



World Food Programme

Rapid Food Security Assessment of IDPs in Iraq

Rapid Food Security Assessment of IDPs in Iraq

Agency for Technical Cooperation and Development (ACTED)
Iraqi Red Crescent Society (IRCS)
Islamic Relief (IR)
Mercy Corps (MC)
Mercy Hands (MH)
World Food Programme (WFP)

February, 2008



Table of Contents

1. Conclusions	3
2. Background	4
3. Objectives:.....	4
4. Survey Instruments:	4
5. Results	5
5.1. Demographic aspects of the IDPs:	5
5.1.1. Accommodations of the IDPs:	5
5.1.2. Place of residence before displacement:	5
5.1.3. Reasons of displacement:	6
5.1.4. Working status of household head:	6
5.2. Public Distribution System (PDS)	7
5.3. Food Consumption Coping Mechanism adopted by the IDPs.....	9
5.4. Dietary Diversity	10



1. Conclusions

- More than one quarter (27%) of the households are living in camps and public accommodation while 50% are renting houses and 16% living with relatives. IDPs living in camps and public building in rural areas are higher (32%) compared to those living in urban (25%).
- 60% were originally from Baghdad and 19% from Diyala. 71% of the IDPs are displaced during 2006 and 29% during 2007 with an average of 13 months as IDP in their new locations.
- 64% of the heads of households interviewed were not working and are having difficulties finding jobs and therefore, living off savings and other type of coping mechanism.
- 21% of the IDPs are female headed households and more vulnerable were 89% are without job compared to 57% of the male headed households.
- 55% of the IDPs head of household reported not registering their PDS cards in their new location. Of those, only 16% are still going back to their previous residence and get their monthly ration.
- 61% of households interviewed indicated that they had received wheat flour in their PDS ration of December, 2007 while 45 to 53% received rice, sugar, tea, soap and detergent. Only 17% of the interviewed households reported receiving Vegetable Oil and Pulses for the same month.
- More than half (57%) of the surveyed IDPs households reported experiencing shortages in food and reported adopting one or more food consumption strategies to cope. Strategies most commonly adopted involved modifying food intake habits, such as consume low quality and cheap food stuff, buy food by debt, reduce number of meals per day, reduce adult food intake to avail more food for children and attend ceremonies to eat. In rural area, 71% of the surveyed IDPs are more vulnerable to food insecurity and adopting various food consumption coping mechanism compared to 55% in urban area.
- 58% of the IDPs households are classified as food insecure and consuming only cereals/carbohydrates on a daily basis. The main source of the food items consumed more frequently is the PDS. Other food items (i.e. meat, pulses, milk, and fruits) are rarely, if ever, eaten.
- 37% of the surveyed households were among the more diversified diet group with cereals/ carbohydrates, fats/oils and vegetables are consumed daily.



2. Background

The massive displacement, along with diminished access to basic services, has led to a humanitarian crisis inside Iraq. The continued deterioration of the security situation jeopardized most of the social security network. The Government and some NGOs started aid programmes to assist the IDPs. In August 2007, the UN Security Council, in its resolution 1770, called, *inter alia*, for increased humanitarian assistance in support of the most vulnerable people.

In 2006, Central Organization for Statistics and Information Technology (COSIT) of the Ministry of Planning and Development Cooperation (MoPDC) and the Nutrition Research Institute (NRI) of the Ministry of Health, with the sponsorship of WFP and technical support from UNICEF, WHO, the World Bank and FAO, published a follow-up study on the food security situation in Iraq. The report concluded that just over four million people (15.4% of the population) are food-insecure and in dire need of humanitarian assistance - including food - in spite of the PDS rations that they are receiving. The survey also indicated that a further 8.3 million people (31.8% of the population surveyed) would be rendered food-insecure if they were not provided with a PDS ration.

To continue monitoring the food security situation in Iraq, WFP with UNICEF, NRI, COSIT, and the Kurdistan Region Statistics Office (KRSO) are organizing a third Food Security Survey in Iraq. The survey should cover the 18 governorates of the country, including the three governorates of the Kurdistan region. The report is expected to be published by April 2008.

