HPG WORKING PAPER

The lives and livelihoods of internally displaced people in Mosul, Iraq

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September 2025

Implemented by:

How to cite: Holloway, K., Fouad, L., Shikh Aiyob, M., et al. (2025) *The lives and livelihoods of internally displaced people in Mosul, Iraq*. HPG working paper. London: ODI Global (www.odi.org/en/publications/the-lives-and-livelihoods-of-internally-displaced-people-in-mosul-iraq).

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Cover graphic: Ghazal Qadri

Acknowledgements

The Humanitarian Policy Group (HPG)'s work is directed by our Integrated Programme, a multi-year body of research spanning a range of issues, countries and emergencies, allowing us to examine critical issues facing humanitarian policy and practice and influence key debates in the sector. This paper is part of HPG's 'Collective action in crises: rights, resilience and reform' Integrated Programme. The authors would like to thank HPG's Integrated Programme donors whose funding enables us to pursue the research agenda. With thanks, too, to International Organization for Migration (IOM) in Iraq and KfW Development Bank for its support for this case study.

The authors would like to thank the internally displaced people, non-displaced residents of Mosul and key informants who participated in this study for giving their valuable time and insights. They would also like to thank the Middle East Consulting Solutions researchers in Iraq who wished to remain unnamed as authors of this study, but who are no less important than those who are named. Thanks also to the numerous people both within HPG and in other organisations who peer reviewed this study and gave constructive and considered feedback. This study could not have been completed without oversight by Caitlin Sturridge, project management by Clement Bruce, editing by Sara Hussain and design and production by Jessica Rennoldson.

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1 Introduction

Internal displacement in Iraq peaked at more than 6 million people between 2014 and 2017 due to the conflict with the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) (Linnecar et al., 2024). Ninewa Governorate was the most affected area, with more than one-third of Iraq's internally displaced persons (IDPs) coming from this region (Government of Iraq, 2020). In Ninewa, there were two major periods of displacement – the first at the start of the conflict in 2014 and the second during efforts to liberate the region from ISIS control in 2017 (IOM Iraq, 2023). By the end of 2024, over 1 million people were displaced within Iraq and over 220,000 of those were in Ninewa – the governorate still hosting the most IDPs in the country (IOM, 2025).

Mosul – the capital of Ninewa and second-largest city in Iraq (see Figure 1) – welcomed large numbers of displaced people from surrounding rural areas as well as people from other parts of the city. During the conflict, people moved from Right Mosul (West Mosul) to Left Mosul (East Mosul), as Left Mosul was the first part of the city to be liberated (ICRC, 2018). While Iraq is home to a diverse mix of ethnic and religious communities (including Arabs, Kurds, Turkmen, Assyrians, Christians and Yazidis), the majority of those residing in Mosul are Sunni Muslim.

This paper explores how IDPs in Mosul are rebuilding their lives and livelihoods amidst poor economic conditions, crumbling infrastructure and ongoing risks from extreme and erratic weather exacerbated by climate change. Eight years after the liberation of the city, the 85,000 IDPs who remain in Mosul District, which includes Mosul city and surrounding towns and villages, are unlikely to return to their places of origin, either because they prefer to stay where they are or because security reasons prevent them from returning home (IOM, 2025). This reality underlines the importance of IDPs finding ways to support themselves and their families in their city of residence.

Most IDP camps in areas under the administration of the government of Iraq were closed between 2020 and 2021,[1] though the closures of 'official camps' led to the establishment of informal settlements – or camps by another name (Linnecar et al., 2024). In 2022, almost 1 million Iraqis were in informal IDP sites (UN OCHA, 2023). One government official in Babylon Governorate suggested that IDPs who had yet to return home by 10 September 2023 should no longer be considered IDPs, following the deadline set by the Iraqi Ministry of Migration and Displacement (Kurdistan 24, 2023, cited in Travers, 2024). Yet this paper shows how, for many IDPs, their displacement status continues to affect their ability to build and sustain livelihoods in their current cities.

1 Many IDPs from Ninewa remain displaced in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, where there were still 21 IDP camps as of November 2024 (UNHCR, 2024).

Figure 1 Map of Iraq, showing Mosul in the Ninewa Governorate

Source: Based on a map by the New Humanitarian (www.thenewhumanitarian.org/photo/200709246/map-iraq-highlighting-mosul-ninawa-governorate)

While there has been some attention and increasing acknowledgement on the part of donors, policymakers and practitioners of the importance of supporting displaced people's livelihoods as a path towards economic self-reliance, there has been less research dedicated to understanding what barriers are faced by displaced people – particularly IDPs living in urban areas – and their own priorities and preferences. Most livelihoods interventions have focused on either the micro level (e.g. individual microfinance and vocational training, particularly true of humanitarian programming) or macro level (i.e. wider economic, social, political and climatic trends, particularly true of development programming). Between these two lies the meso-level 'scaffolding' that allows people to build and grow their livelihoods on their own terms, such as borrowing practices, childcare, social care, housing, transport, education and healthcare, including support for trauma and mental health (Crawford and Holloway, 2024; Sturridge, 2024). This scaffolding is often not adequately addressed by either humanitarian or development actors. Mosul is no exception.

1.1 Mosul in the broader context of the 'humanitarian reset'

The international humanitarian system, led by the United Nations (UN) – that had existed in various forms in Iraq since 2003 – had supported the Iraqi government with addressing unmet humanitarian needs throughout various waves of conflict and displacement. This support began to scale down in 2022 with the deactivation of the cluster coordination system (Travers, 2024). Yet international organisations are still working in Mosul, supporting IDPs, returnees and others living in the city who are struggling. How long they will stay remains an open question, particularly in the current era of aid cuts and an emphasis on cost savings and prioritisation.

Against this backdrop, the findings highlight a gap between the assumption that displacement in Iraq was nearing resolution, and the reality that many IDPs remain in protracted and deteriorating situations. The gradual retreat of humanitarian actors from Mosul has not been matched by meaningful investment in essential services, systems, infrastructure or job creation and has exposed the limits of existing 'transition' frameworks and narratives.

This case carries broader relevance for global conversations about the future of humanitarian action, especially in the context of the ongoing 'humanitarian reset' led by the Emergency Relief Coordinator (IASC, 2025). As the sector rethinks its operational model amidst funding shortfalls and rising need, Mosul offers a cautionary example of what happens when transitions are declared before conditions on the ground allow for durable solutions.

Crucially, this report challenges the persistent framing of return as the only viable durable solution. In Mosul, return is often politically fraught, economically unfeasible or untenable due to insecurity, while local integration, though largely ignored in formal policy frameworks, is already occurring in practice. Even so, it remains unsupported and under-recognised.

1.2 Methodology

The findings of this study are based on a series of semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions with internally displaced and non-displaced residents in Mosul, and aid actors[2] in Iraq and globally (see Table 1). Empirical evidence was gathered between January and March 2025 by a research team from Middle East Consulting Solutions and ODI Global's Humanitarian Policy Group. Three validation focus groups were held in April 2025 with 30 previous respondents to confirm and nuance the initial analysis (one with internally displaced men, one with non-displaced men and one with both internally displaced and non-displaced women).

