnerable**<sup>19</sup> **community members faced challenges in accessing livelihoods**. However, several KIs reported that IDPs from the community (8 KIs) and IDPs in the community (6 KIs) faced more challenges to access livelihoods compared to other displacement groups.

Regarding vulnerable groups,<sup>19</sup> several KIs also reported that older persons (8 KIs) and people with disabilities (5 KIs) faced more challenges to accessing livelihoods than other vulnerable groups.

## Access to public judicial mechanisms

#### Challenges to access public judicial mechanisms

All KIs were consulted for this section (30 KIs). The vast majority of the KIs (29 out of 30 KIs) reported that there were no challenges in accessing public judicial mechanisms. However, one IDP KI from the community reported that the sub-district lacked a court at the time of data collection and households needed to travel to other areas to present and process their legal files, facing the challenges of distance and the extra cost for transportation.

#### "The nearest court is about 20 km away from the village."

- IDP KI from the community -

#### Presence of public judicial offices/departments

Returnee, community leader, and SME KIs were consulted for this section (22 out of 30 KIs). According to the vast majority of the KIs (39 out of 42 KIs), there **were no closed public judicial offices** in the sub-district at the time of data collection. However, one SME KI reported that the local police department was closed due to the damage caused to the building during the military operations in 2014.

#### Presence of missing, damaged, or outdated documentation

Returnee and IDP KIs from the community were consulted for this section (16 out of 30 KIs). All consulted KIs reported that **the majority of households did not have missing, damaged, or outdated documentation** in Al-Amerli at the time of data collection.



Perceptions on Governance, Safety and Security, and Community Tensions

## **The Perceptions on governance**<sup>34</sup>

Community leader and SME KIs were consulted for this section (14 out of 30 KIs). Community leader KIs reported the presence of various bodies influencing governance in the sub-district at the time of data collection (8 KIs), while SME KIs reported believing that none of the present bodies were influencing governance in Al-Amerli at the time of data collection (6 KIs).

#### Reported bodies influencing governance in Al-Amerli (out of 8 Kls)21

Local authorities	8 KIs
Formal security actors	8 KIs
Tribal leaders	8 KIs
Political parties	8 KIs
Mukhtars <sup>35</sup>	3 KIs

#### **Bodies influencing returnees and IDPs affairs**

The vast majority of the KIs (28 out of 30 KIs) reported that there were no local bodies influencing returnee and IDP affairs in Al-Amerli at the time of data collection. The rest of the KIs did not know about the presence of influencing bodies (2 KIs).



#### Perceptions on safety and security<sup>34</sup>

Returnee and IDP from the community KIs were consulted for this section (14 out of 30 KIs). All consulted KIs reported that the majority of returnee and IDP households from the community felt safe or very safe in Al-Amerli. This situation was reportedly the same for women, girls, men, and boys, according to all consulted KIs (14 KIs).36

#### Freedom of movement

Returnee, community leader, and SME KIs were consulted for this section (22 out of 30 KIs). All consulted KIs reported that there were no restrictions of movement imposed in the sub-district.

All returnee KIs (8 out of 30 KIs) also reported that the majority of returnee households could freely move during the day and at night in Al-Amerli if they desired. All consulted KIs reported that this situation was reportedly the same for women, girls, men, and boys.36

#### **Explosive Remnants** of War (ERW) land contamination

The vast majority of the KIs (29 out of 30 KIs) reported that there were no fields known to be contaminated with ERW in Al-Amerli at the time of data collection. One IDP KI from the community did not know about land contamination in the subdistrict.

## Perceptions on community tensions<sup>34</sup>

#### **Disputes within the sub-district**

Returnee, community leader, and SME KIs were consulted for this section (22 out of 30 KIs). All consulted KIs (22 KIs) reported that there were no disputes within the sub-district in the six months prior to data collection. However, according to a few KIs, internal disputes, retaliation incidents, and increased crime may reportedly occur in the future if households with alleged links to ISIL decided to return (2 KIs).

#### Resolving disputes within the sub-district

Returnee KIs were consulted for this section (8 out of 30 KIs). Half of the consulted KIs (4 KIs) reported that formal security forces were the most effective body in resolving disputes within the sub-district, while the other half reported that tribal leaders were the most effective (4 KIs).

#### Formal security forces<sup>20</sup>

KIs also reported that formal security forces were the largest official armed force in the sub-district (2 KIs). Another two KIs also reported that the formal security forces were responsible for enforcing the law. In addition, one KI reported believing that formal security actors represented the state in the sub-district.

