TOWARD ECONOMIC RECOVERY AND FOOD SECURITY IN POST-DAESH IRAQ

A Framework for Governance Moving Forward

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DECEMBER 2017

AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF IRAQ SULAIMANI
IRIS
Institute of Regional and International Studies

Konrad Adenauer Stiftung

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This report has been produced with the generous financial assistance of Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

IRIS would like to thank its partner Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung for the financial support provided for this research, without which the production and publication of this report would not have been possible. IRIS would also like to thank Mostafa Ahmad Hassan for providing the pictures featured in this report.

The author would like to thank Mostafa Ahmad Hassan, Ibrahim Al-Hilo, Muthanna Ibrahim Nijris, and Sifok Yousif for their field research work. The author would also like to thank Andrea Turpin-King for her editing work, as well as IRIS Director Christine M. van den Toorn (IRIS) and IRIS programs officers Zainab Hamid Mera and Emily Burlinghaus (IRIS) for their support for this research project.

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KEY TAKEAWAYS

Conflict drives farmers from their land, disrupts economic activities, and prevents people from access to markets. It threatens food security by harming domestic agricultural production, damaging food markets, and hindering people's access to income. In Iraq, the recent war against DAESH has resulted in massive food insecurity, and profoundly affected "the food system's infrastructure, mainly due to the destruction of buildings and assets, fields and of the commercial activities that provided income for the population to buy food."[1] This report describes current food insecurity in multiple post-DAESH towns in Iraq through the lens of economic recovery. It shows that food security and economic recovery are mutually essential in Iraq, and that together they form the backbone of long-term post-conflict stability.

Price increases have affected the ability of residents to purchase food in retaken areas. Price inflation is largely attributable to closures of roads and points of entry during periods of tension. While markets are responsive in urban areas, rural areas are more vulnerable to clashes between local factions of armed groups, and are impacted more directly by the consequences of political conflict between Erbil and Baghdad, thereby reducing community resilience.

Collection of rent by local security forces and the multiplication of checkpoints has been a serious obstacle to food security and economic recovery. Many people report earning less profit than they expect from operating small businesses; some are going bankrupt altogether due to these seizures. It has also affected the ability of food traders to move supply around by increasing transportation costs.

Overreliance specifically on imports from Turkey and Iran impairs Iraq's ability to recover post DAESH. Volatile geopolitics threaten open trade routes, as has been seen recently in the post-referendum setting. In the short to medium run, however, those imports remain essential. The Government of Iraq (GOI) should work towards the diversification of its import sources. For example, official trade with Jordan and Syria is limited. By opening and monitoring more points of entry Iraq's dependence on Turkey and Iran would decrease, while ensuring that goods coming in meet quality standards. Expanding the number of routes into and out of the country may ensure continued movement of goods in the event one or more roads or points of entry close.

Most farmers have not been paid by the GOI for their grain contributions, which supply the Public Distribution System (PDS). Instead of paying farmers, the government is handing out "unpaid checks" – IOUs with no clear settlement date – "guaranteeing" that the farmers' payments are with the government and can be collected at a later date, but effectively

[1] Focus group, Shirqat (Salahaddin), September 29, 2017.

depriving them of immediate income.[2] This kind of policy is unsustainable in the long run and has forced many to turn to alternative sources of employment, thereby decreasing the national production and further increasing dependence on imports. It has also forced farmers to incur important debt, deplete their savings, or sell off assets, making rural communities more food insecure. Because of the food system structure, in which the government acts as a central buyer, farmers have limited alternative options and have to trust that they will one day receive what they are owed.[3]

Lack of infrastructure is also an impediment to local production. For example, DAESH destroyed granaries, and their reconstruction was not identified as priority infrastructure by international organizations and foreign governments, which hinders the ability of farmers to capitalize on their production. Damaged or destroyed irrigation systems and rural power grids also represent a major impediment to agricultural production in post-DAESH areas.

Lack of agricultural assistance to farmers threatens food security and economic recovery. In interviews, farmers lamented their inability to profit from agricultural activity post-DAESH, either because they no longer have the assets necessary or because the government is not paying them for their production. This hurts the resilience of their communities by forcing them to rely on imported or 'outside' food stocks, and stymies economic recovery, in a context where those farmers are not able to hire laborers, an important source of employment in rural areas pre-DAESH.

The primary source of employment post-DAESH thus appears to have shifted to the security services. The police force, Peshmerga, the Hashd al-Shaabi, and other local militias have also attracted recruits in post DAESH settings. While salaries for such positions are quite low – $300 per month on average – it remains the most stable income for many returnees.[4]

Returnees show interest in working the private sector. Lack of capital was most often cited as a barrier to private sector expansion and self-employment. Microfinance programs and public-private partnerships would help returnees launch new or grow existing small businesses, generating jobs and contributing to the communities' economic recovery. The GOI needs to develop private sector incentives and inclusive growth measures to reduce its population's reliance on public sector employment.

Currently, there are no **incentives for private investment in many post-DAESH areas**, which delays economic recovery and the creation of private sector jobs. "There is no investment here, because our town is seen as unstable and unimportant by the government and

[2] Interviews with farmers and municipal officials in Diyala, Salahaddin, and Ninewa, September 15-October 3, 2017.
[3] Ibid.
[4] Ibid.

international organizations."[5] Research shows that development assistance, from the government as well as from international donors, can create conditions that will attract private sector foreign direct investment (FDI) in the medium to long run.[6] Impactful policies that truly yield "humanitarian relief, restoration of government services and rehabilitation of infrastructure"[7] in post-DAESH areas could thus go a long way towards creating the level of stability necessary to attract private investment.

Rampant corruption is a significant impediment to food security. Government officials have complained that corruption and mismanagement hindered the deployment of food rations and other support in areas affected by the DAESH invasion. Many interviewees hinted at the fact that it is present at "every level of the Ministry of Agriculture,"[8] obstructing service delivery.

Recommendations

SHORT TO MEDIUM TERM

- The Government of Iraq's (GOI) 2018 budget should include a plan to issue **outstanding payments to farmers** for output received since 2014 to avoid further draining the agricultural sector.
- The GOI should immediately **resume the distribution of agricultural inputs (e.g. seeds, fertilizers, cattle feed, etc.)** in the short to medium run, as farmers recover from the financial losses incurred over the past three years.
- The GOI, as well as NGOs and international organizations, should develop **policies aimed at supporting small scale farming** through **microfinance** programs, **fiscal incentives or subsidies**, as well as the **rehabilitation and modernization of infrastructure**. In the long run, those programs should have the objective of increasing the independence of farmers to build resilience.
- The GOI should create incentives for farmers to **cultivate produce in addition to grain**. Currently, grain – wheat and barley – is bought by the government at subsidized rates and is thus the favored crop. Harvesting produce would allow farmers to grasp more profit

[5] Interview with local official, Jalawla (Diyala), September 20, 2017.
[6] UNDP. 2008. "Post-Conflict Economic Recovery: Enabling Local Ingenuity." *Crisis Prevention and Recovery Report 2008*; UNCTAD. 2009. "How Post-Conflict Can Attract and Benefit from FDI: Lessons from Croatia and Mozambique." *Best Practices for Investment in Development*, *Investment Advisory Series*, Series B Number 3
[7] UNCTAD. 2009. "How Post-Conflict Can Attract and Benefit from FDI: Lessons from Croatia and Mozambique." *Best Practices for Investment in Development*, *Investment Advisory Series*, Series B Number 3, p. 2.
[8] Interviews conducted in Ninewa, Salahaddin, and Diyala, September- October 2017.

from their production while increasing community resilience at the local level. Encouraging more frequent **crop rotation** would also allow farmers to preserve the fertility of their land and make better use of water resources.

- The GOI, as well as NGOs and international organizations, should **increase support for both entrepreneurs and small and medium enterprises (SMEs)** as a means of building resilience and reducing dependency on the public sector. In the short run, **access to capital** for expanding SMEs and new startups must be expanded. In the medium run, **regulation** surrounding the creation and operation of SMEs must be simplified.[9]

- The GOI should **impose inclusive growth standards on multinationals operating in Iraq**, ensuring that the private sector directly redistributes some of the wealth it earns from the exploitation of national resources. Those could take the form of serious Impact and Benefits Agreements (IBA) with local communities, the funding of microcredit programs, and commitments to decent, competitive wages. It could also **offer incentives for those multinationals to invest in post-DAESH areas specifically**, as a means of creating more private sector jobs for returnees.