Table 1 Breakdown of study respondents

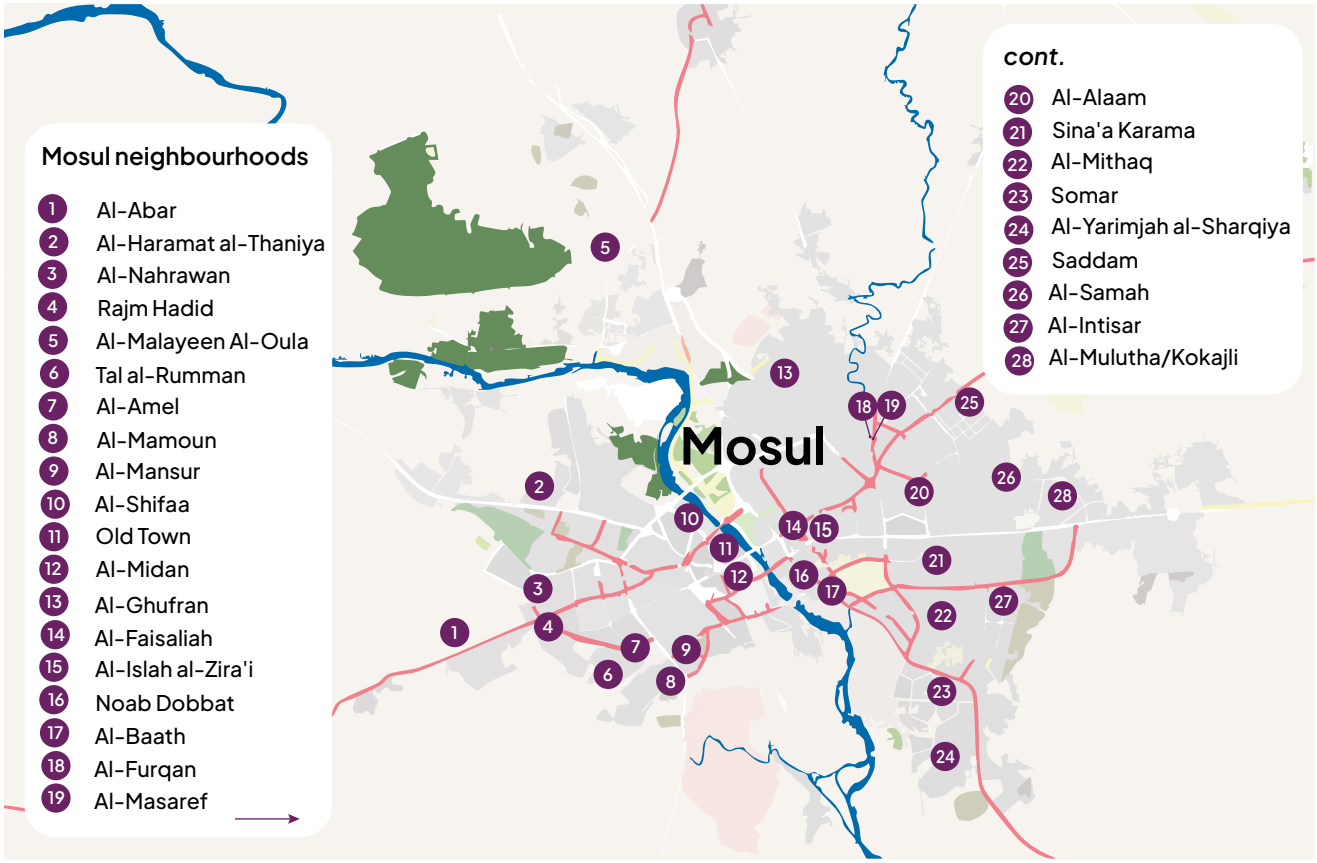
Category	Gender	Age	Total
IDPs	Men	18–25	26
		26–49	50
		50+	13
	Women	18–25	13
		26–49	41
		50+	14
	Total IDPs		**157**
Non-displaced residents	Men		26
	Women		24
	Total non-displaced residents		**50**
Key informants			16
Total			**223**

All 157 IDPs interviewed were either still displaced or self-identifying as IDPs at the time of the interview. Of these, 79% (124 individuals) had been displaced more than 5 years, 14% (22) had been displaced 3–5 years, and 7% (11) had been displaced less than 3 years. IDPs who have been displaced less than three years have been forced to move because of security, economic or environmental factors. Even though the war ended in 2017 – more than seven years ago – there are still post-conflict tensions in some areas or social stigma associated with kinship ties to ISIS fighters, both of which compel families to move to larger cities like Mosul. Others are driven towards Mosul due to the lack of job opportunities and limited basic services (particularly healthcare) in their areas of origin, which they perceive will be better in a city. Finally, the effects of climate change over the last few years – especially recurrent drought – have in turn affected work in the agricultural sector, causing families to move to urban areas.

2 Aid actor is used broadly throughout the report to refer to any person providing assistance, including but not limited to humanitarian and development actors, government officials, donors, UN representatives and local, national and international non-governmental organisation (NGO) workers.

The IDPs and non-displaced residents interviewed live in 28 neighbourhoods across Mosul. Eleven of these neighbourhoods are in Right Mosul, or the western side of the city; 15 are in Left Mosul, or the eastern side of the city; one is in the north of the city; and one is in the south (see Figure 2). Reflecting the broader demographics of the city, these neighbourhoods predominantly consist of Sunni Arab communities, with some neighbourhoods also hosting minority communities, such as Rajm Hadid (Kurds, Turkmens) and Al-Hirmat al-Thaniya (Kurds, Turkmens, Assyrians and Yazidis). Over the last decade, these neighbourhoods have been exposed to compounding cycles of conflict. These areas differ in terms of size, location and exposure to conflict, yet the prevailing conditions and underlying characteristics of communities remain similar citywide. These range from considerable damage to critical infrastructure, prolonged displacement and limited livelihoods opportunities, to insufficient basic services, especially water, education, healthcare and electricity. See the Appendix for more detailed information about Mosul's neighbourhoods.

Figure 2 Map of interview locations in Mosul, Iraq



2 Economic barriers

2.1 Mosul's stagnant economy

The 2014–2017 conflict significantly damaged infrastructure in Iraq, with high levels of destruction recorded in Ninewa Governorate specifically. The UN estimated that 50–75% of Ninewa's infrastructure was damaged, and 60–75% of industrial companies destroyed alongside numerous housing sites, the water network, roads and bridges (Government of Iraq, 2020). In Mosul, most of the destruction was concentrated in Right Mosul (West Mosul), which is also now home to many IDPs who have made their homes among damaged and abandoned buildings, with no official access to power or water networks.

Yet Mosul's economic downturn preceded the conflict. According to the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), 'Mosul city was in a state of crisis some ten years before it was officially occupied' by ISIS in 2014 (2016: 11). In the 1970s and 1980s, industry in Mosul thrived, particularly the cement, textile, clothing, wool, leather, pharmaceutical, sugar and food-processing sectors (ibid.). However, internally displaced men explained in a focus group how since 2003, many government-run and private factories have either declined in production or been closed altogether, such as factories involved in pharmaceuticals, spinning and weaving, sugar, soft drinks and dairy. A key informant from a UN agency also noted that with the closure of so many factories, these goods have been replaced by imports from China, so that even if factories were rebuilt, it is unlikely they would be able to compete on price.

The events of the past two decades have created a stagnant economy for everyone – not just IDPs (IOM Iraq, 2023). The average unemployment rate in Ninewa has been described as 'alarmingly high', and though Mosul is doing better than other parts of the governorate, average rates still reach 50% (Nadhim, 2024: 11). What was once a thriving secondary city is now struggling to rebuild both physically and economically.

2.2 Over-reliance on informal work

There are two important distinctions between IDPs and other residents in Mosul that make Mosul's economy even more challenging for those who have been displaced. First, IDPs exhibit an over-reliance on informal work. Informal work brings with it irregular working hours and the inability to cover unexpected expenses. Fewer than one in four IDP households have a stable income source, and only approximately one in seven are able to afford an unexpected expense (IOM Iraq, 2023). Only 30% of IDPs have livelihood conditions at the same level as non-displaced households in Mosul (ibid.).

Two-thirds of the IDPs interviewed individually for this study relied on some form of informal labour to meet their basic needs. The most mentioned sectors for informal work were blacksmithing, carpentry, cleaning, construction, food preparation, laundry, painting, street vending, tailoring, transportation and water network maintenance. Even those who had succeeded in obtaining a more regular job, like

working in a barbershop or a factory with a salary and fixed hours, continued with informal labour on their days off to earn additional income. Many IDPs felt they could not save any money or make any progress towards rebuilding their lives due to their inconsistent income.

IDPs' displacement status also increases their vulnerability to shocks and limits their ability to claim their full rights as citizens or to access services in the same way as non-displaced residents in the city (Linnecar et al., 2024). For many IDPs in Mosul, formal employment remains out of reach due to legal and administrative barriers, including lack of civil documentation. A 2023 REACH survey across informal displacement sites estimated that around 14% of IDPs lacked civil documentation, but in operational areas with long-term displacement, that number rose to 38% (REACH, 2023). Without a valid identity document (ID), IDPs are unable to complete formal hiring processes, access social protection schemes like Iraq's Social Safety Net or secure legal contracts. A business owner highlighted that the number of IDPs working in Mosul is small due to the various bureaucratic hurdles they have to overcome, such as the need to provide a letter from the mukhtar (community leader), intelligence service or national security forces proving the person is truly displaced and residing in Mosul as an IDP and that they do not have legal issues, or ties to ISIS. This lack of documentation not only hinders access to public services but also effectively excludes large segments of the displaced population from formal recovery and employment pathways (Linnecar et al., 2024).

IDPs also noted that not only was informal work scarce, unstable or unavailable due to a lack of documentation, but it led to a challenging and stressful life. As one man who has been displaced to Mosul for less than three years remarked:

> My work is intermittent and inconsistent, forcing me to borrow money from friends and then repay when I return to work. This situation causes me constant anxiety.

Indeed, debt is a common livelihood strategy in Iraq, with more than 60% of all IDP and returnee households who responded to the 2022 Multi-Cluster Needs Assessment owing more than 90,000 Iraqi dinar – approximately $70 – per person (UN OCHA, 2023). The need to repay debt was the fifth most reported household priority across IDP and refugee households in 2022, following livelihoods support and employment first, then shelter/housing, healthcare and food (ibid.).