#### **Tribal leaders**

Reportedly, the Al-Amerli community was structured according to a tribal system and applied customary laws<sup>37</sup> to resolve these disputes (4 KIs). These KIs also reported that tribal leaders had the role and obligation of resolving conflicts and disputes between community members in the sub-district. In addition, one KI also reported that tribal leaders were consulted and trusted by the community members, strengthening their ability to negotiate solutions.

#### Disputes between the sub-district and other areas

Returnee, community leader, and SME KIs were consulted for this section (22 out of 30 KIs). All consulted KIs (22 KIs) reported that there were no disputes between the sub-district and other areas in the six months prior to data collection.

#### ₹ Resolving disputes between the sub-district and other areas

Returnee KIs were consulted for this section (8 out of 30 KIs). Three quarters of the consulted KIs did not know about these bodies (5 KIs) or reported the lack of effective bodies for resolving disputes between the sub-district and other areas (1 KI). The rest of the consulted KIs (2 KIs) reported that the formal security forces were the most body in resolving disputes between the sub-district and other areas.

#### Formal security forces<sup>20</sup>

KIs reported that formal security forces were responsible for confronting any armed attack to the sub-district (2 KIs) and for implementing the law and maintaining order (1 KI).





## Perceptions on community inter-relations<sup>34</sup>

#### Feeling welcome in the sub-district

Returnee and IDP from the community KIs were consulted for this section (16 out of 30 KIs). All consulted KIs reported that the majority of returnee and IDP households felt welcome or very welcome in the sub-district.

#### Returnee households feeling welcome

Returnee KIs were consulted for this section (8 out of 30 KIs). All consulted KIs reported that the majority of returnee households felt welcome or very welcome in the sub-district (8 KIs). Consulted KIs stated that returnee households:

- Returned to the areas where they were born and belonged to, to their homes, and they are perceived as the "owners of the land" (7 KIs),
- Reconnected with their relatives and friends after long period of displacement (2 KIs), and
- Had kinship ties with other households in the community (1 KI).

"Because we are the original owners of the sub-district, so we returned to our area, rather than being strangers or outsiders in the area we live in."

- Returnee KI -

Regarding the feeling of belonging to the sub-district, the vast majority of returnee KIs (7 out of 8 KIs) reported that most of returnee households felt a strong sense of belonging to their AoOs in Al-Amerli. One returnee KI did not know how returnee households felt regarding their belonging to the sub-district.

#### IDP households from the community feeling welcome

IDP KIs from the community were consulted for this section (8 out of 30 KIs). All consulted KIs reported that the majority of IDP households from the community may feel welcome or very welcome in the sub-district if they decided to return (8 KIs). IDP households from the community reportedly had kinship ties and social bonds with other households in the sub-district (7 KIs), strong communication and interpersonal relationships with other households (7 KIs), and work relationships with other households, especially through agricultural exchange (2 KIs). According to one IDP KI from the community, IDP households from Al-Amerli belonged to existing tribes, causing them to feel protected and accepted if they decided to return.

Regarding the feeling of belonging to the AoDs, the vast majority IDP KIs from the community (7 out of 8 KIs) reported that most IDP households from the community felt that they somewhat belonged to their AoDs. One IDP KI from the community reported believing that some IDP households felt a strong sense of belonging to their AoDs, these being reportedly displaced in Markaz Tooz Khurmato Sub-district.

#### **Interaction between displacement groups**

Returnee and IDP from the community KIs were consulted for this section (16 out of 30 KIs). Almost two thirds of the KIs (10 out of 16 KIs) reported interaction between community groups in Al-Amerli at the time of data collection. Some KIs did not know

#### Reported interaction for returnee households

Three quarters of returnee KIs (6 out of 8 KIs) reported no interaction between returnee households and other groups. The rest of the consulted KIs (2 KIs) reported that the majority of returnee households interacted with all groups in the community. The most reported ways of interacting for returnee households included work relationships (2 KIs) and family and social bonds (1 KI). Reportedly, work interrelations included friendship and professional relations developed while interacting at work (2 KIs) and running common businesses and partnerships (1 KI).

#### Reported interaction for IDP households from the community

All IDP KIs from the community (8 KIs) reported that the majority of IDP households from Al-Amerli interacted with all groups in the community through family and social bonds (8 KIs) and work relationships (2 KI).

Reportedly, family and social bonds included:

- Kinship ties between households from the community and in Al-Amerli (6 KIs),
- Financial support to vulnerable households, especially returnees, to cover their basic needs in the sub-district (4 KIs),
- Providing transportation for households who needed access to water (2 KIs), noting that 11 KIs reported that households in the sub-district purchased water from Tooz Khurmato, and
- Financial support to households with members with a specific medical condition to access medical treatment (1 KI).