- **Agriculture and local economic recovery should be identified as a priority areas for stabilization**, and funding should be allocated to the demining of agricultural land and the repair of public infrastructure such as irrigation systems and rural power grids.

MEDIUM TO LONG TERM

- **Reform of the Public Distribution System (PDS)** must be a top priority for the GOI to incrementally transform it into a targeted safety net for food insecure Iraqis. The digitalization and centralization of the registry system would allow for more flexibility and a **more effective response to displacement, return, and permanent relocations**. Data centralization would also reduce opportunities to use food rations for patronage. Moreover, a better targeting of current safety nets, through the gradual implementation of needs-based food subsidies, as opposed to universal food rations, would promote a decrease in overall cost and more support for the most vulnerable.

- **Adaptation of the input distribution system**, which is still centralized through the Ministry of Agriculture, should be another top policy priority. The inability of the GOI to provide inputs to farmers in post-DAESH areas has hindered their ability to produce.

[9] See IRIS report on the state of entrepreneurship in Iraq and the Kurdistan Region for more details on this: Bartnick, Aaron. 2017. "Obstacles and Opportunities for Entrepreneurship," Institute of Regional and International Studies, AUIS.

- **International financial institutions (IFIs)**, such as the World Bank or the Islamic Development Bank, should offer the GOI **credit lines specifically tied to the reform of its food system and agricultural sector**. The issue has been overlooked, reportedly due to its complexity,[10] but decreased reliance on imports, achieved through increased national production underpinned by effective government support policies, could be an important vector of stability. The GOI should also aim to attract more agri-business investments, which would create a local market for agricultural outputs and generate jobs in rural and peri-urban areas, thereby expanding food production value chains.

- A structural effort should also be made to **include smallholder farmers**, the majority of Iraq's farmers, in those value chains and ensuring they do not get left behind.[11] Smallholder agriculture is an efficient and sustainable model to prevent poverty in rural areas.[12]

- Because lesser quality food products are coming in and out of the country along the porous borders with **Syria and Jordan**, the GOI should set up more **official points of entry and monitor the quality of goods traded**.

- The GOI should work with educational institutions to offer more **market-oriented human development and capacity building programs** – both at the professional training and university levels – to address the market's needs and ensure that graduates find employment in their fields and are able to access regular income.

[10] Key informant interview with USAID official, October 20, 2017.
[11] IFAD. 2017. "Republic of Iraq: Smallholder Agriculture Revitalization Project, Design completion report." (IFAD has launched a USD 31.77 million initiative to support smallholder agriculture in southern Iraq (Muthanna, Thi-Qar, Qadisiya, and Missan) in the fall of 2017. This initiative, if successful, could become a model to be adapted to other parts of the country, including post-DAESH areas.)
[12] OECD, Solving the food crisis, webpage http://www.oecd.org/agriculture/solving-the-food-crisis.htm

Introduction

The World Food Programme's (WFP) 2016 Comprehensive Food Security and Vulnerability Assessment (CFSVA) of Iraq found that 2.1 percent of Iraqis were food insecure at the time of the assessment (2015). The ratio rose to 5.6 percent when considering only the internally displaced. Compared to other countries with ongoing civil violence and conflicts, such as Yemen where 60 percent of the population is critically food insecure[13] or South Sudan, with a ratio that exceeded 30 percent in 2016,[14] those numbers are surprisingly low. This is because, as a WFP official explained in a discussion in Erbil, Iraq, "Iraq is different."

Iraq is an upper middle income country,[15] where 70 percent of the population lives in an urban setting.[16] It also shares borders with two of the largest food producers and exporters in the region, Turkey and Iran, and seems to be equipped with responsive food markets and relatively reliable infrastructure, as the liberation of large urban centers from DAESH over the last two years has shown.[17] Finally, it boasts the largest public food assistance program in the world, the Public Distribution System (PDS). While it has been described as largely dysfunctional,[18] it has also at times shielded segments of the population from food insecurity and poverty, while providing income to regionally non-competitive farmers for years.[19] In this sense, on paper, Iraq seems food secure.

But often overlooked in these analyses is the issue of stability, likely due to the fact that it remains largely out of national and international organizations' control. Iraq has suffered from instability on multiple fronts – environmental, political, security – since 2003, which has impeded sustainable economic development in rural areas and severely impacted the country's domestic food production. The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) in fact now identifies stability as one of its four central pillars of analysis. By this standard, the organization's 2016 Regional Overview of Food Insecurity for the Near East and North Africa (NENA) ranked Iraq as one of the region's most food insecure countries due to enduring conflict and civil violence, displacement, and vulnerability to climate change. Shocks induced

[13] WFP. 2017. "State of Food Insecurity in Yemen." URL: http://documents.wfp.org/stellent/groups/public/documents/ena/wfp291809.pdf?_ga=2.181584423.1465964597.1504688423-579584413.1503411515.
[14] WFP. 2016. "Unprecedented Level Of Food Insecurity In South Sudan, UN Agencies Warn." URL: https://www.wfp.org/news/news-release/unprecedented-level-food-insecurity-south-sudan-un-agencies-warn.
[15] World Bank. 2017. "Iraq Data." URL: https://data.worldbank.org/country/iraq.
[16] World Bank. 2017. "Urban Population (% of total)." URL: https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.URB.TOTL.IN.ZS.
[17] WFP. 2016 (October). "Rapid Market assessment in Tikrit, Al Door, Samarra, and Balad: Salah al-Din Governorate;" WFP. 2017 (March). "East Mosul Rapid Market Assessment;" WFP. 2017 (June). "West Mosul Rapid Market Assessment."
[18] Van der Auweraert, Peter. 2011. "Displacement and National Institutions: Reflections on the Iraqi Experience," *Middle East Institute*.
[19] World Bank. 2006. "Considering the Future of the Iraqi Public Distribution System;" FAO. 2009. "Iraq Food Prices Analysis." Inter-Agency Information and Analysis Unit.

by violent conflicts are particularly difficult to prevent and manage, as they usually "disrupt [both the] economy and institutions."[20]

Furthermore, as the WFP's 2016 CFSVA finds, food insecurity in Iraq is more prevalent among internally displaced people as a result of the conflict with DAESH.[21] This instability thus causes varying degrees of food insecurity within the country, and those differences are likely to endure, as governance vacuums are being filled by non-state and hybrid groups often representing narrow, parochial interests. Instability also underscores the importance of building more economic resilience among Iraqis to shield them from external shocks; in a context where supply tends to be responsive to demand,[22] economic opportunities will remain the single most important factor in determining a household's and a community's food security level.

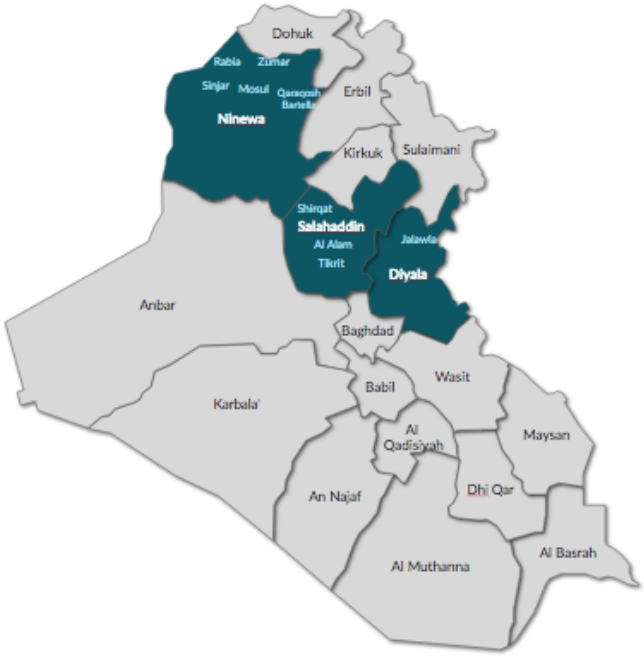
In fact, economic recovery and food security are tightly linked in the Iraqi context. In rural areas, employment opportunities are usually found along the food production chain and thus directly rely on agricultural production: overall, about one third of the country's population depends on agriculture for income.[23] In larger cities, relatively responsive markets usually ensure that as long as residents earn sufficient income, they will be able to purchase quality food supplies and absorb temporary price shocks without resorting to using one or more negative coping mechanisms.[24] But at the moment, however, "there is hardly any home that does not have at least one unemployed member."[25] Most analysts estimate that the unemployment rate among IDPs returning to their villages hovers around 50 percent.