In 2007, WFP conducted a rapid needs assessment which showed that many IDPs cannot access the PDS due to difficulties in document transfer, especially for those moving between governorates. This Food Security Rapid Assessment is a continuation of WFP and partners efforts to update and monitor the food security situation of the IDPs in Iraq.

3. Objectives:

The IDP problem in Iraq is complex and requires collaborative action from the government, civil society, NGO, and the international community. A better understanding of the dynamics and characteristics of displaced populations is required to help these actors better respond to their needs. The general objective of rapid assessment was to provide quick information on IDP characteristics and establish the current food security status of IDPs in Iraq.

4. Survey Instruments:

The primary instrument of data collection was the household questionnaire. The questionnaire was designed in a participatory approach and involved ACTED, IRCS, MC, MH, IR, WFP and other members of the Food Security Sector outcome Team. It was decided by the team to conduct a Rapid Food Security Assessment using staff from different humanitarian organizations (Local and International NGOs) working in the subject.

The household questionnaire was translated into Arabic and Kurdish languages and was designed to collect quantitative data and information covering the:

- Demographics aspects of the IDPs,
- Public Distribution System (PDS)
- Food consumption coping mechanism adopted by the IDPs and
- Dietary diversity of the IDPs



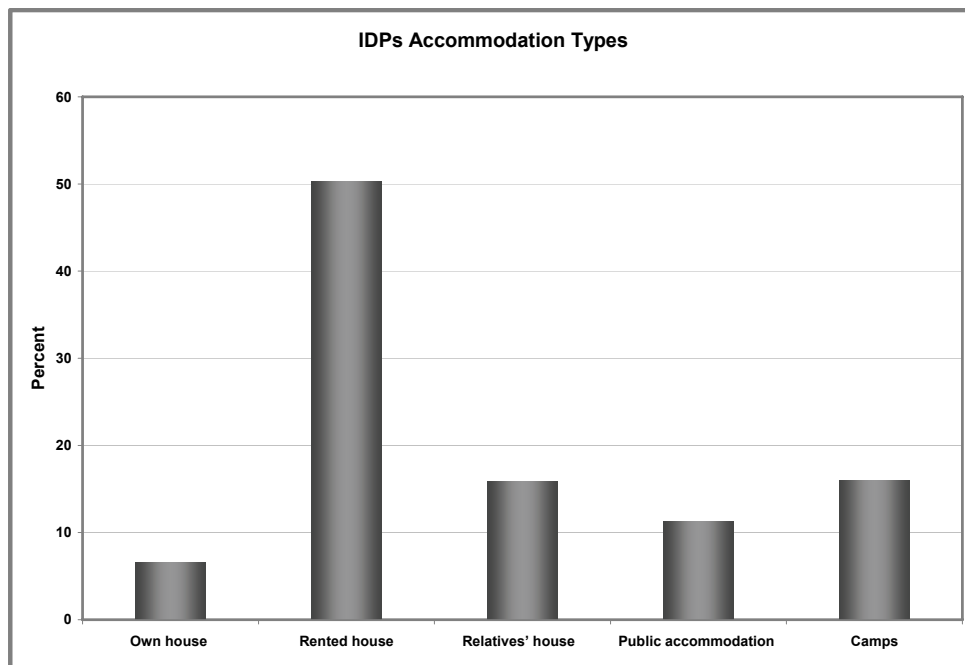
5. Results

5.1. Demographic aspects of the IDPs:

Of the 1188 households interviewed the 18 governorates of Iraq, 79% were male-headed households while 21% were female-headed. Household size among the interviewed households was 6.8 (3.5 female and 3.3 male). 70% of the interviewed IDPs were in urban area, while 30% in rural area.