According to two consulted KIs, work interrelations included providing financial support to farmers for land irrigation and digging water wells in the sub-district (1 KI) and ensuring transportation for farmers to sell their products in Tooz Khurmato market (1 KI).

#### **Barriers for interaction between groups**

Returnee and IDP from the community KIs were consulted for this section (16 out of 30 Kls). The majority of the Kls (13 KIs) reported that there were no challenges for interaction between displacement groups in the sub-district. However, two returnee KIs reported believing that some households had alleged links with ISIL, which made their interaction with other community members difficult. Additionally, one returnee KI reported that there was a lack of trust between community members negatively affecting interaction and communication between them.

#### **Participation in decision-making processes**

Returnee and IDP KIs from the community were consulted for this section (16 out of 30 KIs). Three quarters of consulted KIs (12 KIs) reported that the majority of returnee and IDP households from the community participated in decisionmaking processes in the sub-district.







## Perceptions on social cohesion<sup>34</sup>

#### **Actors influencing social cohesion**

All KIs were consulted for this section (30 KIs). All KIs reported that the most influential actors in terms of social cohesion were the tribal leaders in the sub-district.

Perceptions on the most influential actors were as the following:21



#### Improving social cohesion

All KIs were consulted for this section (30 KIs). The vast majority of the KIs (29 KIs) reported initiatives to improve the need for social cohesion in the sub-district. These reportedly included:

#### Initiatives ensuring access to employment for all

Over half of the reporting KIs (16 KIs) reported the need to implement different initiatives that may ensure access to employment. The vast majority of these KIs (15 KIs) reported that employers, NGOs, and the local government should ensure access to livelihood opportunities equally for community members from different population groups. In addition, eight KIs reported that employers must create safe spaces where workers from different population groups can interact.

#### Implementing seminars, national and local conferences, and awareness sessions

Over half of the KIs (16 KIs) reported that organising seminars, conferences, awareness sessions, and workshops could effectively promote social cohesion. The most recommended topics for these activities were:

- Accepting differences, tolerance, and coexistence (10 KIs),
- Dialogue between population groups and peace building
- Sub-district internal affairs (2 KIs), and
- Anti-extremism and conflict resolution (2 KIs).

KIs also reported that these activities should target community members from different population groups (11 KIs). Reportedly, these should be organised by local authorities (6 KIs), tribal leaders (4 KIs), and NGOs and civil society actors (3 KIs).

#### Advocacy initiatives to encourage the return of IDP households from the community

Over one third of the reporting KIs (mostly IDPs from the community and SMEs) reported the need to implement advocacy initiatives promoting social cohesion and encouraging the return of IDP households from the community to their AoOs in Al-Amerli (11 KIs). These KIs reported the need to advocate for the return of displaced households, ensure the re-establishing of bonds and relations between community members and focus the local government on restoring basic public services in the sub-district, namely water and electricity.

"Jobs create interaction between community members from all groups, especially through daily dealing in work no matter what the work type is. Also [access to basic] services will help households to return, and this will lead to interaction with new returnees either from working on rehabilitating their homes or being reunited with their relatives."

- IDP KI from the community -

#### Involvement in activities and projects conducted by NGOs and the local authorities

Several KIs (8 KIs) reported that NGOs and local authorities must implement activities and projects that involve all community groups in the sub-district aiming to improve social cohesion. A few KIs (3 KIs) also reported that community members from different population groups must participate in voluntary work, which may promote interaction between them.

According to one returnee KI, there was no need for additional efforts to improve social cohesion in Al-Amerli since the households in the sub-district had an understanding between them, which ensured coexistence. In addition, a second KI did not answer how social cohesion could be improved.

#### Perceptions on durable solutions<sup>38</sup>

Returnee and IDP KIs from the community were consulted for this section (16 out of 30 KIs). Findings showed that perceptions on durable solutions varied between consulted displacement groups.

#### **Returnee households feeling reintegrated**

Returnee KIs were consulted for this section (8 out of 30 KIs). The majority of consulted KIs (7 out of 8 KIs) reported that the majority of returnee households felt re-integrated in the sub-district, and had a strong sense of belonging to their AoOs. According to five KIs, households felt reintegrated since they returned to their homes and lands in the same villages they used to live in before 2014. Additionally, one returnee KI reported that returnee households "did not have any security indicators", not being perceived as ISIL-affiliated, which facilitated their reintegration in the community of the sub-district.

However, one returnee KI reported that some returnee households did not feel reintegrated in Al-Amerli. The reasons for not feeling reintegrated included:

- Some returnee households having reported security indicators of alleged links to ISIL, making their reintegration in the community of Al-Amerli more challenging,
- Imposed restriction and security measures affecting the movement of households with security indicators in some
- The sub-district being controlled by informal security actors.

