

# CMI REPORT

R 2011: 4

## Between two societies

### Review of the Information, Return and Reintegration of Iraqi Nationals to Iraq (IRRINI) programme

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## Abbreviations

AGEF	Association of Experts in the Field of Migration and Development Cooperation
BIP	Business Innovation Programs
CAP	Community Assistance Programme
CMI	Chr. Michelsen Institute
ECRE	European Council on Refugees and Exiles
ERF	European Return Fund
GARP	Government Assisted Repatriation Programme
ICG	International Crisis Group
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IRFAD	Iraqi Research Foundation for Analysis and Development
IRRANA	Information, Return, and Reintegration of Afghan Nationals to Afghanistan
IRRINI	Information, Return, and Reintegration of Iraqi Nationals to Iraq
JD	(Norwegian) Ministry of Justice and Police
KDP	Kurdish Democratic Party
KRG	Kurdish Regional Government
NOAS	Norwegian Organization for Asylum Seekers
MFA	(Norwegian) Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MUF	Iraqi nationals with temporary work permits in Norway but without rights for family reunion
NOK	Norwegian kroner
NSD	Norwegian Social Science Data Services
PRIO	Peace Research Institute, Oslo
PU	International Police Immigration Service
PUK	Patriotic Union of Kurdistan
REAB	Return and Emigration of Asylum Seekers Ex- Belgium
REAG	Return and Emigration Program for Asylum Seekers in Germany
TP	Torshov Project
UoD	University of Duhok
UDI	Norwegian Directorate of Immigration
UNE	Immigration Appeals Board
USD	US Dollar
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
VARRP	Voluntary Return and Reintegration Programme

# Executive summary

## Background

The Information, Return, and Reintegration of Iraqi Nationals to Iraq (IRRINI) programme was established in 2008 by the Norwegian Directorate of Immigration (UDI) to facilitate the voluntary return and reintegration of persons from Iraq. It is the second country-specific return programme supported by UDI: the IRRANA programme for Afghan nationals started in 2006.<sup>1</sup> In addition to assisting asylum applicants who are either waiting for a decision or in receipt of a negative one, the IRRINI programme supports the repatriation of Iraqis with Norwegian residence permits. IRRINI does not include Iraqi nationals who have been deported by the Norwegian police.

By August 2010 IRRINI had assisted the return of 859 Iraqis to Iraq. In phase I, from March 2008 to June 2009, 274 applicants returned and 585 more returned during phase II from July 2009 to August 2010. Of these there were 792 males and 67 females. This trend has continued after the conclusion of this review, by August 31 2011 a total of 1381 Iraqis had returned through the IRRINI programme.

UDI commissioned in October 2009 a review of the IRRINI programme from the Chr. Michelsen Institute (CMI) in collaboration with the Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO), the University of Duhok (UoD) and the Iraqi Research Foundation for Analysis and Development (IRFAD).

The components of the IRRINI programme to be examined according to the ToR were:

- Information about return (before departure)
- Individual career planning/advice (before departure)
- The cash component
- The reintegration support in Iraq: vocational training, job referral, business planning, etc.
- Individual follow-up after return

The study was carried out to provide knowledge on how the various components of the IRRINI programme might influence the decision for voluntary return to Iraq and provide insight into how the programme, wholly or partially, contributes to a sustainable return and reintegration in the country of origin. Additionally, the authors were to suggest how the return programme can best safeguard returned asylum seekers' need for support in the reestablishment phase in Iraq.

The research methodology included a review of IRRINI documents and statistics, including materials from the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the Business Innovation Programs (BIP), literature on return migration and information about return programmes in other European countries. Team members observed information meetings in Norway and the arrival of returnees in Iraq. Interviews were conducted with staff of UDI, the Norwegian Embassy in Jordan, IOM (Norway, Jordan, Baghdad, Erbil, Duhok), BIP (Norway, Erbil and Duhok), reception centres and with a number of other key informants.

The review team aimed to highlight the returnees' perspectives of the programme, as return and reintegration are the primary objectives of the IRRINI programme. The primary source of data for this

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<sup>1</sup> Other foreign nationals without legal residence in Norway are served by the Voluntary Assistance to Return Programme (VARP). A VARP application is, however, the first step in the assessing the qualifications of would-be IRRINI participants.

study is therefore a series of semi-structured interviews conducted with 28 prospective returnees and Iraqi asylum seekers in Norway, including 2 women, and 85 IRRINI participants in Iraq, including 4 women. Among these, 25 had returned to southern Iraq (primarily to Baghdad), and 60 to Iraqi Kurdistan. In Norway, most interviews were conducted with the assistance of a translator. While covering about 10 percent of the returnees at the time of the interviews, and a lesser per cent of the female returnees, the study includes returnees from the four major return destinations in Iraq: Baghdad, Erbil, Suleimaniah and Duhok. Interview data was subsequently verified and tested against other sources, including staff from the organizations involved in the implementation of the programme.

## Iraqi migration patterns

War and conflict have caused massive migration movements in and from Iraq. During Saddam Hussein's presidency Iraq experienced almost three decades of continuous conflict. Many fled to safety within the region, but Great Britain, France, North America and Australia were main destinations for Iraqi emigrants until the Gulf War. In 2002, 550,000 Iraqis world-wide benefited from refugee status, and from 2002 to 2008, roughly 200,000 Iraqis applied for asylum in Europe alone, with the main host countries being Sweden, Germany, Great Britain, the Netherlands and Norway. As of January 2011, UNHCR operates with figures of 1.7 million Iraqi refugees and 1.3 million internally displaced persons (IDPs), revised downwards from earlier years.

The first contemporary wave of migration from Iraqi Kurdistan (1975-1991) consisted of young, relatively well educated and politically active, middle class men. This wave was associated with the defeat of a major Kurdish rebellion, state persecution and the war against Iran. Internecine fighting and continued insecurities in the mid-1990s contributed to further migration, as did the US-led invasion of Iraq and the overthrow of Saddam Hussein in 2003.

The invasion led to high levels of violence and conflict in the southern parts of Iraq, and Baghdad in particular, peaking in the period 2005-2007. Iraqi Kurdistan, which first established its own Kurdish Regional Government in 1991, has enjoyed a measure of international recognition, economic growth and increased security and stability. Important exceptions include the cities of Kirkuk and Mosul, where insecurity prevails.

So far, return to Iraq has been limited as compared with the total number of refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs). About 300,000 IDPs and nearly 80,000 refugees returned in 2008 and 2009, of which many were Kurds.

## IRRINI implementation

UDI has contracted the International Organization for Migration (IOM) to implement the IRRINI programme. The IOM office in Oslo provides IRRINI information in Norway, undertakes pre-departure interviews, and organizes the practical return arrangements and travel. The IOM Iraq Mission, which maintains hub offices in Baghdad, Erbil, Basrah and Amman, and a number of satellite offices, receives the returnees upon their arrival in Iraq. The mission provides a cash grant, counselling, reintegration support, and follow-up advice. IOM also implements voluntary return/reintegration programmes on behalf of numerous other countries in Iraq.

As a supplement to IRRINI, UDI has contracted Business Innovation Programs (BIP) to inform Iraqi nationals in Norway about the potential for establishing small businesses upon return. In Iraq, BIP invites returnees to courses in Erbil, Suleimaniah and Duhok to develop viable business ideas and provide know-how needed to establish and run small businesses.

## Norwegian asylum policy

Political developments in Norway in recent years have directly or indirectly affected Iraqi asylum seekers, who constitute the largest group of asylum seekers in Norway during the greater part of the last decade. This includes the general restrictions on governmental asylum policies as of September 2008, the implementation of a more restrictive work permit policy as of January 2009 and the establishment of the Torshov Project, operative from October 2008 until June 2009. The project aimed to speed up the processing time for individual asylum applications and to fast-track Iraqi asylum seekers whose cases seemed easy to determine. The agreement the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) entered into with Iraq in May 2009 authorised Norway to return Iraqis without legal residence in Norway. Sixty-four Iraqis were returned forcibly to Baghdad by the end of 2009, causing expressions of concern by UNHCR due to the precarious situation in Baghdad.

## Selected review findings

For over half of the 60 respondents in Iraqi Kurdistan, the refusal of legal status in Norway was the primary motivation for return, followed by poor living conditions/ill treatment in Norway. Only 7 persons cited family related issues for return, and only 2 the benefits of a return programme. That differed for those in Baghdad, where equal numbers cited conditions in Norway and family related issues to care for in Iraq as reasons for return. Not more than 5 mentioned perceived improvements of the situation in Iraq.

In Norway, the large majority of those interviewed had obtained information about the IRRINI programme at the reception centres, including information sessions held by IOM. Although more than half felt they had obtained sufficient information, during the interview many appeared unaware of important details of the programme – not least regarding the reintegration support. In Iraq, approximately three-quarters of the returnees reported learning of IRRINI from IOM. Other sources of information included BIP, friends, reception centres and UDI.

Cash assistance, on the other hand, came up prominently when respondents were asked both about their knowledge of the IRRINI programme and what they considered to be most useful for their return.

In terms of return conditions at home, most respondents in Norway (79 percent) reported being well informed from the media, family, friends, and the internet. However, nearly three-quarters of returnees in Iraqi Kurdistan and Baghdad found the situation to be very different from what they had expected. The situation differed from region to region. In Iraqi Kurdistan 38 per cent judged the situation to have improved, 22 per cent found it worse, while in Baghdad only 8 per cent found improvements, and 56 per cent found it to have deteriorated.

This perception affects returnees' views on the sustainability of return. In Iraqi Kurdistan approximately three-quarters of the respondents said they would remain. In Baghdad, however, nearly half the returnees did not know if they would remain in the area they returned to.

All but one of the returnees to Iraqi Kurdistan returned to where they had lived before leaving for Norway, although some had already first fled internally in Iraq. For Baghdad, a different picture emerged, with 40 per cent of returnees not returning to their previous location. We were unable to determine the reason for this difference, but expect that it may be found in the history of conflict and altered demographic map of Baghdad and parts of southern Iraq.

The interviews revealed a range of factors concerning the will and ability of potential returnees to relate to and absorb the information provided:

1. A lack of interest among participants in the return package: it was not the cash/ reintegration support that triggered the decision to return for the majority.
2. Confusion over the reintegration support: is it in cash or in kind?
3. Lack of adequate knowledge on the part of reception centre staff, reducing the possibility for close and daily dialogue with returnees;
4. Distrust of information provided by IOM and BIP; exacerbated by
5. Fragmented information sessions that make it difficult to obtain a holistic understanding of IRRINI;
6. Excessive use of acronyms causing further confusion; and
7. A rather unstructured follow-up with IRRINI applicants.

The majority of returnees do not regard IRRINI as a voluntary programme, and many express distrust in the Norwegian government's handling of asylum applications from Iraqi nationals. For them the term "mandatory return", as suggested by the European Council on Returnees and Exiles (ECRE), appears to be a more accurate description of their options and of the IRRINI programme.

What is very positively perceived, (with the exception of a few returnees to Baghdad), is how the return travel is organised and the cash assistance received at the airport upon return. 37 per cent returning to Iraqi Kurdistan explained that they spent the cash grant on themselves/daily expenses, 27 per cent spent it on transportation, 17 per cent invested it in income generating activities, 12 per cent used it to pay back loans, while the remainder either invested in the home or saved the grant. Returnees emphasized the importance of being able to offer gifts to the family upon return and receive visitors, as "it would be a very big shame for them to come back without any gifts". Exchange rate fluctuations between the US dollar and the Norwegian kroner (NOK), and the resulting large variations in the cash amount provided at different times, created suspicion among returnees about corruption in the programme.

With respect to reintegration support, a slight majority chose the "business option", including 48 per cent of those returning to Iraqi Kurdistan and 64 per cent of those returning to Baghdad. 28 per cent of Baghdad returnees cited previous experience in their current line of business. This selection was followed by job referral (33 per cent for Iraqi Kurdistan and 24 per cent for Baghdad, of which 16 per cent reported to have secured long term jobs). 8 per cent in Iraqi Kurdistan and none in Baghdad opted for education/vocational training.

Assessments of IOM's support for the reintegration process were uneven. 43 per cent of those returning to Iraqi Kurdistan were positive about their performance, 23 per cent negative, 25 per cent mixed and 8 per cent unclear. There are, however, major regional differences. Returnees to Duhok were much more critical than returnees to other areas, primarily due to the time and money spent commuting to the IOM office in Erbil for obtaining reintegration assistance. Returnees to Suleimaniah, on the other hand, mentioned IOM's close follow-up as a main reason for their satisfaction. Approximately two-thirds of the returnees to Baghdad reported satisfaction with IOM.

IOM's contact and reintegration management was cited as the primary reason for frustration, especially for those returning to Duhok. Three complaints were frequently mentioned in the interviews:

1. Inaccurate information pre-return and discrepancies between information given before and after return.
2. A time-consuming and frustrating bureaucracy.

3. A lack of follow-up. This was of particular concern for vulnerable groups in need of additional assistance.

Specifically, frustration resulted from uncertainty of whether the reintegration support was in cash or in kind, the requirement to produce “three quotes” for all procurements, the lack of one contact person to relate to at IOM, and a lengthy application process that many regarded as obstructing rather than facilitating their reintegration.

## Conclusions

Four major findings emerged from this study:

1. The IRRINI programme has provided a large number of Iraqi asylum seekers in Norway a dignified alternative to what they perceive to be their only other option, a forced return.
2. The majority of the returnees give a positive assessment of the support provided by IOM, though with significant regional variations regarding the reintegration component.
3. The majority of those who have returned expect to remain in their area of origin, although this is true for only half the returnees in Baghdad.
4. Perceptions formed in Norway regarding conditions in Iraq diverged significantly from returnee experiences, leading to frustrated expectations.

The study identified three areas of concern with the programme:

1. The way information about IRRINI is organized and conveyed.
2. The way IOM organises and manages the reintegration process, and whether they allocate sufficient resources to handle it.
3. Whether the current reintegration package meets the real needs of the returnees.

We also found that the IRRINI programme’s reputation was affected by the fact that most returnees do not perceive return to be a “voluntary” option, but rather a last resort once other options are exhausted. In addition, many respondents from Iraqi Kurdistan expressed a belief that the Norwegian government had stopped granting them asylum as a group, irrespective of their individual background. Regarding the pre-departure return information: Many asylum seekers are not receptive to return information until they have actually decided to return. Once the decision has been made, they receive information mainly through fragmented presentations (by IOM and BIP, separately) and discussions with reception centre staff, who often lack detailed information themselves. The entire process is hampered by an excessive use of acronyms, and the lack of a personalized return dialogue with staff from IOM. Regarding return and reintegration: The return travel is well organised by IOM, and the cash support provided upon arrival in Iraq meets an important need and allows the returnees a more dignified return.

As for the reintegration package, a striking number of returnees claimed that there was a discrepancy between what they understood about their entitlements in Norway and what they actually received in Iraq. Reintegration support often comes late due to extensive IOM procedures and overburdened field staff. This lengthy process is unexpected by the returnees and causes grievances not easily addressed by the fragmented IOM bureaucracy.

Many returnees entered into short term businesses to secure faster access to cash, and “money” was explained as the biggest advantage of the IRRINI programme. A lack of sufficiently broad, specific and comparable data inhibit any firm conclusion on the sustainability of the business establishments,

though there are indications that a high proportion of businesses either close or cannot be monitored by IOM.

The reported lack of systematic follow-up from IOM makes it difficult to document the sustainability of return and ensure that the needs of especially vulnerable groups are catered for. However, experiences from Suleimaniah indicate that a structured and sustained contact from IOM with the returnees can generate a trust in IOM staff critical to identifying and supporting the most vulnerable returnees.

## Recommendations

Based on the above findings, our recommendation to UDI is to consider a different model for the reintegration component of the programme. In place of a comprehensive reintegration package, we suggest provision of a cash amount equal in value to the present reintegration package (NOK 35,000), provided in two instalments. The justifications for a new model include:

- The majority of returnees place the highest value on cash support already, while there is a general lack of interest in the return package.
- Our research suggests that many of the returnees treat the reintegration assistance (for example support to open a kiosk) not as a long-term solution but rather as a means of accessing cash as quickly as possible. Giving cash outright will avoid time-consuming and expensive formalities.
- The cash support model is more flexible and empowering as it places more trust on the returnee's ability to cater for his or her own future, and reduces incentives to "cheat the system".
- Many returnees invest the cash they already receive to cover basic expenses after return to support their longer-term reintegration (investing in their homes, income-generating activities, etc).
- Reduced bureaucracy will speed up application handling procedures and lower transaction costs. The prospective returnee will have an exact idea of what the reintegration assistance consists of, which is more conducive to realistic and active planning on the part of the beneficiary before returning. This, together with more transparent and consistent message delivery, will enable the IOM to assume the role of a trusted facilitator and helper, rather than a controller.
- Since every returnee will now get their support more easily, disappointed returnees will be less likely to communicate back to their compatriots in Norway that IRRINI beneficiaries do not get what they are entitled to, potentially producing rumours that undermine the credibility of the programme.

A cash grant system must however be supplemented by a stronger emphasis on advice and planning pre-departure, in addition to targeted follow up in Iraq.

Another option is to improve the current reintegration support model, with an emphasis on a more personal, and thorough, follow-up process.

The following recommendations relate to both options.

## A. Sustainable return starts in Norway

1. Ensure information about IRRINI is both dynamic and up-to-date by facilitating contact between potential returnees and people who have already returned, in addition to IOM and BIP staff. Maintaining email lists, a blog, or a Facebook group updated with personal stories and videos, and available for comments and questions are a few possible ideas for connecting potential and current returnees. Improve the relevance of reception centre presentations of IRRINI, and separate basic information from the reintegration components of the programme. For the latter, joint presentations by IOM and BIP would help ensure that reintegration assistance options in Iraq are portrayed in a comprehensive and clear manner.
2. Clarify all entitlements and expected processing times to reduce criticism among returnees. Be explicit in communicating what is given as cash and what (if anything) is given as in-kind assistance. Explain the nature of follow-up, how other reintegration schemes differ from the Norwegian one, and what roles and responsibilities IOM and BIP have in the programme.
3. Begin the reintegration process before return. Combine reintegration planning with short, targeted courses that enhance the returnees' skills and improve their chances of finding jobs after return. This can include a BIP business establishment planning session for those wishing to establish a business, targeted to the specific returnee age groups and backgrounds to ensure relevance.
4. Improve communication between IOM, BIP and the reception centres in order to ensure better coordinated information and dialogue with prospective returnees.
5. Allow returnees part of the return grant that is currently paid upon arrival, before departure from Norway, in order to facilitate purchases of clothes and gifts in preparation of return.

## B. Sustainable return continues in Iraq

1. The cash grant provided at the airport should be fixed in US dollars, and US dollars should be considered for all money transfers in the programme.
2. UDI is advised to replace the present in-kind reintegration package with a cash support package. Such a package would give returnees' greater control over the reintegration process, reduce frustrating bureaucracy and minimize the perverse incentives that exist in the current programme.
3. Otherwise, we recommend the programme implementer, IOM, to improve their handling of the reintegration component and their follow-up of the returnees. Changes should include:
  - Improving their procedures to ensure a swift and less bureaucratic processing of reintegration applications, with the assignment of one personal contact point at IOM for each returnee – to establish contact, communication and trust.
  - Reviewing the division of responsibility and task between field offices in Iraq and the Iraq office in Jordan to ensure that more decisions are made inside Iraq, potentially by seconding main office staff on rotation bases to the field offices. A separate unit can pay random and unannounced visits to offices for spot checks on financial management and the fund/in-kind distributions to returnees.
  - Training IOM staff in addressing the returnees as customers in need of support and advice during their reintegration process, and ensuring returnees are aware of what the reintegration processes implies and the length of time required.
  - Providing increased individual follow-up and ensuring that IOM staff (or other contracted actors) have the required qualifications and capacity to enter into a dialogue and mentoring process with the returnees. It is especially important to have

staff-members that are qualified to help vulnerable returnees in seeking assistance, not least women and children and those who might suffer psychological problems upon their return.

- Ensuring that IOM has offices in locations with high levels of return to ease the application and reintegration process and reduce travel time and expenses.
4. Increase the visibility and relevance of BIP with respect to the programme. This includes functioning as a network hub for sharing experiences and providing advice on business development and access to credit schemes. Ensure information is disseminated to returnees and create linkages between information and pre-return business planning sessions. Provide information tailored in form and style to the target age groups.
  5. For both organisations: secure proper documentation of the return process and to what extent different reintegration options help secure a sustainable return. Analyse and utilize findings to make knowledge based adjustments to the programme.
  6. Improve the coordination with other governments and initiate common reviews with central and regional governments in Iraq and promote greater standardization of return packages.
  7. Suggest to the Iraqi authorities that they establish a microcredit programme available to returnees and non-migrants alike.

# 1. Introduction

In October 2009, the Norwegian Directorate of Immigration (UDI) invited tenders for a review of their programme for voluntary return and reintegration to Iraq: Information, Return, and Reintegration of Iraqi Nationals to Iraq (IRRINI). The Chr. Michelsen Institute (CMI) in collaboration with the Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO) and the University of Duhok (UoD) was commissioned to undertake the research project. Our partner for interviews in Baghdad was The Iraqi Research Foundation for Analysis and Development (IRFAD).

The Tender Notice for the review defined the following components of the IRRINI programme to be examined:

- Information about return (before departure)
- Individual career planning/advice (before departure)
- The cash component
- The reintegration support in Iraq: vocational training, job referrals, business planning, etc.
- Individual follow-up after return

The notice emphasized a need for a focus on particular activities in relation to preparation for return in Norway, implementation of the return programme in Iraq and its potential impact on reestablishment and durable return. However, a holistic perspective was requested, in which all relevant project components are assessed in connection to each other.

The study aims to provide knowledge on how the various components of the IRRINI programme might influence the decision on voluntary return to Iraq, as well as provide insight into how the programme, totally or partially, contributes to a sustainable return and reintegration in the country of origin. In addition, suggestions on how the return programme can best safeguard the returned asylum seekers' need for support in the reestablishment phase in Iraq were requested.

More specifically, concrete goals for the evaluation include:

- Assessment of how the information on return affects the asylum seekers' inclination to return voluntarily
- Assessment of the role of individualized career planning in Norway on the probability of successful reintegration and re-establishment in Iraq
- Description of participation in and the utility of courses and entrepreneurial training in Iraq organised by IOM/BIP
- Enhanced knowledge of the reintegration process of voluntary returnees
- Enhanced knowledge of the role of various incentives for the decision to voluntarily return
- Description and assessment of the different stakeholders involved in IRRINI
- Identification and assessment of other possible initiatives/factors which could affect the decision to voluntarily return
- Assessment of the extent to which the family situation and social networks of returnees in Iraq have affected the choice of voluntary return
- Assessment of the extent to which IRRINI fulfils the needs of especially vulnerable groups
- Outline of possible measures to further develop and improve IRRINI

The research commenced in December 2009 and the draft report was submitted to UDI in November 2010. The research team had the following members: Dr. Arne Strand (teamleader), Dr. Synnøve Bendixsen and Jessica Schultz (CMI); Erlend Paasche (PRIO); Ali Sada (IRFAD); Dr. Dawood S. Atrushi (administrator), Samia Saeed Khalid Amedi, Maamoon Abdul-Samad Al-Sayid (researchers), Prof. Chachan J. Mohammed and Mohammed Saeed Hussein Barwari (quality control) (UoD). Dr. Cindy Horst (PRIO) contributed to the development of the research methodology. To overcome the challenge of two distinct Kurdish dialects, Kurmanji and Sorani, and a degree of historical and political tension within Kurdistan, local female research assistants were hired in Erbil and Suleimaniah to complement the team. Two of these were social workers and one had a PhD in psychology. Their professional insights were drawn upon during the interview debriefing.

The internal reference group consisted of Prof. Anne Sofie Roald and Dr. Johan Helland (both CMI) while the following persons have met on the external reference group meetings: Bente Scott Amundsen, Guri Langmyr Iochev, Roald Kristiansen and Nils Olav Refsdal (UDI), Abdulrahman Abbas and Jon Steinar Østgård (BiP), Antonio Polosa and Chalank Yahya (IOM) and Knut Felberg (JD). The reference groups reviewed and advised on the research methodology and the interview forms. Initial field findings were presented and discussed with the external reference group. A continuous dialogue was maintained with the internal reference group, and both groups were requested to give input for and comments on the draft report. The draft report was discussed with UDI and a revised draft report was presented to the external reference group in March 2011.

The team wishes to express gratitude to the reference groups for their valuable advice and comments on the research process and the outcome, and the assistance rendered us in Norway, Jordan and Iraq by staff of UDI, IOM and BIP.

In the remaining report, the analytical framework and research methodology applied in the study are first discussed. The next two sections provide background information on the IRRINI programme and on Iraqi migration historically. Subsequent sections deal with the empirical data collected, first presenting an analysis of research findings from Norway; then from northern Iraq; and finally from Baghdad and southern Iraq. In the final two sections, we will first provide general conclusions on the basis of the information provided, after which we offer a number of recommendations.

## 2. Analytical framework

The team drew on a range of existing literature and reviews when establishing the methodology and the analytical framework for this evaluation, including development of interview forms, field methodology and in the final analysis of findings.