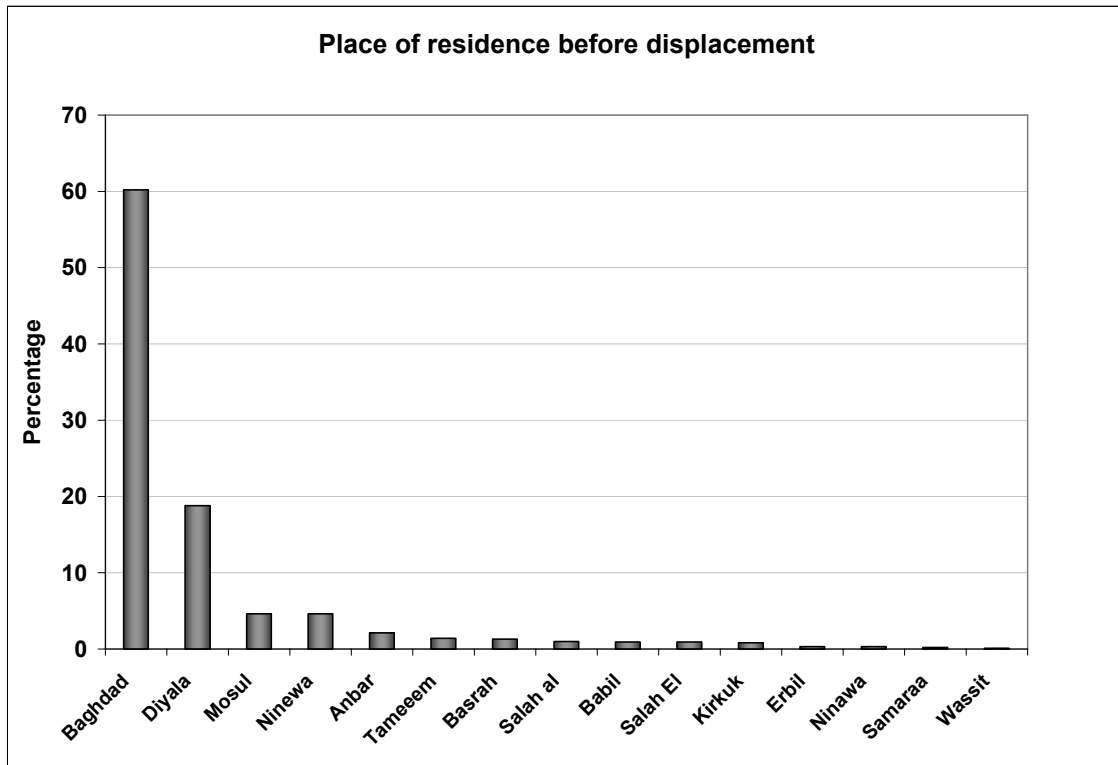
5.1.1. Accommodations of the IDPs:

More than one quarter (27%) of the households are living in camps and public accommodation while 50% are renting houses and 16% living with relatives. IDPs living in camps and public building in rural areas are higher (32%) compared to those living in urban (25%).



5.1.2. Place of residence before displacement:

Of the sampled IDPs, 60% were originally from Baghdad and 19% from Diyala. 71% of the IDPs are displaced during 2006 and 29% during 2007 with an average of 13 months as IDP in their new locations.