There has been little systematic effort to identify the key problems that will be faced in the medium to long run post-DAESH, or to suggest institutional and administrative mechanisms to help the GOI address them. The focus has been almost exclusively on the security operations and the short-term crisis responses. Consequently, the key elements of stabilization and rehabilitation operations, and the mechanisms needed to implement them, remain underaddressed.

[20] ESCWA. 2008. "Food Security in Conflict Affected Countries: Lessons & Opportunities of Attaining Food Security."
[21] WFP. 2016. "Comprehensive Food Security and Vulnerability Analysis: Iraq," p. 159.
[22] Those negative coping mechanisms usually consist of selling properties, borrowing assets from relatives or members of their community, purchasing lesser quality and less varied food items, or, in some cases, outright reducing the family's daily calorie intake. (FAO, WFP, and Islamic Relief Worldwide. 2015 (March). "Rapid Food Security Assessment for Tikrit;" FAO, WFP, and Islamic Relief Worldwide. 2015 (February). "Rapid Food Security Assessment for Mosul.")
[23] FAO. 2017. "Iraq Agriculture Damage and Loss Needs Assessment," p. 3.
[24] WFP. 2016 (October). "Rapid Market assessment in Tikrit, Al Door, Samarra, and Balad: Salah al-Din Governorate;" WFP. 2017 (March). "East Mosul Rapid Market Assessment;" WFP. 2017 (June). "West Mosul Rapid Market Assessment."
[25] Focus group, Tikrit (Salahaddin), September 22, 2017.

"They [international organizations] say they want to restore stability only, but there won't be any stability without food, without jobs."[26] Many residents of post-DAESH areas interviewed for this research expressed profound disillusion with current stabilization programs. Most recently, the issue of internal territorial disputes between the GOI in Baghdad and the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) in Erbil have also brought the risks related to over reliance on food imports into sharper focus. As the last DAESH strongholds in Iraq are retaken and the status of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI) is negotiated, it is crucial to look for sustainable and realistic governance frameworks to address food insecurity and economic health.

Methodology



AREAS SURVEYED

DIYALA	NINEWA
Jalawla	Bartella
	Qaraqosh
SALAHADDIN	Mosul
Al Alam	Rabia
Shirqat	Sinjar
Tikrit	Zumar

This study (1) mapped retaken areas according to their current level of food insecurity, using data from the FAO and WFP; (2) analyzed contexts and policies in those areas, including those linked to economic recovery (support for SMEs, sustainable livelihoods programs, microfinance, etc.); and (3) used this analysis to compare retaken areas and formulate policy recommendations. It sought to answer the following questions: Which areas are the most food secure/insecure? What are the economic challenges faced by returnees in those areas? Are certain administrative policies and/or security contexts fostering or hindering food security and access to employment? How can these policies and contexts be replicated or adapted? Answering these questions requires venturing into political issues, which international organizations working on food security in Iraq are not in a position to do.[27]

This study focused on specific districts and

[26] Focus group of returnees, Shirqat (Salahaddin), September 29, 2017.
[27] Key informant interview with WFP official, Erbil (Erbil), August 2017.

sub-districts in Diyala (Jalawla), Salahaddin (Tikrit, Al Alam, and Shirqat), and Ninewa (Mosul, Sinjar, Rabia, Zumar, and parts of Al Hamdaniya).[28] In each area, focus groups were conducted with targeted stakeholders. In urban settings, those included (1) returnees and (2) food traders; in rural settings, (1) returnees and (2) farmers and agricultural workers. Key informant interviews were also conducted with provincial and municipal officials, as well as with experts and practitioners from the humanitarian and development communities in Iraq. Interview questionnaires are available under Appendix A of this report.

To be sure, this report does not claim to present a comprehensive portrait of the economic and food security situations in Iraq or in post-DAESH areas. Rather, its aim is to offer public policy analysis based on targeted research and to provide concrete recommendations to address non-traditional security threats – hunger and unemployment – as Iraq begins the process of reconstruction and a return to relative normalcy in post-conflict areas.

Mapping food insecurity in Iraq

The 2014 DAESH attacks have had dire consequences for food security throughout the country. In Ninewa and Salahaddin, known as the "breadbaskets" of Iraq because their wheat and barley outputs amount to over a third of the country's total production, those consequences have been particularly alarming and have had repercussions beyond province and district boundaries. Agriculture, the second largest contributor to the country's GDP, is the lifeblood of northwestern Iraq, where it provides employment and income for over 60 percent of the population.[29] As farmers' income comes under pressure, employment opportunities shrink both in rural and urban areas, at times creating community tensions and disincentives for return. Furthermore, due to declining agricultural production rates in the two provinces following the missed harvests of 2014, 2015, and, in some cases, 2016,[30] the most recent WFP CFSVA (2016) found that "food access vulnerabilities – expressed by high food expenditure share – [to reach] 37 percent in rural areas compared with 30 percent in urban areas." [31]

Farmers have seen their livelihoods impacted in two pivotal ways. First, most of their farms and villages were attacked during or after the 2014 harvest period, resulting in the loss of a

[28] Anbar was not covered due to limited research access.
[29] Al-Jaffal, Omar. 2014. "Fighting robs Iraqi farmers of harvest." *Al-Monitor*. URL: https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2014/09/iraq-agriculture-production-decrease-military-operations.html
[30] DAESH's attacks in 2014 either took place around harvest time (Ninewa), which means that farmers loss a year's worth of yield, or right before planting time (Salahaddin), which led many to delay planting and eventually flee. In 2015, most had just returned and were not able to resume activities in time for the season. Some found themselves in the same situation in 2016. (Jaafar, Hadi H. and Woertz, Eckart. 2016. "Agriculture as a Funding Source of ISIS: A GIS and Remote Sensing Analysis." *Food Policy*, Volume 64, pp. 14-25; Al-Jaffal, Omar. 2014. "Fighting robs Iraqi farmers of harvest." *Al-Monitor*. URL: https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2014/09/iraq-agriculture-production-decrease-military-operations.html)
[31] WFP. 2016. "Comprehensive Food Security and Vulnerability Analysis: Iraq," p. 15.

year's worth of work overnight.[32] Second, after returning, they found themselves resourceless: most of their assets, including livestock, agricultural tools and machinery, and specialized buildings had been looted or destroyed. "Farmers left their farms. Shopkeepers left their shops. When we returned, all our things had been stolen or heavily damaged. And we had exhausted all our savings to survive while we were displaced," recounts a food store owner in Tikrit.[33] Replacing those assets requires important financial capital which most no longer had after providing for their families during displacement. Moreover, returning farmers who were actually able to gather the assets to operate arguably had difficulty offering competitive wages to day laborers,[34] which used to be one of the main sources of employment in rural areas.[35] Aggressive recruitment of villagers by state and non-state security forces was also reported, which crippled the reinvigoration of economic activities. Young men have left the farms *en masse* to man the frontlines of the war against DAESH and the checkpoints of local militias.[36] Overall, returnees "who want to cultivate their land must bear a heavy financial burden in the form of security risks, lack of water, equipment, seeds, and government support."[37]

Indeed, a 2016 FAO assessment of the food security situation in newly liberated areas found that "loss of crops and reduced yields" over the past three years are a direct result of "a lack of affordable fertilizers and quality seeds, damage to irrigation, suspension of government subsidised purchases and inputs, and lack of labour as many young men have joined the fight against ISIS (particularly since April 2015)."[38] A year later, this assertion remains widely supported by research. The same assessment also stated that the presence of IEDs on agricultural land was also a serious obstacle to the relaunching of agricultural activities.[39] Due to the fact that agricultural land, much like individual property such as houses, is not considered "critical infrastructure" by UNDP, there are no plans to support demining in the short to medium run, so the situation appears likely to persist.[40] Finally, the road blockades due to security threats and political instability continue to cripple the "transport of goods and people," inflicting ongoing damage to the economic situation in retaken areas.[41]

[32] Jaafar, Hadi H. and Woertz, Eckart. 2016. "Agriculture as a Funding Source of ISIS: A GIS and Remote Sensing Analysis." *Food Policy*, Volume 64, pp. 14-25.
[33] Focus group in Tikrit (Salahaddin), September 24, 2017.
[34] Focus groups in Salahaddin and Ninewa, September-October 2017.
[35] FAO. 2016. "Agriculture And Livelihoods Needs Assessment in the Newly Liberated Areas of Kirkuk, Ninewa and Salahaddin," p. 55.
[36] Ibid, p. 54
[37] Key informant interview, Zumar (Ninewa) municipal official, October 3, 2017.
[38] FAO. 2016. "Agriculture And Livelihoods Needs Assessment in the Newly Liberated Areas of Kirkuk, Ninewa and Salahaddin," p. 23
[39] Ibid.
[40] Key informant interview with USAID official, October 20, 2017.
[41] FAO. 2016. "Agriculture And Livelihoods Needs Assessment in the Newly Liberated Areas of Kirkuk, Ninewa and Salahaddin," p. 23.