In our approach to the first question we were asked to address – to what extent the incentives offered by IRRINI influenced Iraqis’ decision to return – we drew on a wealth of recent literature probing motivations for voluntary return. Of particular relevance is the 2004 British Home Office report (Black et al. 2004) titled “Understanding Voluntary Return.” The evaluation of a similar return programme to Afghanistan (IRRANA – Information, Return and Reintegration of Afghani Nationals to Afghanistan) (Strand et al. 2008) was also helpful in defining our analytic framework.

The Black report, evaluating a number of Assisted Voluntary Return Schemes in the UK, suggests three key factors affecting refugees’ propensity for return: 1) structural conditions in the host country and country of origin, disaggregated into political, social and economic factors; 2) family and individual circumstances; and 3) policy incentives to return. The report attributes some primacy to conditions in country of origin, and indicates a certain level of scepticism towards the extent to which policy interventions can facilitate voluntary return in the absence of such conditions improving. It also stresses that some migrants may need to make special considerations, e.g. to childcare, and have special goals, e.g. accumulating capital or taking a higher education.

There is rarely a single determinant of return but rather a complex of issues that all seem relevant, to various degrees, to the decision to return or not. The study did not find particular trends related to age and gender, but noted a certain fear among female returnees of gender-based persecution.

Findings from the evaluation of the IRRANA voluntary return and reintegration programme to Afghanistan suggest that many Afghan returnees did not find information about the return programme relevant at the time when it was given (Strand et al. 2008). Brekke (2008) has reached a similar conclusion in more general terms, in his evaluation of the cooperation between UDI and the Norwegian Refugee Council on disseminating information about return and repatriation (INCOR).

This brings us to the second question that the UDI poses for the evaluation: how does the programme – both as a whole and in each of its constitutive parts – contribute to sustained return and reintegration in the country of origin?

There is no set definition of sustainable return. The Home Office Report (Black et. al 2004:38) explores proxies for physical sustainability of return (whether or not returnees expressed a firm intention to re-emigrate), as well as for socio-economic and political sustainability (for instance, whether returnees had found a job and whether they expressed security concerns). Evolving standards emphasize the importance of safety, including physical, legal and material security (UNHCR 2004). A lasting return from conflict-generated migration rests on structures and mechanisms that can act as confidence-building measures and promote co-existence in the country of origin.

The abovementioned Home Office report distinguishes between “individual” and “aggregate” sustainability. Return migration is seen as sustainable for individuals if returnees’ socioeconomic status and fear of violence or persecution is no worse, relative to the population in the place of origin, one year after their return. In contrast, aggregate sustainability implies that return migration may be sustainable for the home country or region if socioeconomic conditions and levels of violence and persecution are not significantly worsened by return, as measured one year after the return process is complete.<sup>2</sup> In both these cases, the desire to re-emigrate is perhaps a useful proxy indicator for whether a return process has been sustainable. The report furthermore distinguishes subjective and

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<sup>2</sup> For a further discussion of these definitions, see Black & Gent (2006).

objective perspectives, and discusses measurement in relation to physical location, socio-economic conditions or political-security circumstances (see table 1). Based on experiences from the IRRANA evaluation, the degree of reintegration into family networks and support from family networks may be another indicator.

**Table 1: Elements and potential measures of the sustainability of return (Black et al 2004)**

	Physical	Socio-economic	Political-security
Subjective perception of returnee	(Lack of) desire to re-emigrate	Perceived socio-economic status	Perception of safety, security threats
Objective conditions of returnee	Proportion of returnees who (do not) re-emigrate	Actual socio-economic status of returnees	Actual persecution or violence against returnees
Aggregate conditions of home country	Trends in levels of emigration and asylum-seeking abroad	Trends in level of poverty and well-being	Trends in levels of persecution, conflict and violence

Drawing further on the IRRANA study, our working hypothesis at the outset was that given continued security improvements the return to Iraq would be more sustainable than the one to Afghanistan. The security situation in Iraq, with the exception of Baghdad and some other areas, is thought to be better than the one in large parts of Afghanistan. Economic development is more promising and offers more opportunity for entrepreneurship and income-generating activities. The IRRINI project also puts greater emphasis on entrepreneurial activities. Another assumption from our side was that returnees to Iraq are expected to have higher education than those who returned to Afghanistan, facilitating, among other things, procurement of employment and reintegration. Finally, we expected less negative attitudes among Iraqis in Norway towards voluntary return than what was the case for Afghans considering returning, potentially facilitating information work in Norway and encouraging potential returnees to accept the offer.

## 2.1 Cash v. In-kind: Available knowledge

It is somewhat surprising that we know so little about the respective effects of cash-grants and in-kind assistance on the sustainability of return, given that VARRPs are increasingly popular among European host states, and often considered as an alternative to forced return. Whereas much attention has hitherto been paid to the pre-return components of VARRPs (such as information dissemination, country of origin information and counselling) and the transportation phase, the European Migration Network reports that several European states are now shifting their focus towards the post-return reintegration phase.<sup>3</sup> Hopefully, this implies an increased attentiveness to the need for careful monitoring of these programmes, as there is a dearth of evidence on the reintegration outcomes of VARRP beneficiaries – a knowledge gap that was already identified in 2004 but still persists today.<sup>4</sup> Pending rigorous comparative research on cash grants and in-kind assistance, there are still some observations to be derived from the literature. It is for instance relevant that an internal IOM

<sup>3</sup> European Migration Network (2011). "Programmes and Strategies in the EU Member States Fostering Assisted Return to and Reintegration in Third Countries". Synthesis Report.

<sup>4</sup> See for instance IOM (2004). "Compilation of Best Practice in Return Management in Selected EU Countries and Romania. Vienna: IOM; Thiel, Darren and Gillan, Kirsten (2010). "Factors Affecting Participation in Assisted Voluntary Return Programmes and Successful Reintegration: A Review of the Evidence." Home Office Research Report No. 29; Statskontoret (2010). "Uppföljning av Återetableringssödet"; and Council of Europe (2010). "Voluntary Return Programmes: An Effective, Human and Cost Effective Mechanism for Returning Irregular Migrants". Parliamentary Assembly. Doc. 12277. Committee on Migration, Refugees and Population.

evaluation of return to Iraqi Kurdistan from the UK found that "(...) many returnees remarked that the most valuable component of the IOM assistance was the £500 fund allocation at the beginning of the assistance package."<sup>5</sup> Another IOM paper finds that in a cross-country analysis of different VARRPs to Iraq, Iraqis who are free to choose to receive reintegration assistance as a cash grant prefers this to the alternative in-kind reintegration assistance (authors' emphasis):

A challenge facing the return and reintegration programmes for Iraqi nationals are the general return and reintegration programmes implemented in most countries, for which Iraqis are eligible, and which provide different types of assistance, mainly *cash assistance*. This can be viewed as an obstacle as many countries with options for Iraqi returnees to choose return under a general programme with cash assistance or return under a specific programme for Iraq with *in kind* assistance, saw their Iraqi returnees numbers' [sic] grow, but merely under the *general* return programmes.<sup>6</sup>

Whether this should in fact be regarded as a challenge or not depends on whether one believes that in-kind assistance better contributes to the sustainability of return than cash-based assistance, or whether one believes more in demand-driven reintegration assistance. In the field of humanitarian assistance, however, has there been a growing interest in recent years in cash grants as a humanitarian assistance and social protection tool, complementing or even replacing in-kind assistance.<sup>7</sup> Haver et al. (2009) notes that positive experiences from repatriation operations "would suggest that cash grants have earned their place as a standard instrument in the tool box for UNHCR-assisted voluntary repatriation operations."<sup>8</sup> While not uncontroversial, cash-based interventions are according to Troger and Trennant (2008) likely to become an increasingly important component of the humanitarian response portfolio.<sup>9</sup> According to these authors, one key question will go a long way in determining whether a cash-based intervention is appropriate: can people buy what they need in local markets?<sup>10</sup> This concern is also noted in a recent mapping study on the use of cash transfers commissioned by the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (Norad), though one of their key lessons identified is that "cash-based mechanisms are a credible and preferred alternative to in-kind assistance."<sup>11</sup>

The study by Norad takes into account the use of cash support in humanitarian emergencies, recovery situations, protracted emergencies and development situation, and for return and integration programmes. There are three results achieved with cash transfer that the study highlights that appear to be of particular relevance for the IRRINI study (Norad, p.12):

- **Beneficiaries are highly receptive to the cash-instruments, where goods are available.** The preference is systematically verified through evaluation. There is strong evidence that cash is directed to meeting basic needs, and is not more prone to misuse or anti-social use than other forms of assistance. Cash allows people to diversify their income sources and consumption. It provides greater flexibility to beneficiaries, based on need and conditions, than in-kind assistance. Literature also finds an increase in dignity comes with increased

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<sup>5</sup> IOM Iraq (2010). "Internal Evaluation of Returnees from the UK to Kurdistan Regional Government: Movement and Assisted Migration (MAM) Report." p. 9.

<sup>6</sup> Zadel, Esther Van; Kakushadze, Anna & Tongeren, Bart Van (2010). "Assisted Voluntary Return & Reintegration of Iraqi Nationals from Selected European Countries". Hague: IOM. p. 25.

<sup>7</sup> Haver, Katherine; Hatungimana, Felicien & Tennant, Vicky (2009). "Money Matters: An Evaluation of the Use of Cash Grants in UNHCR's Voluntary Repatriation And Reintegration Programme in Burundi". UNHCR Policy Development and Evaluation Service. Geneva: UNHCR.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid, p. 43.

<sup>9</sup> Troger, Franziska & Trennant, Vicky (2008). "The Use of Cash Grants in UNHCR Voluntary Repatriation Operations. Report of a 'Lessons Learned' Workshop". UNHCR Policy Development and Evaluation Service And Division of Operational Services. Geneva: UNHCR. p. 2.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid, p. 2.

<sup>11</sup> Norad (2011) "We Accept Cash: Mapping Study on the Use of Cash Transfers in Humanitarian, Recovery and Transitional Response". Oslo, Norad Report 10/2011 Discussion

choices and control over resources, which has had a positive impact on long term development prospects.

- **Evaluations indicate that the cash-based approach has been effective in targeting vulnerable groups.** The approach can also have a broader impact reducing vulnerability. Examples given in the evaluation literature include building up household asset, using cash to pay down debt to increase credit worthiness later, providing access to banks and financial services for the first time, and generally allowing vulnerable groups to participate in what the literature describes as "monetary society".
- **Cash can be more cost-effective than in-kind assistance.** Several studies have documented whether a cash approach is more cost-effective than commodity-based alternatives. Assessment is complicated by the many variables, and brings in elements of barter cost, the quality and origin of products (internationally procured vs. locally produced), and effect on local markets, among others.

Evidence on cost-efficiency and cost – effectiveness is context specific. There is no evidence that cash is always more efficient than in-kind assistance or vice versa. Focus should be in cost-effectiveness though, since one transfer might be more efficient but less effective and, therefore, delivering less benefit. Regardless, the overall conclusion is that, with the right enabling conditions, a cash-approach is more cost-effective than in-kind.

Three additional results found in the literature (ibid. p.13) is that 1) cash transfer can allow programmes to kick off a lot quicker than traditional in-kind delivery; 2) that it can be combined with saving and loans mechanisms, to expand access to capital; and 3) that it can enable the entire community of beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries' need to be addressed in the pre-implementation phase, so that they are in possession of adequate information.

The main finding is that there is little evidence that (ibid. p.17):" systematically, the use of cash creates inequality, that resources have been diverted by male households members for non-priority or 'anti-social' use, or that cash-based mechanisms have contributed to increased domestic tension or violence. Rather the evidence indicates that cash has mainly been spent according to intentions, by men and women, and perceived risks have not materialised".

Altogether, the initial findings on the use of cash support are positive and do seem applicable for a reintegration programme as IRRINI.

### 3. Research methodology and return and returnee data

We will in this chapter present our research methodology and data and statistics relating in general to return to Iraq and specifically on the informants for this study.

#### 3.1 Research methodology

The overall methodological design and the interview guides for prospective returnees in Norway and those who had returned to Iraq were derived from the theoretical framework, and further developed and operationalized for Iraq through workshops with Iraqi researchers/consultants, within the team, through discussions with the internal and external reference groups and through pilot interviews. The interview guides are included in Annex II.

The review team has prioritised highlighting the returnees' perspective of the programme, as their return and reintegration is the primary objective of the IRRINI programme. We have throughout the study sought to bring forward their assessment of the programme, including through the use of quotes, although our analysis and conclusions have taken into account a range of other sources to balance this actor perspective. Our primary source for verification has been information from and data check with the organizations involved in the implementation of the programme.

The methodology, interview forms and introduction letters for interviewees in Norway and Iraq were registered with and approved by the Norwegian Social Science Data Service (NSD). Limited access was sought on information on Iraqi asylum seekers in Norway in general and those registered for the IRRINI programme with the Ministry of Justice and the Police in particular. Strict procedures for data handling and registration were agreed upon with NSD and applied for all researchers/consultants involved in the research. These implied that informed consent was obtained from informants prior to starting any interview, where they orally and in writing were informed that their names and contact details would be deleted from our files post-interview.

These procedures furthermore ensured that private information would be kept separate from the main interview form (with a code for identification) and that all sensitive data would be stored in a separate computer disconnected from the internet. This information was deleted, as instructed by NSD, following completion of the analysis of interviews. The information letter is enclosed as Annex III. Moreover, all researchers signed a "Declaration of Confidentiality" before being provided with any personal information on the IRRINI returnees. The Kurdish Regional Government was informed of the evaluation, and provided the team with a letter of introduction for use in areas under their jurisdiction.

The research methodology included a review of IRRINI, IOM, and BIP documents and statistics, as well as literature on return migration more broadly and on Iraqi migration patterns in particular. Likewise information on return and reintegration programmes in other European countries incorporated into the methodology. Observations were gathered at information meetings conducted by IOM and BIP at reception centres in Norway, (including one conducted in Arabic), and during the arrival of returnees at Erbil Airport in Iraq. Semi-structured interviews were held with staff of UDI, the Norwegian Embassy in Jordan, IOM (Norway, Jordan (Iraq mission), Baghdad, Erbil, and Duhok), BIP (Norway, Erbil and Duhok), reception centres in the Oslo and Bergen regions, and with a number of other key informants in Norway, Jordan and Iraq. A full list is included in Annex IV, although the names of reception centres visited are not given in order to maintain the anonymity of informants. The aim of these more open interviews, each targeted to the specific role or knowledge held by the organization and/or the interviewee, was to provide the team with broad knowledge on the IRRINI programme, return and reintegration processes, the situation for returned asylum seekers in Iraq and Iraqi Kurdistan, and subsequently, to obtain feedback on initial research findings and discuss ways for improvement of the programme.

Our main source of information and the main focus of our analysis for the review consisted of semi-structured interviews with a total of 113 Iraqi nationals, including potential and prospective returnees in Norway, and IRRINI-registered returnees to southern and northern Iraq. While we cover marginally more than 10 percent of the returnees through the interviews (by spring 2010) and recognize that women are underrepresented in our sample, we cover returnees from all the four major return areas as shown below: Erbil, Suleimaniah, Duhok and Baghdad.

In Norway interviews were conducted with 28 Iraqi asylum applicants/refugees, of whom 14 informed that they had registered for voluntary return with IRRINI. In total, 26 of the interviewees were men, the majority between 20-29 years, and only 2 were women.

In Iraqi Kurdistan 60 IRRINI returnees were interviewed, 2 women and 58 men. The large majority were between 20 and 39 years old. Of these, 6 had asylum status or protection on humanitarian grounds in Norway and 7 were MUF cases.

In Baghdad and southern Iraq, 25 IRRINI returnees were interviewed, 2 women and 23 men. In this group 5 had asylum status in Norway and 1 had protection on humanitarian grounds. The majority were between 31 – 40 years old.

The team also had a focus group interview with 13 returnees attending a BIP network meeting in Erbil. This provided us with background information on what experiences these returnees had with the process of establishing a business.

Given the total number, different backgrounds and ages of those interviewed our findings and recommendations are based on a fairly representative selection of returnees. The exception here is the sex distribution of interviewees, where only 6 female interviewees represent a too small a sample for a meaningful analysis. Nevertheless, the majority of refugees from Iraq are male, thus our main focus of analysis (see figure 3).

The interview guide for use in Iraq was first reviewed by the Iraqi researchers and subsequently field tested through four test interviews conducted in collaboration with Iraqi and Norwegian researchers. This led to an adjustment in the question flow and phrasing to ensure clarity and a logical development of the interview. Following completion of interviews in the Kurdish regions all interviews were examined and discussed in a workshop with the research team; separate meetings were held with the Erbil and Suleimaniah research assistants. This was to allow for a thorough review of the interviews, and to gain further insight into the interview process, meta-data, and contextual differences across the different return locations. As noted above, the different professions represented in the interview team, and their knowledge of available social and medical support by the Kurdish Regional Governments, offered valuable insight into the situation and support options of vulnerable returnees. This was supplemented by information from the UNHCR, the Social Department of the KRG in Erbil and the Mayor of Erbil.

The team met with staff of IOM and BIP offices in Erbil before completing the fieldwork. Here we received feedback on our initial field findings, asked for verification of information obtained pertaining to their respective activities and sought further clarity on procedures and organizational matters. Contact was followed up with the IOM office in Jordan, assisted by the Oslo office, to obtain additional information on IOM's organisational setup and procedures related to the reintegration application and management.

Most of our contact with IOM has been with local offices directly involved with IRRINI returnees after their return, but the team also received support from IOM in Norway. Following an initial meeting in Oslo, we drew on their assistance in contacting IRRINI returnees, updating information on the number of IRRINI applicants and returnees, and developing the outline of the application process in Norway.

When analyzing the interviews it is important to recognize that certain cultural factors inevitably influence the replies to our questions, and subsequently the reliability of our data. It was evident that some suspected that the researchers and/or translators could potentially influence an asylum application/status by passing information from the interview to the Norwegian Government (including UDI), IOM or BIP. We have consistently tried to counter such scepticism by explaining our background and independence and encouraging those interviewed to express and explain their concerns. Still, we cannot be entirely certain that we managed to build sufficient trust in all interview settings to allow the IRRINI participants to speak freely. In some cases, interviews were terminated because the respondent obviously misunderstood the purpose of the discussion and in a few cases we were advised by reception centre staff not to interview vulnerable individuals. The fact that the interviewers made use of translators in Norway may also have affected the answers – both due to potential inexact translations and as a consequence of mistrust towards the translator as a person.

Informants in Norway were identified by reception centre staff as well as IOM. The team emailed an information letter to selected reception centres in both Arabic and English for the benefit of both staff and potential informants which explained the purpose and background of the study. Despite our continuous efforts to clarify the nature and purpose of the research, some Iraqi asylum seekers who were approached for an interview declined. A few “felt they had enough information” or “did not feel like discussing return with yet another person.” A majority of the interviews were conducted at the reception centres. Some were conducted at a café in the city centre, chosen by the interview partner. The selection of informants in Iraq was largely based on a list of contact details of IRRINI registered returnees provided by IOM and BIP. It proved difficult to obtain contact with all returnees using these lists as many changed their mobile numbers frequently, a problem IOM Erbil informed us about. We therefore complemented the IOM and BIP lists by a snowballing methodology where interviewees were kindly asked to provide us with names and contact details of other returnees they knew from the IRRINI programme. These contact details proved to be more up to date and reliable for Duhok and Erbil, while the IOM- only list was used in Suleimaniah. In Baghdad the security obstacles to conducting face-to-face interviews meant that 14 of the 25 interviews had to be conducted by phone and three by internet. Only 8 were thus interviewed in person. According to the local researchers who conducted these interviews, the difference in interview methodology did not seem to affect the answers given. Many were initially sceptical to researchers when they were approached, but, strikingly, not a single one of the respondents in Baghdad refused to be asked questions. This contrasts with the case in Iraqi Kurdistan, where the refusal rate was much higher. In Duhok, especially, 19 of 49 refused to be interviewed, either arguing that they were upset with the programme and therefore did not want to discuss it any further, or that they “did not have the time”. The particular relations people from Duhok have to IOM will be discussed later in the document.

The text contains quotations from the respondents. Since most of the interviews were not conducted in English the quotes in the text may diverge from the precise formulation of the respondents. The quotations selected, however, shed light on the mindset and perspectives revealed during the interview.

### 3.2 Return and returnee data

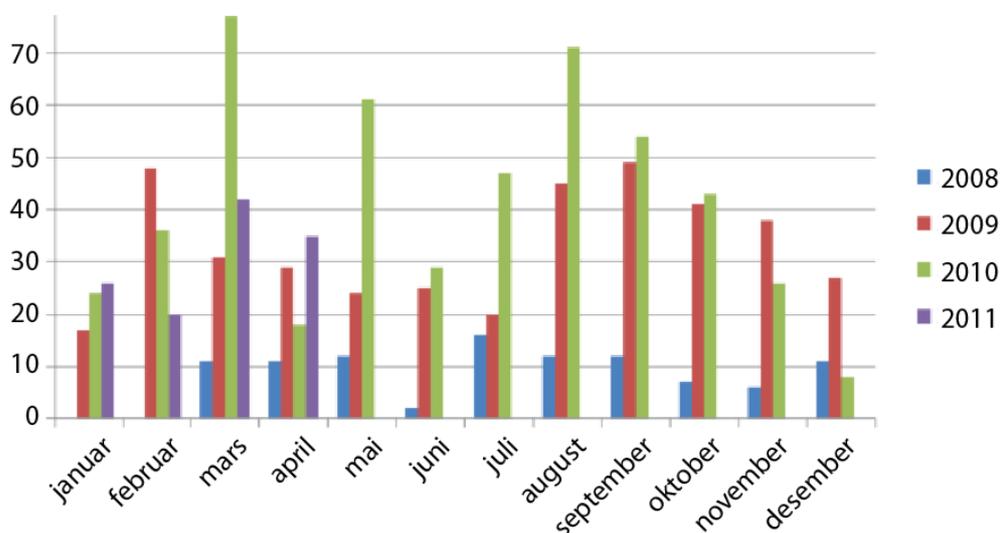
The IRRINI programme had assisted a total of 859 Iraqis to return as of August 2010, when the fieldwork for this study was concluded. In phase I of IRRINI (March 2008 – June 2009) 274 applicants returned, while 7 who applied to the programme were not eligible. In phase II (July 2009 – August 2010) there were 585 who returned and 10 who applied but were not eligible.<sup>12</sup> As seen below the number of returns through IRRINI has increased greatly over time. This positive trend has

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<sup>12</sup> According to UDI, a total of 363 people from Iraq used the programme for return between January and September 2010. Asylum seekers from Iraq represent the largest group that make use of the return programme. UDI's homepage: <http://www.udi.no/Nyheter/2010/Rekord-i-frivillige-returer/> (accessed 19.10.2010).

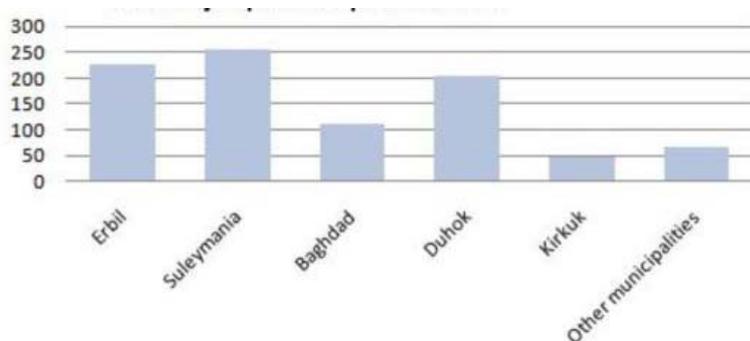
continued, 281 returned to Iraq between January and June 2011<sup>13</sup> and by 31 august 2011 a total of 1381 Iraqis had returned with IRRINI.

**Figure 1: Voluntary return to Iraq from January 2008 until May 2011<sup>14</sup>**



The study covers returnees from all the four major return areas as shown below: Erbil, Suleimaniah, Duhok and Baghdad.

**Figure 2: Main destinations of voluntary returns to Iraq<sup>15</sup>**



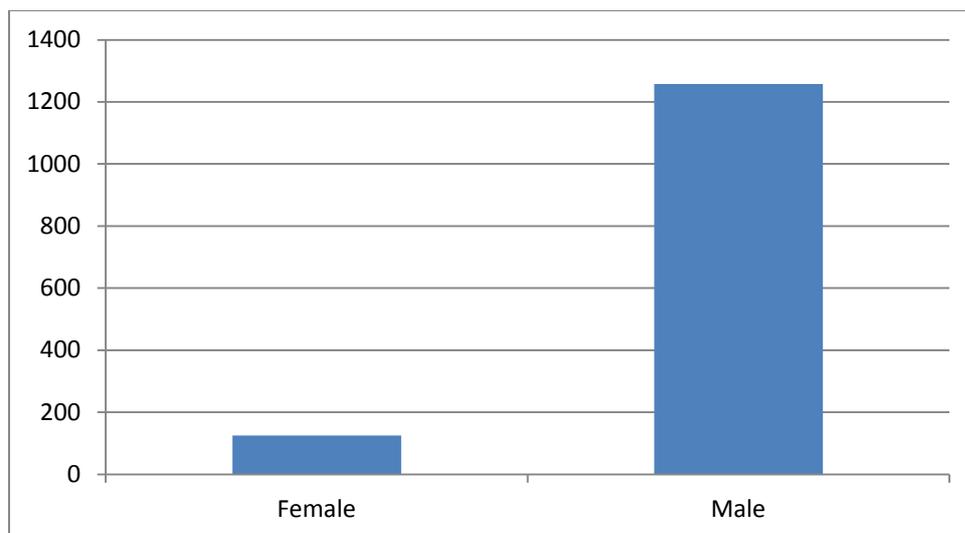
Given the different backgrounds and ages of those interviewed we are of the opinion that we have a fairly representative selection of returnees on which to base our findings and recommendations. It should also be noted that we did not specifically target vulnerable groups/individuals for interviews but assumed that we would identify them during the course of the discussion.