2.3 Lack of financial capital

The second important distinction is that IDPs also typically suffer from a lack of financial capital, due to having expended their resources before and during their displacement and the difficulty they may face in securing new sources of reliable and sustainable income (Gaviria Betancur, 2024). One internally displaced woman described the situation:

> Many displaced people once owned their businesses, but after being forced to leave their homes, they lost the resources needed to run those businesses.

A lack of capital was mentioned explicitly by three in four IDPs individually interviewed for this study as the main reason they were unable to establish (or re-establish) and grow their own business – a goal that many of the IDP respondents shared as a way to progress out of informal work. As an internally displaced man explained:

> I know that the blacksmith profession is profitable, but I do not have enough money to open my own shop, so I am forced to work for shop owners who do not offer good wages. They take advantage of our need for work as displaced people and do not take into account our circumstances.

As other research has shown, one of the best determinants of how successful the livelihoods of refugees and displaced people will be is whether they are able to bring some form of financial capital with them when they are forced to move (Jacobsen, 2005; Nguyen et al., 2021).

3 Social dynamics

3.1 Limited social networks

In Mosul, people predominantly access employment not through formal labour markets but via kinship ties, tribal affiliations and community-based connections. Hiring is often based on existing relationships, 'wasta' (patronage) and reputational trust rather than open competition (IRC, 2017). As one male business owner interviewed for this project explained:

> I hired a person because I am familiar with his work and the skills needed for my operations, especially since he is from the same area as me.

For IDPs, however, finding opportunities in a system that relies on connections with a community where they have not always lived can prove difficult. As an internally displaced man elaborated:

> Competition in the construction sector affects everyone, but it can be particularly difficult for IDPs who lack a strong network of connections to help them find jobs easily.

Numerous IDP interviewees described how opportunities were primarily linked to who the business owners know and who is recommended to them. As one internally displaced woman detailed:

> In my village, I used to work three days a week for good pay, but after my displacement, I only worked one or two days a week for very little pay, until the employer laid me off and hired one of her relatives in my place.

Employers who do hire outside of their family or social networks often do so only when roles are especially arduous or require more labour than their usual network can supply. Even then, IDPs often face a probationary period to prove themselves before gaining trust or receiving a referral. This reliance on social proximity creates barriers for the urban displaced, who typically arrive in the city without such networks (DSP and IMPACT, 2021; Al-Shami et al., 2022).

By contrast, a few business owners interviewed for this study viewed the integration of IDPs into the workforce as both a moral responsibility and a practical opportunity. Several employers described feeling a strong sense of duty to support IDPs, highlighting the importance of helping others rebuild their lives and contribute economically. Others noted that displaced individuals often show high levels of motivation and a willingness to acquire new skills, which makes them appealing hires. For others, hiring IDPs was not only a way to fill labour gaps but also a means to strengthen social cohesion and IDP integration. Yet several key informants suggested that the main motivation for business owners in hiring IDPs was likely their lower wages, putting IDPs at risk of economic exploitation.

3.2 Social and cultural norms

Social and cultural norms continue to shape the livelihood landscape in Mosul, as they heavily influence both the acceptability and feasibility of participating in the labour market – particularly for displaced women. Traditional views reinforce a division of labour that confines women to a narrow range of roles deemed culturally 'appropriate'. These include sewing, tailoring, food preparation, hairdressing and, in some rural areas, agricultural or livestock activities – jobs that are often home-based (IOM Iraq, 2024). Even within these limited options, women must typically seek permission or approval from male relatives such as fathers, husbands or brothers, and in the case of women-headed households, the late husband's extended family. As one internally displaced woman explained:

> The traditions that put restrictions on women's work still pose a major obstacle to us. For example, women cannot work in all sectors, especially in places where men are present.

These restrictions are more pronounced for younger or unmarried women, who face heightened scrutiny and fears of harassment when seeking employment outside the home. By contrast, older women or widows may receive slightly more societal leniency, albeit often coupled with increased caregiving burdens and limited access to viable income sources (IOM Iraq, 2024). The impact of these norms is often compounded by other circumstances, such as the loss of a primary breadwinner. Many displaced women, particularly widows or those whose husbands are absent, have been forced into economic roles for which they were neither prepared nor previously permitted to take up.

The lack of diversification in women's livelihood opportunities is also evident in local market dynamics. In Mosul district and other areas like Kirkuk (in the Kirkuk Governorate in northern Iraq) and Sinjar (in Ninewa Governorate), women's participation is largely confined to small-scale trades deemed suitable for women. A study in Kirkuk noted that women generally only work in confectionery, beauty salons and sewing, and do not consider investing in other types of businesses (Nadhim, 2024). Statistics underscore the depth of the challenge: Ninewa Governorate has the highest percentage of young women aged 15 to 24 not in education, employment or training at 75.3% (ILO, 2022). This figure reflects not only the limited availability of opportunities but also the weight of social norms that discourage or prevent young women from engaging with them.

Yet displacement can also offer an unexpected opportunity. Several women reported that relocation to Mosul city allowed them to escape more conservative environments in their areas of origin.[3] As one woman explained,

> After my husband died, I could not work because our village community is very conservative... But here in Mosul, I found a good job opportunity that enables me to support my children.

3 Similar findings appeared in an earlier HPG study on the impact of displacement on gender roles in relation to people displaced to the city of Peshawar, Pakistan. In this instance, women and girls from the Federally Administered Tribal Areas moved to Peshawar and found that they now had the opportunity for more movement outside of the house, including for work, and for girls to go to school (Levine et al., 2019).

The integration of women into economic life is not only an urgent need for households under strain, but also a structural necessity for the recovery of Mosul's economy. The war resulted in a sharp increase in the number of widows and women whose husbands are missing – many of whom are displaced and facing significant challenges in securing housing and sustaining their families. Without death certificates, women with missing husbands often struggle to be formally recognised as widows by the government, which limits their access to state support. If women are not economically integrated now, the city risks losing long-term capacity needed for future growth.

3.3 Unpaid care work

In most cases, Iraq's social and cultural norms mean that caregiving responsibilities for family members who are ill or who have disabilities, for children and for elderly relatives falls on women – whether they are displaced or not. This is also true worldwide, resulting in limited education and employment opportunities and resulting in persistent gender inequality (GADN, 2017; Coffey et al., 2020).

For many internally displaced women in Mosul, these caregiving responsibilities must be juggled with paid work, in order to supplement their husbands' salary to make ends meet. Other times, women have moved with their children to the city following the death or disappearance of their husbands, and are both primary caregiver and breadwinner. In either instance, many women seek alternatives that allow them to fulfil both roles simultaneously. Two internally displaced men mentioned in a focus group that when their children were young, their wives helped them financially by making pastries and bread at home and selling them. After the number of children increased, however, their wives were unable to do this work because of their increased responsibilities. This affected the economic and social stability of the families.

Other accounts reveal how conflict and resulting displacement have created additional caregiving demands. One internally displaced woman recounted:

> I live with my father, who suffers from chronic diseases, such as diabetes. I also have to support my brother's three orphaned children, because he was killed by ISIS because of his work in the government army. Their mother abandoned them and married another man. These circumstances place enormous responsibilities on me.

The societal expectation for women to act as caregivers, even at the cost of their own economic stability, constrains their ability to pursue formal or full-time employment.

Among interviewees, working from home emerged as the preference for internally displaced women, as it helps maintain caregiving responsibilities as well as avoid societal judgment. One woman said:

> It's positive for me because I work from home and don't have to leave my children alone. I can take care of them and work at the same time.

However, these options are typically limited in scale and profitability and do little to change broader structural exclusions, as they often result in less favourable business outcomes than working outside of the home (IOM Iraq, 2024).

4 Essential service and infrastructure challenges

Infrastructure challenges in Mosul preclude an enabling environment for livelihoods, thereby preventing IDPs from re-establishing their lives. Structural supports – the meso-level scaffolding – such as safe and affordable healthcare, housing and transport, allow people the time, space and financial resources to seek out their own livelihoods opportunities and support their families on their own terms (Crawford and Holloway, 2024). Yet in Mosul, there are many challenges to these structural supports.

4.1 Healthcare

Healthcare challenges have a direct and debilitating impact on displaced people's ability to sustain livelihoods. For many IDPs in Mosul, particularly those working as informal labourers, being able to work depends on being healthy or having access to healthcare, which is often something they cannot afford, due to their lack of capital. The health system in Mosul was severely damaged during the conflict: hospitals were bombed, medical staff fled and public services that were once free now require payment (ICRC, 2018). Additionally, the conflict meant that people no longer had – and in many cases still do not have – adequate access to water and electricity, increasing the risk of disease and injury (ibid.).

Since paying for healthcare is a barrier to access, many urban IDPs go without care until they simply cannot work, and minor conditions go untreated until they become chronic or disabling. As one internally displaced woman said:

> I work as a seamstress sometimes, but not regularly because I have a herniated disc in my lower back that makes me unable to sew regularly.