Overall, as mentioned above, access to income and food security remain strongly correlated in the Iraqi context. Data from the WFP, the FAO, and from other organizations shows that the large majority of food insecure Iraqis are still located in Salahaddin and in Iraq's southern provinces, such as Thi-Qar, Maysan, Wasit, Qadisiya, and Muthanna,[42] which have historically been poorer and more rural than other regions, and continue to suffer from unemployment rates above the national average.[43] Food insecurity is also particularly prevalent among IDPs across provinces, who "often resort [...] to borrowing money from friends and families and eating food of lesser quality."[44] While this report does not address the issue of displacement particularly, it affects the food security and economic recovery situations in many of the areas surveyed and should be considered in policy-making.

Area portraits

Below is information collected through interviews and focus groups that provides a general portrait of areas surveyed for this research both in terms of food security and economic recovery.

NINEWA

Mosul (East and West); Bartella and Qaraqosh in the district of Al Hamdaniya in the Ninewa Plains; Sinjar, Rabia, and Zumar.

All of the districts and sub-districts surveyed in Ninewa are rural, with the exception of Mosul, one of Iraq's largest cities. The geopolitical location and diverse ethno-sectarian composition of Ninewa has given rise to particularly marked competition between a range of state and non-state actors post-2014. The ensuing instability has been a key obstacle to food security. "All areas around have been liberated, but we are still lacking services like electricity and water and there is no access between our village and towns in the area because each part is under the control of different armed group," stated a group of young men in Sinjar.[45]

In the rural areas of Al Hamdaniya, Sinjar, and Zumar, returning farmers have also been unable to reach pre-2014 levels of production because of looting and damage of physical assets and a lack of support post-DAESH. "The farmers who were able to rebuild their destroyed farms have returned but are still facing problems, such as marketing and storage. Farmers who do not have the money to rebuild or repair their farms have not returned."[46]

[42] Food Security Cluster. 2017 (May). "Iraq Food Security Cluster 2017 Operational Dashboard: Key Information." URL: http://fscluster.org/sites/default/files/documents/fsc_irq_hrp_2017_operational_dashboard_0.pdf.
[43] WFP. 2016. "Comprehensive Food Security and Vulnerability Analysis: Iraq," p. 68.
[44] REACH. 2017. "Humanitarian Overview of Five Hard-to-Reach Areas in Iraq," p. 4.
[45] Focus group with farmers and agricultural workers, Sinjar (Ninewa), October 5, 2017.
[46] Ibid.

In West Mosul, while initial reports following the ousting of DAESH showed severe food insecurity,[47] our research shows that the situation seems to have improved, with markets starting to function again. However, the Government of Iraq (GOI) has delayed salary payments to civil servants after the city's liberation from DAESH, which has forced many to rely upon the community for basic necessities. Local police forces provide security for the area, but the presence of competing security forces has led to enduring volatility. The situation is similar in East Mosul, but interviewees have not experienced delays in salary payments to the same extent, since their neighbourhoods were retaken from DAESH quicker and earlier.

In Bartella, competing local security actors, with different patrons, are struggling to assert control over the town, which has spurred instability and slowed return and reconstruction processes. In Qaraqosh, the Ninewa Protection Units (NPU), a Christian non-state force loyal to Baghdad,[48] is providing security. The local food markets are dependent on Mosul's markets and main roads. All interviewees have identified the KRG's frequent roadblocks between Mosul and Al Hamdaniya as the main impediment to food security and economic recovery.[49] Our research also shows a lack of NGO- or government-led projects in the district.[50] "No one would invest here, unless they're from the area," concluded Joni Shamun, sub-district Director of Qaraqosh.[51]

In Zumar, Rabia, and Sinjar, markets had been provisioned by larger traders in Dohuk and Zakho. Most recently, following the takeover of the area by the GOI, it has been difficult to bring in food supplies due to roadblocks. The Mosul road seems to open only sporadically. NGOs appear to have provided more support for small businesses and farmers in the area than other places, such as Tikrit, where residents complain that they have not received any support from either governmental or non-governmental organizations.

[47] REACH. 2017. "Humanitarian Overview of Five Hard-to-Reach Areas in Iraq," p. 3.
[48] Gaston, Erica. 2017. "Qaraqosh, Hamdaniya District." *Global Public Policy institute (GPPi)*. URL: http://www.gppi.net/publications/iraq-after-isil-qaraqosh-hamdaniya-district/.
[49] Interviews and focus groups, Qaraqosh and Bartella (Ninewa), September 18-19, 2017.
[50] Ibid.
[51] Key informant interview with Qaraqosh (Ninewa) sub-district official, September 17, 2017.

SALAHADDIN
Tikrit; Al Alam; Shirqat

Tikrit is a large urban center. Al Alam and Shirqat, on the other hand, are rural districts. Most residents of Tikrit and Al Alam who had been displaced by conflict have returned, but Shirqat remains somewhat unstable.[52] The WFP also found that IDPs currently living in Salahaddin were the most food insecure throughout the country, with rates reaching over 8 percent, due to limited economic opportunities in the province.[53]

Security in Tikrit is ensured by the local police forces and the Iraqi army, as well as by tribal factions of the *Hashd al-Shaabi* in some neighbourhoods.[54] Residents reported receiving little to no support in terms of economic recovery, from either NGOs or the GOI. They also claim that government support for farmers, which was "already insufficient before 2014," has not resumed.[55] Some farms and agricultural facilities are also reportedly still used as military barracks, which has prevented the return of farmers to their home and livelihood.[56]

Many in Tikrit seem to either be employed within the private sector – workshops, retail, and the food and construction industries – or hope to be. Disillusion with regards to public employment or government professional training programs was widespread among interviewees and focus group participants: "the aspirations of young graduates are incompatible with the career opportunities offered by the government, which are sparse for Tikritis anyway."[57]

Shirqat's food markets are supplied by traders from Tikrit, Erbil, and Mosul. The main obstacles to inflows of food products are the frequent roadblocks, either because of military operations or for political reasons. The food system in the area was also significantly impacted by what interviewees described as "sanctions" imposed by the government during the time when it was controlled by DAESH. Those include cuts to salaries and farming subsidies, as well as restrictions on food purchases.

After liberation, farmers have not been able to return to their land, due to the lack of electricity and fuel for agricultural equipment and instability. Shirqat's Mayor, Ali

[52] Saleh, Bahra. 2017. "Iraq after ISIL: Shirqat District." Global Public Policy institute. URL: http://www.gppi.net/publications/iraq-after-isil-shirqat/
[53] WFP. 2016. "Comprehensive Food Security and Vulnerability Analysis: Iraq," p. 15.
[54] Interviews and focus groups, Tikrit (Salahaddin), September 20-24, 2017.
[55] Ibid.
[56] Key informant interview with Ministry of Trade official, Tikrit (Salahaddin), September 19, 2017.
[57] Key informant interview with a faculty member at Tikrit University, Department of Administration and Economics, Tikrit (Salahaddin), September 19, 2017.