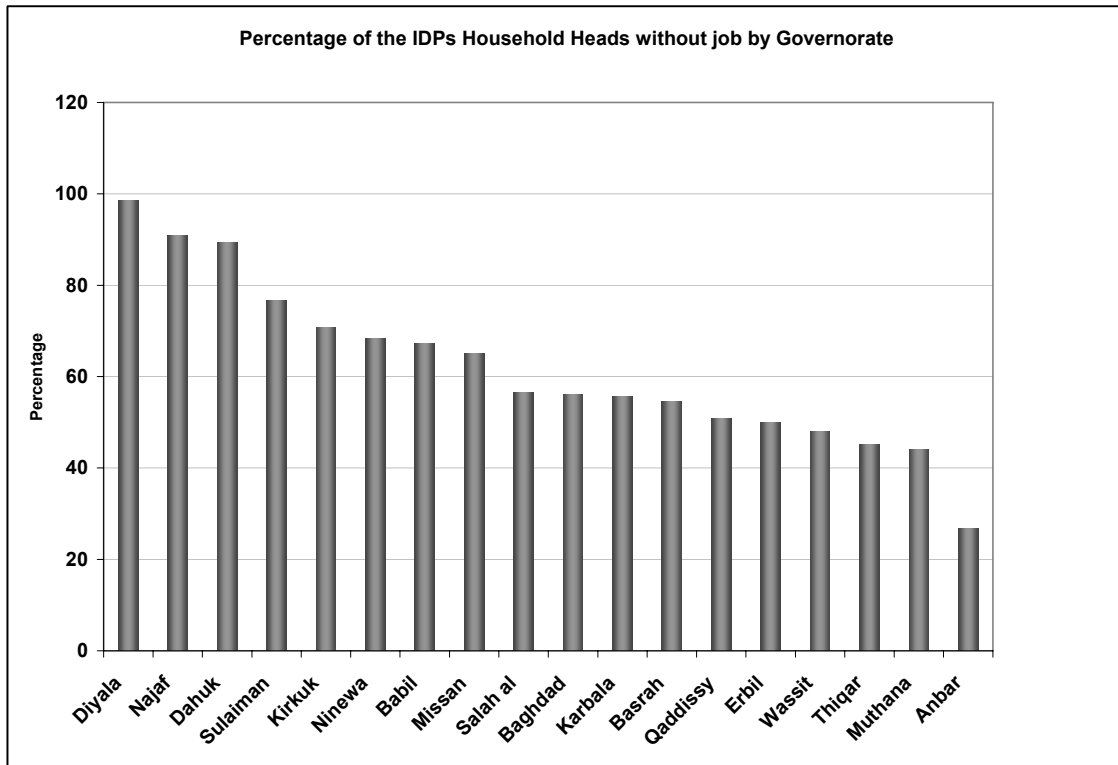
5.1.3. Reasons of displacement:

99% of the surveyed IDP reported security deterioration and ethnic conflict as the main cause of displacement.

Displacement Reason	Percent
Security deterioration	48.5
Ethnic conflict	50.2
Political conflict	0.8
Other	0.5

5.1.4. Working status of household head:

At the time of the survey, close to two-third (64 %) of the heads of households interviewed were not working and are having difficulties finding jobs and therefore, living off savings and other type of coping mechanism. The highest unemployment rates were more than 90% of the IDPs head of household without jobs were reported in Diyala and Najaf. The lack of regular income combined with the steady rise in market prices, means that the IDPs living in public building and camp and the rent-paying families will find it difficult to continue meeting their own needs as the length of their displacement extends. Female headed households are more vulnerable where 89% are without job compared to 57% of the male headed households.