When access to healthcare is not available, illness is not just a health issue, it is an economic one. Nearly a third of displaced households in Iraq spend more than 25% of their budget on health-related costs, a burden that drives high levels of debt and forces painful trade-offs (UN OCHA, 2023). Many IDPs interviewed said that they often must cut back on their own and their children's food to repay debts incurred due to healthcare costs or to pay for medical treatment.

Iraq has the institutional basis for a functioning social protection system. In Mosul, specific welfare salaries exist, with approximately $170 provided monthly to people with disabilities and $200 to widows monthly, according to interview respondents. These payments target households without income, employment or marketable skills, and they are intended to support widows, divorced women and people with disabilities.

In practice, however, access to these benefits remains inconsistent and highly exclusionary. Many IDPs are unaware of the welfare programmes or unclear on the application requirements. Access is also heavily dependent on possessing a full set of civil documentation, often difficult for IDPs to obtain due to displacement-related disruptions. Even when applications are submitted, bureaucratic delays are common, with some waiting three to four years for approval. This undermines the intended protective function of the welfare system and leaves many vulnerable people without timely support.

Alongside these physical health challenges, IDPs experience mental health struggles that are likely to affect their ability to access and maintain livelihoods. These psychological difficulties are linked to the violence and upheaval they have endured. Economic hardship, including lack of a stable source of income and livelihood opportunities for displaced people, emerged frequently from the interviews as a source of stress. One internally displaced woman explained that despite her husband having a bachelor's degree in pedagogy, his low salary is not enough to cover household expenses and growing debt, placing the family under constant psychological pressure.

Debt, in particular, emerged as a source of distress. Many IDPs often rely on limited sources of credit, such as local food vendors, who may be the only ones willing to extend goods on trust. Missing repayment deadlines can result in losing access to these critical supplies, leaving displaced families vulnerable to food insecurity. This uncertainty creates stress: IDPs described worrying about meeting obligations to, securing necessities from, and managing relationships with those to whom they are indebted, including informal debts to friends. As one displaced woman expressed, debt creates a cycle of pressure and fear:

> This [debt] situation was causing me constant anxiety and fear of the unknown future, wondering if we will stay trapped in this endless loop.

Comparatively, several IDPs noted that losing their homes and being forced into unfamiliar environments caused feelings of isolation and grief. For others, exploitative or unstable employment further undermined psychological wellbeing. One internally displaced man recounted the toll of unpredictable work and emotionally volatile employers, while another described feeling trapped in exhausting 12-hour shifts under extreme heat, resulting in both physical and mental fatigue.

IDP interviewees also spoke of difficulty concentrating in their jobs, coping with pressure and balancing work with studies. Some business owners acknowledged that the psychological impact of conflict and displacement could affect productivity and integration. Stigma and social discrimination further compound the issue, with some employers hesitant to hire displaced individuals due to perceived emotional instability.

4.2 Housing

Housing scarcity and high costs remain significant structural barriers to sustainable livelihoods for urban IDPs, with inadequate shelter conditions, insecurity of tenure and unaffordable rents intersecting to undermine long-term recovery and economic reintegration. Recent studies have shown that IDPs who live in adequate housing are more likely to achieve financial stability (IOM, 2023).

In Mosul, interviewees frequently described the financial burden of rent as a primary obstacle to stability, and with limited income sources, most earnings are quickly absorbed by rent. Many noted that they had to accept poor housing conditions because it was all they could afford. Informal settlements established on government land are constantly threatened with eviction or demolition. In some cases, families moved frequently in search of lower rents, leading to further instability and disconnection from markets and support networks – thereby undermining sustainable livelihoods. Others relied on friends or extended family for temporary shelter in unfinished or damaged houses, which brought some financial relief but did not eliminate the challenges posed by inadequate housing.

Post-ISIS reconstruction efforts have lagged or been concentrated in one part of the city. Over 135 locations in the city were destroyed, and basic services, such as electricity, water and sanitation, are under massive strain (UN-Habitat, 2016). As a result, many IDPs live in unfinished or makeshift shelters with poor ventilation and sanitation and which lack electricity and water provision. One IDP stated:

> Due to the high rentals in other areas, I was unable to move to a better place, so we now live in slums that lack basic services such as water and electricity.

Another described their dwelling as 'a structure unfit for habitation', meaning without windows or a floor.

Poor living conditions among displaced populations continue to exacerbate health and wellbeing conditions. Many IDPs reside in unfinished or structurally damaged buildings that offer inadequate protection from weather conditions, often leading to cold, damp environments and persistent overcrowding. These conditions cause recurring health issues, including respiratory illnesses, especially amongst children; residents report exposure to rainwater due to leaking ceilings and an inability to insulate their homes properly.

4.3 Transport

The spatial disconnect between affordable and available housing, often situated on the city's peripheries, and employment opportunities concentrated in central or industrial zones, imposes both financial and logistical burdens on IDPs. Their daily commute, frequently involving multiple transit modes, is time-consuming and economically taxing, particularly for those engaged in low-wage or informal work. Many IDPs interviewed expressed a desire to relocate closer to their workplaces to alleviate transportation costs and improve their quality of life. A freelance carpenter and blacksmith highlighted the unpredictability and expense of commuting:

> The distance between the workplaces is often far, and I have to take a taxi to get there, if the employer does not provide a means of transportation. And this makes it difficult and costly.

For some, the cost of commuting from the peripheral areas where displaced people have been able to find housing to the parts of the city where they may be able to find work is so prohibitive that they have stopped working altogether, stating that the minimal wages did not justify the expense and effort.

Employers, too, are affected by these dynamics. A business owner observed that commuting employees often face delays, impacting business operations:

> Sometimes, workers face challenges due to the long distance between their homes and the workplace. Due to the city's large size, commuting between different areas can take more than an hour, causing them to be late for work at times.

This has led to a preference for hiring individuals residing closer to the workplace, inadvertently disadvantaging IDPs who typically inhabit the city's outskirts.

The challenges are compounded by Mosul's post-conflict urban landscape. The city's infrastructure, including roads and public transit systems, suffered extensive damage during the conflict, impeding mobility and access to services, making commutes longer and more arduous for residents, particularly those in peripheral areas. Moreover, the lack of affordable and reliable public transportation options forces many IDPs to rely on informal or expensive private means. This reliance not only strains their limited financial resources but also exposes them to safety risks, especially during adverse weather conditions.

5 Extreme and erratic weather

5.1 Intensifying climate change

Iraq is among the most climate-vulnerable countries globally, with summer temperatures soaring above 50°C in some areas (IRC, 2024). These challenges intersect with infrastructural limitations, housing insecurity and precarious labour conditions, creating a compounding set of vulnerabilities for displaced populations whose survival often depends on informal, weather-exposed work. According to Islam and Wilson (2024: 20), 'Iraq's climate is changing faster than people can adapt'.

While conflict-related displacement in Iraq has improved greatly since 2017, climate-related displacement is on the rise due to growing temperature extremes and decreasing rainfall that are exacerbating natural hazard-related and slow-onset disasters, such as dust storms and droughts, leading to desertification and water scarcity. In 2024, there were twice as many internal displacement movements in Iraq due to disasters (46,000) than due to conflict and violence (23,000) (IDMC, 2025). Nearly all the disaster-related internal displacements last year were due to drought; seven million people are now at risk of being displaced by drought (ibid.; CARE International in Iraq, 2024).

Although the most extreme impacts of climate change are concentrated in southern Iraq, Ninewa in the northwest is not exempt. Farmers in rural areas of the governorate are being displaced by drought, with many leaving their lands and moving to urban areas to find work (Skills House, 2023). According to a key informant, the only farmers in rural areas of Ninewa who can harvest a sustainable crop are those who have access to boreholes and groundwater, as rainfall is no longer reliable enough for agricultural livelihoods. Climate change has also been cited as a barrier preventing the return of IDPs to their areas of origin in Ninewa, due to limited livelihoods opportunities, as well as causing secondary displacement when returnees find that drought has made their livelihood no longer viable and are forced to move again (CARE International in Iraq, 2024; IDMC, 2025).

Urban areas like Mosul are not exempt from the effects of climate change either. In particular, the urban heat island effect sees temperatures rising in urban areas faster than rural areas due to increased air and water pollution, lower air circulation, urban building materials and impervious surfaces, as well as human activities (Abed et al., 2024). IDPs living in urban areas are often more likely to live in parts of cities – the informal settlements and peripheries – that are most vulnerable to environmental risks. Not only do urban areas experience extreme and erratic weather patterns themselves, but they will also feel knock-on effects of climate change in rural areas, such as the quantity and quality of raw materials coming in for processing and manufacturing, as well as what is available for consumption.

5.2 Climatic impacts on IDP livelihoods

The impact of extreme and erratic weather events – particularly heatwaves, prolonged droughts and seasonal flooding – on livelihood stability was a recurring theme across interviews. While a changing

climate impacts both displaced and non-displaced people alike, non-displaced people are more likely than displaced people to have resources and the ability to cope with and adapt to these impacts. Climate change also impacts livelihoods unevenly, and informal work – which is used disproportionately by IDPs in Mosul – is particularly vulnerable. IDPs interviewed for this study described how weather-related work stoppages have led to repeated job switching, as they search for alternative income during the most challenging seasons. This often results in an erosion of skills and employability, with the inability to work consistently in one profession resulting in a lower possibility of being rehired in the future.