Dahdouh Khalaf, also underscored the difficult financial situation of farmers: "without government subsidies, farmers have not been able to repair the damage incurred to irrigation infrastructure in fighting and clear their land of remnants of war and IEDs."[58] Following liberation, "agricultural lands have remained battlefields."[59]

In terms of economic recovery, interviewees state that most youths are now employed by security services in the area or have relaunched the businesses they ran prior to 2014. "Even before DAESH entered, there was little investment in Shirqat because the region was classified as unstable in terms of security. As for after liberation, investors need support and guarantees from the government in order to move forward with these projects. For now the region is not ready for this because of the lack of basic services."[60]

DIYALA
Jalawla

In Diyala, our research focused on the mixed district of Jalawla – the town itself as well as surrounding rural villages, including Osaj and Nadoman. The Peshmerga controlled the area until the October 18 takeover by Iraqi forces, as a result of the post-referendum stalemate.[61] Interviewees and focus group members complained that, since 2014, they had not been able to receive their food rations. There was also confusion regarding the marketing of agricultural output. Sheikh Yaqub, the Jalawla sub-district Director, remarked: "the [GOI] used to train farmers in how to market their production and give them technical courses, but we have not had that since DAESH left."[62]

While most people have returned to Jalawla,[63] living conditions are not optimal. An IOM study focusing on obstacles to return showed that over 80 percent of returnees in Jalawla stated having just enough cash assets to buy basic products, forcing households to rely on wage labour and negative coping mechanisms to keep afloat.[64] With unemployment levels reaching an estimated 75 percent,[65] there is an urgent need for economic recovery in the area, where agricultural production and food trade

[58] Key informant interview with the Mayor of Shirqat (Salahaddin), September 27, 2017.
[59] Key informant interview with a Ministry of Trade official, Shirqat (Salahaddin), October 7, 2017.
[60] Interviews and focus groups, Shirqat (Salahaddin), September 27-30 and October 3-6, 2017.
[61] "Iraq takes disputed areas as Kurds 'withdraw to 2014 lines,'" *BBC*, October 18, 2017. URL:http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-41663350.
[62] Key informant interview with local official, Jalawla (Diyala), September 20, 2017.
[63] Iraq Protection Cluster. 2017. "Diyala Returnee Profile - February 2017." URL: https://www.ecoi.net/file_upload/5250_1493978327_returnees-profile-diyala-feb2017-30032017.pdf
[64] IOM. 2017. "Obstacles to Return in Retaken Areas of Iraq," p. 29.
[65] Key informant interview with local official, Jalawla (Diyala), September 20, 2017.

used to be a key source of income. Instability and lack of government support have led businesses and factories to shut down, and have prevented the resumption of profitable agricultural production. "The only improvement is that we feel more secure now, but there is no money, no investment."[66]

FOOD (IN)SECURITY, ECONOMIC RECOVERY & POLICY

"Farmers are sending grain to the government, but have not been paid since 2014."[67] This statement was voiced in each interview and focus group conducted for this report. It not only underscores the dire fiscal predicament of the GOI, but also highlights years of poor policy-making. Indeed, as Fatallah (2015) remarks, "Iraq's 2015 budget has not allocated money for the purchase of grains from [DAESH]-controlled areas, partly for fear of transferring cash into the group's hands."[68] This meant a second year without income because farmers in those DAESH-controlled areas had lost their 2014 harvest as well.[69] According to our research, no payments were made in 2016 either, effectively leading most farmers to either turn to other livelihoods activities or incur substantial debt. In Shirqat, Al Alam, and Jalawla, the failure to pay farmers also reverberated into the wider economy, as wage laborers, traders, and shopkeepers also saw their income reduced or were forced to switch jobs. For the government, it also meant that it had to reach into scarce foreign currency reserves to bridge the gap – DAESH-held areas usually produce around one million tonnes of grain annually[70] – increasing budget deficits and further exposing its population to external price shocks.[71]

Compounding this is the instability and volatility of the security situation in parts of the country. "The availability of food depends on the security situation in the vicinity of the city, since supplies come from the neighboring cities of Mosul, Erbil and Tikrit, and often the road is cut."[72] This kind of statement was also articulated in the overwhelming majority of focus groups and interviews conducted for this report. The emergence of an array of non-state and hybrid security forces in the post-DAESH context has exacerbated instability and, in conjunction with inadequate policy-making on the part of the GOI, is likely to foster food insecurity and impede economic recovery. The section below addresses those points.

[66] Focus group, Jalawla (Diyala), September 21, 2017.
[67] Focus group, Tikrit (Salahaddin), September 23, 2017.
[68] Fathallah, Hadi. 2015. "How Iraq is Driving Itself to Hunger." *Sada Journal, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*.
[69] As Jaafar and Woertz (2016) note, DAESH purchased grain from farmers in areas under their control at the international price levels – between $220 and $230 – which is much less than the usual Iraqi government subsidized rate. (Jaafar, Hadi H. and Woertz, Eckart. 2016. "Agriculture as a Funding Source of ISIS: A GIS and Remote Sensing Analysis." *Food Policy*, Volume 64, p. 16.)
[70] Lydon, Chris. 2016. "Focus on Iraq." *World-Grain.com.*
[71] Fathallah, Hadi. 2015. "How Iraq is Driving Itself to Hunger." *Sada Journal, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*.
[72] Focus group, Shirqat (Salahaddin), October 3, 2017.

Local markets & the role of hybrid and non-state security actors

While food markets appear to be functioning relatively well in large cities such as Tikrit and East Mosul, the rural areas of Ninewa, Salahaddin, and Diyala remain vulnerable to road and checkpoint closures. The war against DAESH has led to the fragmentation and decentralization of authority of the security forces in Iraq. The extremist group's rapid incursions into Anbar, Ninewa, Salahaddin and Ninewa provinces in 2014 led to the emergence, or reemergence, of several non-state and hybrid security forces, which actively participated in the liberation of DAESH-held territory over the past three years. Those forces also held and secured these areas exclusively or alongside other forces.[73] The existence of multiple and sometimes competing non-state security actors translates into different post-conflict dynamics and governance models. Those security forces consistently utilize road blockades for political purposes. Since 2014, certain areas have been isolated for extended periods of time – sometimes for months – which has led to sharp price increases in food products.

Because employment is scarce, this price inflation causes food crises. "The disruption of the main supply routes is the most important obstacle [to food security]," stated a municipal official in Bartella, "because it leads to unexpected price hikes and people do not have the same kind of resources they had before 2014."[74] The situation in Fallujah in Anbar province has been covered in the media rather extensively. The WFP detailed, in April 2016: "Aid [and supplies have] not reached Fallujah since the government recaptured nearby Ramadi in December 2015, with supply routes cut off by Iraqi forces and the armed groups preventing civilians from leaving. [...]The high level of unemployment [...] and the increase in food prices has eroded their purchasing power."[75] Throughout the areas surveyed for the present report, the same story prevails, and recent political instability between the KRG and the GOI has only exacerbated food insecurity. "When a dispute breaks out, or clashes with DAESH take place, or roads are blocked for political reasons, the markets witness an immediate and sharp increase in prices of food and fuel," stated Ali Dahdouh Khalaf, Mayor of Shirqat (Salahaddin).[76]

[73] More details on Iraq's post-DAESH security situation are available in a joint IRIS-GPPi report here: Gatson, Erica and Derzsi-Horváth, Andras. 2017. "Iraq After ISIL: An Analysis of Local, Hybrid, and Sub-State Security Forces." *Global Public Policy institute*. URL: http://auis.edu.krd/iris/post-isis-security-project/post-isis-security-iraq-case-studies

[74] Key informant interview with municipal official, Bartella (Ninewa), September 21, 2017.

[75] WFP. 2016. "Flash Update." URL: http://documents.wfp.org/stellent/groups/public/documents/ena/wfp282924.pdf.

[76] Key informant interview with the Mayor of Shirqat (Salahaddin), September 27, 2017.

In areas caught between Erbil and Baghdad, Iraq's disputed territories (DIBs),[77] competition for control has given rise to political tensions and heightened instability. Many political leaders claim that the consistent lack of public investment in the DIBs is a direct consequence of the constitutional dispute – no one side wants to risk investing limited public funds in an area that might not remain under its control.[78] They also think that this will further delay the implementation of agricultural support policies.

> "For example, many markets, medical complexes, coffee shops, and other small businesses have been opened in Rabia, and the villages around also saw an increase in economic activities. But then this referendum happened and everything is uncertain again. The Rabia point of entry is closed. The irrigation system won't be repaired. The political situation between Baghdad and Erbil has been [an impediment] to economic recovery here."[79]

Interviewees from Sinjar, Rabia, and Zumar also observed more food insecurity in their areas during the recent post-referendum crisis – with several checkpoints and points of entry closed – than in the context of the war against DAESH.[80] In Sinjar, a local aid worker reported that, following the Iraqi military takeover of October 2017, the road to Dohuk – the district's only access to regional food markets – had been closed and NGOs had been barred from entering.[81] Other interviewees claimed that political factions had been using "intentional obstruction" to trade in the area around the referendum, as means of applying pressure to achieve their desired goals.[82] Similarly, a returnee from Shirqat, Salahaddin, commented: "food markets are heavily impacted by quickly changing security settings, which dictates fluctuations in supply and prices."[83] Increasing the resilience of communities – through support for local production, the promotion of investment in agricultural value chain industries, and the restoration of storage facilities, for example – could mitigate the impact of this instability at the security level.