<sup>13</sup> Further statistics available at IOM webpage <http://www.iom.no/files/Statistics%202011-1.pdf> (accessed 12.09.11)

<sup>14</sup> Homepage of the Royal Norwegian Embassy in Amman, Jordan: <http://www.norway-iraq.org/Retur/Lover-og-regler-for-opphold-i-Norge/Statstikk-for-returnerte-til-Irak-med-IRRINI-programmet/> (accessed 04.10.2011).

<sup>15</sup> Homepage of the Royal Norwegian Embassy in Amman, Jordan: [www.norway-iraq.org/Retur/Lover-og-regler-for-opphold-i-Norge/Destinasjon-retur/](http://www.norway-iraq.org/Retur/Lover-og-regler-for-opphold-i-Norge/Destinasjon-retur/) (accessed 23.11.2010).

**Figure 3: Gender distribution of voluntary returnees to Iraq as of 31 August 2011** <sup>16</sup>



It is moreover of interest to note for how long returnees had been in their home areas before they were interviewed, in determining the expected extent of their reintegration process.

**Table 2: Duration of stay in Iraq before interview** <sup>17</sup>

Region	Average number of weeks
Duhok	48
Erbil	61
Suleimaniah	43
Baghdad and South Iraq	24
<b>Total</b>	<b>44</b>

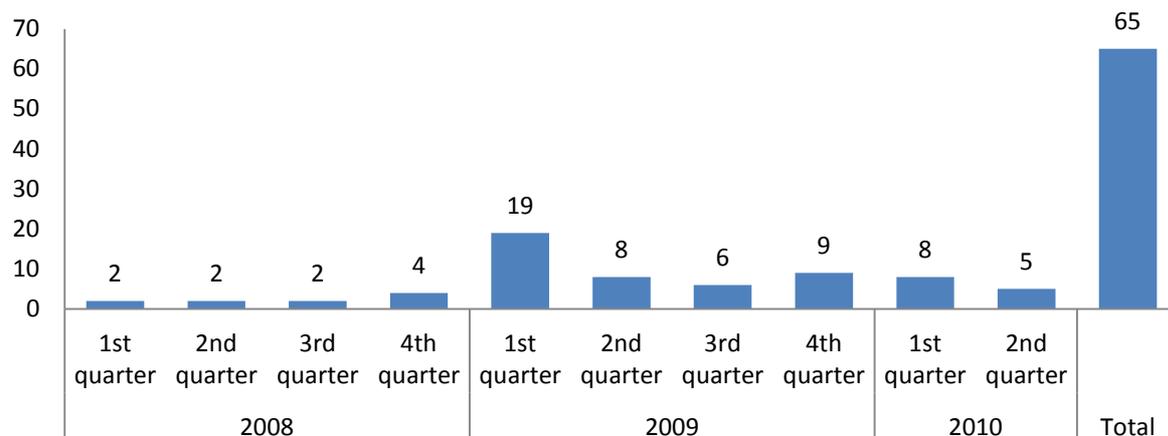
The notable difference here is that returnees to Baghdad and Southern Iraq had spent a shorter period back home before interviewed than those returning to Iraqi Kurdistan, in average close to 6 months. This implies that 50 per cent of the returnees selecting the business option had not started their business at the time of the interview and thus held less experience with this part of the reintegration programme. In contrast, while those who returned to Erbil had spent a longer time back home than returnees to Duhok and Suleimaniah, they had all been back home on average between nearly 11 and up to 15 months. This will have ensured that they, again on average, should have been through the entire reintegration process.

Another interesting aspect of the study is the uncertainty regarding whether we have been able to cover a fairly representative number of returnees throughout the programme period. Figure 4 documents a good spread of time of return among those returned when broken down by annual quarter of return, with a peak in the first quarter of 2009.

<sup>16</sup> Homepage of the Royal Norwegian Embassy in Amman, Jordan: [www.norway-iraq.org/Retur/Lover-og-regler-for-opphold-i-Norge/Kjonnsfordeling-frivillig-retur/](http://www.norway-iraq.org/Retur/Lover-og-regler-for-opphold-i-Norge/Kjonnsfordeling-frivillig-retur/), accessed 23.11.2010, and UDI update of 04.10.2011

<sup>17</sup> A total of 19 interviewees cited the month of return only, without citing an exact date. In these instances, the basis of calculation has been taken to be the 15th of that month. 'January 2009' thus translates into "15.01.2009". A total of 10 interviewees indicated the year of return, without any further specification. These were all taken out of the calculation of average duration of stay. Suffice to say that 2 returned in 2008, while the remaining 8 returned in 2009.

**Figure 4: Time of return to Iraq<sup>18</sup>**



Some differences in the responses from returnees to Baghdad and Iraqi Kurdistan need to be considered, where those returning to a worse security situation in Baghdad (and the south) are more satisfied with the IRRINI programme. A closer analysis finds this group to be slightly older, but factors that are probably more relevant to their satisfaction with return include higher levels of education and their established family situation.

**Table 3: Demographic differences between returnee groups**

	<b>Iraqi Kurdistan</b>	<b>Baghdad and southern Iraq</b>
Average age	30 years	34 years
Percentage of childlessness	69 per cent	44 per cent
Percentage of primary level education only	41 per cent	16 per cent

<sup>18</sup> Those that only provide information of year of return (the majority from 2009) or where no information was provided was excluded, leaving us with accurate date on the return of 65 returnees.

## 4. Background to the IRRINI programme

The Information, Return, and Reintegration of Iraqi Nationals to Iraq (IRRINI) programme was established in 2008 by the Norwegian Directorate of Immigration (UDI) to facilitate the voluntary return and reintegration of persons from Iraq. It is the second country-specific return programme supported by UDI: the IRRANA programme for Afghan nationals commenced in 2006.<sup>19</sup> In addition to assisting asylum applicants who are either waiting for a decision or in receipt of a negative one, the IRRINI programme supports the repatriation of Iraqis with Norwegian residence permits. IRRINI does not include Iraqi nationals who have been deported by the Norwegian police.

Phase I of the programme lasted from 1<sup>st</sup> of March 2008 to 28<sup>th</sup> of February 2009, and was extended until June 2009. Due to high demand, it continued with a phase II lasting to August 2010, and moved into phase III in September 2010. Among those who are ineligible for IRRINI are asylum seekers with Dublin status (who have either applied for protection in another country, are registered with fingerprints in another country after crossing a border illegally, or hold a visa or residence permit in another country); or applicants deemed ineligible by the National Police Immigration Service (PU), e.g. due to criminal records.

Norway and Iraq signed on 15<sup>th</sup> of May 2009 an agreement on return of Iraqi nationals with rejected asylum applications to Iraq. The agreement emphasises promotion of voluntary return, but opens up for forced return and states Iraq's responsibility to receive its citizens.<sup>20</sup> The Kurdish Regional Government has raised objections to forced return to areas under their administration, but welcomes voluntary return.

The IRRINI programme consists of the following components:

### 4.1 Information in Norway

IOM and BIP periodically present information about the programme in English, Arabic and Kurdish at reception centres, and online. The information is aimed at potential Iraqi returnees, staff at reception centres and others in contact with the target group.

Both IOM and BIP provide information and advice on an individual basis to those considering return, either in person, by telephone or by email.

### 4.2 Return preparation

Norwegian authorities encourage returnees to Iraq to undergo a voluntary health check, recommend them to obtain vaccination against diphtheria, tetanus and poliomyelitis, and refund expenses. Those registering with IRRINI will be interviewed by IOM to record their reintegration requirements in Iraq. This information is transmitted to IOM offices in Iraq. Returnees that have spent less than 183 days in Norway may also request an advance tax assessment and repayment of excess tax paid. IOM may organize transport within Norway upon request or refund travel expenses, and also helps prospective returnees procure valid travel documents and visas.

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<sup>19</sup> Other foreign nationals without legal residence in Norway are served by the Voluntary Assistance to Return Programme (VARP). A VARP application is, however, the first step in the assessing the qualifications of would-be IRRINI participants.

<sup>20</sup> The MFA press release is available at the homepage of the Norwegian government (in Norwegian only): [www.regjeringen.no/en/dep/ud/pressesenter/pressemeldinger/2009/irak\\_avtale.html?id=562738](http://www.regjeringen.no/en/dep/ud/pressesenter/pressemeldinger/2009/irak_avtale.html?id=562738) (accessed 23.11.2010)

### 4.3 Travel and arrival in Iraq

IOM assists with preparation of the return travel, funded through VARP, by helping to obtain valid travel documents and visas and organising the return travel. The returnees are entitled to have travel expenses to the airport covered, and receive 60 USD (adult) and 90 USD (children) as “pocket money” for their travel.

IOM staff in Iraq meet the returnees at the airport upon arrival in Iraq, at which time they are to be provided with up-to-date information on relevant affairs and available reintegration services offered by IOM, BIP and others.<sup>21</sup> The returnees receive an initial cash grant in US dollars equivalent to 10,000 NOK,<sup>22</sup> and they are entitled to support for onward transportation to their final destination, including overnight accommodation if required.

### 4.4 Counselling and reintegration support

The returnees meet with staff of IOM Iraq after arrival to discuss their reintegration plan, where they can make a choice between assistance to 1) find a job; 2) pursue an education or vocational training opportunity; or 3) receive in-kind assistance for establishing a business.

As explained on the UDI information sheet in English: “The reintegration allowance of up to NOK 25 000 per person is administrated by the Iraqi IOM in agreement with the applicant/returnee.”<sup>23</sup> IOM's homepage, however, contains a caveat stating: “Note that you will not receive the in-kind grant of 25,000 NOK but instead IOM will use it to pay for (services) or buy items you will need for your reintegration option.”<sup>24</sup>

Any other need for additional support for vulnerable returnees is to be determined through this counselling and reintegration process. Those who applied for voluntary return by 1 July 2009 or later have the possibility of applying for a housing allowance of up to NOK 20,000 through IOM Iraq. This is only granted to a limited number of returnees upon an application submitted through IOM Iraq, which will appraise the proposal before it is eventually approved by UDI.

BIP provides other components, namely training in entrepreneurship, in establishing and developing small businesses as well as developing concrete business plans in Iraq. BIP moreover maintains contact with those who have attended their training sessions, and organises regular network meetings where participants can share their experiences.

The Norwegian Government has assigned a Second Secretary on Immigration Issues to their Embassy in Amman in Jordan, tasked with liaising with IOM regarding return and coordinating efforts with other nations.

### 4.5 Organisations involved in IRRINI

As noted above, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) is contracted by the UDI to manage the IRRINI programme. In addition, UDI funds the Business Innovation Programme (BIP) to provide additional support to returnees starting their own businesses.

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<sup>21</sup> As written in more detail on IOM's homepage: “You will be provided with information about Government, international and local NGOs including BIP's and UN agencies programmes being implemented in your final destination.” [http://www.iom.no/irri/services\\_under\\_irri.htm](http://www.iom.no/irri/services_under_irri.htm) (accessed 23.11.2010).

<sup>22</sup> If the returnee has a residence permit in Norway, 15, 000 NOK is given before departure from Norway by UDI.

<sup>23</sup> UDI IRRINI Information sheets are available at <http://www.udi.no/Norwegian-Directorate-of-Immigration/Central-topics/Return-and-repatriation/Information-sheets---Return-and-repatriation-to-Iraq/>

<sup>24</sup> Available at [http://www.iom.no/irri/services\\_under\\_irri.htm](http://www.iom.no/irri/services_under_irri.htm), accessed 04.11.2010

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) is an international intergovernmental organisation specialising in migration management. Their main office is located in Geneva, the Norway office is in Oslo, while the Iraq Mission maintains hub offices in Baghdad, Erbil, Basrah and Amman, with satellite offices in various additional governorates. IOM staff are tasked with following up on returnees in locations such as Duhok. IOM is involved in a number of migration related issues and programmes, including assistance to rejected asylum seekers and irregular migrants in Norway who wish to return voluntarily to their countries of origin (VARP). In Norway, the IOM runs special programmes for Afghan and Iraqi nationals who wish to return, as well as assisting victims of trafficking and empowering Polish labour migrants.

The IOM has since 2003 been directly assisting approximately two million Iraqis in need, through emergency assistance, assisted migration, community stabilization, capacity-building and socio-economic reintegration.

The IOM has since 2008 been assigned the main responsibility for the IRRINI programme by UDI, regulated through a contract outlining services to be provided to the returnees. This includes the entire process from information dissemination work in Norway, organizing the return journey, provision of reintegration support to meeting special needs in Iraq post-return. More details on IOM's assistance are presented throughout the evaluation.

IOM implements return programmes from many states to Iraq, although each state independently designs its own programme. Details on the widely differing assistance offered by some European states are provided in the next chapter.

The Business Innovation Programmes (BIP) is a non-profit foundation with headquarter in Moss, Norway. The organization's objective is to contribute to the establishment of jobs and small businesses, and facilitate the development of expertise in the field of business development as an effective means of building or rebuilding countries.

BIP is currently running projects in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro and Serbia in addition to Iraq, and organizes entrepreneurship courses in Norway for refugees who aspire to return to their home country. Participants who have completed the skills upgrading course in Norway or locally may in some countries apply for loans to set up their companies, but this is not offered in Iraq.

BIP is contracted by UDI to inform Iraqi nationals in Norway about the potential for establishment of small businesses upon return to Iraq. In Iraq, BIP invites returnees to courses in Bagdad and Erbil to develop viable business ideas and provide knowledge on how to establish small businesses, including developing business ideas and entrepreneurial qualifications as well as calculating costs and income. BIP moreover assists returnees in establishing networks and invites them to events aimed at maintaining contact and sharing experiences. Contact with the returnees is also maintained by two BIP employees in Duhok and in Suleimaniah, who also are in contact with returnees regarding general questions relating to IRRINI and their reintegration.

During the 6 first months of 2010 BIP organized 11 business establishment courses for 78 IRRINI returnees, including some individually targeted, and organized 5 network meetings in Erbil, Zako and Suleimaniah. By the end of 2010 BIP reported that they have been in contact with 514 IRRINI returnees, of which 312 report to have established businesses with a total of 505 jobs. Moreover, 142 returnees have reported to BIP that they have obtained permanent jobs while 40 remained jobless and 30 sought education.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> BIP (2011) Årsrapport pr. 30. desember 2010: Støtte til retur-og tilbakevendingstiltak Irak.: "Videreføring av etablerte næringsutviklingssenter i Nord-Iraq". Moss, Business Innovation Programs

**BIP's Business establishment statistics from February 2010 document that the most popular type of businesses are: a) Minimarkets (20); b) taxis (15); c) clothing stores (14); d trucks (12) and e) cosmetics (10).**

## 5. Norwegian policy developments of relevance to IRRINI

A number of policies have been implemented in Norway during recent years that affect Iraqi asylum seekers, the largest group of asylum seekers to Norway during the greater part of the last decade.<sup>26</sup> There is a great variety as for what benefits different European countries provide in their reintegration programmes in Iraq, causing a degree of confusion among returnees about their entitlements.

### 5.1 Norwegian policy developments

The political measures targeting or affecting Iraqi asylum seekers should be viewed against a backdrop of restrictions on governmental asylum policies as of September 2008, at a time when Norway, next to the Netherlands, had the largest increase in asylum applicants in Europe.<sup>27</sup> Many of these were Iraqis, and the increase in Iraqi asylum seekers to Norway from 2007 to 2008 has been associated with restrictions in the asylum regime in Sweden (Agenda 2009: 9). A 13-point policy document issued by the Norwegian government in September 2008 signalled a tightening of immigration policy. Two of the measures (nos. 8 and 13) in particular directly affected Iraqi asylum seekers. Number 13 provided: "A fast track procedure for particular groups where there are a high percentage of rejections will be established. This is conditional of cooperation between all government bodies needed in the process."

The ensuing Torshov Project (Torshovsprosjektet, TP) was operative from October 2008 until June 2009 and specifically targeted Iraqi asylum seekers. Its objectives included speeding up the processing time for individual asylum applications and to fast-track Iraqi asylum seekers whose cases seemed easy to determine (e.g. young, adult and single Kurdish men) by centralizing the different steps in the process – registration, interview, decision-making, accommodation, information about rights, document review and language tests, medical tests, clothing, etc. in one single place. This entailed the co-localizing of staff from the Directorate of Immigration (UDI), the Police Immigration Unit (PU), the Norwegian Organization for Asylum Seekers (NOAS) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM). The Immigration Appeals Board (UNE) was also instructed to prioritize requests from TP. The temporal objectives were reached, as the time period from arrival until the final decision by UNE was reduced from 1-1.5 years to approximately 3 months (Agenda 2009: 10).

Statistics from UDI for the period 2008 to 2010 show that the number of Iraqi nationals granted asylum remained stable (approximately 6-9%) while there was a slight increase in those granted humanitarian protection. Those receiving "other protection" (sterke menneskelige hensyn) however, drastically declined so that the overall percentage of Iraqis receiving the right to remain in Norway decreased as a whole. The number of asylum seekers peaked in 2009, with nearly twice as many that year as in 2010. These latter two factors may contribute to the perception among respondents that "no one" receives protection in Norway. While applicants may perceive that their cases are not being fully heard, UDI maintains that it undertakes a "concrete and individual" assessment in all asylum cases brought by Iraqi citizens (AI -65/08 - Instruks om behandling av asylsøknader fra Irak). This represents a change in policy since 2008, however, for Iraqis from central Iraq and the "Red Zone", who were previously deemed to have a de facto need for protection.

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<sup>26</sup> Homepage of the Norwegian Ministry of Justice and the Police, "Norsk Flyktning- og Migrasjonspolitik i et Europeisk Perspektiv" (page 86): <http://www.regjeringen.no/nb/dep/jd/dok/regpubl/stmeld/2009-2010/Meld-St-9-2009--2010.html?id=597820> (accessed 23.11.2010).

<sup>27</sup> Homepage of the Norwegian Ministry of Labour, AID Press Release Nr. 88, 03.09.2008, "Tightening of the Immigration Policy": <http://www.regjeringen.no/en/dep/aid/press-centre/press-releases/2008/tightening-of-the-immigration-policy.html?id=525564> (accessed 23.11.2010).

**Table 4: Iraqi asylum seekers to Norway 2008 – 31/08/2011, key categories.**<sup>28</sup>

Categories	2008	2009	2010	31/08/11	Total
Asylum (convention refugees)	113	145	137	53	782
Protection on other grounds / other refugee status	307	8	6	2	323
Humanitarian grounds	145	194	233	25	467
Rejected	935	1545	744	121	3345
Rejection other reasons	7	14	8	8	37
Dublin II decree	216	335	143	79	773
Withdraw/dismissed	121	188	140	44	493
Other	0	20	6	2	28
<b>Total</b>	<b>1844</b>	<b>2449</b>	<b>1417</b>	<b>334</b>	<b>6044</b>

Of the more than 250 Iraqis whose applications were rejected at TP, about ten had entered into “serious talks” with IOM concerning return some months after its inception (Agenda 2009: 12). Among the main reasons for the low interest for return, according to the report, was the absence of an agreement with Iraq whereby Norway could forcibly return Iraqis with final rejection (Agenda 2009: 12, 18).

By 15 May 2009, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) had entered into an agreement with Iraqi authorities that Norway could return Iraqis without legal residence in Norway, and who did not want to return voluntarily, with Iraq’s permission. The Minister of Labor and Social Inclusion at the time saw this as a viable solution for both countries, framing the issue as being important to Norway for enabling it to return those with final rejection letters,<sup>29</sup> and to Iraq for the human capital offered to it by former emigrants who could now contribute to the country’s reconstruction. As stated, “[m]any of those who have emigrated have qualifications that Iraq needs. The agreement may also contribute to the voluntary return of an increasing number. These will get a return package with economic support, so that they will not be a burden for the Iraqi society upon return.”<sup>30</sup> In December the same year, 30 Iraqi asylum seekers were forcibly returned from Norway to Baghdad, an action leading the UNHCR to express its “concern”.<sup>31</sup> Between January 1 and November 18, 2010, another 132 Iraqi nationals had been forcibly returned from Norway.<sup>32</sup> During the first six months of 2011 a further 162 have been forcedly returned,<sup>33</sup> while Iraqis constituted in this period the second largest group (641 persons) to obtain a permanent stay permit in Norway and the third largest to obtain Norwegian citizenship (435 persons).<sup>34</sup>

<sup>28</sup> UDI homepage, available at <http://www.udi.no/Oversiktsider/Statistikk-og-analyse/Statistikk-/Asyl/Asylvedtak-fordelt-pa-statsborgerskap-og-arstall/> (accessed 04.11.2011).

<sup>29</sup> In Norwegian policy circles, asylum seekers with final rejection are by definition no longer “asylum seekers”.

<sup>30</sup> MFA Press release Nr. 039/09, “Avtale med Irak om tilbaketakelse undertegnet”: [www.regjeringen.no/nb/dep/ud/pressecenter/pressemeldinger/2009/irak\\_avtale.html?id=562738](http://www.regjeringen.no/nb/dep/ud/pressecenter/pressemeldinger/2009/irak_avtale.html?id=562738) (accessed 23.11.2010). Our translation.

<sup>31</sup> Letter from the UNHCR Regional Office for the Baltic and Nordic Countries to the Norwegian Minister of Justice, 228/ROBNC/2009. [http://media.aftenposten.no/archive/01182/200902442-7\\_vedleg\\_1182063a.pdf](http://media.aftenposten.no/archive/01182/200902442-7_vedleg_1182063a.pdf)

<sup>32</sup> Bergens Tidende homepage, “Ingen norsk stans i retur til Irak”. <http://www.bt.no/nyheter/utenriks/Ingen-norsk-stans-i-retur-til-Irak-1195980.html> (accessed 25.02.2011).

<sup>33</sup> Politiets Utlendingsenhet “Månedstatistikk 2011: Uttransporteringer fra Norge” [https://www.politi.no/vedlegg/lokale\\_vedlegg/politiets\\_utlendingsenhet/Vedlegg\\_1425.pdf](https://www.politi.no/vedlegg/lokale_vedlegg/politiets_utlendingsenhet/Vedlegg_1425.pdf) (accessed 04.10.2011)

<sup>34</sup> UDI “Nøkkeltall for første halvår 2011” available at <http://www.udi.no/Global/Nøkkeltall.pdf> (accessed 14.09.2011)

The change in refugee status determination procedures has likewise been controversial, as Norwegian procedures for Iraqis from some areas deviate from UNHCR's recommendations, as outlined in UNHCR Eligibility Guidelines for Assessing the International Protection Needs of Iraqi Asylum Seekers.<sup>35</sup> UNHCR recommends that applicants from the provinces Baghdad, Diyala, Salah al-Din, Ta'amim and Nineweh should be given protection on a general basis, whereas applicants from the northernmost provinces Dohuk, Erbil and Suleimaniah should be assessed individually. According to UDI these recommendations are relevant, but the organization reaches its decisions on the basis of individual and contextual information at the applicant's place of origin and reserves the right to assess differently than UNHCR, as the agency's guidelines are not legally binding.<sup>36</sup>

Not all policy measures that affect Iraqi asylum seekers are targeting them explicitly. The implementation of a more restrictive work permit policy in January 2009 is referred to as significant by high-ranking UDI officers who have worked with Iraqis. The Ministry of Labour and Social Inclusion (AID) instructed the UDI to adopt a stricter practice when granting temporary work permits to asylum seekers.<sup>37</sup> Asylum seekers now need to document their identity in order to obtain such a work permit. The rationale for this new policy was the dual aim of making it less attractive for asylum seekers without need of protection to come to Norway primarily to work, and to provide an incentive for asylum seekers to document their identity. The measure has meant that as of March 2010, exceedingly few asylum seekers have permission to work in Norway, as only approximately five per cent of asylum seekers have documented their identity properly.<sup>38</sup> Valenta et al. (2010) have nonetheless indicated that among Iraqis in Trondheim with final rejection, it is not unusual to find a way of surviving "outside the system", e.g. in the secondary labour market (2010: 106). These Iraqis were people with relatively long residency histories who had previously possessed work permits.

Finally, the adoption of the EU Return Directive will result in the harmonization of national legislations across the Schengen member states in the field of the enforced return of third-country nationals. The Norwegian government has, as of October 2010, proposed to implement the EU Return Directive in Norwegian legislation (Prop. 2 S). One of the main objectives of the directive is to contribute to increasing the number of voluntary returns.