5.2. Public Distribution System (PDS)

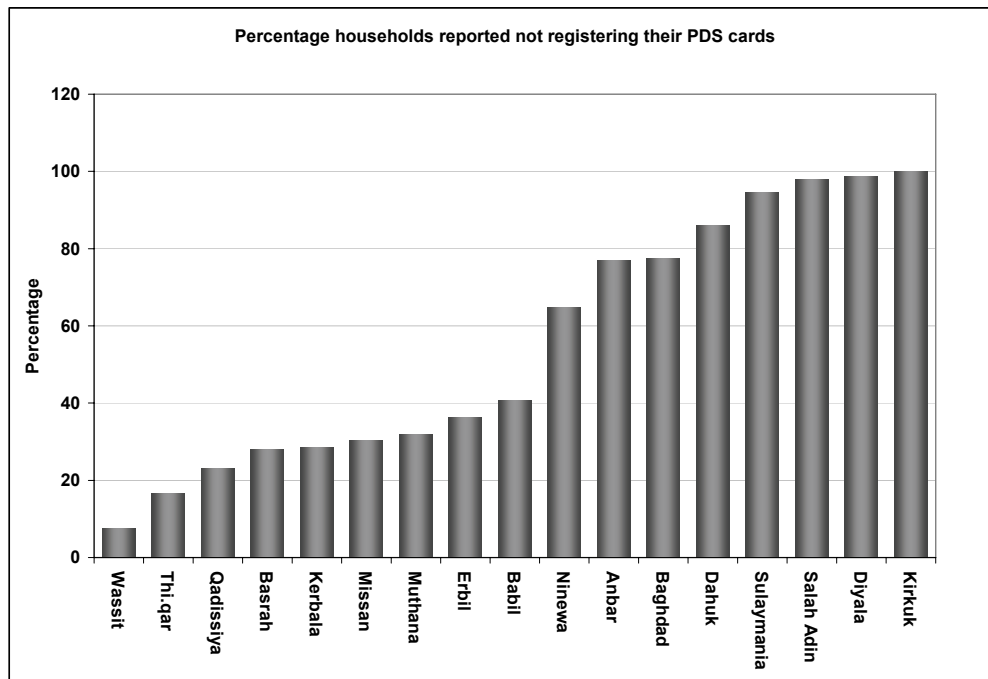
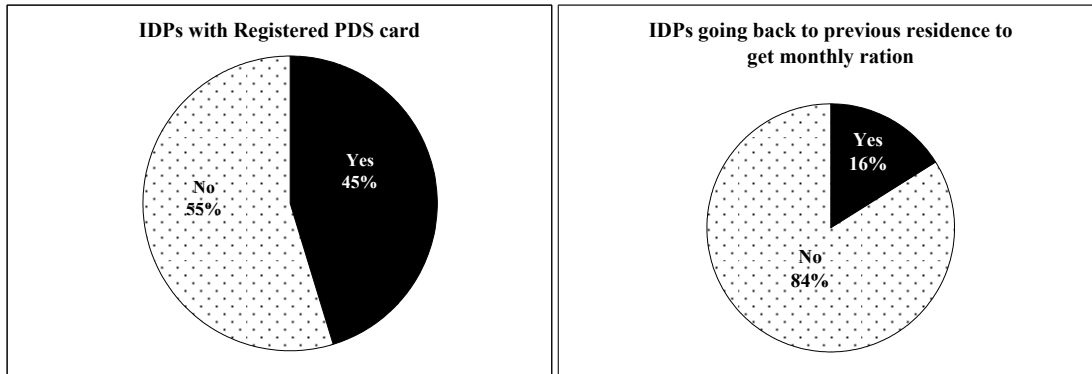
All Iraqi citizens within Iraq are entitled to receive the PDS, tied to their official residence. Many poor families rely heavily on Iraq's Public Distribution System. The PDS should provide every Iraqi with the following ration: (per person, per month) wheat (9 kilos), rice (3 kilos), sugar (2 kilos), tea (200 grams), vegetable oil (1.25 kilo), detergent (500 grams), pulses (250 grams), adult milk (250 grams), soap (250 grams), infant formula (1.8 kilo), salt (100 grams) and weaning cereals (800 grams).

Transfer of food ration cards is a time-consuming process in a volatile security environment requiring the completion of paperwork at both place of original registration and the new location. At the time of the survey, 55% of the IDPs head of household reported not registering their PDS cards in their new location. Of those, only 16% are still going back to their previous residence and get their monthly ration. 49% of the IDPs living in rural area reported registered compared to 44% of those living in urban area. Also, 32% of the reviewed IDPs living in rural area reported going back to their previous residence to collect their monthly ration compared to 11% living in urban area.



World Food Programme

Rapid Food Security Assessment of IDPs in Iraq



For the extremely poor population across Iraq, the PDS represents 50% of their total income and in many cases it represents 100% of their total income¹. While there is an overall high dependency on the PDS, increasingly there are shortfalls and disruptions in the distribution of the commodities in the ration especially to IDPs.

A clear periodic discrepancies between the 'planned' and the 'distributed' ration were reported. In this assessment, not all IDPs are receiving their PDS ration on a monthly basis. An estimated 61% of households interviewed indicated that they had received wheat flour in their PDS ration of December, 2007 while 45 to 53% received rice, sugar, tea, soap and detergent. Only 17% of the interviewed households reported receiving Vegetable Oil and Pulses for the same month. The supply shortfalls can result in households often receiving less than the planned ration items. Shortfall impacts fall disproportionately and dramatically on poorer IDPs given their higher dependency on the PDS, unemployment and the continuous rise of commodities prices in the market.