National production

Overreliance on imports has made Iraqis more vulnerable to external shocks. While heavy reliance on food imports is an increasingly strong trend in the Middle East – ESCWA estimates that the region's deficiency in cereals will "more than double by 2030"[84] – it is not sustainable, especially in a politically unstable context. ESCWA also finds the

[77] Iraq's disputed internal boundaries are constitutionally designated areas (Article 140 of the Iraqi Constitution) where the Ba'ath party has historically conducted "Arabization" policy and whose administrative status – either under the Kurdistan Region of Iraq or under the GOI – has yet to be defined. They include parts of Ninewa, Salahaddin, Erbil, Wasit, Diyala, Kirkuk and Sulaimani.
[78] Focus group, Sinjar (Ninewa), October 1, 2017.
[79] Key informant interview with Rabia (Ninewa) municipal official, October 2, 2017.
[80] Interviews and focus groups, Sinjar, Rabia, Zumar (Ninewa), October 1-5, 2017.
[81] Key informant interview with Sinjar (Ninewa)-based humanitarian worker, October 22, 2017.
[82] Focus groups and interviews, Sinjar (Ninewa), October 2017.
[83] Focus group, Shirqat (Salahaddin), September 29, 2017.
[84] FAO. 2015. "Regional Coordination Mechanism (RCM) Issues Brief for the Arab Sustainable Development Report: Food Security and Sustainable Agriculture in the Arab Region."

correlation between poverty and food insecurity to be particularly high in cases where countries import most of their food.[85]

Our research supports the findings of the ESCWA. Local experts state that "the decreased level of local production has led to an increase in food prices, and has even impacted the price of non-food items sold in local markets."[86] A vicious cycle ensues, whereby farmers and agricultural workers facing higher food prices move to the city to seek better, more stable income, in turn reducing their communities' resilience.[87] An agronomist from Bartella, Ninewa stated: "the most serious impediment to our town's food security now is the fact that most farmers are moving to big cities to work in the industrial sector. The decreasing rate of local production has led to a huge rise in food prices."[88]

However, because those food imports remain necessary in the short to medium run, Iraq can work towards the diversification of its import sources, once again as a means of increasing resilience. Interviewees in Ninewa highlighted the fact that trade with Syria and Jordan is limited despite open borders. The opening of more points of entry could decrease Iraq's dependence on Turkey and Iran. In Sinjar, our focus groups revealed that unofficial trade with Syria, through Khanasor, had been vital at times when the road and checkpoints to the KRI were closed.[89]

Crisis response: universal versus targeted social safety nets

The PDS is a maladapted safety net that does not maximize the potential benefit from the investment of such important public financial resources. In general, Iraqi laws and institutions failed to respond quickly enough to the reality of displacement,[90] such as making it very difficult, if not impossible, for internally displaced Iraqis to transfer their PDS ration card to their governorate of displacement.[91] The "ration card" has been the target of much criticism, both from IDPs and returnees. In rural areas of Salahaddin (Al Alam and Shirqat), for example, residents assert that they have received products of increasingly poor quality since the area was retaken from DAESH. Products like flour, oil, sugar, and rice are also not distributed simultaneously, but instead individually and sporadically, which forces families to purchase missing items to respond to short-term needs.

[85] FAO. 2015. "Regional Coordination Mechanism (RCM) Issues Brief for the Arab Sustainable Development Report: Food Security and Sustainable Agriculture in the Arab Region."
[86] Key informant interview with a local agronomist, Bartella (Ninewa), September 22, 2017.
[87] Farmers focus group, Al Alam (Salahaddin), September 18, 2017.
[88] Key informant interview with an agronomist, Bartella (Ninewa), September 30, 2017.
[89] Focus group, Sinjar (Ninewa), October 1, 2017.
[90] Van der Auweraert, Peter. 2011. "Displacement and National Institutions: Reflections on the Iraqi Experience." *Middle East Institute.*
[91] UNHCR. 2008. "Rapid Needs Assessment (RNA) of Recently Displaced Persons in the Kurdistan Region, Dohuk Governorate."

Food insecurity also seems to be more prevalent among IDPs in the areas surveyed. The WFP's most recent comprehensive survey corroborates this: "food insecurity was highest in 84 percent of the IDPs who were displaced by DAESH-related conflict."[92] In Zumar and Rabia, reports of Arab IDP families from Tal Afar suffering from malnutrition or lack of access to food were frequent. All focus group discussions highlighted the fact that ration distribution was used as a political tool by local authorities.

In this sense, a better targeted, more efficient support system, which would distribute higher quality food products to Iraqis who actually need them most – often, IDPs and rural dwellers – is necessary.

DECENTRALIZATION OF THE FOOD SYSTEM & AGRICULTURAL SECTOR SUPPORT POLICY REFORMS

The GOI has repeatedly presented policy plans to make the agricultural sector more resilient and productive.[93] However, both analysts and farmers claim that weak and dysfunctional institutions, compounded by the ongoing financial crisis, have consistently hampered the implementation of those plans. "Unclear" and "inadequate" have been used frequently by a variety of stakeholders interviewed for this research to describe the GOI's Ministry of Agriculture policies. This has delayed the relaunch of agricultural activities in the post-DAESH areas surveyed, resulting in the large scale import of food products from neighbouring countries, as discussed above.

While the Ministry of Agriculture was partly decentralized under the USAID-Tarabot project in 2012-2013,[94] the food system – from the distribution of input to the purchase of yields and the distribution of food rations – remains almost entirely state-controlled. The government is still theoretically responsible for the distribution of inputs and purchases outputs, which is problematic because its current fiscal situation has prevented it from effectively doing so.[95] According to experts interviewed for this research, such a highly problematic policy issue has been overlooked by donors, especially in the context of the war against DAESH.[96]

Since 2014, the GOI has bought grain from farmers to supply the PDS, but most farmers are still waiting to be paid. Instead of paying farmers, the government is handing out "unpaid checks" – IOUs – "guaranteeing" that the farmers' payment is with the

[92] WFP. 2016. "Comprehensive Food Security and Vulnerability Analysis: Iraq," p. 16.
[93] See FAO. 2012. "Agricultural Sector Note - Iraq," FAO Investment Center, pp. 25-35; Wing, Joel. 2013. "Iraq's Troubled Agricultural Sector," *Musings on Iraq*; RFSAN. 2016. "The Impact of ISIS on Iraq's Agricultural Sector."
[94] "Agriculture." *Tabaot-Iraq*. URL: http://tarabot-iraq.org/ministries/53-ministry-of-agriculture
[95] Key informant interview with Ministry of Agriculture official, Mosul, September 22, 2017.
[96] Key informant interview with USAID official, October 20, 2017.

government and can be collected at a later date.[97] This kind of policy, perhaps justifiable during wartime, is unsustainable in the long run and has forced many to turn to alternative sources of employment, thereby decreasing overall national production and community resilience. In Salahaddin, some interviewees even reported that farmers had yet to be paid for pre-2014 shipments of grain to the government, which speaks of deeper structural issues that cannot be justified by the "war effort."[98]

Failure to provide adequate assistance to farmers has important consequences both in terms of food security and economic recovery. Farmers have repeatedly stated in interviews that they lack the ability to profit from agricultural activity post-DAESH, either due to the fact that they do not have the assets necessary or because the government is not paying them for their output; their frustration signals a decline in the resilience of both communities and the country as a whole. At the community level, it means that farmers are also unable to hire laborers, an important source of employment in rural areas pre-DAESH. "Before the crisis, each farm employed an average of 14 workers."[99] At the national level, it is diminishing overall production in the short term, forcing the government to rely on imports, raid scarce foreign exchange reserves, and increase its debt level.[100]

Similarly, the fact that the GOI is exclusively purchasing grain has created incentive for farmers to aim for wheat- and barley-intensive harvests, delaying crop rotation or forgoing the cultivation of other crops, such as produce, altogether.[101] Crop rotation is not only beneficial in terms of preserving land fertility and productivity, it also increases community resilience by diversifying local production. "Vegetables and fruits provide good supplementary and nutritive food in daily diet and they also fetch attractive price for the producers."[102] The portion of agricultural land in Iraq devoted to fruits and vegetables farming was only 9 percent before 2014,[103] and this research suggests that it has decreased even more since then. The European Union also argues that "ecosystem-based adaption," which includes crop rotation among other elements, is a vector of food security.[104] In this sense, agricultural sector support policies should be developed to target produce farming in particular.