5.2.1 Heat and drought

Heat and drought have a direct and debilitating effect on productivity, especially for IDPs engaged in physically intensive labour such as construction, plastering, cement mixing, carpentry, blacksmithing and market vending. Many of these jobs take place in outdoor or poorly ventilated spaces, where protection from the sun and access to adequate cooling measures are limited or entirely absent. IDPs working in cement and plastering explained that they cannot use some of the machines because they overheat, noting that high temperatures affect both physical stamina and the performance of materials, with plaster drying too quickly or unevenly in intense heat.

IDPs working in produce markets and agriculture face related, but distinct, impacts. Vegetable vendors reported that high temperatures during summer months lead to rapid spoilage of goods, forcing them to sell at lower prices or absorb financial losses. These losses are compounded by decreased customers during the hottest parts of the day, as people avoid shopping in open-air markets.

Health risks associated with extreme heat are also widely reported. Prolonged exposure leads to symptoms of heat exhaustion, dehydration and, in severe cases, heatstroke. The risks are intensified by poor housing infrastructure, since many IDPs live in makeshift or semi-permanent dwellings with roofs made from corrugated iron or other heat-retaining materials. Several IDPs mentioned the difficulty of sleeping or resting due to indoor temperatures and the increased reliance on electricity for fans and coolers – costs that strain already limited budgets.

Drought, while less immediately visible, also affects livelihoods indirectly. For those working in agriculture or transporting agricultural goods, lower crop yields driven by water scarcity reduce both the availability and affordability of produce, which in turn affect market vendors and seasonal farm labourers. The slowdown or halting of agricultural and construction projects due to high temperatures and drought also results in lost daily wages or even job loss. In a focus group with internally displaced women, two participants mentioned that working in high temperatures has become very difficult for their husbands in the construction industry, so they stop working on hot days. Another internally displaced man described his work on a relative's farm:

> Because of the drought and lack of rain, the crops were damaged. I was not paid, my work stopped, my employers lost all their crops and I lost my job.

These climate-related disruptions are a key driver of displacement in Iraq, particularly in regions such as the Ninewa Plains and southern governorates, where farming remains a primary livelihood.

5.2.2 Flooding

Flooding presents a different, though equally disruptive, set of challenges. Occurring mostly in winter and early spring, seasonal floods lead to work stoppages in construction, masonry and street vending due to impassable roads, damaged work materials and hazardous working conditions. An internally displaced woman recounted that her husband works in welding outside the house, so on rainy days he moves his machinery inside the house, which is significantly disruptive to the rest of the family.

The intersection between poor housing and extreme weather exposure is increasingly evident. During a focus group on extreme weather events, IDPs described how unfinished homes become uninhabitable during winter rains or summer heatwaves. One internally displaced woman said:

> My house consists of one room where 10 people live, and on rainy days, the room floods, making life very difficult.

Others reported spending limited income on short-term mitigation measures such as nylon coverings, makeshift insulation or cement barriers to reduce flood damage or retain heat. These temporary adaptations, while providing some immediate relief, are often financially burdensome and ultimately inadequate.

Transportation-based livelihoods are also highly sensitive to flooding. IDPs working as motorcycle or truck drivers described struggling to operate in waterlogged conditions. Roads in informal settlements are often unpaved and poorly maintained, making them particularly vulnerable to rain and runoff. As one IDP noted:

> During winter, the situation becomes disastrous. The roads aren't paved. When it rains, everything floods, and we can't move.

Drivers face safety risks such as slipping, accidents and damage to their vehicles. This affects both their ability to earn and the consistency of services they can provide to others.

5.2.3 Other forms of extreme weather

In addition to the heat, drought and floods, Mosul is also beset by several other forms of extreme weather – dust storms, fog and even snow – all of which are becoming more frequent and disruptive to people's livelihoods. The World Meteorological Organization (WMO) (2025a) claims sand and dust storms affect roughly 330 million people in more than 150 countries worldwide, with the Middle East

and North Africa contributing more than 80% of global dust. The rise in dust emissions in West Asia in 2024 was attributed to environmental and human-induced factors, such as overgrazing, deforestation, poor land management, rapid urbanisation and drought (WMO, 2025b).

In Mosul, dust storms affect the tile industry specifically, as the dust sticks to the smooth surface of the tiles and changes their colour, and work is sometimes forced to stop completely. Dust storms, fog and snow are all particularly dangerous for vehicles and affect those who work in transportation (e.g. taxi drivers and couriers) or who must use transportation to reach their job sites, as these factors severely restrict vision. Dust and fog also contribute to difficulty breathing for those with poor health.

6 The current aid landscape in Mosul

6.1 The stalled humanitarian transition

In December 2022, the UN deactivated the cluster system that had existed in the country since 2014. The decision to stand down the UN humanitarian system was taken based on the improved humanitarian situation in the country, the reduction in humanitarian funding and the idea that Iraq's continued post-conflict needs could be better served through development, rather than humanitarian, systems. Moreover, since the end of the ISIS conflict in 2017, there have been successful democratic elections, a decline in security threats and a rebounding of Iraq's economy (UN OCHA, 2023; Travers, 2024).

Although ambitious in its scope and scale, the Iraqi government's *National plan for getting IDPs back to their liberated areas* has yet to produce a successful transition away from humanitarian assistance due to insufficient resourcing and underdeveloped implementation strategies. Rather than focus on local integration, the government has consistently prioritised return as the answer to the IDP question. Further progress was made under the Office of the Special Advisor on Solutions to Internal Displacement, though recent funding cuts threaten this progress by shifting attention away from IDPs altogether (Linnecar et al., 2024). For Iraq specifically, funding received in 2022 when the clusters were still active was more than $500 million, whereas this number has dropped to $270 million in 2023 and just over $200 million in 2024. For the first half of 2025, Iraq has received $63 million in reported funding (UN OCHA, n.d.).

This drop in funding compounds Iraq's continued economic challenges as well as increasing threats due to a changing climate. While Iraq is still classified as an upper-middle-income country, its economic recovery has been severely affected by an over-reliance on oil revenues, political instability in both the country and the region, and the decline in international assistance – all of which has resulted in poverty, unemployment and insufficient livelihoods opportunities (IRC, 2024). At the same time, development actors have yet to scale up, since the nation's revenue should theoretically mean it has the capacity to solve its own problems (Islam and Wilson, 2024). While the humanitarian transition is feasible and pragmatic on paper, the country's pre-existing needs – along with the growing threat from climate change – are unlikely to be met by the government alone.

6.2 What aid actors are currently doing in Mosul

Although the cluster system was deactivated at the end of 2022, there remains a large international humanitarian presence in the country since, as one UN worker stated, 'you still have pockets of humanitarian emergency'. Yet, without the cluster system, some key informants felt there was a gap in joint coordination platforms post-deactivation. As one key informant cautioned:

> Whenever you think about what will replace the clusters, make sure they're well-funded well in advance. We thought development funding would rain in, but then Ukraine happened, and it wasn't forthcoming.

Another key informant noted that the humanitarian–development split was divided between population groups, with humanitarian actors focused more on IDPs and development actors on returnees. While this division remains, it is highly unlikely that development programmes would have the capacity and ability to extend to IDPs as well, highlighting the need for some sort of continued humanitarian programming.

Many aid actors who are still working in Mosul – including local actors – carry out livelihoods programming, often through microfinance grants to individuals. This type of programming aligns with IDP preferences as it meets their need for capital and allows them to become entrepreneurs. One internally displaced man who benefitted from a livelihoods grant told his story:

> Thanks to this grant, I was able to achieve my dream of opening my own electrical appliance store. The grant was a blessing for me and my family, as it helped me have a stable source of income to support my family and meet our daily needs.

A worker for an organisation that offers the option of training or a grant stated that 'most prefer to have the cash grant than to be retrained', whereas several local organisations interviewed for this study felt that training, such as in tailoring, alongside the provision of capital, such as a sewing machine, at the end of the training provided 'good and noticeable results'. Livelihoods programming that focuses on providing assets, such as vegetable carts or new machinery, rather than removing barriers to participating in the labour market, such as access to documentation or limited social networks, was identified as a challenge to the successful integration of refugee perspectives into aid programming – and a similar challenge persists in Mosul (Barbelet and Wake, 2017).