## 5.2 European and Iraqi return programmes

Throughout the research the team encountered numerous references to other countries' assisted return programmes to Iraq. Returnees from within the same family might receive different support from IOM depending on which country they have returned from. The plethora of reintegration programmes also includes the Kurdish Regional Governments' special land allocation to Kurds returning from Iran in the early years after the overthrow of Saddam Hussein. Not only may this in sum confuse returnees from Norway (and other countries), and foment resentment against IOM, staff of IOM in Iraq raised a concern that it was a challenge to remain updated on the different types of assistance offered to returnees from different countries. For returnees from France there is further internal differentiation, with entitlements depending on which part of France the returnee is from.

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<sup>35</sup> UNHCR homepage. "UNHCR Eligibility Guidelines for Assessing the International Protection Needs of Iraqi Asylum-Seekers, April 2009": <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/49f569cf2.html> (accessed 23.11.2010).

<sup>36</sup> UDI Asylpraksis Irak. UNHCRs anbefalinger. <http://www.udiregelverk.no/default.aspx?path={E59FA0F0-0ABD-4322-8CC0-37B8F83F2CFE}>

<sup>37</sup> UDI homepage. "Strict requirements for temporary work permits for asylum seekers", 5 February 2009. <http://www.udi.no/Norwegian-Directorate-of-Immigration/News/2008/Strict-requirements-for-temporary-work-permits-for-asylum-seekers/>

<sup>38</sup> Norwegian governmental white paper: "Norsk Flyktning- og Migrasjonspolitik i Et Europeisk Perspektiv". <http://www.regjeringen.no/nb/dep/jd/dok/regpubl/stmeld/2009-2010/Meld-St-9-2009--2010.html?id=597820>

Based on information collected for us by the Embassy in Amman in February 2010, we here present some basic information on reintegration packages provided to returnees to Iraq by Belgium, Denmark, Germany, the Netherlands, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom.

Belgium's general Assisted Voluntary Return (ARV) programme has two components that returnees to Iraq can apply for: 1) The basic Return and Emigration of Asylum seekers Ex-Belgium (REAB) is implemented by IOM and provides transport home and a cash component of €250 (NOK 2,000); 2) A complementary reintegration program implemented by IOM and Caritas that provides in-kind assistance upon arrival equivalent to €700 per person (NOK 5,600) and €350 for minors (NOK 2,800) with the possibility to apply for an additional €500 (NOK 4,000) if particularly vulnerable (e.g. for medical costs).

From 2010 returnees from Belgium could in addition apply for two reintegration schemes cofounded by the European Return Fund (ERF) and implemented by IOM and Caritas: 1) a scheme termed "enhancing reintegration", which supports creation of micro-businesses with an additional €2,000 (NOK 16,000) per file; and 2) a needs-based assistance provision for vulnerable groups, based on their real needs rather than on fixed amounts.

Denmark had a voluntary return and reintegration scheme for northern Iraq (Erbil, Dohuk and Suleimaniah) that ended in November 2008 while it continued until December 2010 for asylum seekers from the central and southern parts of Iraq. The programme included a) six to nine months of educational and vocational training in Denmark; b) economic support for voluntary return; as well as c) reintegration assistance.

However, based on an agreement reached between Denmark and Iraq in May 2009, the voluntary return and reintegration programme was terminated as it was decided that all Iraqi nationals whose asylum requests had been rejected by the Danish Immigration Authorities could be returned forcibly. The only exception was for unaccompanied minors with rejected asylum applications as they were regarded as a particularly vulnerable group. Their return is organised by IOM.

Germany has a Reintegration and Emigration Program for Asylum-Seekers in Germany (REAG) and a Government Assisted Repatriation Programme (GARP) administrated by IOM, where the GARP assistance varies depending on country of return.

Those returning to Iraq receive travel assistance of up to €200 (NOK 1,600) for adults/youth over 12 years and €100 (NOK 800) for those under. The GARP start-up cash grant is €750 (NOK 6,000) for adults/youth over 12 years and €375 (NOK 3,000) for those under.

Returnees may moreover apply for vocational training and/or language courses provided by the German organisation Association of Experts in the Field of Migration and Development Cooperation (AGEF), funded by Germany, the UK, Sweden and Denmark.

The Netherlands provides a cash grant for 500 Iraqi returnees to return over two years, paid upon return of either €500 (NOK 4,000) or €200 (NOK 1,600) for a single adult, depending on their asylum status. There is a post arrival reintegration assistance administrated by IOM of maximum €2,500 (NOK 20,000) of which a maximum amount of €750 (NOK 6,000) will be paid in cash and the remaining €1,750 (NOK 14,000) is provided in kind for small business start-ups, education/vocational training or work placement. IOM provides monitoring and follow-up until 6 months after return.

In addition to the individual return assistance the Netherlands provides support for communities with returnees through an IOM implemented Community Assistance Project (CAP), where 9 projects with an average budget of €25 000 (NOK 200 000) have been budgeted for. Moreover, the Netherlands planned for 2 international meetings to gather best practises of bilateral return projects from European countries.

Sweden is also collaborating with IOM for their “reestablishment support”, though their support is a cash grant paid made in one instalment of US dollar corresponding to the value of SEK 30 000 (NOK 26 000) for each person over 18 years and SEK 15 000 (NOK 13 000) for those under 18, up to a maximum per family of SEK 75 000 (NOK 65 000). The money has to be collected at the IOM office no later than 3 months after return. Sweden introduced in 2010 a time limited in-kind support programme for 400 returnees. Migrasjonsverket is currently assessing the results of this support, and whether it should be continued.

Switzerland has offered a repatriation programme for Iraqi nationals since July 2003 in collaboration with IOM. Since July 2008 returnees have been offered two services in addition to repatriation guidance in the Cantons, support for obtaining travel documents and organisation of the travel: 1) Start-up aid of CHF 1'000 (NOK 6000), and 2) Reintegration aid of CHF 5'000.- (NOK 30 000).

The United Kingdom does not provide details on their cash assistance offered through IOM Iraq, but the help package needs to be agreed upon with IOM while the returnee still is in the United Kingdom, and may contain as most other country schemes: a) help to set up a business; b) education; c) job placement; or d) training to give returnee the skills needed for a particular job. The returnee is expected to leave the United Kingdom within three months of application to be eligible for the programme.

## 6. Iraqi migration: A brief historical background

War and conflict has caused massive migration movements in Iraq. People have left at different times, for different locations and for different reasons. This again influences their inclination to return, how they are perceived in their communities as “returnees”, and the extent to which the Government of Iraq and the Kurdistan Regional Government welcome and support their return and reintegration. Put rather bluntly by an elected official: “I won’t be re-elected if I prioritise those who more recently left primarily for economic gains over those who stood out the suffering over the years back home.”

### 6.1 Post – 2003 displacement

Despite expectations that refugees would begin to leave Iraq immediately following the U.S.-led invasion in April 2003, Iraqi forced migration remained limited in scope during the initial years. The number of displaced increased sharply, however, after the bombing of the al-Askari Mosque in Samarra on 22<sup>nd</sup> of February 2006, which triggered a flare-up of violence in the area, catalysed a breakdown in state functions already partly dismantled by US policy-makers, and produced an exodus of Iraqis, mainly across borders to neighbouring countries. It was hence a complex of economic, political and security pressures that led people to flee (Marfleet 2007), although personal, and to a lesser degree general insecurity were by far the primary triggers (Paasche 2009: 28-53, 2010: 29). Although estimates of refugee flows vary widely, as of January 2010 the UNHCR operated with figures of 1.8 million Iraqi refugees and 1.6 million internally displaced persons (IDPs).<sup>39</sup> According to these estimates, Iraqis were the second largest refugee group in the world in 2009 under the UNHCR’s mandate, after Afghanistan (UNHCR 2010). These estimates are controversial, however, even within the UNHCR itself (UNHCR 2009a), and largely based on the governmental figures of Syria (1,054,500) and Jordan (450,756), whose basis of calculation remains unclear.<sup>40</sup>

The total number of Iraqis registered with the UNHCR since 2003, as of February 2009, was significantly lower – barely exceeding 320,000 region-wide (in Syria, Jordan, Egypt, Lebanon, Iran and Turkey) (Paasche 2010: 28). Iraqi displacement (i.e both IDPs and refugees) is at any rate the largest in the Middle East since the 1948 Palestinian exodus.

Levels of displacement have gradually stabilized since mid-2007, as major (though not irreversible) security improvements have taken place since then,<sup>41</sup> and are overall receding, in spite of sporadic episodes of renewed displacement. Yet return is limited. Only about 300,000 IDPs and nearly 80,000 refugees returned spontaneously in 2008 and 2009,<sup>42</sup> leaving the vast majority in a state of continued displacement. A 2010 UNHCR survey of 537 families who have returned from neighbouring countries, to Baghdad, where most refugees come from, found that “physical insecurity, economic hardship and lack of basic public services has led the majority (61 per cent) to regret their decision to return to Iraq.”<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> UNHCR Country Operations Profile: Iraq. [www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/page?page=49e486426](http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/page?page=49e486426) (accessed 23.11.2010).

<sup>40</sup> UNHCR Country Operations Profile: Syrian Arab Republic. <http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/page?page=49e486a76> (accessed 23.11.2010). UNHCR Country Operations Profile: Jordan. <http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/page?page=49e486566> (accessed 23.11.2010).

<sup>41</sup> See for instance “The Brookings Institution’s ‘Iraq Index: Tracking Variables of Reconstruction & Security in Post-Saddam Iraq’”, October 31, 2010: <http://www.brookings.edu/~media/Files/Centers/Saban/Iraq%20Index/index.pdf> (accessed 23.11.2010).

<sup>42</sup> UNHCR Country Operations Profile: Iraq. <http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/page?page=49e4864266>

<sup>43</sup> UNHCR home page. “UNHCR Poll Indicates Iraqi Refugees Regret Returning Home”, 19.10.2010. Available at <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/4cbfd6562.html>, accessed 22.10.2010.

Iraq's political will and institutional capacity for facilitating return is also limited (Marfleet & Chatty 2009; Paasche 2010: 32), and the state's response to its displaced citizens abroad has been described as "callous neglect" (ICG 2008: i). Next to continued insecurity and economic hardship, a central issue remains that of inadequate property restitution mechanisms (Refugee International 2010, Isser & Auweraert 2009). Many of the properties left behind by displaced Iraqis were seized by militias, which then occupied or looted them, or allocated them to other families. Although the Iraqi state has made some effort to address this problem, initiatives are few and far between. A 2009 U.S. Department of Defence report observed that serious efforts on the part of the Iraqi government to facilitate return from Syria and Jordan are "all but non-existent" (U.S. Department of Defence 2009: 9). Whether or not this is the case, the key determining factor will be whether the displaced actually want to return. IOM estimates that if given the option, 25 per cent of the IDPs would be interested in local integration (IOM quoted in Refugee International 2010) and many Iraqi refugees in neighbouring countries express "a deep sense of alienation from the Iraqi state, which they felt had abandoned them since they left the country" (UNHCR 2009a: 54).

Finally, Iraq's displacement extends beyond the humanitarian challenges. As the social strata of Iraq's middle class professionals, already severely debilitated by international sanctions before 2003, has been decimated by post-2003 events, the refugee situation has also drained Iraq – with the exception of Iraqi Kurdistan – of human capital, one of the elements it needs to recover. (Jabar 2009; ICG 2008; Sassoon 2009: 129-140).

## 6.2 Pre – 2003 displacement

In migration studies, "cumulative causation" is used to denote movements that first involve no more than a few individuals but gradually engage entire communities, generating complex interactions across internal and external borders when each additional journey affects relations throughout the migratory network (Massey 1990: 8, quoted in Marfleet 2007). Cumulative causation theory fits well with Iraq's modern history of migration (Marfleet 2007: 408), where each successive wave of human movement has been embedded in previous ones. State-building, according to Chatelard, has played a pivotal role in these processes, as the Iraqi state has consistently singled out some demographics for forced migration and immobilized others.<sup>44</sup> Chatelard argues that population movements in Iraq "were intrinsically linked to the creating of a nation-state seeking to homogenize populations, assert sovereignty over territories contested by other nationalist claims, silence domestic political opposition, and perform population engineering as part of policies of modernisation and development".<sup>45</sup> Her analysis is backed up by Fawcett and Tanner's study of Iraqi internal displacement, which maintains that "it is not so much hatred of "the other" that has driven the brutal repression of the past decades, as much as the regime's political and economic calculations" (2002: 2). The cost of the regime's engineering of demographics has been high in human terms, especially in the northern, Kurdish areas. UN Habitat presented a survey of the internally displaced persons in these three provinces in 2001, breaking down the total amount of 805,505 IDPs into the following nine categories.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Chatelard, Geraldine (forthcoming). 'The Politics of Population Movements in Contemporary Iraq: A Research Agenda.' In Bocco, R; Tejet, J. and Sluglett, P. (eds.). *Writing the History of Iraq: Historiographical and Political Challenges*. London: World Scientific Publishers/Imperial College Press. Available at: [http://halshs.archives-ouvertes.fr/docs/00/51/22/58/PDF/Population\\_Movements\\_Historiography\\_book.pdf](http://halshs.archives-ouvertes.fr/docs/00/51/22/58/PDF/Population_Movements_Historiography_book.pdf) (accessed 23.11.2010).

<sup>45</sup> Ibid: 4.

<sup>46</sup> The overview is from Fawcett & Tanner (2002: 16).

**Table 5: Iraqi IDPs as of 2000.**

<b>IDP categories</b>	<b>Numbers</b>
Expelled in the 1970s and -80s	372,347
Victims of the 1988 Anfal campaign	222,839
Victims of ethnic cleansing	58,706
Victims of in-fighting	77,004
Returnees from Iran	40,145
Refugees from Iran	491
Refugees from Turkey	2,552
Victims of conflicts with PKK	15,335
Others	16,086
<b>Total</b>	<b>805,505</b>

Given Iraq's decades-long recent history of internal and external conflicts it is not surprising that many also were pushed or forced to flee the country. During Saddam Hussein's presidency Iraq experienced almost three decades of multiple conflicts, and the price was paid by the people. During the 1970s Iran emerged as an early destination country, as the Ba'athist regime had expelled half a million Iraqis there, many of whom were Shi'ite Kurds.<sup>47</sup> Some expellees moved on to Syria during this and the following decade, turning Damascus into a hub for opposition movements. In fact, large parts of the political elite in Iraq nowadays, including President Nour al-Maliki, fled to Syria in political exile during the 1980s and -90s.

Outside the region, Great Britain, France, North America and Australia seem to have been the main destinations for Iraqi emigrants until the eve of the 1990-1991 Gulf War. The total number of Iraqi emigrants at that time has been estimated by Chatelard at somewhere between 500,000 and 700,000, excluding some 200,000 Assyrian emigrants, people who had been "re-integrated" as Iranian nationals, and Sephardi Jews. Between the early 1990s and the end of 2002, out of a total population which increased from 18 to 24 million, Chatelard further estimates that up to one and a half million Iraqis left their country permanently. Most left for Turkey, Jordan, Iran, and Syria, but a third of these went on to settle in a Western country, mainly through asylum applications. In 2002, 550,000 Iraqis world-wide benefited from refugee status. Of these, 350,000 were registered as refugees in Iran and 20,000 were spread out in neighbouring countries awaiting third country resettlement through the UNHCR. In the same countries, there were at least 600,000 other Iraqis, more than two-thirds of whom living in what UNHCR termed a "refugee-like situation".

While precise statistics are unavailable, it was asserted by UNHCR that during the late 1990s, Iraqis constituted the largest migration of people seeking refugee status and asylum in the world (King 2005: 317).<sup>48</sup> From 2002 to 2008 in Europe alone, roughly 200,000 Iraqis applied for asylum – making it the single largest national group of asylum seekers to the continent during that period (JD 2010: 86).<sup>49</sup> The main host countries were Sweden, Germany, Great Britain, Netherlands and Norway, in that order

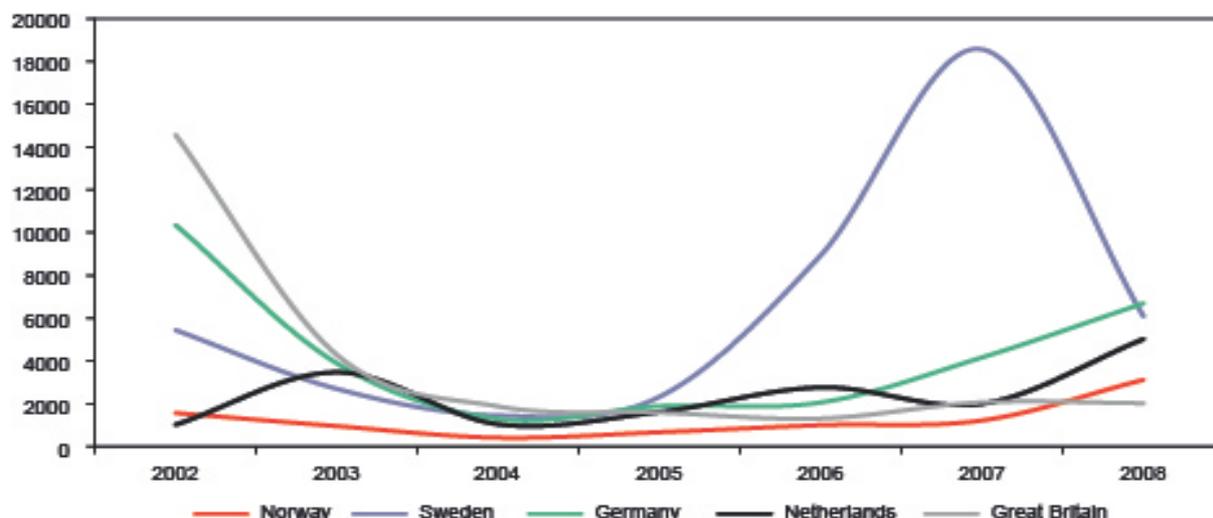
<sup>47</sup> This took place in scattered episodes since the 1960s, and preceded Saddam Hussein's presidency (1979-2003). The following section is a summary of Chatelard (2010).

<sup>48</sup> Most of these were Iraqi Kurds (Leezenberg 2005, King 2008:317).

<sup>49</sup> For further details see <http://www.regjeringen.no/nb/dep/jd/dok/regpubl/stmeld/2009-2010/Meld-St-9-2009--2010.html?id=597820>

(ibid). Norway received five per cent of the applications, whereas Sweden, with its liberal refugee regime to Iraqis, experienced a dramatic increase in numbers around the summer 2007.<sup>50</sup>

**Figure 5: Asylum seekers from Iraq to the five main destination countries, 2002-2008<sup>51</sup>**



### Iraqi Kurdish migration

Much due to a turbulent political history, 22 per cent of the population of Iraqi Kurdistan had close relatives abroad in 2004, mostly in Europe (COSIT 2005: 56). Quite a few have returned since then and quite a few have subsequently emigrated, although comprehensive data are not available. Around 200,000 Iraqis, many of them Iraqi Kurds (though the precise number is obscured by their statistical invisibility as “Iraqis”), applied for asylum in Europe during the period 2002 – 2008 (JD 2010: 93).

The first contemporary wave of migration from Iraqi Kurdistan was of young, relatively well educated and politically active, middle class men in 1975 till 1991, associated with the defeat of a major Kurdish rebellion against the Government of Iraq (GoI), state persecution and the Gulf War against Iran (King 2008: 210; Emanuelsson 2008: 6). Transnational contact was kept at a minimum before 1991 in order to avoid persecution and punishment of the emigrants’ relatives by the GoI (King 2008: 212; Gran 2008: 124). The Kurdish autonomous region was established as a rather unintended consequence of the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1991: the brutal response from the Baghdad government to the popular uprising in the Kurdish region led to a displacement crisis and then to a UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR 688) and the establishment of a “Safe Haven” in Iraqi Kurdistan. Most of the refugees returned to what now came to be administered by the Kurdish Regional Government (KRG) (Leezenberg 2005).

While most refugees returned for some time, concrete plans to return permanently among Kurds in the diaspora were soon replaced by transnational migration, import marriages, chain migration of relatives and by a rise in the number of Kurdish asylum seekers in Western Europe, where Iraqi Kurds by far constituted the largest group of refugees by the late 1990s (Leezenberg 2005: 636). Internecine fighting and continued insecurities in the mid-1990s contributed to this. During this time, remittances

<sup>50</sup> Conspicuously few Iraqis were granted asylum by the states that invaded and occupied their country. The U.S. only accepted a few thousand asylum applicants up to 2007, as reflected in Elizabeth Ferris’s article called “Iraqi Refugees: Our Problem or Sweden’s?” Available at: [www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/06/17/AR2007061701030.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/06/17/AR2007061701030.html) (accessed 23.11.2010).

<sup>51</sup> From Stortingsmelding 9 (2009 – 2010). “Norsk Flyktning- og Migrasjonspolitik i et Europeisk Perspektiv”, table 2.10. Downloadable at: <http://www.regjeringen.no/nb/dep/jd/dok/regpubl/stmeld/2009-2010/Meld-St-9-2009--2010/15/2.html?id=597931>, accessed 20.07.2010.

from abroad kept many families from starvation during the period 1991 – 2000, before the economy started prospering, and served as an effective and informal social insurance. With the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq and the toppling of Saddam Hussein in 2003, Iraqi Kurdistan officially became a semi-autonomous political entity and has since enjoyed international recognition and economic growth. It has at any rate remained politically stable and witnessed few security incidents at a time when the rest of Iraq has descended into violent conflict and sectarianism (especially the period 2005-2007), with the important exceptions of Kirkuk and Mosul, which remain cities where insecurity prevails. Northern Iraq is home to multiple religious groups (Sunni and Shi'a Muslims, Christians, Chaldeans, and Yezidis), intersecting with ethnic groups (Kurds, Assyrians, Armenians, Turkmens, and Arabs), although the majority is Sunni Muslim Kurds.

In spite of the impressive political accomplishments, liberal laws promulgated to encourage investment, security, two international airports, and the construction boom that characterize the main cities, there is little economic equity. Two families control the political and economic activity of Iraqi Kurdistan and lead the two political parties. The Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP), which controls Erbil and Duhok, and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), which controls Suleimaniah and surrounding cities. "Every" member of the two families has a senior job in the government, the security services or the economic conglomerates which they control (Sassoon 2009: 137). According to Sassoon (2009: 138), the lack of transparency is remarkable and the economy marked by corruption, cronyism and nepotism. Personal research and fieldwork in Iraqi Kurdistan indicate that lack of access to the networks of patronage extended by these parties may figure prominently among the reasons why many Iraqi Kurds go to Europe in search of better lives. Insecurity issues, also general ones, may however play into the motivation to migrate. Analysts ponder if Kurds have already had their "hour of power" and argue that the withdrawal of US military troops may jeopardize their new-found confidence. There are fears that KRG will lose its status and semi-independence to the Baghdad government. Iraqi Kurdistan is commonly identified as "post-conflict" although there are several unresolved domestic security issues with the GoI, including disputed territories and the regional distribution of oil wealth (ICG 2009).

In order to understand migration and return it is not only the volume of migration from Iraqi Kurdistan to Europe and back that is of interest. Similarly interesting is the human dynamic of return and its impact on a patrilineal society where tribal and patriarchal values are deeply entrenched (King 2005: 316). King describes this in her account of return migrants coming from Europe in the early 2000s (2008: 215):

*Many narrators of experience in the West seemed to walk a careful line, describing what for Kurds are malign and reprehensible features of Westernness, while simultaneously seeming at pains to reassure their hearers that they had not capitulated [i.e. "gone native" abroad]. Returnees strived to show that they still upheld the values of their natal culture, but that they had also acquired and encountered enviable new values, status and possessions. To their hearers, they were agents who selectively navigated and manipulated the desired, bounteous West.*

Gran (2008: 249), studying the transnational lives of Iraqi Kurds in Norway, points to tensions between those who stayed and returnees. He argues that "[Iraqi Kurds] who stayed there all the time may feel that others who left during the harsh times took the easy way out and are now threatening the jobs and positions of those who stayed behind" (2008: 249). Future research should examine how to counteract the negative reactions and resentments that return migrants face (ibid. 250).

## 7. Research and findings from Norway

The interviewees in Norway included both those who had decided to return and had registered themselves with IRRINI, as well as Iraqi nationals who were eligible but had not yet made a decision to return. Other key informants included IOM and BIP staff, employees at reception centres, UDI personnel, and representatives from ministries and specialized organisations (NGOs). Our main focus was on interviewing prospective returnees living in reception centres, though we acknowledge that this covers less than 50 % of those who register for voluntary return with IRRINI.

### 7.1 Interviews and profile of respondents

We interviewed a total of 28 asylum seekers/refugees from Iraq in Norway using a standard interview guide attached in Annex II.<sup>52</sup> Of these, 14 informed that they had registered with the IRRINI programme while several others had considered return options but had not yet made a final decision. About 40 percent of all the interviewed said they “never” considered return.

Those who had already applied for IRRINI support were more willing to discuss the topic of return in general, as well as their perspectives on the programme. Many of those who had not registered with IRRINI were unwilling to discuss return at all. This may have been due to a fear that the interview was about convincing them to return, or an unwillingness to entertain the possibility of return as an actual option. In both cases, the respondent may have become so attached (emotionally and psychologically) to his/her migration story that maintaining a “coherent flight narrative”, developed during migration and in encounters with various (immigration) authorities, becomes a reflexive position.