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[97] Interviews with farmers and municipal officials in Diyala, Salahaddin, and Ninewa, September 15-October 3, 2017.
[98] Focus group, Shirqat (Salahaddin), September 29, 2017.
[99] FAO. 2016. "Agriculture And Livelihoods Needs Assessment in the Newly Liberated Areas of Kirkuk, Ninewa and Salahaddin," p. 55.
[100] Fathallah, Hadi. 2015. "How Iraq is Driving Itself to Hunger." *Sada Journal, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*. 2015.
[101] Focus groups in Shirqat and Al Alam (Salahaddin), as well as Sinjar, Rabia, and Zumar (Ninewa), September-October, 2017.
[102] Bishay, Fahmi K. 2003. "Crop Production and Protection" in *Towards Sustainable Agricultural Development in Iraq: The Transition from Relief, Rehabilitation and Reconstruction to Development*, FAO Special Emergency Programmes Services.
[103] FAO. 2014. "FAO STAT: Iraq." URL: http://www.fao.org/faostat/en/#country/103.
[104] European Commission. 2013. "European Union, Science for Environment Policy." URL: http://ec.europa.eu/environment/integration/research/newsalert/pdf/42si2_en.pdf.

Public infrastructure

"The government has no ability to stock food during harvest time, so it goes bad."[105] The lack of adequate food storage, marketing opportunities, and functional infrastructure, such as large irrigation systems, have been identified as serious impediments to local production, which affects both food security and economic recovery in rural areas. The use of agricultural land for military purposes and the continued presence of explosives in rural areas has also been identified as a serious challenge.

The destruction or damaging of granaries in Sinjar, Zumar, Shirqat, Alam, and Bartella – which have not been identified as priority infrastructure for reconstruction – hinders the ability of farmers to capitalize on their production.[106] DAESH "burned all the wheat and barley warehouses," a Ministry of Agriculture spokesman told *Al-Monitor* in September 2014.[107] Similarly, in a recent study, the FAO found that, across the country and most direly in Ninewa province, "only 20 percent of farmers are thought to have access to irrigation, compared with 65 percent prior to the crisis."[108] Our research confirmed this: many farmers identified inadequate infrastructure and services as a key impediment to the restarting of their activities after DAESH.[109]

The lack of basic services, such as running water and electricity, is also an imposing obstacle to economic recovery in both rural and urban areas, although it seems more widespread in the former.[110] Enduring instability, characterized by the presence of competing security forces in certain areas and delays in reconstruction of education and health facilities, has also made returnees reluctant to invest resources in small businesses or agricultural assets.

Finally, due to the fact that the demining effort is led by the international community under the banner of stabilization, large swaths of agricultural land remain filled with IEDs, as most interviewees in rural areas have mentioned.[111] This has prevented grain and produce farmers from resuming activities, while also hurting livestock farmers, who do not have enough grazing areas anymore. An agricultural engineer from Shirqat reported that many are now forced to smuggle their livestock assets to other districts and sell them at "a

[105] Key informant interview with civil engineer in Mosul and local Ministry of Agriculture official, East Mosul (Ninewa), September 19, 2017.
[106] Interviews and focus groups in Sinjar (Ninewa), Zumar (Ninewa), and Shirqat (Salahaddin), September-October, 2017.
[107] Al-Jaffal, Omar. 2014. "Fighting robs Iraqi farmers of harvest." *Al-Monitor*. URL: https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2014/09/iraq-agriculture-production-decrease-military-operations.html
[108] FAO. 2017. "Iraq Agriculture Damage and Loss Needs Assessment," p. 4.
[109] Interviews and focus groups with farmers in Ninewa, Salahaddin, and Diyala, September-October 2017.
[110] Ibid.
[111] Ibid.

very low price, only to be able to buy food for their families."[112] This fits into the aforementioned "negative coping mechanisms" making households in post-DAESH areas increasingly vulnerable to food insecurity and jeopardizing their ability to start farming again after the security situation has stabilized. UNDP should review its demining program to include agricultural land[113] or work with the GOI to provide funding for the clearing of those areas.

Rent-seeking & corruption

In many surveyed areas, the collection of rent by local security forces has been a serious obstacle to economic recovery, to such an extent that people are either earning less profit than might be expected from operating a small business or are going bankrupt altogether. "There is a security vacuum, and parties often take royalties from the owners of shops, clinics, and pharmacies. There is no one to monitor and stop them."[114] IRIS research on the topic in Tuz Khormatu showed that "decentralized rent-seeking" in the post-DAESH context has importantly impeded economic recovery across different sectors.[115]

"People are reluctant to invest in launching a small business here since DAESH. There are too many controls by too many different security actors," complained a store owner in Tikrit. In focus groups, many in fact identified the "multiplicity of sources of decision" and rent-seeking as a major obstacle to economic development. Those who have financial assets to invest prefer to do it in more stable areas. In this sense, the GOI should work towards the establishment of a security climate conducive to investment, with clear regulation.

In the same vein, this research points to rampant corruption as one of the main impediments to food security in the short run.[116] In particular, government officials in Tikrit argued that "administrative and financial corruption and mismanagement" significantly limited the level of help, both in terms of food rations and direct economic support, provided to IDPs living in camps around the city.[117] Similarly, in Sinjar and Zumar, focus group participants spoke of the use of rations by local officials engaging in patronage.[118]

[112] Key informant interview with agricultural engineer, Shirqat (Salahaddin), October 6, 2017.
[113] See UNDP. 2017. "Funding Facility for Stabilization: Quarterly Progress Report Q1 -Y2017."
[114] Focus group, Shirqat (Salahaddin), September 29, 2017.
[115] DeWeaver, Mark. 2017. "Decentralized Rent-Seeking in Iraq's Post-ISIS Economy: A Warning from the Concrete Block Industry." *IRIS Iraq Report*. Institute for Regional and International Studies, AUIS.
[116] Interviews and focus groups conducted in selected districts of Ninewa, Salahaddin, and Diyala, September-October 2017.
[117] Key informant interview with Ministry of Trade employee, Al Alam District, September 2017.
[118] Focus groups, Sinjar and, Zumar (Ninewa), October 1-5, 2017.

Private sector employment

Our research shows a desire among returnees to work in the private sector, especially amongst the educated youth. The lack of investment due to persistent instability has thus impacted returnees. Post-DAESH, the main source of employment for men seems to be security services – the Peshmerga, the Hashd al-Shaabi, local militias, or police forces. This research highlights that while salaries for such positions are quite low – $300 per month on average – it remains the most stable source of income for many.

In Tikrit, interviewees stated that high youth unemployment rates were attributable to the fact that recent graduates had "no interest in working in government or security institutions" and the "mismatch between the graduates' skills and the job market." Lack of capital was most often cited as a barrier to entrepreneurship or small business growth. Microfinance programs, especially in urban areas, could help returnees launch or expand small businesses, which in turn would contribute to the communities' economic recovery through the creation of jobs and wealth.

In the same vein, the GOI should impose inclusive growth standards on multinationals operating in Iraq, ensuring that the private sector directly redistributes some of the wealth it earns from the exploitation of national resources. Those could take the form of serious Impact and Benefits Agreements (IBA) with local communities or commitments to decent, competitive wages. It could also offer incentives for those multinationals to invest in post-DAESH areas specifically, as a means of creating more private sector jobs for returnees. This is something the UNDP, which spearheads stabilization efforts throughout the country, has successfully attempted, through the creation of a public-private partnership program with Toyota,[119] which could be replicated.

Current levels of unemployment have led residents in post-DAESH areas, as well as IDPs elsewhere, to resort to negative coping mechanisms to survive.[120] While they might not identify them as such, according to WFP analyses standards, indebtedness and "savings depletion," is characteristic of food and economic insecurity.[121] In the same vein, using FAO rapid assessment data, Jaafar and Woertz (2016) argue: "[s]evere food insecurity that indicates outright hunger still remained limited [in Iraq...] but this might change over time as virtually every household there was affected by either mild or moderate food

[119] UNDP. 2017. "With support from UNDP and Toyota Iraq, displaced Iraqi youth learn job skills and regain hope for a better life." URL: http://www.iq.undp.org/content/iraq/en/home/ourwork/crisispreventionandrecovery/successstories/with-support-from-undp-and-toyota-iraq--displaced-iraqi-youth-le.html

[120] As mentioned above, those mechanisms may take many different forms, including selling properties, borrowing assets from relatives or members of their community, purchasing lesser quality and less varied food items, or, in some cases, outright reducing the family's daily calorie intake.