While aid actors' programming aligns with the kind of support that IDPs want to receive, the scale of aid is insufficient when Mosul's stagnant economy and IDPs' specific vulnerabilities are considered. As one international NGO (INGO) worker explained, their organisation focuses on people affiliated with armed groups, women-headed households and people with disabilities because 'market infrastructure in Mosul isn't built to support these kinds of marginalised groups'. Other local organisations explained that they often face difficulty in helping IDPs since recipients must have a safety paper signed by the mukhtar and the Iraqi intelligence service that guarantees the person has no legal cases or affiliation with ISIS, as well as an endorsement from the mukhtar of the area in which they live to prove their residence. Moreover, helping IDPs start their own businesses does little to overcome the other barriers they face. They may no longer need relationships and referrals to find work, but connections and social networks are also important for establishing and maintaining a customer base (Crawford et al., 2024). Other structural barriers such as healthcare, housing and transport are also not adequately addressed by these types of programmes.

Disparities in terms of aid programming also sometimes arise when international actors provide tailored assistance, including protection, to persecuted minorities such as Christians, Kurds or Yazidis, given the violence they experienced under ISIS. In contrast, displaced Sunnis receive general forms of assistance from aid providers. In some cases, areas with higher concentrations of minority

populations, such as Telkaif in northern parts of Ninewa Governorate home to predominantly Christian and Kurdish communities (UN-Habitat, 2016), tend to benefit from comparatively better infrastructure and service provision.

All these issues are exacerbated by extreme and erratic weather. Although several aid actors mentioned changing their programmes to become more climate-sensitive over the past several years, most of them were local NGOs, rather than international organisations. One local aid actor explained that their programming had not changed, but that they supported people whose livelihoods had been affected by climate change, such as street vendors who were supported in opening small shops or kiosks to protect them from the rain and heat. In this way, they were no longer forced to stop working due to extreme or erratic weather. Similarly, an international organisation has provided a regular covered market in the neighbourhood of Al-Intisar for street vendors to protect them from harsh weather conditions.

Other innovative approaches have targeted the economy at a more macro level, though still on a relatively small scale. For example, one INGO worked with businesses to encourage them to hire displaced people by paying their full salary for the first few months, paying part of their salary for the next few months and finally having the company pay the whole salary moving forward. In this way, the company takes on less risk when hiring someone that is 'unknown' to them, and that person can keep a long-term position – though internal evaluations of this type of project have found only limited success. Another international agency is providing larger grants to small- and medium-sized enterprises, rather than small grants to individuals, so they can grow and expand their business and hire more workers. As one business owner explained:

> I benefitted from this grant to develop the shop, purchase raw materials, equipment and a new advanced wood-cutting machine that I did not have before. Before receiving the grant, I relied on simple and basic machines and equipment, but after receiving the grant, my equipment improved, and I was able to expand my work and recruit other workers, including displaced people who have experience in this field.

Although these types of programmes can be beneficial for the individual recipients and limited numbers of workers through small-scale job creation, they do not go far in terms of addressing large-scale economic stagnation within the city. With the dwindling aid funding and the humanitarian transition, the continuation of programmes like this in the future on a scale that will revitalise Mosul's economy is unlikely.

7 Policy implications

In a displacement context that has transitioned – on paper, if not fully in practice – from emergency assistance under the UN cluster system to a development-centred approach led by the government, there are still large-scale needs across the entire population that are made even more acute for people who have been displaced. These needs are likely to grow exponentially in the future – not because of conflict any longer, but because of the impacts of climate change and the extreme and erratic weather patterns that it creates. And yet, in many ways, the livelihoods programming that aid actors are implementing in Mosul remain largely individualised and more akin to a humanitarian strategy towards improving livelihoods than a development one.

A broader developmental approach that focuses on improving essential services, such as healthcare, housing and transport systems for the most vulnerable areas of Mosul, is appropriate, but it will also take time and resources that have not yet been earmarked for this purpose. Serious thought is required to develop a more feasible long-term strategy, led by the government of Iraq, with long-term public and private funders stepping in to help rebuild the city's infrastructure and economy. Targeting both displaced and non-displaced communities through an area-based approach more accurately addresses the complex interplay of economic conditions and social interactions that exist in urban areas (Crawford and Holloway, 2024). But the most vulnerable populations, of whom IDPs are a significant proportion, still need additional immediate support, and social protection systems are not functioning adequately to meet their needs. Therefore, humanitarians should remain engaged – as they currently are – but they should not be stuck in the more individualised responses that they are used to.

A more strategic approach to addressing the lives and livelihoods of urban IDPs in Mosul is required. While it is true that most IDPs in the city have been there for almost a decade and have no plans to return, their displacement experience continues to contribute to their vulnerabilities and limits their livelihoods options, highlighting the need for continued, and targeted, support for urban IDPs. Local integration is happening already, and should be seen as a viable solution by humanitarian, development and government actors. More should be done to enable integration for IDPs who wish to remain in the city.

7.1 Policy implications for aid actors working in Mosul

Since ISIS left Mosul almost a decade ago, the city has been making steady progress towards its own rehabilitation, though lately this progress has slowed. Displacement numbers have become static. While some of the needs of people affected by conflict have decreased, overall need will likely increase over the coming decade due to climate change. The transition from a UN-led humanitarian response to a government-led development response has stalled, with humanitarian actors still working in the city to address needs. Several large development projects to rebuild the city have got underway, but they have done little to address the scale of destruction across Mosul.

In a context of decreased humanitarian funding, then, aid actors who continue working in Mosul should consider the following recommendations.

To support IDP livelihoods specifically:

- **Trial job-matching services.** Creating opportunities for networking and mentorship across the city within industries may help IDPs – especially those residing in peripheral areas – to expand their social networks, place skilled workers into appropriate positions and strengthen trust within the population.
- **Continue to provide access to capital.** Most IDPs want to start small enterprises, but they lack the capital to do so. The markets in Mosul are advanced enough that small enterprises have proven to be successful for many, though continued market assessments should be undertaken to avoid reaching saturation points in any given industry.
- **Continue advocating for the government to reduce documentation requirements (or ease the process for obtaining them).** IDPs who are unlikely to return to their areas of origin continue to struggle with missing documents that would allow them to apply and qualify for work. Aid actors should push for reducing requirements, expediting processes and/or enabling alternative registration procedures for IDPs.

For all Mosul citizens:

- **Focus on community-level interventions.** These interventions – whether in healthcare, childcare, housing or transportation – help create the scaffolding that will support the lives and livelihoods of Mosul's citizens, displaced and non-displaced alike. This could be macro-level interventions, such as rebuilding healthcare facilities and paving roads, or micro-level interventions, such as childcare and housing vouchers.
- **Prepare for climate change now.** Help people – displaced and non-displaced alike – adapt their homes and livelihoods to more extreme weather conditions, including heat, drought, floods, dust storms, fog and snow. INGOs have a potential role to play in complementing the efforts of local actors through technical support, scaling strategies and/or policy advocacy.
- **Let women decide how to support their families economically.** Some women would prefer to work from home for social, cultural and care reasons, whereas others have built thriving businesses and now need investment to bring their business out of the home. Design programmes for women that are flexible, consider women's diverse needs and roles and take their preferences as the starting point. Offer alternative childcare options for women who wish to be supported in this way.

7.2 Policy implications for humanitarian transitions in other countries

In the context of declining aid, it is likely that UN-led cluster systems will be deactivated in more protracted crises to prioritise the countries and contexts with the highest needs. Although the humanitarian transition was the not the focus of this report, it provides an opportunity for the sector

to reflect on the success of the transition in Iraq from international humanitarian assistance to a government-led developmental response. Learning from the transition in Iraq, aid actors – whether international, national or local and whether humanitarian, development or government – should consider the following before a transition is implemented:

- **Create collaborations between humanitarian and governmental structures from the start.** If collaboration is not yet underway between clusters and government counterparts, begin this relationship now. Start by understanding who the focal points are on each side, and build collaboration into interventions where possible by using existing infrastructure or building systems that can be integrated into government processes in the future.
- **Engage with – and secure commitments from – development actors before the transition begins.** Particularly in countries like Iraq where some development projects had taken place prior to the conflict, more effort should be exerted to work with development organisations rather than operating in parallel. Livelihoods can be a bridge between humanitarian and development programming, as it often requires both immediate, individual, micro-level interventions to occur within the context of longer term, community or regional, macro-level improvements in the economy.
- **Create entry points for local actors.** Local actors were operating prior to the crisis and will be operating long after the international community is gone. Include them in the process, and update service maps regularly so everyone is aware of who is operating in certain areas to avoid both duplication as well as omission.