It is important to emphasize that this is not a judgement on whether or not informants’ stories are “true” or “false”. Additionally, although efforts were made before and during the conversation to clarify that the interviewer could not influence the outcome of the asylum application, some respondents gave the impression that they either did not understand or accept this. The way that their narrative stories are framed must thus be analysed in relation to the fact that some believed that what they told us would have an impact on their situation in Norway. Also, some of the respondents appeared depressed and were not motivated to engage in in-depth discussion. The ethical dilemmas this raised were balanced against the imperative of getting the asylum seekers’ side of the story, done with care and by interviewers seeking to avoid questions that might be further upsetting.

With some exceptions, we intentionally timed the interviews to take place in a period shortly after a presentation by IOM and BIP. This way, we could assess people’s perceptions of the return programme while they still had the information fresh in mind. It is important to note that our sample is not statistically representative of Iraqi asylum seekers in Norway. In terms of gender and age representation, however, the sample corresponds well with the total Iraqi asylum seeker population (see table 6, 7 and 8).

All of those interviewed were principle asylum applicants in Norway, with the possible exception of two respondents who did not answer this question.

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<sup>52</sup> There were 1227 asylum applications from Iraqi nationals in Norway in 2007. This number increased to 3137 in 2008 and fell to only 1214 in 2009. Between 1<sup>st</sup> of January and 30<sup>th</sup> of September 2010 there were 328 asylum applications from Iraqi nationals. From <http://www.udi.no/Norwegian-Directorate-of-Immigration/Oversiktsider/Statistikk-/Asylum/Asylum-applications-by-nationality/> (accessed 18.10.2010).

**Table 6: Legal status in Norway**

Legal status of interviewees	Numbers
Asylum application failed	16
Still awaiting an initial decision or appeal outcome	9
Refugee/humanitarian status	1
Unanswered	2

Of the 28 asylum applicants interviewed, 14 had registered with IRRINI. Most of our respondents were male (only 2 females – 7 per cent), between 20-29 years old. Data from UDI for the period 1998 – 2009 confirms that most of the asylum seekers from Iraq are male (representing 87 per cent in 2008 and 75 per cent in 2009). This is also the case for IRRINI users (see table 7).

**Table 7: IRRINI departures (both phases) between 1 March 2008-31 August 2010, gender distribution<sup>53</sup>**

Gender distribution	Numbers
Male	792
Female	67
<b>Total</b>	<b>859</b>

**Table 8: Age distribution of respondents**

Age	Under 20	20-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60-69	Above 70
Respondents	2	17	5	4	0	0	0

Regarding the Iraqi age groups in Norway, IOM only distinguishes between minors or adults. According to an IOM employee, however, returnees registered with IRRINI are typically single, adult males, aged 18-30 years.

**Table 9: IRRINI departures (both phases) between 1 March 2008 - 31 August 2010, age distribution<sup>54</sup>**

Returnees age	Numbers
18 & above	797
Under 18 (including 6 Unaccompanied Minor cases)	62
<b>Total</b>	<b>859</b>

Of the respondents 75 per cent were Kurds, while 25 per cent were Arabs. Though there were different places of origin, most came from Iraqi Kurdistan (in particular Erbil, Suleimaniah and Kirkuk).

A majority of respondents were single (71 per cent) and childless (78 per cent). Only 3 respondents had relatives in Norway although more than half (64 per cent) had close relatives elsewhere outside Iraq. Almost none sent financial aid to another Iraqi and several respondents explained that they did not have enough resources themselves. When it came to employment in Iraq, 75 per cent of the

<sup>53</sup> When the returnees sign up for the return programme in Norway, IOM – Oslo, in addition to collecting basic information on the applicant's gender, collects information on their background and qualifications. This information is meant to assisting the reintegration process in Iraq.

<sup>54</sup> Information from IOM- Oslo. Email exchange 29.10.2010.

respondents had worked (43 per cent of the respondents as unskilled labour, 18 per cent of them as skilled labour and 14 per cent were self-employed), while in Norway 46 per cent had worked.

In terms of educational background, 32 per cent had none (including incomplete primary school), 29 per cent had primary school, 29 per cent had secondary school, while 11 per cent had attended university. Only one person had obtained any education in Norway (excluding Norwegian language courses).

More than half (68 per cent) of the respondents had left Iraq in 2005 or later. Most had spent several months, and some around 1 year in order to reach Norway, meaning that most had arrived in Norway in 2006 and later. Many told that they had used smugglers to reach Norway, and some talked about this more openly than others. Almost all of these had gone through Turkey.

**Table 10: Year of arrival in Norway**

1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
1	2	1	0	2	0	1	1	4	8	3	5

Only 7 per cent of the respondents argued that they had taken up a loan to come to Norway, while 14 per cent had used their own savings and 18 per cent had sold property. However, 43 per cent responded that their family had supported their travel and several explained that their family consequently had debts or that they did not know whether this was the case. 7 per cent had worked en route, and 7 per cent answered “other” or did not answer. Only 7 per cent of those interviewed had used less than 10 000 USD to reach Norway. More commonly, people reported spending between 10 000 USD – 20 000 USD on the trip.

The most common reason for choosing Norway was (according to 11 respondents, 39 per cent) political, many referring to the “good human rights” situation here. A few (3) respondents (11 per cent) chose Norway because they knew someone here, while 2 came to Norway “by chance”. Some few had received information on Norway from other refugees while passing through other European countries, such as Germany. A few asylum seekers with a Christian background seemed to have chosen between Germany and Norway, and their religious affiliation was emphasised as a reason for coming to Norway.

**Table 11: Reason for choosing Norway**

Reason for choosing Norway	Numbers
Because of the political situation here (including respect for human rights, democracy, etc)	11
Because of the economic situation here (including easy to secure a good income, etc)	1
Because I knew someone here (friends, partners, family, etc)	3
Because of a combination of these	2
By chance	2
Because I was rejected elsewhere	2
Other (including “climate”, “the absence of an Iraqi embassy in Norway”, and “the advice of human smugglers”)	4
Unanswered	3

## 7.2 The return application process

Several organizations are involved at different points in the processing of an IRRINI application. It was clear from interviews that many prospective returnees struggle to maintain an overview of the process, including which actors are involved for what purposes.

## 7.3 The decision to leave

Most of the asylum seekers cited security reasons for leaving Iraq. Hardly anyone cited economic reasons. This is in sharp contrast to the majority of the respondents in Iraq who emphasised economic issues as reasons for leaving Iraq in the first place. This will be discussed further. Notice here that the answer to the question of why they left must be assessed in relation to the interview situation. As mentioned in the description of the methodology, despite reassurances by the interviewers that they were independent researchers it is likely that their relation to the Norwegian immigration authorities may have been questioned, particularly by asylum seekers still hoping to have their asylum application granted. The emphasis on security concerns could as noted above also be seen in light of a wish to maintain a coherent flight narrative.

Several of the respondents stated that their own work or that of their close relatives (brother or father) in Iraq (e.g. working with the Americans, or as police or bodyguard for the government) created security problems that forced them to leave.

## 7.4 Considering Return

When respondents were asked if they had considered returning to Iraq there was a clear distinction between those who claimed to never have considered it, and those that had already decided to return.

**Table 12: Whether or not the person has considered returning to Iraq**

If considered returning to Iraq	No.
Never	11
Thought about it	4
Registered with IRRINI	10
Returned on an exploratory visit	0
Planning to return without assistance	0
Cannot return	2
Unanswered	1

We asked everyone (including those who never considered returning) “What are/were the factors that need(ed) to be in place in your home area before you considered/would consider applying for a voluntary return programme?” Two factors were most frequently cited, namely “general security and stability” and “personal security”, followed by “job”. Notably, this includes people who thought that the general security or/and personal security had already improved and thus had decided to return, as well as those who would return in case their general or personal security changed in a positive direction.

Among those who had registered with IRRINI, or thought about returning, the reasons provided for making this decision varied from personal issues (physiological pressure, the urge to continue their education, get a job or marry), to poor living standards and quality of life in Norway, family matters, or a lack of options following a failed asylum application. For example, one person who had a brother

in Norway and Sweden but who had his asylum application rejected decided to, rather than appeal, return to Erbil because his mother was seriously ill. He also listed his desire to continue his education and to get married as reasons for his decisions to return.

One person argued that the lack of legal opportunities for work was the most important factor influencing his decision to return:

*Because Norway no longer gave me any economic support, I didn't have a choice anymore. When I lost my permission to work after the application was rejected, I had to return.*

Others, however, were categorically unwilling to entertain the notion of return. Reasons mentioned here were security and/or the political situation in Iraq, family difficulties, lack of housing, and prospects of unemployment. One person claimed:

*If our asylum application is rejected, I am willing to go to a room, lock the door, and put fire to myself. My daughter also threatens with committing suicide if sent back to Iraq.*

Notably, a few who had registered with IRRINI admitted that they did not intend to stay in Iraq, but already thought about continuing to another country, such as Turkey, or elsewhere in Europe.

## 7.5 Information work in Norway

The information work in Norway is important both in relation to Iraqi asylum seekers' decision to explore the return option, but also for their understanding of what they are to return to and what assistance they are to expect from the IRRINI programme. To the question "Have you ever heard of any assistance for return offered by the Norwegian or Iraqi government or another agency?", 78 per cent answered that they had heard that there exist programmes on return although the respondents gave the programmes various names, including "UN" and "UM".

We focus below on the respondents who had heard about the possibility of assistance for return.

## 7.6 Channels of information

Most of the respondents (89 per cent) had received information concerning return at the reception centres, including through information sessions held by IOM. In advance of on-site presentations, IOM states that it inquires whether there are groups of Iraqis or Afghan nationals living at the given centre. If so, it will conduct separate sessions with these nationalities, specifically focusing on IRRANA and IRRINI.

Not all (potential) applicants live in reception centres and information on IRRINI for these people comes from other sources.<sup>55</sup> One person not living in a reception centre, registered with IRRINI and still waiting for his passport from the police, explained where he had heard about assistance for return:

*First of all, those Iraqis who register for IRRINI inform others whose asylum application has been rejected about IRRINI. The information comes from Kurds in Norway. I don't live at a reception centre, but with friends, so IOM may have provided information about return at those centres, but I have not heard about it myself.*

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<sup>55</sup> IOM informs that 57 % of their applicants live privately and outside Reception Centres.

Similarly, an IRRINI-registered asylum seeker who tried to keep his decision to return a secret from others said:

*I heard about it through a friend of mine who has a friend who had returned through the return programme. He gave me the telephone number to the IOM office in Trondheim.*

Another respondent whose asylum application failed, but who argued that there was “no way” that he would return to Iraq, still knew about the possibility of return:

*I have heard about the UM [sic.], this is a well-known programme. All Iraqis know about this programme.*

Concerning the content of the information, while over half the respondents (54 per cent) claimed that they had received enough information about the IRRINI programme, during the interview some of these seemed unaware of important details, such as the procedure through which they could potentially receive funding/money. Others, such as the individual quoted below, claimed to have received very little information from IOM despite having registered with IOM for the IRRINI programme:

*I only received some information when I applied for asylum - they showed a video about people returning to Iraq. Now that I have registered with IOM I get no information. I don't know when I will be travelling, how, with whom, what I am supposed to do in Iraq... I talk with friends and they don't know what they will do when they return. I don't know what would happen if I change my mind in Iraq – if I have the possibility of returning to Norway? If there is no work in Iraq, what then? This uncertainty makes some discouraged to return to Iraq.*

Counselling from IOM occurs, logically, after the IRRINI application is approved. However, the person above reports that poor information caused unnecessary frustration at a late stage in his return preparation process.

On IOM's website, there is an UDI-produced information video on return to Iraqi Kurdistan where people discuss their return (one version is 36 min. and a shorter one is 12 min.).<sup>56</sup> This video was only infrequently referred to by respondents and likely unknown to many.<sup>57</sup>

Information officers employed at the reception centres are obliged to hold a specific conversation about return (“retursamtale”) twice each year. The degree of success encouraging return through formal conversations at the reception centres seems limited. Recent research in Norway, as well as other countries, has concluded that asylum seekers are not receptive to information regarding return provided through formal conversations at the reception centres (Krogh 2007). Many will not acknowledge entertaining thoughts of return before they have exhausted all avenues of appeal for their asylum application.

How can information about return and reintegration assistance be conveyed in the right way, at the right time? Brekke (2008: 71) has pointed out the importance of timing in delivering information about return to rejected asylum seekers. Information should be given at an early stage when the asylum seeker has still not made a final decision, but at this stage s/he is less inclined to receive such information as it is not perceived as relevant. A 2007 report (Krogh) on return work in reception centres, in addition to our own interviews with reception centre staff, emphasizes that most

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<sup>56</sup> Available at IOM's homepage: [http://iom.no/irini/video/video\\_lang\\_norsk.htm](http://iom.no/irini/video/video_lang_norsk.htm) (accessed 28.05.2010). In this video, Dr. Hussain from BIP is also interviewed on his situation of return, and introduces BIP's work in Iraqi Kurdistan.

<sup>57</sup> The team is informed that the video was removed from the website in November 2010 on the request from BIP due to threats against their staff appearing in the video and as the information was outdated.

meaningful discussions regarding return take place outside the organized times. “Ongoing, individualized and informal discussions with people they trust” is how one reception centre employee characterized these more fruitful exchanges. At the same time, the information officers we spoke to say they have inadequate information about what IOM and BIP offer, and would like more details about returnees’ experiences with these programmes. While presentations targeting reception centre staff, such as those made during UDI’s “fagdag” (professional training day) on return are certainly useful, they are inadequate to provide relevant staff with the confidence and competence they need. IOM, for their part, explained that in advance of their twice yearly meetings at the reception centres they request a staff meeting to discuss VARP and similar programmes. Regardless of the successes or failures of this procedure, it is expected that information flow between IOM and reception staff will improve when the new “return centres” are established.<sup>58</sup>

In addition to the biannual conversation about return “retursamtale”, asylum applicants receive specific IRRINI information when IOM and BIP independently visit reception centres around Norway.

**Table 13: Information to Iraqis in reception centres - IRRINI phase I. Source IOM**

UDI Region	Number of visits to RCs	Number of Iraqi asylum seekers
Oslo	38	638
Inner East	33	256
South	21	329
West	31	334
Mid-Norway	22	309
North	40	541
<b>Total</b>	<b>185</b>	<b>2,407</b>

**Table 14: Information to Iraqis in reception centres - IRRINI Phase II. Source IOM**

UDI Region	Number of visits to RCs	Number of Iraqi asylum seekers
Oslo	16	88
Inner East	38	266
South	24	279
West	13	91
Mid-Norway	14	271
North	34	269
<b>Total</b>	<b>139</b>	<b>1264</b>

The impact of these information presentations appears to be limited. According to several reception centre staff members, attendance among Iraqis is low. Furthermore, some people seem confused about the motivation behind such visits.

<sup>58</sup> See <http://www.udi.no/Nyheter/2011/Etablerer-retursentre/>, accessed 22.02.2011.

At one reception centre, a staff member said:

*Inhabitants were not persuaded by BIP's presentation.... People thought they were trying to trick them into going home and did not trust him at all. IOM has only presented once in the last year(...). The presentation was not tailored for the particularities of a reception centre– they talked first about how IOM helps people reunite with their families, from that point on that was the only thing people wanted to hear about. Very counterproductive.*

IOM reports it is aware of this challenge and that this is a sensitive topic to address. They have tried conducting these sessions in different ways and have noticed that people are more receptive to the information when they understand IOM better. Jumping straight to voluntary return has proven to be counterproductive as people “shut off” immediately.

## 7.7 Types of information

More than half of the respondents (54 per cent) said that they felt that they had obtained enough information about the return programme. 29 per cent of the respondents did not feel that they had enough information and 7 per cent of the respondents argued that they had “almost” enough information.

Most of the respondents (79 per cent) stated that they have enough information about the return conditions at home. This information, they said, were received mostly from media, including TV (71 per cent), family or friends at home (68 per cent) and the internet (61 per cent) (multiple answers allowed). The most trusted sources included personal contacts in Iraq (39 per cent) and TV/Internet (18 per cent).

Most of the respondents answered that they had obtained information about the cash grant that they would receive. Almost everyone (82 per cent) said that they would receive 10.000 NOK and then 25.000 NOK if they signed up for IRRINI. Only 11 per cent of the respondents had not heard about any assistance for return offered by the Norwegian or Iraqi government or another agency.

Not all were well informed as to how they would receive these cash grants and some mentioned rumours they had heard that people had not received all of the money they were entitled to after returning to Iraq. A total of 39 per cent knew that they would receive a return ticket and even more (46 per cent) had heard that they could receive help with starting their own business. Fewer had knowledge about assistance concerning assistance with education (7 per cent), job placement (7 per cent) and housing (1 respondent – 3, 5 per cent).<sup>59</sup> None had gone through an individual career plan. None of the respondents had knowledge of BIP.

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<sup>59</sup> There was a limited group targeted for housing support in phase II (only 20 out of 600 IRRINI returnees could be provided Housing support), which made it necessary to outline strict criteria for eligible applicants for Housing support during phase II.

**Table 15: Respondents' knowledge of integration support before leaving Norway<sup>60</sup>**

Assistance offered	Respondents knowledge (multiple answers allowed)
Cash assistance	23
Help with return transport	11
Help with rebuilding your house	1
Help with starting your own business	13
Help with education	2
Help with job placement	2
Other type of training	1
Other	1
Unanswered	4

A few respondents had inaccurate information about types of assistance. One of the reception centre employees informed that people get confused between the cash grant and the reintegration assistance, which is worth 25,000 NOK. Some think the reintegration component is cash-based. This misunderstanding was confirmed during the interviews with the asylum seekers. Others report to have received “special” information. One respondent explained that he had been told:

*...if you have a contract to build a house you can get 20000 extra – but this is not for everyone and I have been told not to share this information with the others.*

While indeed not everyone is eligible for housing support, being asked to keep information confidential may induce a feeling of mistrust.

One person believed that “IOM” would not provide him assistance in Iraq since he did not have a place to stay or any work (which was his main explanation for why he had come to Norway). Similarly, another interviewee who seemed poorly informed said:

*You need a house or a business or something to get the 25 000, you need to invest them in something good. For me who does not have a house or a job, I don't get the money. So I don't really get the assistance, it's just empty words.*

During the interviews it became clear that some of those interviewed would have benefited from a more personal discussion and return planning (i.e. with discussions on education and work). For example, one male Kurd in his twenties said that he would like to become a taxi driver when returning to Suleimaniah, but had not received advice about options for assistance and consequently did not know that taxis are no longer supported by the IOM as they were previously.

Reception centre staff noted that people often do not know the programme name (IRRINI), and throughout the interviews with asylum seekers it was sometimes referred to as “IOM”, “UN”, “frivillig”, and “UM”. One staff member at a reception centre suggested that perhaps she and her colleagues do not mention the acronym “IRRINI” when they describe the programme, as they often have meetings with asylum seekers of several nationalities, where voluntary return is explained in more general terms. Furthermore, the asylum seekers have so many acronyms to deal with that they may forget specific names.

<sup>60</sup> Different interviewing techniques were used by the two interviewers regarding this question, making the data somewhat inaccurate though still indicative.

While the lack of name recognition among potential applicants may not necessarily reflect negatively on information dissemination about IRRINI, it may be symptomatic of a general lack of accurate information about the programme, excerpted from the various quotations above. It may suggest the need for a renewed focus on both how information is given and how it is best received. The interviews point to the need for more targeted information by IOM and BIP, both to asylum applicants and reception centre staff, through alternative channels to those used today.

According to a 2007 study (Krogh 2007: 15), reception centre staff feel that they have a better connection to the asylum seekers and that consequently the return conversation goes more smoothly than it would have if an outsider introduced the topic. According to one: “We can use almost the same words as IOM, but the tolerance is bigger” (2007:15). The fact that people do not seem to be receptive to organised “retursamtaler” highlights the importance and benefit of the informal conversation over a cup of coffee, and thus the need to increase reception centre staff involvement. The relative success of spontaneous conversations taken on the premises (the reception centres) suggests it is essential to increase the involvement of centre staff in informing asylum seekers of the IRRINI programme. Centre staff should as a consequence be equipped to convey detailed information about the IRRINI programme when the opportunity arises.

Overall, inadequate or inaccurate information may be explained by the following:

- **A general lack of interest among participants in the return package:** Many of the respondents said that the offer of money/support did not significantly influence their decision to return. The prospect of forced return, dissatisfaction with treatment in Norway and frustration over the long waiting time seemed to be the determining factors for those who register with IRRINI.
- **Lack of adequate knowledge on the part of reception centre staff:** Employees at the reception centres repeatedly expressed an interest in having more information about IRRINI and BIP that they could relay to potential participants.
- **Distrust towards IOM and BIP:** It should also be noted, however, that some of the presentations made by IOM in particular targeted multiple nationalities and therefore may have contributed to a feeling among Iraqi audience that they were not being seen or heard as individuals. It is important that IOM information officers, after information sessions, remain accessible for one-to-one conversations in a private setting, for a sufficient period of time to engage each interested individual. This option should be clearly communicated during the initial presentation.
- **Fragmented information strategy:** BIP and IOM currently provide information separately, but should consider holding information meetings in collaboration. At the moment they are not seen as parts of an holistic programme, given the difficulty in understanding how IOM and BIP relate to each other in practice. The imperative of personal contact would also be easier to facilitate if IOM and BIP would represent their programmes together.
- **Excessive use of acronyms:** The return process involves multiple actors. Some of the employees at the reception centres said that the asylum seekers have to relate to so many acronyms that it becomes hard to distinguish between and remember them.
- **Concern about inadequate follow-up:** Some of the interviewees who had signed up for IRRINI complained about a lack of personal contact with IOM. While some argued that they wanted to go back as soon as possible and that the process took too long, a few also expressed concern about unresolved health issues, such as scheduled medical operations. The lack of a “go-to” person created anxiety that their individual issues might be forgotten. Most importantly, IRRINI applicants need individual follow up.
- **Potential confusion over reintegration support:** The formulation of the information sheet available at the UDI home pages in Norwegian, English, Arabic, Kormanji and Sorani may

create some confusion.<sup>61</sup> While the Norwegian information sheet states that the “reintegreringsstøtte verdt inntil NOK 25.000 per person” (“reintegration support valued at up to NOK 25,000 per person”), the English version is less clear: “In addition, the programme offers a reintegration allowance of up to NOK 25 000 per person.” This sentence fails to specify that the reintegration component is in-kind, not cash. According to native Kormanji and Sorani speakers, the language of these information sheets is very formal and academic. One formulation may make it unclear that the money is not in cash. Likewise, according to native Arabic speakers the team spoke to, the Arabic version (first paragraph) is relatively vaguely formulated as one formulation (“bi-qemat”) can mean both “amount” (“beløp”) and “equivalent to” (“tilsvarende”). Consequently, one suggestion is to state explicitly that this money is not provided in cash.

## 7.8 Perspectives on, and prerequisites to, return

Respondents said that the way return would be looked upon by family and friends in Iraq depended very much on the returnee’s individual circumstances. 46 per cent said it would be accepted, while 21 per cent argued it would not be accepted (21 per cent did not answer and 12 per cent didn’t know).

A male Kurd in his twenties argued that he was sure that “4 out of 5” of his fellow asylum seekers would wish to return when the circumstances in Iraq improved. He said:

*Because most of them are young men who want to create a life – go back there in order to get married. We are between two societies: we cannot go back to the society we are coming from because of insecurity, while here we are not allowed to get married or to create a life. One can compare Iraq with a mother one can always return to. Everyone will go back when security is installed because it is our mother country. We have a culture and language in common. If the circumstances which made one leave Iraq would change, then one would go back. It’s always acceptable to go back.*

Among those who argued that return is not approved of by members of their community, one said:

*People look negatively at the person who is returning, [thinking that] they have not done enough in order to stay here.*

Another argued:

*Of course it is personal, but still one would laugh [at someone] if he has run away from a problem and then returns to that problem at the same time as he has lost everything.*

In terms of which factors need(ed) to be in place in their home area before they would consider return the majority answered “general security and stability” (36 per cent) and “personal security” (36 per cent). It is worth noting that 18 per cent of the respondents emphasised the availability of jobs and 14 per cent mentioned housing. The largest category, however, was “unanswered”, reflecting unwillingness among many interviewees to even consider the question.

When asked what sort of assistance might facilitate the decision to return, more money is often mentioned. At the same time, all respondents claimed that the assistance package does not affect their personal decision to return. The high living expenses in Iraq, as well as the considerable amount of money used to come to Norway are mentioned as explaining why the cash element should be higher.

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<sup>61</sup>Information sheets are available at <http://www.udi.no/Norwegian-Directorate-of-Immigration/Central-topics/Return-and-repatriation/Information-sheets---Return-and-repatriation-to-Iraq/>

Although some respondents were loath to admit that money was important to them, they emphasized its significance for others:

*It depends on the individual. For those who want to marry getting help to buy a house is very important. For those who want to open a shop, money is important.*

**Table 16: Assistance considered most useful for return**

Prerequisite cited	Frequency (Multiple answers allowed)
Cash assistance	8
Help with return transport	2
Help with rebuilding your house	1
Help with starting your own business	2
Help with education	1
Help with job placement	1
Other type of training	1
Unanswered	12

For those considering or deciding to return all but one person would go back to places where they had lived before. However, during the conversation a few also suggested they would consider travelling to another country (Turkey, Syria or Italy) after returning to Iraq. Only two persons had visited their previous home since leaving Iraq.