#### IDPs from the community feeling integrated

IDP KIs from the community were consulted for this section (8 out of 30 KIs). All consulted KIs reported that the majority of IDP households from the community did not feel integrated in their AoDs. Reportedly, the majority of IDP households from the community felt that they somewhat belonged to their AoDs,





#### **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 Insider, An Iraqi Shiite Town Is Getting Desperate After A 6-Week ISIS Siege, August 2014
- 5 Naharnet, Joint Effort to Break Jihadist Siege of Iraqi Turkmen Town, August 2014
- 6 "On August 31, Iraqi security forces and allied groups reached the town, which had been cut off from all overland access for more than 80 days due to ISIL encirclement." USAID, Iraq complex emergency factsheet 4, September 2014
- 7 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-Amerli, there were 6 community leader and 5 SME respondents. Population figures for returns and IDP populations in Al-Amerli were based on their estimates at the time of data collection.
- 8 To date, <u>IOM DTM's bi-monthly tracking of returnees and IDPs</u> 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.
- 9 For the purposes of this research, "remainee" refers to members of the host community who did not displaced during the events of 2014 or after.
- 10 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.
- 11 "The <u>DTM</u> 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, <u>Location Assessment Methodology</u>
- 12 "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)." <u>IOM DTM Methodology</u>
- 13 The most severely affected areas in Al-Amerli in terms of social cohesion and safety perceptions were reportedly Brawchili village, Chardaghli village, Qara Naz village, Bir Ahmed Ali village, Maftol Al Sagher village, Maftol Al Kaber village, Abod village, Theaeleb village, Sayad village, Bir Ahmed Mohammed village, Ta Sharaf village, Bir Al-Thahab village, Nabeaa village, Basatmly village, Esheel Tapa village, and Dunbalan Dara Al-Saghir village IOM DTM, Returns Index Round 15, January, February, and March 2022
- 14 For the purposes of this research, "older returnees" refers to households who returned to Al-Amerli Sub-district more than three months prior to data collection.
- 15 For the purposes of this research, "IDPs from the community" refers to households from Al-Amerli displaced during the events of 2014 to areas different than their AoOs Interviewed IDP KIs were displaced in Kirkuk Governorate, specifically in Markaz Kirkuk Sub-district.
- 16 For the purposes of this research, "community leaders" are members of the host community represented by five mukhtars and one social cohesion official in the area. 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.
- 17 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 two education specialists.
- 18 There were 30 individuals interviewed for the Al-Amerli assessment aged between 39 and 62 years old. All KIs were male (30 KIs). The lack of gender balance among the KIs was a limitation to the assessment, this mainly attributed to local norms and reluctant participation of female KIs in the assessment.
- 19 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.
- 20 "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 Defence and the NP under the command of the Interior respectively." Institute for the study of war, Iraqi security forces
- 21 KIs were able to select multiple responses to this question.
- $22\ \mbox{Other}$  less reported primary need was infrastructure rehabilitation (1 KI).
- 23 Findings were indicative of each population group and not representative. Due to the small sampling, findings may be under-reported.
- 24 Durable solutions assistance includes the humanitarian, stabilization, development, and peace-building assistance under its umbrella.
- 25 Other less reported types of programmes implemented in Al-Amerli in the six months prior to data collection included: infrastructure rehabilitation (2 KIs) and non-food items distributions (1 KI).
- 26 "Community participation is the active involvement of the people of a particular community in a developmental program/project. It is universally accepted that without community involvement and participation, developmental initiatives in the economic and social sectors have little chance to succeed." SlideToDoc, World Bank community participation definition
- 27 "Financial vulnerability has been described as the inability to recover from sudden financial shock, such as an unexpected loss of income or uncontrollable increase in expenditure." Money101, What can you do to reduce financial vulnerability?
- 28 "Stable income is defined as Social Security, Supplemental Security Income, Social Security Disability, pensions or other regular and consistent income." Law insider, Stable income definition
- 29 "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
- 30 Other less reported livelihood sectors with growth potential in the 12 months following data collection in Al-Amerli included: public education (9 KIs), construction (8 KIs), private healthcare (8 KIs), defence under the Iraqi Ministry of Interior (7 KIs), public healthcare (6 KIs), and real estate (1 KI).
- 31 Other less reported livelihood sectors available in Al-Amerli at the time of data collection included: manufacturing (2 KIs), services (hotels and restaurants) (1 KI), and public administration (1 KI).
- 32 Agriculture works also reportedly included livestock raising and animal breeding.
- 33 Referring to the official police and the Iraqi Security Forces under the Iraqi Ministry of Defence.
- 34 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.
- 35 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.
- 36 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.
- 37 "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