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Appendix Mosul's neighbourhoods

Neighbourhood	Latitude	Longitude	Description
Rajm Hadid	36°19'32.81"N	43° 4'16.92"E	Rajm Hadid is one of the largest residential neighbourhoods in Right Mosul, the western part of the city. The area is predominantly inhabited by Sunni Arabs, but it also includes Kurdish and Turkmen minorities. It was heavily affected during the military operations to retake Mosul, which caused widespread destruction of infrastructure. Residents currently suffer from a severe lack of basic services such as clean drinking water, electricity and proper sanitation. Education is also limited – there is only one poorly equipped makeshift (caravan) school serving roughly 2,000 families. Socially, the neighbourhood is considered low-income and faces major challenges in reconstruction and service delivery. As of 2025, specific demographic and population data for the Rajm Hadid neighbourhood in Mosul is not publicly available. However, a 2017 report by ACTED indicates that over 86,000 people benefitted from the rehabilitation of a major water plant located in the Rajm Hadid neighbourhood, which suggests that the area had a substantial population at that time (ACTED, 2017).
Al-Haramat al-Thaniya	36°21'34.16"N	43° 4'17.29"E	Al-Haramat al-Thaniya is a residential neighbourhood in Right Mosul. It is predominantly inhabited by Sunni Arabs. However, the neighbourhood is known for its ethnic and religious diversity, including minorities such as Kurds, Assyrians, Turkmens and Yazidis. The neighbourhood, like much of western Mosul, suffered significant damage during the conflict with ISIS and the subsequent military operations to retake the city. This led to the displacement of many residents and substantial destruction of infrastructure.
Tal al-Rumman	36°18'54.93"N	43° 5'20.61"E	Tal al-Rumman is a residential neighbourhood in Right Mosul. The neighbourhood is predominantly inhabited by Sunni Arabs. During the conflict with ISIS, Tal al-Rumman experienced significant challenges. It was reported that ISIS fighters used civilian homes for movement and cover, leading to dangerous conditions and damage to infrastructure (Amnesty International, 2017).
Saddam	36°23'7.32"N	43°12'19.96"E	Saddam neighbourhood is in Left Mosul, the eastern part of the city. The neighbourhood is predominantly inhabited by Sunni Arabs. During the conflict with ISIS, Saddam neighbourhood experienced significant challenges. Currently, efforts have been made to rehabilitate infrastructure and restore basic services in Saddam neighbourhood. However, challenges remain, including rebuilding homes.
Al-Mamoun	36°18'47.64"N	43° 6'33.03"E	Al-Mamoun is a residential neighbourhood located in the southern part of Right Mosul. While specific demographic data for Al-Mamoun is limited, the neighbourhood is part of the broader western Mosul area, which is predominantly inhabited by Sunni Arabs. During the military operations to retake Mosul from ISIS in early 2017, Al-Mamoun was among the first neighbourhoods in Right Mosul to be liberated. On 26 February 2017, Iraqi Counter-Terrorism Service (CTS) forces announced the full recapture of Al-Mamoun neighbourhood. The neighbourhood suffered considerable damage during the conflict, leading to the displacement of many residents. In the aftermath, returning families faced challenges related to destroyed infrastructure, lack of basic services and the presence of unexploded ordnance.

Neighbourhood	Latitude	Longitude	Description
Al-Nahrawan	36°20’6.35”N	43° 4’16.30”E	Al-Nahrawan is a neighbourhood situated in Right Mosul, approximately 5.9 kilometres from the city centre. The neighbourhood is predominantly inhabited by Sunni Arabs. It is recognised as one of the city’s most impoverished areas. Following the liberation of Mosul from ISIS control, Al-Nahrawan faced significant challenges, including extensive damage to infrastructure and a lack of basic services. In the aftermath of the conflict, residents returning to Al-Nahrawan encountered homes that were partially or completely destroyed. Essential services such as water and electricity were severely disrupted, compelling the community to engage in collective efforts to clear debris and commence rebuilding. The neighbourhood’s recovery has been gradual, with ongoing efforts to restore infrastructure and improve living conditions. Humanitarian organisations have played a crucial role in supporting Al-Nahrawan’s recovery. Médecins Sans Frontières has been active in the area, providing vital healthcare services, including maternity, paediatric and mental healthcare (MSF, 2022). These services have been essential in addressing the health needs of the community, particularly in the absence of fully functional local healthcare facilities. Efforts to rehabilitate housing have also been undertaken. In 2019, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) initiated a project to rehabilitate 365 housing units in Al-Nahrawan, aiming to facilitate the return of displaced families and improve living conditions (UNDP, 2021). Despite these initiatives, the neighbourhood continues to face challenges related to infrastructure, access to services and economic opportunities.
Al-Amel	36°19’23.48”N	43° 5’37.52”E	Al-Amel is a residential neighbourhood located in the Al-Jadida area of Right Mosul. The demographic composition of Al-Amel primarily consists of Sunni Arab families, reflecting the broader population trends in western Mosul. The neighbourhood suffered significant damage during the conflict with ISIS, leading to the destruction of homes and infrastructure. Residents faced significant challenges during and after the conflict, including displacement, loss of property and limited access to essential services. In response to the extensive damage, UNDP initiated a rehabilitation project in 2018, focusing on the restoration of housing units in Al-Amel. This project aimed to facilitate the return of displaced residents and improve living conditions in the neighbourhood (UNDP, 2021).
Al-Yarimjah al-Sharqiya	36°17’3.07”N	43°12’9.06”E	Al-Yarimjah al-Sharqiya is a neighbourhood located in Left Mosul. The neighbourhood is predominantly inhabited by Sunni Arabs. Following the liberation of Mosul from ISIS control, the area faced significant challenges, including extensive damage to infrastructure and a lack of basic services. In response, local authorities initiated reconstruction efforts, focusing on reopening streets and improving public infrastructure. Despite ongoing works, residents continue to face challenges related to housing, access to services and economic opportunities.

Neighbourhood	Latitude	Longitude	Description
Al-Abar	36°19’10.63”N	43° 2’36.73”E	Al-Abar is a neighbourhood in Right Mosul that has faced significant challenges in the aftermath of the conflict with ISIS. The neighbourhood is predominantly inhabited by Sunni Arab families. While specific population figures for Al-Abar are not readily available, the neighbourhood has been notably affected by displacement and infrastructural damage. According to a report by the Norwegian Refugee Council (2018), many residents of Al-Abar live in unfinished buildings due to the destruction caused by the conflict. These conditions have led to inadequate access to essential services such as healthcare, education and civil documentation. The lack of official documents has further hindered residents’ ability to access government assistance and services.
Al-Samah	36°21’50.13”N	43°13’0.37”E	Al-Samah is a residential neighbourhood located in Left Mosul. The area is predominantly inhabited by Sunni Arab families. During the conflict with ISIS, Al-Samah experienced significant infrastructural damage, including the destruction of electricity distribution networks, street lighting and stormwater drainage systems. In response, the Emergency Operation Development Project (EODP) initiated rehabilitation efforts focusing on restoring these essential services to improve living conditions for residents. In December 2016, as Iraqi forces advanced to reclaim Mosul, many civilians fled Al-Samah to escape the fighting. Despite ongoing reconstruction efforts, the neighbourhood continues to face challenges related to housing, access to services and economic opportunities.
Al-Intisar	36°19’49.31”N	43°13’3.58”E	Al-Intisar is a densely populated neighbourhood situated in the southern part of Left Mosul. As of 2018, it was home to approximately 20,000 families, predominantly Sunni Arabs. Following the liberation of Mosul from ISIS control, Al-Intisar neighbourhood faced significant challenges. The neighbourhood experienced substantial infrastructural damage, leading to inadequate access to essential services such as healthcare and education. Many residents, including displaced families from other parts of Mosul and surrounding areas, sought refuge in Al-Intisar, often living in rented accommodation, unfinished buildings or with relatives. Living conditions in Al-Intisar remain difficult. The influx of displaced persons has strained the already limited resources, and the neighbourhood continues to grapple with issues related to housing, access to clean water and reliable electricity.
Sina’a Karama	36°20’29.30”N	43°12’10.33”E	Sina’a Karama is an industrial and residential neighbourhood in Left Mosul. The neighbourhood is predominantly inhabited by Sunni Arab families. During the conflict with ISIS, Sina’a Karama neighbourhood suffered significant infrastructural damage, including the destruction of electricity distribution networks, street lighting and stormwater drainage systems. In response, EODP initiated rehabilitation efforts focusing on restoring these essential services to improve living conditions for residents. Following the liberation of Mosul, many residents of Sina’a Karama faced challenges related to housing, access to services and economic opportunities. The neighbourhood’s recovery has been gradual, with ongoing efforts to rebuild infrastructure and support the return of displaced families. Despite these initiatives, the area continues to grapple with issues stemming from the conflict’s aftermath.