## 7.9 Impact of IRRINI on the return migration

As noted in the section on the analytical and methodological framework, it is unrealistic to identify one exclusive motivating factor for return. However, from our interviews it was clear that push factors rather than incentives from the Norwegian authorities triggered the decision to return. As noted earlier, concern about security was the main factor precluding return. Among those respondents who argued that they left Iraq due to a lack of personal security, most argued that they would return to Iraq if these issues (personal security, sometimes family-oriented and sometimes related to their past work in Iraq) were resolved.

However, the importance of cash assistance once the decision to return is made was appreciated by a substantial number of informants. Several emphasized the need for money in the initial stages of reintegration (e.g. to start paying back eventual loans, and have some resources to start life anew).

*Maybe if they would have gotten 50.000 NOK to go back so that they could have given back the money they had borrowed and also opened a business [they would have returned] – that is, those who have money issues – not like me who has problems which cannot be solved with money.*

For some young men the focus on money seemed insulting. Here, the story which the asylum seeker brings forth to explain why he/she left Iraq will influence that person's understanding of the programme. It is likely that if the reason given for flight relates to personal security matters, offering money in order to return may be perceived to affirm a lack of understanding of one's perceived situation. This can also be a matter of perpetuating one's narrative/belief (of personal insecurity) in Norway during the interview. Although none of the interviewees made the following argument, one may wonder whether accepting money as a means of returning may also feel like accepting that one's

story of insecurity was “never really true”. Next to the fear that openness about economic motives could ruin their chance for asylum, the fact that most of the returnees interviewed in Kurdistan cited economic reasons for initially leaving Iraq could seem to corroborate this observation. They may no longer have needed to maintain their narrative as the rejection of their application for asylum could no longer be reversed.

## 7.10 Credibility of the programme

A few expressed disbelief regarding the feasibility of the promises made in the IRRINI programme. For example, when discussing his future return one person pointed to the fact that IOM will demand to see a contract that he works in Iraq in order to receive the rest of the money. He had told IOM that he finds this strange since when he used to work in Iraq (in a bakery) he never had a contract. In response, he says, IOM told him that times have changed, but he wonders how it could have changed so much so quickly.<sup>62</sup> He concludes that IOM is out of touch:

*I do not understand the way they [Norwegians/IOM] do things - things are not like they believe in Iraq – their procedures are not reflecting the realities.*

The credibility of the programme is also affected by how the asylum seekers perceive the Norwegian government’s asylum policies. Several of the respondents expressed a belief that their asylum application had not been seriously dealt with by the Norwegian government. Two persons put it like this:

*The government is treating all the Iraqi people the same way even if they do not all have the same problems. The government is not making any distinction.*

*The Norwegian authorities are not interested in hearing about our problems and our suffering. They only want to send us back.*

Many of those interviewed seemed to believe that no one from Iraq is granted refugee status – and therefore feel that their personal situation does not seem to matter as long as they are from Iraq. This perception of unfair treatment, despite the fact that some Iraqis do receive status, seems to have fuelled a lack of trust in the decision process which may well have spilled over to a lack of trust of the actual safety of their return. Many expressed distrust in the Norwegian government’s information about the situation in Iraq – they explain that Norwegian authorities themselves only consider the Kurdish parts safe for travel, and are of the opinion that Norwegian officials only interact with government officials (people who are in a privileged situation) and travel around in “safe cars and hotels” rather than speaking to ordinary people. In general, there is a sentiment expressed by interviewees that the Norwegian government is not well-informed and that the asylum seekers’ individual circumstances are not taken seriously. Like the person above, another interviewee mentioned several times during the discussion that “the UDI attitude towards Iraqis is problematic since they are treating everyone the same.”

## 7.11 ‘Voluntary’ aspects of the programme

The credibility of the programme is also affected by the fact that it claims to facilitate voluntary return, when in fact most of the target group perceives their return to be anything but voluntary.

Among interviewees registered with the IRRINI programme, participation is considered an act of last resort and not a choice in any real sense of the word. One of the participants, distressed by having seen a forced return to Iraq on TV, argued that he is simply going back because he feels trapped and would

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<sup>62</sup> IOM informs that they globally follow certain procedures in order to track services the organisation offer.

rather die in his homeland than in Norway. He has nothing here, nothing there. Similarly, another person said:

*It's not about the support I get, it's about getting away from the situation I'm in in this country.*

Although it was never directly expressed by any of the interviewees, one may question whether IOM's own insistence that it engage only in voluntary return (as its mandate requires) paradoxically undermines its own credibility in the minds of potential clients. For example, one person registered with IRRINI, when asked whether he had heard of any assistance for return, answered that:

*It's called "Frivillig". That's what they call it. But many who go through this programme are forced to do it. I heard about it at Fagerli.*

The discourse of "voluntary" seems to collide with asylum seekers' felt realities that it represents rather a "last" option. When asked whether return is discussed amongst his friends, one person answered:

*Mostly Iraqis are negatively to it. If we could return we would of course. Those who absolutely do not want to go back are those without families in Iraq. Those who stay here at the reception centre are treated like animals, that's why they go voluntarily there. They rather return there than live under these conditions.*

Another suggested that:

*I'm only returning because of the rejection of my asylum application. After that I lost the permission to work and the driver's licence was invalid. I wanted to study at a Norwegian university, continue in the field I already had studied, but after I was rejected all doors were closed. After rejection of the asylum application, life here is like a prison. When I go out the police can take me. When it's like that, it's better to return.*

In order to participate in the programme they may feel that they are forced to refute their story - whether it is true or not - in order to benefit from assistance. This tension has produced efforts to promote a more nuanced way to discuss return by international organisations engaged in refugee issues.<sup>63</sup>

The European Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE 2005), for example, has drawn attention to what it considers as frequent and increased misuse of the notion "voluntary". Distinguishing between "forced"<sup>64</sup>, "mandatory" and "voluntary" return they apply "voluntary return" only to cases of people with a legal basis for staying in the host country (ECRE 2005: 28). "Mandatory return" includes people who do not have a legal basis for residing in the host country for protection-related reasons and who consent to return. The IRRINI programme targets this latter group, and return through IRRINI may thus most accurately be considered as "mandatory".

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<sup>63</sup> Overall, there is a discussion between those who stress the unfeasibility of distinguishing between incentives, disincentives, coercion, force etc. and those who think that drawing a firm line are critical. The perception that 'voluntary return' is only applied by those with a legal basis for remaining if they so wish, is the main distinction between UNHCR and IOM's operationally-oriented definitions (ECRE 2005: 28, footnote 58).

<sup>64</sup> ECRE defines 'forced' return as "the return of persons who are required by law to leave but have not consented to do so and therefore might be subject to sanctions or force in the form of restraints in order to effect their removal from a country". See ECRE, Position on Return, 2003.

## Suggestions for improving IRRINI

The following suggestions were made by both key informants and asylum applicants in Norway:

1. At facilities with significant numbers of potential returnees, IOM, BIP and PU should establish a formal presence. This would make the logistics of VARPs much easier, and allow staff to earn trust and encourage return. The new “return centers” (“retursentre”) planned 2011 will facilitate this as the centres (approximately 16 in total) will bring together all asylum seekers with final rejections.
2. Prioritize document processing for those who have chosen voluntary return. Not being allowed to leave shortly after the decision to return has been made leads to frustration. PU is often the bottleneck according to our key informants. From application to exit at Lier Ventemottak, from which processing was fast-tracked, it still took about 4-6 weeks in May 2010.
3. Make assistance more flexible. The money sum is too rigid because it does not accommodate other things that people might need to return. For example, one staff member at a reception centre recalled that a resident’s request for a suit to wear at a relative’s funeral (rather than cash upon arrival) was rejected by IOM. This suggestion was echoed in some of the other interviews. For example, one asylum applicant proposed:

*Before we’re sent back to Iraq we could get financial support to buy new clothes as well, so we could make a good impression when we’re back from Iraq. Some people have had to return home without shoes. And that doesn’t make a very good impression. Some days ago, someone was sent back. He didn’t have anything and looked terrible. If I could have helped him by giving him some money, I would have.*

Addressing such issues is relatively easy and might make the difference between a return that is dignified and one that is not.

4. Both reception centre staff and the asylum seekers we spoke to also mentioned –given the months-long processing time for most return applications - the need for vocational training options in Norway. As one person shared:

I’d wish that those who would choose to return voluntarily would be sent to special reception centres, where conditions would be better and things would be more adjusted to their needs. If I go home now and my parents and family see me like this, they would ask themselves if I’m coming from Norway or Mogadishu [smiles]. At such centres we could also do courses in computers, mechanics, electricity and languages – English and Norwegian. I have some knowledge of computers, some competence in IT already, but I would benefit from more knowledge, it could help me in Iraq to open a shop.
5. Cooperate with Iraqi government/Kurdish authorities to create job opportunities for people who return. While several people mentioned this as an ideal, they also acknowledged that the Iraqi government/Kurdish authorities were likely not able/willing to help potential returnees.

## 8. Findings from northern Iraq

The main focus of the study was on returnees to northern Iraq as most of the returnees from Norway have returned and reintegrated to this part of the country. The next chapter examines return to Baghdad, as many Iraqi nationals with permanent residence permits in Norway have returned there.

### 8.1 Profile of respondents in northern Iraq

Of our informants in Iraqi Kurdistan, 44, or 73 per cent out of a total of 60 respondents had their applications for asylum denied; 12 per cent had MUF status; and 10 had asylum or residence on humanitarian grounds prior to returning. The remainder was unspecified.

The vast majority of interviewees were male. Although female interviewees were deliberately chosen to facilitate access to female interviewees, it was a methodological challenge to obtain access. This resulted in the poorly representative sample of 58 men (97 per cent) and only two women (3 per cent).

As for the age distribution, 82 per cent of the respondents are equally split into the age cohorts 20-29 and 30-39 years.

**Table 17: Age distribution**

Age	-20	20-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60-
Respondents	4	26	23	5	1	1

Compared with the Iraqis interviewed in Norway, of whom 69 per cent had completed primary level education, 82 percent of Iraqi returnees for whom information was collected had completed primary school.

**Table 18: Education**

Education level	No.
None (including incomplete primary school)	9
Primary school	22
Secondary school /vocational school	22
University	5
Unspecified	2

In terms of arrival in Norway, 38 per cent arrived in Norway in 2005 or earlier, while the remaining 62 per cent arrived later. A notable 12 per cent arrived before 2000.

**Table 19: Year of arrival in Norway**

Before 2000	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
7	0	1	6	4	1	4	6	13	15	2	1

Asked why they left north Iraq, answers deviated from the answers provided by asylum seekers interviewed in Norway. The largest number cited economic reasons (20 persons), followed by family

issues (11 persons) and then an equal number of 8 listed “imitating others”, improve general quality of life and social/political reasons in Iraq.

**Table 20: Reasons cited for emigration from Iraq**

<b>Reason for leaving Iraq</b>	<b>Frequency (multiple answers allowed)</b>
General insecurity /unspecified security reasons	6
Personal insecurity	2
Medical reasons	2
Economic reasons	20
Family issues	11
“Imitating others”	8
Improve general quality of life	8
Family in Norway	4
Social/political reasons in Iraq	8
“Nothing to do”	1
Aspiration to travel/see Europe/Norway	4
Unspecified/unanswered	4
Multiple answers	17

Why did the respondents choose Norway as the country of destination? The bulk of responses stress asylum/immigration policies (23 per cent) and the political context (21 per cent), while only 12 per cent of the responses concerned “economic reasons”. 12 per cent of the responses indicated no special intention to come to Norway.

**Table 21: Reasons for coming to Norway**

<b>Reason for coming to Norway</b>	<b>Frequency (multiple answers allowed)</b>
Norwegian asylum/immigration policies perceived as favourable (including “expectations of asylum”)	15
Political reasons (including “no sectarianism”, “no racism”, “peace”, “respect for human rights”, etc)	14
Economic reasons	8
Because I had family/friends there	13
Because I was advised to go there by someone	5
By chance (including ‘it just happened’)	8
Unspecified/other	3
Multiple answers	13

The IRRINI programme was implemented in March 2008, and only 5 per cent of the respondents returned before that date. The majority, 78 per cent, returned in 2009 while only 5 per cent had returned in 2010 at the time of the interviews.<sup>65</sup>

**Table 22: Year of returning to Iraq**

Before implementation of IRRINI March 2008	2008	2009	2010
3	5	47	3

## 8.2 Motivation for applying for IRRINI

We chose to frame the question of motivation for return in an open manner, as “Why did you choose to return?” in order to allow informants to express motivations that were not assumed a priori. The most frequent answer (55 per cent) was that the interviewee was not granted citizenship, asylum or residence to stay and work in Norway. A broader category “conditions in exile in Norway” necessarily overlaps with the former answer, but denotes the specific living conditions in the country rather than legal status. Family-related issues, including “they need me” were also given as an explanation by 12 per cent. 13 per cent provided different answers or did not specify why they chose to return, and 13 per cent gave multiple answers. Examples of responses were:<sup>66</sup>

*Because of psychological and mental problems that I had and the destabilizing situation of being transferred from one refugee reception centre to another.*

*The Norwegian government pressured me and pushed me to return. I decided to return because some of my friends became mad when they lost everything and because of the bad situation they were in.*

*I had no choice. They put us in a miserable situation. They told us if you don't go voluntarily the police will catch you and send you to Baghdad airport.*

Others mention the economic aspect, as money dried up leaving no alternative and viable options, as in:

*My economic situation became very bad.*

*I didn't have any work and no permission to stay so life was hard. It was my decision to return since my life was miserable.*

The decision was also at times prompted by factors pertaining not to exile, but to the homeland, or even a mixture of both. This could mean general improvements in security, or personal responsibilities for family members in Iraq.

*Because my mother was very sick and I had not seen her for seven years. Therefore I decided to return.*

*Because I did not get Norwegian nationality. Also, life in Kurdistan became better than before, and safer.*

<sup>65</sup> These percentages do not reflect the (unknown) return dates for two respondents.

<sup>66</sup> The quotes cited in this section aim to represent a cross section of returnees to different parts of northern Iraq.

In general, respondents clearly tended to downplay their own agency and voluntariness, making it more appropriate and meaningful to talk of “mandatory return” rather than “voluntary return”. This is underscored by the myriad references to pressure from the Norwegian authorities to make people return. Several allude to mental problems prior to making the decision. Although typically not specified, pressure from the Norwegian authorities seems to have played a major role in “motivating” return. Similar to responses in Norway, return migration overall seems more rooted in “push-factors” in exile than “pull-factors” at home, as demonstrated in table 23 below. The combination of not being granted the desired legal status and rights (45 per cent), general exhaustion over being in exile (7 per cent), and poor living conditions/ill treatment in Norway (15 per cent), together constitute 67 per cent of the responses given to the question of why the respondent chose to return.

**Table 23: Reasons for choosing to return**

<b>Reason for choosing to return</b>	<b>Frequency (multiple answers allowed)</b>
Not granted asylum/right to work/stay permit/citizenship	33
Money-related issues	
Family-related issues (including “family needed me at home” and not granted family reunification”)	7
Cultural differences	2
Tired of exile / generally exhausted	5
Improvements in homeland affairs	0
Poor living conditions/ill treatment in Norway	11
Returning seemed attractive due to the programme incentives	2
Had little / no other choice	7
Unspecified/unanswered	3
Psychological/medical reasons (including “stress” and “depression”)	3
Multiple answers	4

### 8.3 Logistics: Processing time and travel

When asked about the time that elapsed from the moment of registering with the IOM as interested in IRRINI till the actual return took place, 65 per cent cited that it took two months or less and 25 per cent cited that it took two to four months. Only 7 per cent experienced from four to six months of waiting and 3 per cent did not specify or had to try more than once. Management staff at Lier Ventemottak and some Iraqis interviewed in Norway complained about incidences of slow processing of IRRINI applications in the bureaucracy.

In addition to the bureaucratic processing time the actual movement back to Iraq is another component to the “return” part of IRRINI. Asked how well the return travel was organized, 73 per cent answered “very well”, 2 per cent replied “fairly well”, 7 per cent said it was “unsatisfactory”, and five per cent cited “very badly”. 13 per cent answered that they “do not know”. On the basis of our interviews in Iraq, the rule seems to be that IRRINI logistics from Gardermoen Airport in Norway to the international airports of Erbil, Suleimaniah and Baghdad, work very well. It is worth bearing in mind that the trip to Norway was often arduous and time-consuming. By comparison an inter-continental flight is hassle-free.

Some reported, however, that they found the arrangement of the travel from the returnee's place of residence in Norway outside the Oslo region to Gardermoen Airport less satisfactory. Two returnees independently described their problems in similar terms:

*I came from the reception centre in northern Norway to Oslo airport, a 17 hours' drive. I paid for the ticket and the food myself. Then they gave me only 50 dollars [a standard sum given to everyone at the airport]. It was nothing.*

## 8.4 IRRINI information channels

Asked from whom the respondents received information about IRRINI, 73 per cent cite the IOM. BIP is cited by no more than 7 per cent of the respondents, although many mentioned Dr. Hussein – the director of BIPs regional office in Erbil. There can be little doubt that IOM is the major disseminator of IRRINI information. Nevertheless, one should heed the tendency among interviewees referring to organizations as persons. It was not unusual for respondents to describe a specific staff member at an organization when asked for his opinion about the organization. Thus BIP was reduced to Dr. Hussein, and IOM was reduced to Ms. Chalank. We will return to this point later, suffice to say that it underscores the significance for returnees to Iraqi Kurdistan of having a personal contact, a specific person within the organization responsible for their case, to whom they can relate.

As a separate point, there were also statements of the type that “every Iraqi knows the IOM”, suggesting that those Iraqi nationals with more or less extensive social networks relative to other Iraqis would by necessity get acquainted with IRRINI through informal information channels. Other statements contradict this by suggesting that issues pertaining to return constitute something of a taboo and are not talked about.

## 8.5 The impact of information on decision making

More than half (57 per cent) answered that the information about IRRINI in Norway (i.e. overwhelmingly information from the IOM) “very much” influenced the decision to return. Roughly half as many, 28 per cent, answered that such information did not influence their decision to return at all, 10 per cent answered that information influenced the decision to a small extent, and 2 per cent answered that it influenced the decision to some extent. 5 per cent answered “don't know”. Among the 28 per cent of the respondents who rule out any influence of the information, it should be noted, a high number come from Duhok. These respondents seemed in general more negative to IRRINI, compared to respondents in Erbil or Suleimaniah, a perception that is assumed to be linked to IRRINI's reintegration component and will be dealt with in more depth later.

## 8.6 Return migration trajectories

Of 60 informants, only one individual did not return to where he lived before leaving for Norway. The caveat here is that for some of the returnees, where the respondent lived before is not necessarily “home”. For instance, one respondent indicates that he first became an internally displaced person when he fled Kirkuk and moved to Duhok where he lived prior to emigrating and applying for asylum. When his application was rejected in Norway he went back to Duhok, where he had resided before leaving for Norway, but which is not where he feels at home.

In general, however, it is not very surprising that returnees return to the places where they lived before they emigrated. Iraqi Kurdistan is a tightly-knit society where the family unit continues to be an important principle of social organization, in addition to other principles, such as class, tribe and clan. “Home”, in this context, is typically where the family is, the family may provide food and accommodation, especially while the returnee awaits approval of his application for the reintegration assistance. Social capital functions as social security in these cases. Local researchers have indicated

that there is limited internal contact across regional boundaries in Kurdistan and few inter-regional marriages, partly as a consequence of the history of internecine conflict centered around the political parties. Reliable statistics on this are scarce and it is unclear as to what extent this also limits the amount of internal migration across the three Kurdish provinces.

## 8.7 Time of return

Whereas only a handful of Iraqis returned through IRRINI during the first months following its implementation, the number of IRRINI-registered returnees has grown exponentially,<sup>67</sup> in part reflecting the increase in Iraqi asylum applications. The low number of respondents who returned in 2010 is explained by the fact that the contact information we were given was gathered by the IOM and BIP during the early months of 2010. Thus, 5 per cent of the respondents said they returned prior to the implementation of IRRINI, 8 per cent returned during 2008, 78 per cent during 2009 and only five per cent in 2010. Although we have no specific data on this, the time period indicates that some of our respondents have had their applications processed through the Torshov Project.

## 8.8 Assistance received at the airport

Upon returnees' arrival at the airport, IOM is to provide a cash grant in U.S. dollars, equivalent to 10,000 NOK.

A major problem upon return, however, is that fluctuations in the exchange rate between Norwegian kroner and US dollars create differences in the amount of money issued to each individual. In a society where corruption is pervasive, this causes suspicion and distrust towards IOM. 3 per cent of the interviewees informed that they had received 10,000 NOK, 23 per cent cited that they were given less than 1,500 USD, 12 per cent were given an amount ranging from 1,500 and 1,599 USD, 17 per cent were given an amount ranging from 1,600 to 1,699 USD, fourteen were given a cash grant ranging from 1,700 to 1,799 USD and 15 per cent claim to have received 1,800 USD or more. Even if the returnees often may have paid comparatively little attention to the cash grant at a time when their families were waiting in the arrivals hall, and that their memory of the cash grant consequently may be less than accurate, this indicates substantial fluctuations in the exchange rate.

We believe much is to be gained in the way of trust and satisfaction by calculating a fixed amount of USD to be administered to each returnee, allowing less room for suspicions of corruption or institutional greed, as this quote indicates:

*The negative part about the IOM is that the cash grant is issued in kroner. They charge a lot when they exchange.*

While the majority interviewed confirmed having received this support, there are a few indications that this does not always work the way it is supposed to.

*They have given me 700 USD at the Erbil Airport. I was told that I would receive the rest at home, but I had to phone them hundreds of times until I got the remaining 700 USD.*

*I have not received any money at the airport in Iraq. They promised that they would give us 10 000 Norwegian kroner at the airport.*

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<sup>67</sup> See table 2, page 24.

IOM's responsibilities do not end here, however. IOM is supposed to be readily available to answer questions that may arise on the part of the returnee. It seems this responsibility was not always met on the returnees' arrival at the airport.

*They neglected and left us without helping us in the airport, beyond the 10, 000 NOK. They just gave us their telephone numbers.*

*We did not get sufficient information at the airport. They were pressuring us on, without giving us the service we needed and which was talked about before our departure from Norway.*

According to IOM's website for IRRINI, returnees "will be provided with onward transportation assistance to your final destination. If needed, you will be provided with transit accommodation if unable to reach your home town on the day of arrival in Iraq."<sup>68</sup> Once an IRRINI returnee is ready to return from Norway, this person is to be contacted by the IOM's movement team to confirm destination and travel arrangement. The prospective returnee can change his/her final destination while still in Norway and IOM will in that case inform the receiving mission about the change in destination.

Few returnees report to have been provided with onwards transportation assistance, and several expressed surprise when asked about it. That onward travel is rarely organized in practice, is less serious than the fact that so few seemed to know that they were entitled to it. This lapse could be plausibly explained by the practice whereby returnees' families gather at the airport to greet them upon return and bring them safely home. However, the practice of the family covering the cost should not be due to the returnee's unawareness of his/her entitlements. Several returnees informed us that they themselves had paid for the onward transportation.

*I got off the airplane in Iraq at the beginning of 2009. I got the 1,400 USD, but we had been told in Norway that the IOM would help us in Iraq to reach our final destination, or homes. We had to hire a car ourselves. So they were cheating us.*

*They didn't help us in the airport except from giving us the money. After that we did not see them anymore and we payed the taxi home with the cash grant.*

IOM Erbil explained to us that IOM does indeed cover these costs upon request, but that the request must be made in advance, prior to return. This means that the request must be made by the prospective returnee to IOM Norway in due time for this office to forward the request to IOM Iraq, so that the latter has time to register the request, calculate the amount needed, withdraw the money, bring the money for covering onward travel to the airport, and provide a means of transport. This practice is both cumbersome for the IOM and suboptimal for the returnee

## 8.9 Expenditure of the cash grant

Shifting focus from the IOM to the individual returnee, the question that follows is: what did returnees spend the cash grant on? Firstly we need to stress that NOK 10, 000 – although a substantial amount one or two decades ago – is a meagre sum in today's Iraqi Kurdistan. A consistent message given by returnees is that although the cash grant is appreciated, it soon dwindles due to everyday expenses. However, 5 per cent of respondents had managed to save the money, another 5 per cent had invested it in the home, and 17 per cent had managed to invest it in income-generating activity. In contrast, 37 per cent spent the money on "myself and/or daily expenses" as is the intention of this cash support. For the returnee, offering gifts to family and kin and hosting visitors who come to the house to mark the occasion, is one of the mechanisms of social reintegration. This is all the more important as what they perceive as a mandatory return is associated with the loss of face for those who have come back from

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<sup>68</sup> [http://www.iom.no/irini/services\\_under\\_irrini.htm](http://www.iom.no/irini/services_under_irrini.htm)

the costly journey abroad with little to show for it. As the interviewer in Suleimaniah stated, “it would be a very big shame for them to come back without any gifts.”