¹ Food Security And Vulnerability Analysis In Iraq WFP and COSIT (2006)



World Food Programme

Rapid Food Security Assessment of IDPs in Iraq

The following table presents the percentages of IDPs household reported the type of commodities received through the PDS for the listed months.

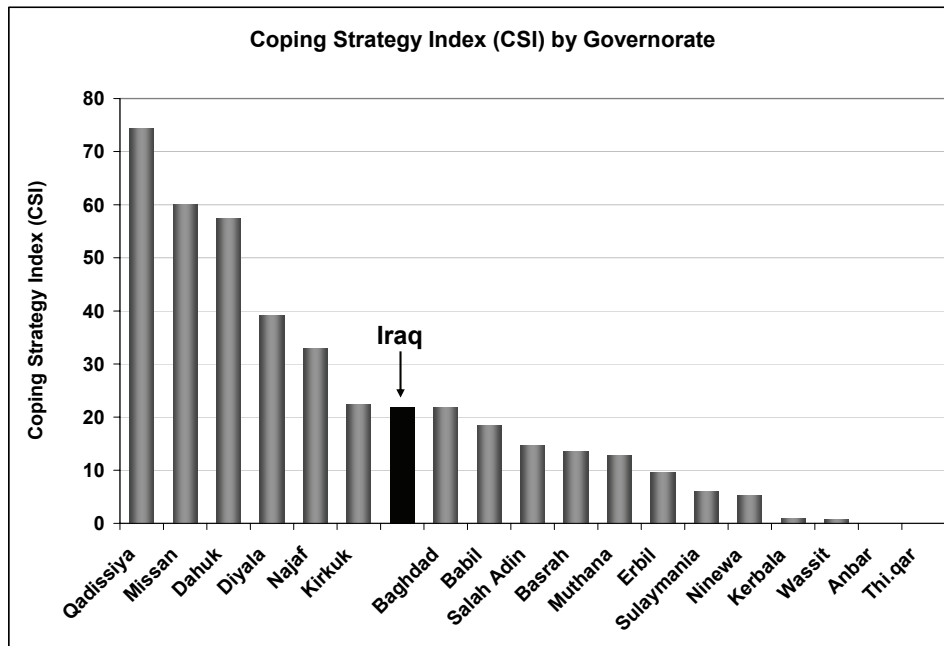
Commodity	Dec, 07	Nov, 07	Oct, 07	Sep, 07	Aug, 07	Before Aug, 07
Wheat flour	61	16	8	2	2	10
Sugar	53	20	11	3	3	12
Rice	50	17	10	3	3	17
Tea	47	18	8	4	3	20
Detergent	45	14	10	3	1	26
Soap	45	14	11	7	3	20
Ghee/V. Oil	17	13	11	9	3	46
Pulses	17	8	13	7	4	52
Infant cereals	12	5	2	1	1	79
Adult milk	11	6	6	8	1	68
Weaning cereals	8	2	1	0	0	89

5.3. Food Consumption Coping Mechanism adopted by the IDPs

The Coping Strategy Index (CSI) is defined for this assessment as the degree of reliance on food-related coping mechanisms adopted by the IDPs poor households which do not have enough food, or money to buy food, over a period of 30 days prior to December 2007 when the data was being collected.

More than half (57%) of the surveyed IDPs households reported experiencing shortages in food and reported adopting one or more food consumption strategies to cope. Strategies most commonly adopted involved modifying food intake habits, such as consume low quality and cheap food stuff, buy food by debt, reduce number of meals per day, reduce adult food intake to avail more food for children and attend religious, death, or marriage ceremonies to eat. These food-related strategies have a direct impact on the food security and nutritional status of household members.

IDPs living in rural area are more vulnerable to food insecurity. In rural area, 71% of the surveyed IDPs reported adopting more coping mechanism in a more frequent time compared to 55% in urban area. The following chart presents the calculated CSI per governorate and the higher CSI suggest that households are more vulnerable and food insecure and have adopted some kind of food-based mechanism to cope with a difficult economic and food shortage situation. Consequently, IDPs living in Qadissiya, Missan, Dahuk, Diyala, Najaf and Kirkuk are more vulnerable when compared to other IDPs living in other governorates.