Neighbourhood	Latitude	Longitude	Description
Al-Midan	36°20’29.09”N	43° 7’58.79”E	Al-Midan is one of Mosul’s oldest and most historically significant neighbourhoods, located in the heart of the Old City in Right Mosul. Before the conflict, it was renowned for its vibrant markets, skilled artisans and rich cultural heritage. The area was predominantly inhabited by Sunni Arab families, reflecting the broader demographic composition of Mosul. During the battle to liberate Mosul from ISIS control, this area and its surroundings became the last stronghold of the militants, leading to intense fighting and widespread destruction. Reports indicate that over 60% of the neighbourhood was destroyed during the conflict, with the number rising to 90% following subsequent demolition campaigns. Approximately 85,000 residents registered for compensation due to the damage, yet only 12% have received payments (Abayji, 2022). The living conditions in Al-Midan remain dire. Many residents continue to reside amid rubble, with limited access to basic services such as water, electricity and healthcare.
Al-Mulutha / Kokajli	36°21’29.35”N	43°14’33.47”E	Al-Mulutha, also known as Kokajli, is an eastern suburb of Left Mosul, situated near the main road connecting Mosul to Erbil. The neighbourhood is predominantly inhabited by Sunni Arabs. During the conflict with ISIS, Al-Mulutha experienced significant infrastructural damage, leading to inadequate access to essential services such as electricity, water and healthcare. Following the liberation of Mosul, efforts have been made to rehabilitate the area; however, challenges persist. Residents continue to face difficulties related to housing, employment and access to basic services.
Somar	36°17’50.91”N	43°12’4.64”E	Somar is a residential neighbourhood situated in Left Mosul. The area is predominantly inhabited by Sunni Arab families. During the conflict with ISIS, Somar experienced significant infrastructural damage, leading to inadequate access to essential services such as electricity, water and healthcare. Following the liberation of Mosul, efforts have been made to rehabilitate the area; however, challenges persist. Residents continue to face difficulties related to housing, employment and access to basic services.
Noab Dobbat	36°20’21.62”N	43° 9’18.63”E	Noab Dobbat is a residential neighbourhood situated in Left Mosul. The neighbourhood is predominantly inhabited by Sunni Arab families. During the conflict with ISIS, Noab Dobbat experienced significant infrastructural damage, leading to inadequate access to essential services such as electricity, water and healthcare. Following the liberation of Mosul, efforts have been made to rehabilitate the area; however, challenges persist. Residents continue to face difficulties related to housing, employment and access to basic services.
Al-Furqan	36°22’50.66”N	43°10’51.15”E	Al-Furqan is a residential neighbourhood located in Left Mosul. The area is predominantly inhabited by Sunni Arab families. During the conflict with ISIS, Al-Furqan experienced significant infrastructural damage, leading to inadequate access to essential services such as electricity, water and healthcare. Residents continue to face difficulties related to housing, employment and access to basic services.

Neighbourhood	Latitude	Longitude	Description
Al-Ghufran	36°23’33.11”N	43° 8’48.61”E	Al-Ghufran is a residential neighbourhood located in Left Mosul. The neighbourhood is predominantly inhabited by Sunni Arab families. During the conflict with ISIS, Al-Ghufran experienced significant infrastructural damage, leading to inadequate access to essential services such as electricity, water and healthcare. Following the liberation of Mosul, efforts have been made to rehabilitate the area; however, challenges persist. Residents continue to face difficulties related to housing, employment and access to basic services.
Al-Baath	36°20’5.19”N	43° 9’46.29”E	Al-Baath is a residential neighbourhood located in southeastern Left Mosul. The neighbourhood is predominantly inhabited by Sunni Arab families. During the battle to retake Mosul from ISIS in early 2017, Iraqi CTS forces captured this area as part of their eastern offensive. The neighbourhood suffered significant infrastructural damage during the conflict, including the destruction of homes, roads and public services. Following the liberation, efforts have been made to rehabilitate the area; however, challenges persist. Residents continue to face difficulties related to housing, employment and access to basic services.
Al-Mansur	36°19’10.87”N	43° 6’55.71”E	Al-Mansur is a residential neighbourhood situated in Right Mosul. The area is predominantly inhabited by Sunni Arab families. During the conflict with ISIS, Al-Mansur experienced significant infrastructural damage, leading to inadequate access to essential services such as electricity, water and healthcare. Residents continue to face difficulties related to housing, employment and access to basic services. The neighbourhood’s recovery has been gradual, with ongoing initiatives aimed at improving living conditions and supporting the return of displaced families.
Old Town	36°20’49.15”N	43° 7’49.06”E	The Old Town of Mosul, situated on the western bank of the Tigris River in Right Mosul, was once a vibrant and densely populated area, home to approximately 500,000 residents before the ISIS occupation of 2014. This historic district was renowned for its rich cultural heritage and diverse communities, including Sunni Arabs, Christians and Jews. During the battle to liberate Mosul, this area and its surroundings became the final stronghold of ISIS fighters, leading to intense combat and extensive destruction. According to the UN, over 5,000 buildings were damaged in the Old Town, with 500 completely destroyed (Al-Menasa Media, 2018). Some parts of the neighbourhood were entirely decimated, leaving the area in ruins. In the aftermath, residents faced dire living conditions, with limited access to basic services such as water and electricity. Looting became a persistent issue, further complicating recovery efforts.
Al-Masaref	36°22’48.83”N	43°10’51.31”E	Al-Masaref is a residential neighbourhood located in Left Mosul. The neighbourhood is predominantly inhabited by Sunni Arab families. During the conflict with ISIS, Al-Masaref experienced significant infrastructural damage, leading to inadequate access to essential services such as electricity, water and healthcare. Following the liberation of Mosul, efforts have been made to rehabilitate the area; however, challenges persist. Residents continue to face difficulties related to housing, employment and access to basic services.
Al-Alaam	36°21’38.50”N	43°11’37.36”E	Al-Alaam is a residential neighbourhood located in Left Mosul. The area is predominantly inhabited by Sunni Arab families. During the conflict with ISIS, Al-Alaam experienced significant infrastructural damage, leading to inadequate access to essential services such as electricity, water and healthcare. Following the liberation of Mosul, efforts have been made to rehabilitate the area; however, challenges persist. Residents continue to face difficulties related to housing, employment and access to basic services.

Neighbourhood	Latitude	Longitude	Description
Al-Mithaq	36°19’25.82”N	43°12’14.74”E	Al-Mithaq neighbourhood in Left Mosul is primarily a residential area with a population estimated to be around 20,000. The community is mostly composed of Sunni Arab families. Al-Mithaq has faced significant challenges due to the conflict, including damage to infrastructure and disruptions to essential services like water, electricity and healthcare. Many homes were damaged or destroyed, and residents have struggled with limited access to employment opportunities and basic necessities.
Al-Islah al-Zira’i	36°20’58.06”N	43° 9’27.71”E	Al-Islah al-Zira’i is a residential neighbourhood located in eastern Left Mosul. The area is predominantly inhabited by Sunni Arab families. During the conflict with ISIS, Al-Islah al-Zira’i experienced significant infrastructural damage, leading to inadequate access to essential services such as electricity, water and healthcare. Following the liberation of Mosul, efforts have been made to rehabilitate the area; however, challenges persist. Residents continue to face difficulties related to housing, employment and access to basic services.
Al-Faisaliah	36°21’0.90”N	43° 9’0.97”E	Al-Faisaliah is a well-established neighbourhood located in Left Mosul. The area is home to a predominantly Sunni Arab population, with a mix of middle-class families and professionals. Prior to the conflict, Al-Faisaliah was considered one of the more developed parts of the city, with access to schools, health clinics and commercial services. While the neighbourhood suffered some infrastructural damage during the ISIS occupation and subsequent military operations, it has seen significant recovery efforts since 2017. Basic services such as electricity and water have been largely restored, though intermittent outages still occur. The area now functions as a relatively stable zone compared to other parts of Mosul, attracting returnees and small businesses. However, challenges persist in terms of job creation and long-term reconstruction of public facilities.
Al-Malayeen al-Oula	36°25’37.14”N	43° 5’31.78”E	Al-Malayeen al-Oula is a residential neighbourhood in northern Left Mosul, home to approximately 5,000 families. The area is predominantly inhabited by Sunni Arabs. Despite the end of the ISIS occupation, the neighbourhood continues to face significant challenges. Residents have expressed frustration over the lack of basic services, including unpaved roads, missing sidewalks and a malfunctioning water and sewage system. The main entrance to the neighbourhood remains damaged from the battle against ISIS, and a promised school has yet to be built on land donated by a local resident. These issues have led to public protests, with residents urging city officials to address the ongoing neglect and improve living conditions in the area (964 Media, 2024).
Al-Shifaa	36°21’17.62”N	43° 7’6.92”E	Al-Shifaa is a neighbourhood situated in Right Mosul. Before the conflict, it was a mixed residential and institutional area, notably housing the city’s main medical complex, including the Al-Shifa Hospital. During the battle to retake Mosul from ISIS in 2017, Al-Shifaa became a focal point of intense combat due to its strategic location and the presence of key infrastructure. The neighbourhood suffered extensive destruction, with many buildings, including healthcare facilities, severely damaged or destroyed. In the aftermath of the conflict, residents of Al-Shifaa have faced significant challenges in rebuilding their lives. The destruction of medical facilities has left the community with limited access to healthcare services. Infrastructure, such as electricity, water supply and sanitation systems, remains inadequate, hindering the return of displaced families and the restoration of normality.

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