*My family felt good and were happy about my return back here, but they criticize me and ask me “what have you done”? You have spent a lot of money and now you will pay back your debts.*

The family is often seriously affected, as mandatory return often equates to a failed investment; not only in the well-being of the individual migrant but also the social status and economic prospects of the non-migrant family which often helped to finance the trip and pay off human smugglers. 12 per cent of the respondents had started paying back their loan. At times not much is left of the cash grant when visitors are hosted and debts repaid.

*I got around 1,600 USD at Suleimaniah Airport. I spent 1,000 USD of it paying back my debt, and 600 USD I spent on visitors.*

Apart from these considerations, one finding deserves some elaboration: 27 per cent of the respondents spent the money on transport, many of them from Duhok. We will come back to this point shortly.

## 8.10 Reintegration assistance

Our data are not accurate on the issue of what type of reintegration assistance was chosen, as there has been some confusion both on the part of interviewers and interviewees as to the modus operandi of the IRRINI programme. Based on our data, however, approximately half of the respondents (48 per cent) opted for the business start-up option, one third (33 per cent) chose the job referral option, and less than 8 per cent used the in-kind assistance for purposes of education and/or vocational training. Some of the remainder were still having their applications processed and were thus waiting for support.

Despite a margin of error in our data in this respect, the distribution nonetheless begs the question of why the business option is clearly the most popular in-kind assistance when a) many expressed hope for a job with the government, and b) there is limited progress in private sector development?<sup>69</sup>

Nearly all our conversations on the subject, with a wide range of actors, confirmed that the primary objective of the vast majority of entrants to the labour market is to secure a job in the state apparatus, as confirmed by one high-ranking bureaucrat at the Ministry of Social Affairs.<sup>70</sup> This is above all widely associated with attractive retirement pensions and job security, but also with lax discipline with respect to working hours and conditions. Getting a governmental job is not solely based on personal qualifications: being recruited for state jobs is more difficult for those cut off from networks of patronage.

When so many returnees opt for the business start-up option, it may therefore be partly explained by their lack of access to governmental jobs in the first place, which may or may not have figured in the decision to emigrate. More critically, it may simply be viewed as the easiest way of both obtaining in-kind assistance and of converting this into cash. An important finding here is that 60 per cent of those registering for the business option did that in partnership with others, and the majority did so with “friends”. Over 80 per cent said that they had no personal savings they could use towards their business.

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<sup>69</sup> Factors impeding growth of an emerging private sector within the stasis economy include a lack of competitive culture and little tradition of private initiative and entrepreneurship. See

[http://www.wider.unu.edu/publications/newsletter/articles/en\\_GB/Entrepreneurship-article-1109/](http://www.wider.unu.edu/publications/newsletter/articles/en_GB/Entrepreneurship-article-1109/)

<sup>70</sup> Authors' interview, June 2010.

As the following answers suggest, it is not a given that those who sign up for the business programme are interested in actually running a business. We may assume under-reporting of this phenomenon, but some interviewees expressed themselves quite clearly.

*I did not have any job, but then was told that if I do not do any work I will not get any money. Therefore, I just made myself look like I was working as a guard at an organization. Just to get the money.*

*I have entered into a business partnership, but I can't tell you who it is because we're not partners officially.*

*I pretended that I had a shop to get my money. So I got 4,100 USD and now I'm not working.*

Although we met some returnees whose businesses remained operative and continued to provide a means of income long after the start-up phase, other returnees described to us that their businesses collapsed quickly, leaving them with nothing left. It is hard to assess whether this indicates that the kind of assistance BIP and IOM offers in planning which businesses to set up and how this could be done is either inappropriate or insufficient, or whether this reflects a lack of interest in business in the first place.

A closer examination of IOM's data on the job referral category for IRRINI II, as reported by the 31<sup>st</sup> of August 2010, shows a very broad spread in types of jobs selected by the returnees.<sup>71</sup> Of the 31 job categories they had been referred to, the majority worked as "salesperson" (28 per cent), "worker" (12 per cent), "assistant" (7 per cent) and "driver" (6 per cent). Only a few appear to have been able to secure jobs that require higher education, (one doctor and one lawyer). There are very few indications of jobs secured within the government; there are no teachers in the records, although this was expressed as a preferred option for many returnees. 30 per cent of the informants explained in the interviews that they had been informed that IOM would help them to get jobs in Iraq, and many of these said they were told that IOM would "provide" jobs to them. Only one informant, however, explicitly stated that IOM helped him get his old job back.

The low number of returnees selecting education or vocational training is worrying, as a large proportion of the returnee groups are at an age where one would expect them to consider further education options. One factor that might influence negatively on returnees' interest in making use of this reintegration option was alluded to by a Kurdish official in Erbil. He expressed a concern that they would not be able to provide job opportunities to the increasingly large number of youth that were about to complete their higher education.

## 8.11 Returnees' assessment of IOM

One of the open questions in the questionnaire allowed returnees to assess the actors involved, and thereby the assistance provided in the IRRINI programme. Of the responses 43 per cent are positive about the IOM, 23 per cent are negative, and 25 per cent are "mixed", leaving eight per cent unspecified/unclear. These aggregate numbers mask regional differences, as respondents in Erbil and especially Suleimaniah were overall much more positive towards IOM than those in Duhok. While positive assessments are infrequently elaborated upon, noticeably quite a few of the positive respondents in Suleimaniah stress the respect they are given by IOM there.

*The biggest advantage from the programme is their respect to us. This is very important.*

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<sup>71</sup> IOM (2010) Final Report to the Government of Norway. IRRINI II, Reporting period 1 July 2009 – 31 August 2010. Oslo, IOM Norway

*I don't know about the information we received from the IOM at the airport, but they do respect us in IOM and treat us the same way as we are treated in Europe.*

Three of the most frequent complaints made about the IOM refer to what is perceived as 1) discrepancies between information given before and after return; 2) a time-consuming and frustrating bureaucracy; and 3) a lack of follow-up. These points are elaborated upon in the following:

First, more than just a few respondents had the erroneous impression upon return that IOM would merely hand over the reintegration support in the form of cash or jobs. They maintain they were told a different story in Norway from what actually took place in Iraq, and suggested this was done in order to encourage their return. Several narratives suggest that IOM frame the IRRINI programme too positively in Norway. The following excerpts are from interviews in Duhok:

*IOM was telling incorrect things. They were meeting us from time to time and used to say that they were going to give us 35,000 kroner. They were going to make projects for us to work at. Also they were going to give us permanent jobs with the government.*

*They informed us that they were going to help us with everything. They will try to help us find jobs in Iraq, and that they are going to sort out all our problems. They were lying to persuade people to return. They have separated me from my family, they have made me sick.*

Such criticisms are particularly fierce in Duhok, but are also encountered among the returnees in Erbil. This attitude is also found in Suleimaniah, although much less so.

While this potentially might be an expression of misunderstanding of information provided in Norway, it is evident that such felt discrepancy will have a negative impact on the potential success and acceptance of IRRINI among Iraqis.

Second, the returnees who are critical towards the IOM express a great deal of frustration over the application process itself. Often the applications for in-kind assistance to set up a business are not approved by IOM on the grounds that the necessary documents are not provided by the applicant. A particular concern mentioned by returnees and acknowledged as an issue by the local IOM office, is the “three quote requirement” introduced as a corruption control measure. This is a common policy (also called “RFQ” – request for quotations) in both private and public institutions for procurements over or under a certain value (IAPWG 2006). According to this policy, a procurement officer or buyer collects three price quotes for a certain product or service in order to find the best price-quality combination (value for money).

Within the IRRINI context, the quote requirement creates problems. The interviews suggest that returnees are confused by the concept itself. Certainly, it is unreasonable to expect the average Iraqi to be familiar with safeguards for competitive bidding. It is also unclear what types of products and services related to reintegration support are subject to the “three quotes” rule. According to some returnees, the IOM local office either does not properly explain what it requires or does not accept the quotes they feel IOM should have accepted. As the final approval of the reintegration assistance has to be made at the IOM headquarter located in Jordan, the process has become extra time consuming and cumbersome. Frustratingly, in cases where the processing time exceeds three months, the returnee will need to restart the process and obtain and submit a new set of three quotes for IOM.

From an anti-corruption perspective, formal requirements such as the collection of three quotes are extremely easily manipulated. This is especially the case in a country like Iraq where corruption, especially nepotism, is known to be a major problem. For example, signatures on quotes may be forged, quotes from the same supplier may be put on different letterheads, or suppliers may collude

(one could imagine with assistance from the returnee himself) to produce three inflated quotes. Also, specifications for goods and services might be designed to favour or exclude certain suppliers (Schultz & Sørøide, 2006:18). Given the cultural and financial pressures returnees often face, it is likely that such formalistic rules are widely broken or bent for the benefit of family and friends. As an operational matter, it must be very difficult for even a trained IOM officer to maintain any meaningful oversight.

Because it is unlikely to serve its intended purpose, then, the quotes requirement unnecessarily contributes to a general sense of frustration with the programme. For people whose quotes are not approved, the lack of a personal contact point in the IOM exacerbates matters as it leaves the returnee with little chance of presenting his or her case vis-à-vis a large international organization. Many expressed frustration that they did not get through at the IOM when they had questions, or that they were not properly heard when they had complaints. IOM Erbil also informed that they at times fear for the safety of staff members, as frustrated and angry returnees who come to the office may constitute a security hazard.

Returnees become upset when they realize that obtaining reintegration assistance is more difficult than they expected. On the IOM (Norway) website there was at the time of the study no description of an application process that can take several months and involve demands that must be met by the applicant. Instead, it is simply mentioned under the reintegration package that “You will receive a maximum amount of NOK 25.000 as a non-cash reintegration assistance which can be invested towards [developing a business, on-the-job training education or job placement].”<sup>72</sup> In cases where the reintegration process has not been thoroughly, if at all, presented and discussed during the return interviews in Norway, the returnees risk being ill-prepared for a lengthy process which they might then regard as an obstruction to obtaining support as opposed to facilitating their reintegration.<sup>73</sup>

Third, and also related to the second point, there is a feeling of not being followed-up. The returnees in Duhok were the most frustrated with the requirements in order to qualify for reintegration assistance. This is probably linked to the amount of time and efforts these returnees had to make in order to successfully file an application for reintegration assistance and provide their documents at the IOM’s office in Erbil. Until the end of 2009, there was no IOM representative in this northernmost of the Kurdish provinces, located close to the Iraqi-Turkish border. The distance from Duhok to Erbil and back requires approximately four to eight hours driving by car. Presenting the correct documents proved difficult for many and follow-up seems, on the basis of our data, to have been inadequate. A number of returnees to Duhok complained that they had to spend the modest cash grant not on their “reintegration” but on transport costs. Some had to travel back and forth not just once but several times, in effect spending their cash grant as an investment towards obtaining the in-kind assistance. This produced widespread discontent in Duhok.

*I have spent [the cash grant received at the airport] on transportation, going back and forth to the IOM. I spent money on the IOM requirement to get more money. Four times I have made the three quotations, each time I was told that it was wrong.*

It is reasonable to assume that the situation has improved now that IOM has a representative in Duhok, although the eventual positive effect is not well covered by our data. On the other hand, this single IOM representative describes being overloaded with work and expressed that he had no time to follow up returnees beyond the especially vulnerable. In contrast, at the IOM website prospective returnees read that “You will be consistently followed up to monitor your progress.”<sup>74</sup> This seems to have been better lived up to in Suleimaniah than elsewhere. The interviewer in Suleimaniah found that a majority

<sup>72</sup> [http://www.iom.no/irini/services\\_under\\_irrini.htm](http://www.iom.no/irini/services_under_irrini.htm) (accessed 4.11.2010).

<sup>73</sup> The application for housing allowance is handled more swiftly, as when cleared by IOM Iraq UDI provide them an answer within 24 – 48 hours.

<sup>74</sup> [http://www.iom.no/irini/services\\_under\\_irrini.htm](http://www.iom.no/irini/services_under_irrini.htm) (accessed 23.11.2010).

of the interviewees reported that IOM had called them several times and asked about their situation, which they found respectful and increased their trust in IOM.

However it was also reported from a number of interviewees that they felt they had not been given appropriate follow-up by the IOM, e.g. assistance with obtaining local approval of education obtained in Norway. The situation for vulnerable groups will be discussed later in the report.

## 8.12 IOM compartmentalisation and reintegration management

In discussion with the IOM staff in Erbil and with input from the Iraq office the team established a flowchart of IOM's contact and application processing procedures (see below). This allowed us to better understand and discuss with IOM the frustrations and the anger that were evident in interviews both with returnees and with IOM staff. While the returnees emphasized their frustrations at not being able to make contact with IOM regarding their application, IOM staff complained about returnees taking all their time calling everyone at the office to enquire about their support. In some cases returnees would come to the IOM office and demand to be heard.

The main cause of frustration for the returnees is the cumbersome and time consuming process that IOM has put in place for processing the applications for reintegration support, and the high degree of "compartmentalization" and internal/external control mechanisms established within IOM Iraq. As we will return to in our recommendations, ensuring one contact point at the relevant IOM office, having IOM Iraq staff visit and review reintegration applications rather than sending these to Jordan, and addressing the returnees respectfully will go a long way in overcoming these challenges.

The result has been that 1) the returnees lose oversight of whom to contact at IOM; 2) the IOM field staff lose oversight of the application and support process; and 3) there is no single person/unit within IOM that provides quality assurance of the entire process flow from the initial contact at the airport upon arrival to the monitoring of the sustainability of the reintegration. The housing allowance the process includes is subject to final approval from UDI in Norway.

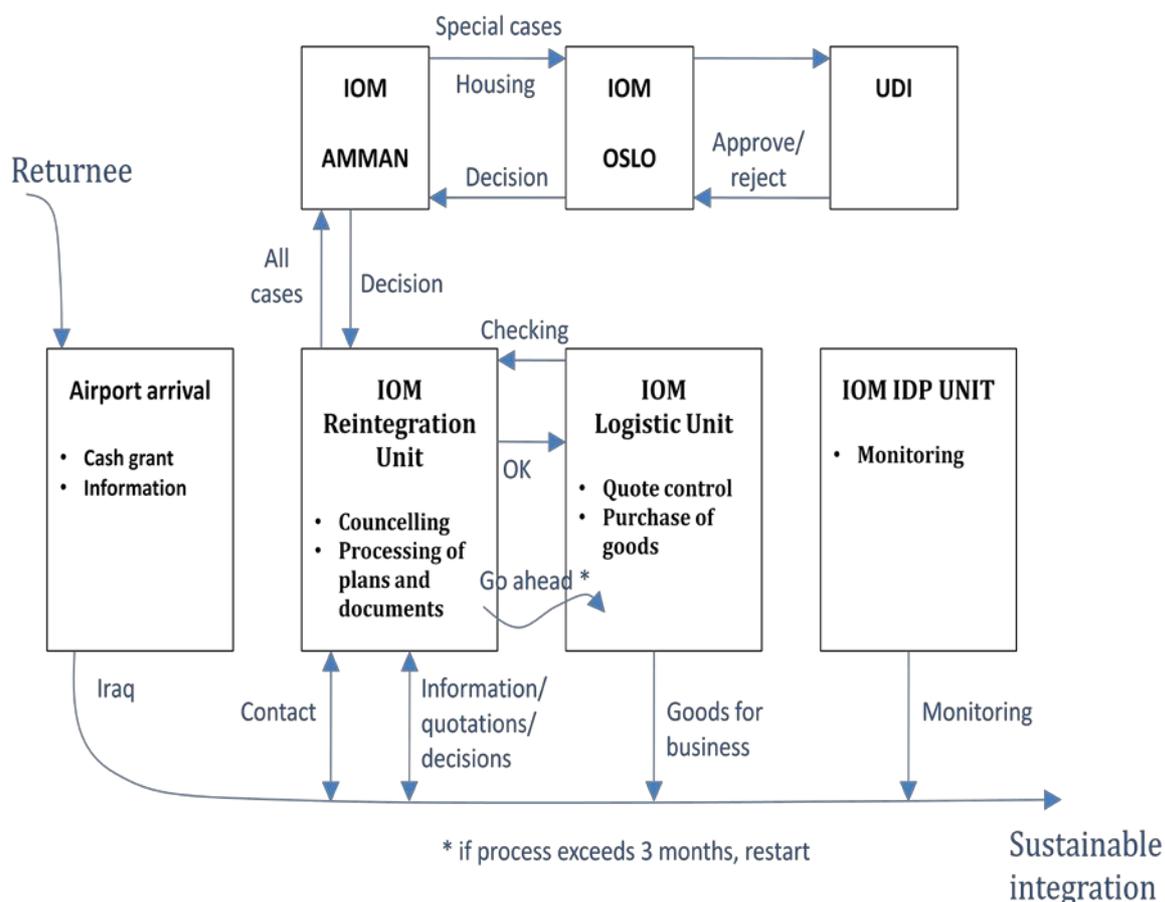
The team has been informed by IOM Norway that corruption charges against Iraq based staff led to major changes in the Erbil office staff as of 1 January 2010. Following this, there has been an introduction of clearer separation of tasks within the office, with decision making moved to the Iraq main office in Amman (where all reintegration applications has to be sent) and more control mechanisms put in place to assess applications and verify the three "quotes".

While this is a classic approach to stemming corruption in a programme – and corruption is widespread in Iraq<sup>75</sup> – it has had a severe effect on IOM staff's ability to make and maintain contact – and thus establish trust – with the returnees, resulting in increasing levels of frustration, alienation, and, ironically, accusations of corruption. This, in the end, is highly de-motivating for IOM staff while returnees end up communicating back to Norway that the IRRINI programme is not delivering what returnees consider to be promised them.

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<sup>75</sup> According to Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index 2010, Iraq ranks as 175<sup>th</sup> out of 178 countries. Available at: [http://www.transparency.org/policy\\_research/surveys\\_indices/cpi/2010/results](http://www.transparency.org/policy_research/surveys_indices/cpi/2010/results) (accessed 23.11.2010).

**Figure 6: IOM process in northern Iraq - exemplified by Erbil office**



A consequence of the separation of tasks between the different branches at the IOM office in Erbil (and the Iraq headquarters located in Amman) is that the returnee has to relate to four separate units and (at least) four different IOM staff members throughout their return and reintegration process.

The manner in which IOM has organised the reception and handling of returnees in the IRRINI programme is therefore about to become a threat to the reputation of programme, and should be addressed as a matter of urgency. Ways have to be found whereby donors’ and IOM’s concerns on corruption and mismanagement do not lead to a structure and procedure so rigid that IOM becomes disengaged from the returnees they are contracted to provide counselling, advice and service to. We will return to this point later. Suffice to say that the time consuming process presented here prevents many returnees from receiving assistance when they need it most – during the early stages of reintegration.

### 8.13 Returnees’ assessment of BIP

BIP has an office in Erbil with four employees and two contact persons located in Duhok and Suleimaniah. They provide the returnees, in groups or individually, with training courses related to the establishment and running of a business. Participants are then followed-up individually and are invited regularly for meetings where they share their experiences and receive advice from BIP and fellow returnees.

The team attended a focus group meeting which provided very positive feedback on BIP and their activities in Iraqi Kurdistan. BIP’s individual follow-up of returnees and invitations to regular meetings with the returnees were highly appreciated. Not least, this provided the returnees the

possibility of obtaining advice on anything from taxation in Norway to the application for reintegration support. None of them recalled having received information on BIP at the airport upon return, but some had informed in their return interviews in Norway that they wanted to start a business, while others had been contacted by BIP over the phone after return.

At first glance, the most striking interview finding as regards BIP's performance is that more than two-thirds of returnees to Iraq claimed never to have heard of the organisation. That said, a closer look shows a more nuanced picture. Several returnees remembered the Head of BIP's Iraq programme, Dr. Hussein, and the fact that they had been invited for training, yet confused BIP with IOM. It remains a challenge for BIP to make itself known to the returnees who contemplate establishing a business, and there are some indications that IOM is not doing enough to promote its smaller partner in this regard. We discovered that even among IOM staff involved in directly implementing the IRRINI programme, not everyone was actually familiar with BIP. The IOM representative in Duhok, for example, had never heard of BIP and had no idea what the organisation is doing.

## 8.14 Pre-return expectations v. post-return realities

Iraqi Kurdistan is a region that is rapidly undergoing transformation. Although quite a number of respondents had not been long in Norway, 72 per cent expressed that the situation was very different from what was expected. Of those who thought that the situation was very different, more felt it is better (38 per cent) than worse (22 per cent). This is an important finding as those interviewed in Norway were of the opinion that they were well-informed about the situation in Iraq because they had access to media and were frequently in contact with relatives and friends at home. Ironically, that progress on development is more positive than anticipated might turn out negatively for the returnees; many have lost out on the economic opportunities while being out of the country.

In order to understand the complex socio-cultural situation of the returnees, one needs to remember that for those who emigrate these days there is the risk of being returned without anything to show for it while neighbours and friends who have stayed behind and reaped the fruits of regional economic growth are the real "winners". A number of respondents mentioned this as one problematic aspect of their return. For some there also seems to be some kind of social stigma connected with return. According to one interviewer in Duhok, one returnee said he felt ashamed at having his photo taken by IOM at his workplace, comparing it to giving money to a beggar and taking a photo of him at the same time.<sup>76</sup> On the other hand, Dr. Hussein of the BIP argued that being part of a business programme organized by the Norwegian government to some extent could offset such a stigma by associating the returnees with foreign assistance.

## 8.15 Future plans

When asked about their future plans, returnees typically answered one or more of the following in that order: 1) No particular plan; 2) to get a job; 3) to pursue an education; and; 4) to marry. Answers 2-4 are not surprising considering that the majority of the interviewees in Iraqi Kurdistan were single young males. However, that the majority does not have a particular plan gives rise to competing interpretations. On the one hand, it may indicate that returnees (again, the majority returned in 2009) have still not fully adapted to their current situation or are demoralized and do not see any way of changing it:

*I am a failed person. Every time I make a plan it fails. Therefore I do not make any.*

*I cannot put any plan into practice because I know I cannot realize my plan or my aims. Me and my brother wanted to find ourselves wives to marry, and to feed our families, but it is very difficult because we don't have anyone to help us.*

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<sup>76</sup> IOM underline that they always request returnee's consent in taking pictures, including during monitoring visits.

On the other hand, it may suggest that the status quo is considered acceptable and that not much can or should be done to alter it. “To marry” was probably a plan for many of the young male emigrants in the first place, so it is not surprising that it remains a priority upon return. Some of the interviewees in Norway also mentioned that they would return to Iraq (partly) in order to get married. Marriage is, however, a costly affair that often requires considerable financial assets and thus remains elusive for some of those without.

Of particular importance for the sustainability of return is the issue of whether returnees planned to remain in the area they returned to or go somewhere else.<sup>77</sup> Here the interview data indicate a high level of sustainability. Of all the respondents, 78 per cent said they would remain in the area of return, 17 per cent didn’t know, and 5 per cent planned to go “somewhere else”. For those contemplating re-emigration, this often seems to be a function of not finding a means of livelihood, though other factors are also mentioned.

*I am looking for a job. If I find a job that enables me to provide for my family so we can survive I will stay. If not I will go to Europe again.*

Although the majority expect to remain in Iraqi Kurdistan, both the Norwegian and the local researchers in Duhok have experienced being approached about “the best way” of re-emigrating to Norway, including receiving an offer of 7,000 USD for facilitating the trip. One IRRINI-registered returnee interviewed in Norway prior to return was already planning his new migration trajectory while waiting to be returned. Immediately after saying this he asked the interpreter not to tell the interviewer. As this episode illustrates it is worth taking into account that returnees are not necessarily inclined to proffer information about re-emigration in a survey, be it for fear of being monitored somehow by the authorities, or for other reasons.

## 8.16 Especially vulnerable groups

For returnees who feel they have no choice but to return, the ability to plan for and time the return in an optimal way is often limited. Coming back to where they emigrated from often leaves returnees in a vulnerable situation. The Red Cross (Red Cross 2009: 29) explain that “Return can be a traumatic experience with loss of prospects for the future.”

One serious challenge to the reintegration of children is that their access to education was hampered by the authorities’ non-recognition of the education undertaken abroad, as long as returnees could not properly document it. In one of the returning families, two teenagers who only speak Norwegian, and neither of the Kurdish dialects, talked about suicide to the interviewer. Language problems mean that they cannot go to school with local peers, so they are socially isolated and mostly sit at home. The interviewer, who has a background from clinical psychology, reported that they were suffering from angst and depression.

This illustrates another concern that surfaced during debriefings of local researchers, which was the lack of follow-up and monitoring by IOM staff. Many returnees explained that they felt that IOM’s commitment towards them ended once assistance was delivered and “picture taken”. This was satisfactory for those that primarily wanted quick access to cash, less so for those committed to establishing their business and in need of advice and support in the first phase upon return. Furthermore, this could be a major threat to a sustainable reintegration for vulnerable groups in need of more than housing support, with limited networks and/or special needs. In the above case the family claimed during interviews with the researcher that they had not received any follow-up or assistance from IOM. In another case one especially vulnerable returnee was unable to receive in-kind assistance

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<sup>77</sup> This is not to say that mobility and sustainability of return are necessarily mutually exclusive. For a discussion, see Black & Gent (2006).

as there was no code for this type of assistance in the IOM accounting system, a problem that according to IOM staff had persisted over months.