5.4. Dietary Diversity

To develop the food security profile of households in Iraq, information on dietary diversity and the consumption frequency of foods was analyzed at the IDPs household level. Dietary diversity is a good proxy indicator of household per capita consumption and household per capita caloric intake, both of which are measures of the 'food accessibility' component of food security. It can also play a role in identifying the food insecure, in monitoring changes in circumstances and in assessing the impact of interventions².

The Diet Diversity is defined as the number of different foods or food groups consumed in a household and it provides a measure of the quality of the diet by reflecting dietary diversity.

The Diet Diversity is calculated based on a household's reported diet over a seven day period prior to the survey and was used to cluster the households into four groups:

- Poor dietary diversity : those households consuming two food groups daily
- Borderline dietary diversity: those households consuming three food groups daily
- Adequate dietary diversity: those households consuming more than four food groups daily

Poor dietary diversity – 58%: In this group, cereals/carbohydrates are consumed on a daily basis. Fats/oils and vegetables are used 3-4 days per week. Other food items (i.e. meat, pulses, milk, and fruits) are rarely, if ever, eaten. The main source of the items consumed more frequently by this group is usually the PDS. This diet type is poor in terms of macronutrient and micronutrient intake. Micronutrient intake might be compromised by this very low dietary diversity. Regarding macronutrients, the diet might provide enough carbohydrates but it is likely to be deficient in proteins. In this group, 70 % of the head of households are unemployed and the quantities of food available for consumption may also

² John Hoddinott and Yisehac Yohannes, Dietary Diversity as a Household Food Security Indicator. Washington, D.C.: Food and Nutrition Technical Assistance Project, Academy for Educational Development, 2002.

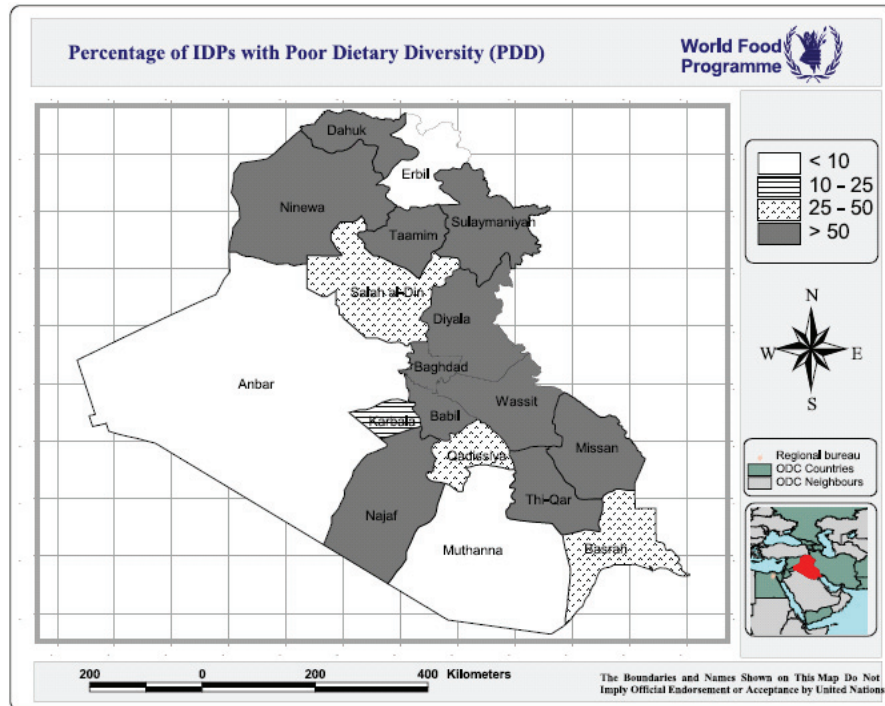


World Food Programme

Rapid Food Security Assessment of IDPs in Iraq

be problematic due to their low purchasing power. 58% of the IDPs households were classified in this poor dietary diversity group.