[121] WFP. 2016. "Comprehensive Food Security and Vulnerability Analysis: Iraq," p. 16,

insecurity."[122] In other words, their food insecurity might not be visible, to the extent that most Iraqis are not currently starving per se, but it is a possibility in the long run, should food prices remain volatile and resources become exhausted.[123]

As IOM reports, "IDPs from rural areas who displaced to urban areas had fewer opportunities to find a job in displacement and reported more difficulties to adapt to urban life."[124] Women encounter similar problems, facing barriers to entry into the workforce. An interviewee from Shirqat, Salahaddin, clearly made this connection: "of course, female-headed families and families where men have been injured in fighting are much more food insecure; without income, they can't buy food."[125] Indeed, the lack of access to employment for women has made female-headed households much more vulnerable to poverty, as well as an "economic burden" for communities supporting them. While cash-for-work and vocational training programs exist,[126] there also needs to be a real strategy for a viable, long-term incorporation of women in the workforce. Facilitating their entry into the job market, through the development of entrepreneurship and microfinance programs for example, would have the double benefit of reducing food insecurity and poverty levels, while boosting the economic recovery of post-conflict areas.

Conclusion

Now that most DAESH strongholds in Iraq have been retaken, the country faces new challenges on many fronts. As we have shown, food insecurity and economic recovery are inextricably linked in post-DAESH Iraq, and both need to be achieved through targeted support designed to decentralize the food system and the job market, in an effort to gradually decrease Iraqis' dependence on dysfunctional public institutions. Efforts to revitalize the economy that do not address food insecurity will fail, leading to increased tensions, violence, and political instability.

The link between food insecurity and radicalization and civil violence in the Middle East has been presented by many analysts over the past few years.[127] "Battered by shifting resources,

[122] Jaafar, Hadi H. and Woertz, Eckart. 2016. "Agriculture as a funding source of ISIS: A GIS and remote sensing analysis." *Food Policy*, pp. 14–25.
[123] WFP. 2015. "Iraq. Bulletin 9."
[124] IOM. 2017. "Obstacles to Return in Retaken Areas of Iraq," p. 65.
[125] Focus group, Shirqat (Salahaddin), October 4, 2017.
[126] UNDP. 2017. "Funding Facility for Stabilization: Quarterly Progress Report Q1 -Y2017."
[127] Asaad, Hanna. 2016. "Syria's withering agricultural sector." *Al-Monitor*. URL: https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2016/04/syria-agriculture-siege-situation-war-losses.html?utm_source=dlvr.it&utm_medium=twitter; Schwartzstein, Peter. 2017. "Climate Change and Water Woes Drove ISIS Recruiting in Iraq." *National Geographic*. URL: https://news.nationalgeographic.com/2017/11/climate-change-drought-drove-isis-terrorist-recruiting-iraq/; Knefel, John. 2015. "How Climate Change Is Threatening Iraq's Fragile Security." *The Nation*. URL: https://www.thenation.com/article/how-climate-change-is-threatening-iraqs-fragile-security/; -- 2015. "Food Insecurity in War-Torn Syria: From Decades of Self-Sufficiency to Food Dependence." Carnegie Endowment for

desperate farmers were driven into terror recruiters' clutches. Can it happen again?"[128] Achieving food security and jumpstarting the local economy in post-DAESH areas will in fact be key to long-term stability and to the prevention of the emergence of further insurgency in a country that has seen many waves over the past 15 years. As research in a variety of other post-conflict contexts has shown, "[e]conomic recovery is essential for reversing and transforming these adverse conditions, and to reduce the risk of a reversion to violence."[129] In the same vein, the recommendations in this report suggest that a long-term vision for diversified and inclusive development and economic growth, driven by the private sector, is necessary.

International Peace. URL: http://carnegieendowment.org/2015/06/04/food-insecurity-in-war-torn-syria-from-decades-of-self-sufficiency-to-food-dependence-pub-60320; Perez, Ines. 2013. "Climate Change and Rising Food Prices Heightened Arab Spring." *Scientific American*. URL: https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/climate-change-and-rising-food-prices-heightened-arab-spring/.

[128] Schwartzstein, Peter. 2017. "Climate Change and Water Woes Drove ISIS Recruiting in Iraq." *National Geographic*. URL: https://news.nationalgeographic.com/2017/11/climate-change-drought-drove-isis-terrorist-recruiting-iraq/

[129] UNDP. 2008. "Post-Conflict Economic Recovery: Enabling Local Ingenuity." Crisis Prevention and Recovery Report 2008, p. xvii.

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APPENDIX A - INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRES

FOCUS GROUPS

Number of participants:
Average age (est.):
Gender:
Group:

QUESTIONS
Goal: understanding the intersection between food security and economic recovery in post-ISIS areas, urban and rural; understanding how certain policies and programs have helped improve or worsened the situation.

Area portrait
Who is providing security for your area:
Who is administering public services in your area:
Have IDPs returned? If so, who? Have there been constraints on return?

Food security portrait

1. Do residents in your area have access to food? Are there many cases of malnutrition, or people not being able to eat regularly?
2. Do many residents in your area rely on community support to provide food for their household (family, religious organizations)?
3. What are the most serious impediments to food security in your area, if any?
4. What role has conflict played with regards to the food system? Has it been a cause of food insecurity? A consequence?
5. Have farmers been able to return to their land? Have they benefitted from assistance to start producing again? If so, from who?
6. Since 2014, has the government been buying food production at subsidized rate? Have you observed smuggled grain being bought at subsidized rate by the government?
7. Since 2014, has the government been offering any kind of support for farmers? If so, what kind? Which farmers are receiving it?
8. Are food markets functioning correctly? Have they been disrupted by conflict?

Economic recovery portrait

1. What is the unemployment rate among residents in your area?
2. What sectors are residents in your area usually employed in? Has that changed since 2014? If so, how?
3. Has the government or other governance actors (security groups or NGOs, international organizations) provided support for employment to residents in your areas (training, job placement, etc.)?
4. How easy is it to start a small business in your area? Have many residents, returnees, IDPs, chosen to do that?
5. Have you witnessed a resurgence of investment, economic activity in your area since it was retaken from ISIS? If so, in which ways? If not, what is hindering this?

KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS

Goal: understanding the intersection between food security and economic recovery in post-ISIS areas, urban and rural; understanding how certain policies and programs have helped improve or worsened the situation.

Area portrait
Who is providing security for your area:
Who is administering public services in your area:
Have IDPs returned? If so, who? Have there been constraints on return?

Food security portrait

1. Do residents in your area have access to food? Are there many cases of malnutrition, or people not being able to eat regularly?
2. Do many residents in your area rely on community support to provide food for their household (family, religious organizations)?
3. What are the most serious impediments to food security in your area, if any?
4. What role has conflict played with regards to the food system? Has it been a cause of food insecurity? A consequence?
5. Have farmers been able to return to their land? Have they benefitted from assistance to start producing again? If so, from who?
6. Since 2014, has the government been buying food production at subsidized rate? Have you observed smuggled grain being bought at subsidized rate by the government?
7. Since 2014, has the government been offering any kind of support for farmers? If so, what kind? Which farmers are receiving it?
8. Are food markets functioning correctly? Have they been disrupted by conflict?

Economic recovery portrait

1. What is the unemployment rate among residents in your area?
2. What sectors are residents in your area usually employed in? Has that changed since 2014? If so, how?
3. Has the government or other governance actors (security groups or NGOs, international organizations) provided support for employment to residents in your areas (training, job placement, etc.)?
4. How easy is it to start a small business in your area? Have many residents, returnees, IDPs, chosen to do that?
5. Have you witnessed a resurgence of investment, economic activity in your area since it was retaken from ISIS? If so, in which ways? If not, what is hindering this?

More specialized questions for agronomists, government officials, international organizations, NGOs:

1. What is the government's approach to addressing food security issues in Iraq? How has it changed over the past months, with the retaking of major population centers by the ISF and non-state armed groups?
2. Is there an understanding within governmental structures that agricultural policies can in fact affect food security (both in terms of access and quality)?
3. How does trade in food product fit within the broader foreign policy strategy of Iraq, regionally?
4. How have post-ISIS stabilization (short and long term) projects and policies taken food security and food sovereignty into account? Is there a role for agriculture in post-conflict reconciliation and economic development models?

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