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Assessment of Economic Needs in Southern Iraq

OVERVIEW

This brief provides an overview of an assessment led by the Cash Consortium for Iraq (CCI) and the International Labour Organization (ILO) to study socio-economic vulnerability and identify opportunities for cash and market-based programs in Southern Iraq. The assessment period is January – April 2021 with findings disseminated between April – May 2021.

Objectives

- Provide an evidence base on level and characteristics of socio-economic vulnerability in Southern Iraq
- Identify entry points to expand cash and market-based livelihoods programming in Southern Iraq

Rationale

The profile of southern Iraq varies from the northern ‘conflict-affected’ governorates most heavily impacted by the conflict with the Islamic State between 2014-2017. Southern Iraq has seen chronic underinvestment since the 1980s, with cumulative impacts building across the Iran-Iraq War and Gulf War, sectarian marginalization from 1991 under the government of Saddam Hussein, and finally the effects of the latest cycles of conflict between 2003 and present. Southern Iraq is home to the country’s highest poverty rates, and four of the country’s poorest governorates. From 2015 onward, Southern Iraq has gained public attention for large-scale protests spurred by the lack of service provision and economic opportunity. At this stage of Iraq’s post-conflict recovery, to achieve stabilization and development, it is critical to take a needs-driven approach to expand assistance across Iraq’s southern governorates. This is even more important given the broad economic impacts of COVID-19 across Iraq as a whole.

Methodology

The assessment includes a desk review, exploring the structure of the economy in Southern Iraq, followed by three data collection activities outlined below.

- *Key Informant Interviews (20-25 respondents)*: In-depth Interviews on context and high growth potential prospects.
- *Household Survey (960 respondents)*: Urban and rural coverage using randomized sampling exploring vulnerability and economic development factors, including food security, unemployment, and human capital.
- *Enterprise Survey (100 respondents)*: Sampling considers the enterprises’ size and economic sector, exploring sectors with significant job-creation potential, including food processing and construction.



Map: Research area (Nine governorates, aggregated in five zones in Southern Iraq)

Geographical Scope

The desk review covers nine governorates: Babel, Basra, Kerbala, Missan, Muthanna, Najaf, Qadasiyah, Thi-Qar and Wassit. Data collection will take place in five governorates: Basra, Kerbala, Missan, Muthanna and Thi-Qar.¹

¹ Each of the governorates selected for data collection are reflective of five distinct ‘zones’ as clustered by common characteristics: International Trade Zone (Basra); Iran Border Zone (Missan and Wassit); Central Zone (Qadisiyah, Thi-Qar, northern districts of Muthanna); Saudi Border and Desert Zone (Muthanna and Najaf’s southern districts); Capital Area Zone (Babel, Kerbala and Naja’s northern districts)



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ABOUT THE CCI

The CCI is a successful and mature partnership focused on enabling vulnerable Iraqis to meet their basic needs and achieve greater self-reliance through harmonized cash- and market-based assistance at scale. It is comprised of five of the largest International Non-Governmental Organizations operational in Iraq: the Danish Refugee Council, the International Rescue Committee, the Norwegian Refugee Council, Oxfam, and Mercy Corps as the lead agency. The CCI has delivered harmonized programming across 13 governorates in Iraq since its formation in 2015. Its partner organizations have had a longstanding presence in Iraq, working across humanitarian and development programs. CCI partner organizations collectively implement over \$100 million USD in economic recovery assistance, inclusive of market-driven training and job development programming. This assistance targets both under-employed individuals (with particular attention to youth and women), and enterprises with the capacity to grow and generate new employment opportunities.

ABOUT THE ILO IN IRAQ

In March 2020, the ILO opened its first Iraq country coordination office in Baghdad to support the government, workers and employers in promoting decent work and increasing employment opportunities, as part of the country's post-conflict reconstruction. In 2019, the ILO launched the country's first Decent Work Country Programme (DWCP) in close consultation with Iraq's constituents, to ensure alignment with the Iraqi national development frameworks. In line with the first DWCP (2019–2023), the ILO, with support from the European Union, is implementing a project to enhance labor governance, inspection and working conditions in Iraq, in response to the COVID-19. Emphasis is placed on compliance with decent work in the agricultural sector to help farmers move towards compliance with labor standards, build their knowledge and capacity, enhance their employability through skills development and help labor inspectors carry out their functions.