	Consumption		
	Poor	Borderline	Adequate
0-2 days/week			
3-4 days/week			
5-7 days/week			
Food Groups			
Cereals/ Carbohydrates			
Meat			
Pulses/ legumes			
Milk and milk products			
Eggs			
Oil/fats			
Vegetable			
Fruits			
Sweets			
Miscellaneous			

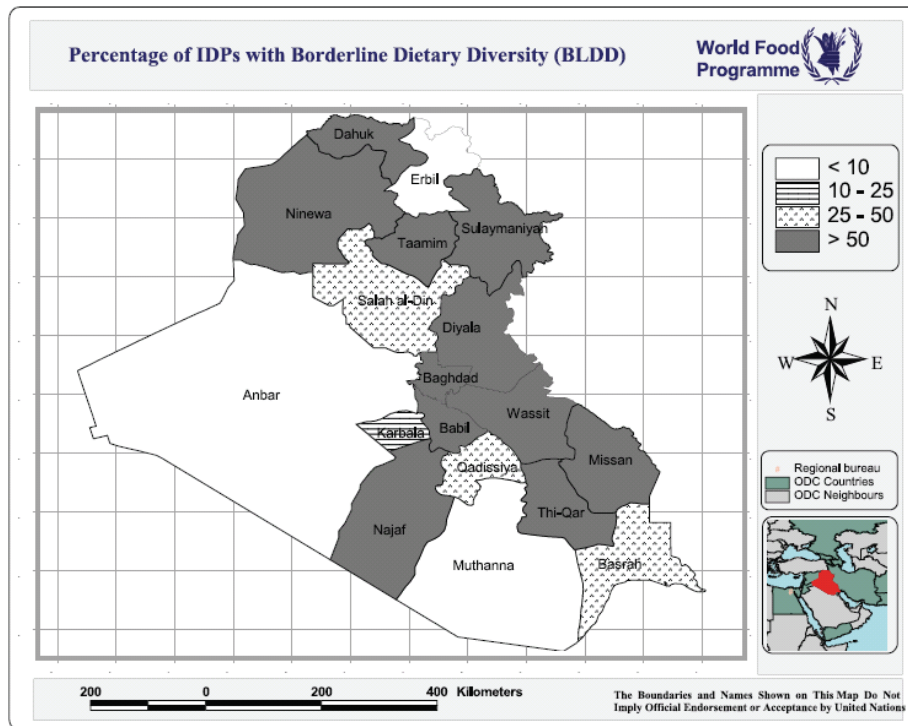


Borderline dietary diversity – 37%: In these households cereals/ carbohydrates, fats/oils and vegetables are consumed daily. Pulses, milk and milk product and eggs are consumed on three to four days per week. Consumption of other food items, in particular meat, is still limited in this group. Households belonging to this profile are clearly able to cover their food needs throughout the week, but their access to food appears to be limited. The main source of the items consumed more frequently by this group (except eggs and vegetables) is the PDS. 37% of the surveyed households were classified in this borderline dietary diversity group.



World Food Programme

Rapid Food Security Assessment of IDPs in Iraq



For the poor and borderline dietary diversity households, the loss of their jobs hampers their ability to meet food consumption needs, gain access social services and generate savings and assets. Of the households in these two groups, 77% said that the majority of their food was purchased while around 40% mention the PDS as a second main source of food. One quarter reported gifts from friends and relative as their second main source of food while food relief from NGOs was reported as the third main source of food by one third of the households. Borrowing food was reported as a third main source of food by one quarter the households in these two groups.

Given that most of their food has to be bought where PDS is not functioning, the only asset available to help them acquire purchasing power is their own labour. Gaining access to labour opportunities in Iraq, however, proves difficult. At the time of the survey, 70 and 59% of the heads of households interviewed in these poor and borderline dietary diversity groups were not working.

Adequate food consumption – 5%: Households in this group have daily access to cereals and carbohydrates and a good combination of other foods (i.e. pulses, milk, eggs, vegetables, sweets, fruits and meat) are eaten on a regular basis. 5% of the surveyed households were classified in this adequate dietary diversity group.