## 9. Baghdad and southern Iraq: Conditions worse than expected

Baghdad and southern Iraq is very different from Iraqi Kurdistan in terms of security, infrastructure and economy, and poses different challenges to return and reintegration of returnees. According to a recent UNHCR poll of returnees from neighbouring countries to Baghdad, 87 per cent said their current income was insufficient to cover their family's needs, and 61 per cent of those interviewed by UNHCR regretted their return.<sup>78</sup> The poll further finds that physical insecurity, economic hardship and the lack of basic public services were key factors in leading the majority of returnees to regret their decision to return.

Our own data seems to suggest that the situation for most returnees to Baghdad and southern Iraq is worse than expected. Many say they do not know whether they will stay or not.

### 9.1 Profile of respondents in Baghdad and southern Iraq

23 men were interviewed, and two women. Out of this total of 25 interviewees, 76 per cent were from Baghdad and the rest from Southern Iraq. 8 per cent were Kurdish, the rest were of Arab ethnicity. All were Muslims, no further inquiry was made (Shi'a, Sunni) due to the current sensitivity of this issue in southern Iraq. Apart from this, their demographic profile is different from those in Iraqi Kurdistan in that the respondents are older and to a much higher extent married – which was the case for 68 per cent of the interviewees.

**Table 24: Age distribution**

Age	≤20	21-30	31-40	41-50	51-60	60+
Respondents	0	8	11	0	0	1

16 per cent brought their families with them to Norway, where 20 per cent report to have family members. About half (52 per cent) have completed high school / upper secondary / vocational school, and 28 per cent have completed a university degree. This makes them more highly educated as a group than the interviewees in Iraqi Kurdistan. Few had worked as skilled labour in Iraq prior to emigration, although only 4 per cent had been unemployed. Post-return unemployment is now experienced by 40 per cent.

### 9.2 Determinants of flight and return

When asked about the reasons for leaving Iraq, 36 per cent cite “general insecurity/unspecified security reasons” and 56 per cent cite “personal insecurity”. In contrast to Iraqi Kurdistan, insecurity thus emerges as the main driver of flight from Baghdad and Southern Iraq.

<sup>78</sup> UNHCR homepage: <http://www.unhcr.org/print/4cbdab456.html> (accessed 23.11.2010).

**Table 25: Reasons for coming to Norway**

Reason for coming to Norway	Numbers
Norwegian asylum/immigration policies perceived as favourable (including “expectations of asylum”)	10
Political reasons (including “no sectarianism”, “no racism”, “peace”, “respect for human rights”, etc.)	6
Economic reasons	0
Because I had family/friends there	3
Because I was advised to go there by someone	4
By chance (including “it just happened”)	2
Unspecified/other	0

Perhaps related to a wish to keep a low profile, a much higher number than in Iraqi Kurdistan emigrated alone, 76 per cent, and consulted no one, 68 per cent. Fewer report taking a loan to finance travel, 56 per cent were able to do so by means of savings, and thus less financially burdened upon their return. The majority had arrived in Norway from 2007 onwards.

**Table 26: Year of arrival in Norway (1 unanswered)**

Before 2000	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
1	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	3	9	8	0

Not only their reasons for migration but also their legal status in Norway distinguishes this group from the respondents in Iraqi Kurdistan, as 24 per cent were granted asylum or protection on humanitarian grounds. 40 per cent had their applications denied and 36 per cent returned while their application was still being processed.

**Table 27: Legal status in Norway prior to return**

Legal status	Numbers
Asylum status	5
Protection on humanitarian grounds	1
Asylum application rejected	10
Waited for an initial decision or appeal outcome	9
MUF	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>25</b>

Whereas 40 per cent explained their motivation for return as a function of conditions in exile (including “tired of exile” / “waiting for asylum” and “because of the living conditions” / “indignity suffered in Norway”), an equal number explained that they had family-related issues to take care of, which again is a major difference from returnees to Iraqi Kurdistan. 20 per cent linked their motivation to perceived improvements in homeland affairs.

**Table 28: Reasons for choosing to return**

Reason for return	Numbers
Not granted asylum/right to work/stay permit/citizenship	6
Money-related issues	3
Family-related issues (including “family needed me at home” and “not granted family reunification”)	10
Cultural differences	1
Tired of exile / generally exhausted	2
Improvements in homeland affairs	5
Poor living conditions/ill treatment in Norway	5
Returning seemed attractive due to the VARRP	0
Had little / no other choice	0
Unspecified/unanswered	0
Psychological/medical reasons (including “stress” and “depression”)	1
Multiple answers	6

In contrast to those in Iraqi Kurdistan, a clear majority, 68 per cent, reported to consult no one before deciding to return, while 32 per cent consulted family in Iraq. This may also reflect their higher degree of socio-economic independence.

## Information

8 per cent report having learned about the IRRINI programme from other asylum seekers, 8 per cent said they obtained information from UDI, and 4 per cent from friends in Norway, with the remainder citing IOM.

## Return

Perhaps indicating that also emigrants from Baghdad and Southern Iraq underwent an arduous journey to reach Norway, levels of satisfaction with the return travel itself are high for the majority, with 32 per cent saying that the flight was “very well” organized. There are nevertheless 8 per cent who say travel was “very badly” organized. Another statistical similarity is the high number of returnees who report to stay with family upon return (68 per cent). Unlike those in Iraqi Kurdistan, however, fewer return to where they lived before leaving for Norway. Only 60 per cent do so, 40 per cent do not. While we do not have the data to show that the latter 40 per cent are experiencing secondary displacement as internally displaced persons, this has been known to happen to returnees to Iraq and remains a concern.<sup>79</sup>

<sup>79</sup> According to a survey done by the end of 2007 in Baghdad by one of UNHCR's partners in Iraq, only a third of the 30 families who returned on a bus convoy organised by the Iraq government managed to return to their original homes, while 66 percent ended up in another location in secondary displacement. UNHCR homepage: [http://www.unhcr.se/en/news/press07/press\\_071207.html](http://www.unhcr.se/en/news/press07/press_071207.html) (accessed 23.11.2010). Although specifically addressing internally displaced, the IDMC confirms that the secondary displacement of returnees remains a concern. IDMC homepage: <http://www.internal-displacement.org/idmc/website/countries.nsf/%28httpEnvelopes%29/311EBD3742172481C125751D00451990?OpenDocument> (accessed 23.11.2010).

### 9.3 Reintegration assistance

Although the cash grant fluctuates depending on the exchange rate for this group of returnees as well, it does not seem to cause the same kind of frustration and resentment as it did for some returnees to Iraqi Kurdistan. This could perhaps be explained by the lack of contact with other returnees from Norway and thus limited information about what they receive (or not). Only 12 per cent say they are in contact with other returnees from Norway, 84 per cent are not. This is nonetheless contradicted by the fact that 28 per cent knew of other returnees from Norway that the interviewer could contact, possibly because this question was posed at the end of the interview and more rapport with the interviewer had been established by then. In any case, everyone received their money at the airport, and 76 per cent of the respondents spent it mostly on “daily expenses”. Gifts are seemingly less of an issue than in Iraqi Kurdistan, as only four per cent reported to have spent the cash grant on gifts. According to the researchers conducting the interviews, returnees were generally happy with the cash grant although all informants expressed that it is “not that much money” in Iraq. Correspondingly, almost half (48 per cent) said they were “very happy” with it and only 4 per cent said it was “not important.”

Considering the three reintegration options, establishing a business was the most frequent choice by returnees to Baghdad and Southern Iraq, as 64 per cent opted for this, 24 per cent opted for job referral, and none opted for education /vocational training. Not surprisingly, 28 per cent say they chose their particular line of business due to previous experience. However, none of the 64 per cent who opted for establishing a business indicated having received any assistance from IOM in terms of choosing this particular business.

Out of the 64 per cent who opted for establishing a business, 50 per cent had not yet started their business at the time of the interview which limit their experience with the programme, 44 per cent had started and 6 per cent were unspecified. All in the latter group had returned to Iraq in the year 2010.

Those who had opted for establishing a business were asked for their assessment of IOM’s business advice. Here 63 per cent declined to answer. Of those who did answer, half found it “somewhat useful” or “very useful” and the other half found it “not useful” or replied that they “do not know”. Out of the 24 per cent who opted for job referral, 80 per cent got the long term job they were looking for and 20 per cent did not. The job referral component therefore appears highly successful.

### 9.4 General living situation

Our data suggests that the living situation for many returnees is rather precarious, possibly more so than for the majority of those living in Iraqi Kurdistan. When asked about their plans, roughly two-thirds say they have no plan and several explain this with reference to insecurity. Only 8 per cent plan to migrate to an unspecified destination and 4 per cent will move internally in Baghdad, but 48 per cent – a much higher percentage than in Iraqi Kurdistan – do not know whether or not they will remain in the area they returned to. Many seem to adopt a wait-and-see attitude and follow security developments. Only 16 per cent of the interviewees, however, know of any relatives or friends who have migrated to Europe after they returned.

Similar to those interviewed in Iraqi Kurdistan, a high number (17) say the situation after return is very different from what they had expected. The difference lies in how it is different. Only 8 per cent say it was better than anticipated. More than half (56 per cent) say it is worse. At the same time, approximately half (48 per cent) also report that simply “coming back to Iraq” was the biggest advantage from the IRRINI programme.

## 9.5 Returnees' assessment of IOM

Roughly two-thirds give positive assessments of the IOM (with 5 individuals saying that it is “very good” or “excellent”), 28 per cent are unspecified, while only 16 per cent are negative. Local researchers offer some complementing observations that somewhat nuance this positive feedback, in light of the fact that half of the returnees selecting the business option had not yet started their business. As one of the local researchers reflected in the debriefing:

*The problem seemed to be that returnees had got information in Norway about the programme, but after they got IOM's contact number at the airport upon return, it seems as if the communication was stopped. They couldn't get more information, and got confused. Many returnees complained about IOM's procedures. The procedures took months and were generally difficult. Returnees did not complain about quotes, but about procedures in general (and about delays in the processing of applications).*

Local researchers had the impression that the delivery of the cash grant worked well, but that returnees expected the in-kind reintegration assistance to be given to them more easily. While acknowledging that the inaccessibility of the IOM must be understood with reference to the security situation in Baghdad, local researchers noted that returnees need more follow-up than what they currently receive from IOM. Returnees need to be contacted frequently and given more individual assistance. Some returnees eagerly expressed frustration about the delays in the processing of their case, and asked the local researchers for their help. Perhaps illustrative of returnees' limited access to the IOM, even the local researchers experienced difficulties in reaching IOM by phone and obtaining the necessary contact information from them.

Unfortunately, few respondents gave any concrete advice in the questionnaire on how the programme could be improved beyond improving access to IOM.

## 10. Consolidating Norwegian experience: IRRINI and IRRANA

In order to consolidate experience from Norway's voluntary return programmes, it is relevant to a) discuss findings from the present study in light of our theoretical framework, and b) highlight and compare some of the key findings from the voluntary return programme to Afghanistan (IRRANA).

### 10.1 Reflection on Theory

More than a decade has passed since King commenced her literature review on return migration in 2000 by describing it as “the great unwritten chapter in the history of migration” (2000: 7). Although this strand of academic literature has grown rapidly in subsequent years, serious gaps remain. There are, to the best of our knowledge, still few studies that analyze or evaluate the reintegration phase of VARPs for instance. By gathering data in both the sending and receiving country of the migration continuum this report distinguishes itself from the methodological nationalism that has characterized much migration research both in Norway (Brekke 2010) and internationally (Wimmer & Schiller 2002).

The empirical focus on rejected asylum-seekers in this report, by far the largest group of IRRINI beneficiaries, also means that some findings from the general migration literature on return will not necessarily apply. For instance, as noted by Black et al. (2004), the existing literature on the decision to return voluntarily suggests that non-economic factors generally weigh more heavily than economic factors, and that “pull” factors in the country of origin are more important than “push” factors in the country of destination. That does not resonate with our data. Our interviewees, especially those who have returned, report a limited sense of agency in the process, as their legal status, retraction of temporary work permits and the possibility of being forcibly returned by the police in Norway serve as a deciding push-factor. Another finding by Black et al. that does, however, resonate with this report, is that “assistance programmes are not a crucial factor in deciding whether or not to return, though they may be of use once the decision has been made” (2004: 22). The reintegration assistance itself is appreciated but not a determining factor.

A synthesis report from the European Migration Network (2011) likewise states that for third-country nationals in Belgium, Netherlands and Spain, any support offered has had a minor effect in incentivizing return. Furthermore, “Austria and Spain also considered that monetary incentives are not the prevailing factor in deciding upon Assisted Return, as the impossibility of integration in the host country due to legal stay [sic], as well as circumstances in the country of return, are considered to be much more important factors contributing to a decision” (EMN 2011: 56).

Moreover, we have pointed to how those interviewed in Norway maintain their flight narrative, or possibly better described: it becomes a narrative with particular feelings attached to it. Here we can draw on Knudsen (2005) to better understand the asylum seekers/potential returnees. He points to how the “action of narration”, in our case “narrations of flight” and “narrations of return”, are always subjective presentations of a version which may well be retold as yet another version. The asylum seeker or (potential) returnee is expected to provide continuous narrative accounts, which at times may seem overwhelming for that person. There is no uniform “return experience” and no unambiguous relation to the option of return. Indeed, “[t]he reasons for fleeing are never singular, never the result of a well-calculated choice or a perfectly mechanical response to the attraction of another space” (Knudsen 2005: 27).

More generally, the observation that so many of our interviewees in Iraq reported that their situation was different than they had previously expected, is quite typical. Whereas return migration was still commonly conceptualized as the “end of the refugee cycle” during the 1990s (Black & Koser 1999), it

has since been described in the academic literature as a more dynamic process in which returnees are actively engaged in a process of emplacement (Holm-Pedersen 2003, Stefansson 2004) and face challenges that may be more serious than those associated with their initial emigration. Whereas we do not have sufficient empirical data in this report to describe these challenges in more detail, we did observe that IRRINI returnees commonly find themselves in a different situation than they had expected. The language of “re-turn” and “re-integration” suggests a normalization of affairs (Hammond 1999), but in reality, returning to the country of origin comprises much more than the physical journey back to the familiar sociocultural habitat of the “homeland” (Stefansson 2004: 69). The challenges in this process for IRRINI returnees may have a bearing on the sustainability of the programme.

The sustainability of return is difficult to define well. One narrow indicator of the sustainability of return is whether returnees subsequently (e)migrate (Black & Gent 2006). According to this indicator, IRRINI seems to promote sustainable return. Although security conditions in Kurdistan are more stable than Baghdad and more interviewees stated their willingness to stay in Kurdistan, the majority of all returnees plan to stay where they are. Then again, not every migrant has sufficient resources needed for renewed migration, so a continued presence is no guarantee that their economic, physical and legal security are ensured in Iraq – conditions deemed necessary for a sustainable return in a broader understanding of the term (UNHCR).

This might hold even truer for populations underrepresented in our sample - female-headed households, single elderly, etc. The indication of vulnerable individuals not receiving sufficient attention after return and bureaucratic procedures that don't easily accommodate for those with special needs is therefore of worry for the sustainable return for vulnerable groups.

According to Cassarino's theory of return migration, being well informed about the country of origin is of paramount importance for emigrants because it increases their “preparedness” – defined as pertaining “not only to the willingness of migrants to return home, but also to their readiness to return” (2004: 271) – and allows them to make maximum use of the resources they have at their disposal. Similarly, the information component of the IRRINI programme prior to return needs to both ensure that returnees can maximize the usefulness of the reintegration component, and prevent unrealistic expectations on the part of the prospective returnee negatively affecting his/her later reintegration, and – through transnational feedback loops between Iraq and Norway – the programme itself.

## 10.2 Comparing IRRINI and IRRANA

When comparing findings from Norway's two specialized return programmes, three important differences need to be noted: 1) the security situation and prospect for improvement was worse for Afghanistan than for Iraqi Kurdistan, although comparable for Baghdad; 2) we have a much larger sample, and thus assumedly better ground for analysis, for the Iraq case than for Afghanistan; and 3) Iraqi returnees spent more time in return centres than the Afghans who often stayed in private accommodation in Norway until their return.

Some of our assumptions set out in the analytical framework have been confirmed. The security situation as well as prospects for economic development are more promising for the majority of the returnees to Iraq, which should be conducive to entrepreneurship and income generating activities. However, one major difference is that the Iraqi returnees held a hope for the government(s) to assist them and provide them with jobs, while the Afghan returnees had no such hope – and were therefore more focused on what they themselves needed to do to reintegrate.

Returnees to Iraq had a higher degree of education than the Afghan returnees. Interestingly enough, education level does not seem to make a significant difference in the kinds of choices people make vis-a-vis reintegration assistance. Few opted for education or vocational training, and despite Iraqi returnees being better educated we found little to substantiate that this factor eased the employment or

reintegration process. Many chose a business unrelated to their education and skills, and those who aimed to be reemployed (as teachers) by the government were frequently barred from doing so.

There are, however, many commonalities between the two programmes which also includes the returnees' discrepancy felt between information provided before returning and reintegration assistance after returning. This points to the importance of presenting and organizing return programmes in a manner returnees are in a position to absorb, understand and use.

Other findings relevant for further reflection on both the Iraq and Afghanistan programmes include:

- Returnees are not receptive to information on the return and reintegration programmes while other options might still be (if only theoretically) available, including “going underground” or continuing to other countries.
- Once people have made the decision to return they wish to pursue this goal as quickly as possible.
- The kind of information they are provided with, together with the timing of information and their perception of the information provider, is therefore very important to their understanding of the reintegration options available, and their subsequent planning.
- Throughout this process, in Norway as well as in the country of origin, organisations per se are less important than persons within the organization they can relate to and whose information they can come to trust. This applies to both IOM and BIP – and for the Afghan study: INCOR.
- Cash upon arrival and a dignified arrival are important in the context of migrants who have invested, often heavily and through incurring debts, in a failed attempt at securing a future in “Europe”.
- The way the reintegration process is organised by IOM generates a high degree of frustration, as it is bureaucratic, time consuming and – for many – just delays their access to cash required for other purposes.

The recommendations that follow may prove useful for a re-examination of the Afghan return programme.

## 11. Cash or comprehensive return package?

The interviews with returnees to Iraq paint a picture of a reintegration bureaucracy that creates obstacles to a dignified and swift return process. Adding to the returnees' frustrations is that they don't receive their reintegration assistance in the form of cash or a job, as many seem to expect, but rather must choose among three options that they feel have not been discussed with them in sufficient detail before their return. This creates frustration with both IOM and BIP. Returnees who find themselves in a vulnerable position upon return spend much of their energy simply securing their entitlements rather than concentrating on their reintegration and reestablishment process.

Given the concern this raises for the acceptance of the IRRINI program, and the potential negative impact on the sustainability of the return, we will therefore outline two different models of assisted reintegration in Iraq for UDI's consideration. The first model, which we recommend UDI to introduce, is a minimalist one with a two-stage cash package payment that reduces the transaction costs, combined with more detailed reintegration planning in Norway and a structured follow-up of returnees in Iraq. The second model is a continuation and improvement of the present model with a choice of three different types of reintegration support, but with a stronger emphasis on follow-up and more personalized guidance through the bureaucratic procedures.

The evaluation has brought out a number of justifications for a new model for reintegration with a cash support package for returnees rather than the more extensive three component package that is offered today. These justifications include:

- The majority of returnees place the highest value on cash support already, while there is a general lack of interest in the return package.
- Our research suggests that many of the returnees treat the reintegration assistance (for example support to open a kiosk) not as a long-term solution but rather as a means of accessing cash as quickly as possible. Giving cash outright will avoid time-consuming and expensive formalities.
- The cash support model is more flexible and empowering as it places more trust on the returnee's ability to cater for his or her own future, and reduces incentives to "cheat the system".
- The returnees interviewed for this study have used the cash grant they received upon arrival in Iraq to support longer-term reintegration. Setting aside the 37% that spent it on their daily expenses during the initial return period (its intended use), and the 27% from Dohuk who used it to pay for transport to IOM's office, the other returnees have either saved the money or invested it in their homes (10%), invested it in income-generating activities (17%) or repaid their loan (12%). The responses demonstrate a high degree of planning on the part of the returnees on how they can sustain their reintegration.<sup>80</sup>
- Reduced bureaucracy will speed up application handling procedures and lower transaction costs. The prospective returnee will have an exact idea of what the reintegration assistance consists of, which is more conducive to realistic and active planning on the part of the beneficiary before returning. This, together with more transparent and consistent message delivery, will enable the IOM to assume the role of a trusted facilitator and helper, rather than a controller.
- Since every returnee will now get their support more easily, disappointed returnees will be less likely to communicate back to their compatriots in Norway that IRRINI beneficiaries do

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<sup>80</sup> Some reported using the cash for more than one purpose, giving a total percentage above 100.

not get what they are entitled to, potentially producing rumours that undermine the credibility of the programme.

There are, however, questions raised in dialogue with the reference group that need to be considered:

- Will the returnees be able to handle such a large amount of cash without being exploited?
- Will the ways in which returnees use the cash facilitate reestablishment and reintegration? Or, might cash be used to re-migrate?
- Will many of the young returnees need more guidance in making their choices given a limited number of options for their reintegration support?
- If the cash package system should fail, how can the present system be re-established?

A number of findings in the study counter these concerns to a sufficient degree to merit serious consideration of the cash support proposal, which is supported by findings from the Norad report referred to in the analytic framework chapter. One argument is that these returnees have gone through a challenging migration process in which they presumably had to manage considerable financial resources. According to our interviews, the costs incurred to migrate to Norway averaged 10 – 20 000 USD. Our study moreover found that the returnees' prime concern is not to remigrate but to be reintegrated in their home communities. The majority of returnees, especially in Iraqi Kurdistan, have moved back to their family which provided financial support for their initial travel to Norway. These returnees inform that they expect to remain in their area of return and their use of the cash assistance confirms their intentions. Many recognize that they have missed out on economic opportunities while they were abroad and now see better opportunities at home. More of those returning to Baghdad did so because of their family ties.

For both these groups we therefore expect that any support, cash included, will primarily be used to facilitate and support their reintegration. This argument is strengthened by an observation IOM convey from interviews in Norway where the returnees are primarily interested in discussing three themes that all relate to the potential of sustaining their return: 1) access to land, 2) possibility of buying a taxi, and 3) the prospect of getting married. We expect that the returnees will consult their family on their plans upon return, and allow them to participate in the decision making process, especially for those young men that constitute the majority of returnees to Iraqi Kurdistan.

The vulnerability of this particular returnee group is, however, of concern, and warrants additional consideration for how the reintegration part best can be organized. That goes for both models. Many are young and have limited education and/or work experience, while possibly holding an overly optimistic wish for employment in the governmental sector. There is therefore a need, in Norway and upon return, to provide them with realistic advice and counselling which is targeted specifically to the different age/interest groups, on how they best can plan and be assisted in re-establishing themselves. Here, business establishment, education and job referral, possibly job training, remain valid options, to which they might be advised to invest their reintegration support. A further challenge is to allow and ensure that counselling relating to how they best can plan their future upon return is separated, in space and person, from information provided them about the return programme which the study shows that they are likely to distance themselves from. The background and skills of staff employed to handle the reintegration process in Iraq is therefore of utmost importance. They need to be skilled in counselling and in communicating with people of different ages and backgrounds.

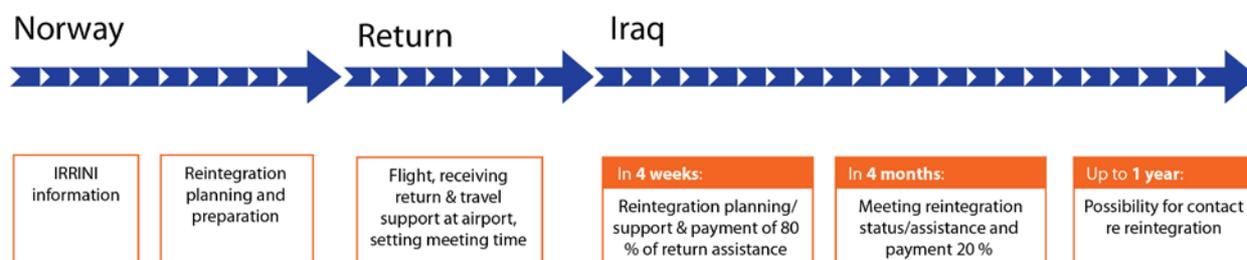
The planned return centres in Norway will likely provide a more conducive milieu for return planning and preparations, combined with a range of other activities. As the staffs of such centers are likely to be well-informed about reintegration programmes they will be more readily available to provide the returnees with personalized answers to questions likely to emerge during the planning process. They would also presumably have a network of persons and institutions in Norway and Iraq that could assist with further information.

Better planning and preparation in Norway, combined with a swifter reintegration process, should help shift the relationship between returnee and the organization assisting with reintegration from one based on control to one based on trust. This, we expect, will make it easier for the returnees to contact the organization(s) when they are in need of assistance or advice. By playing a more proactive role in contacting the returnees, the organization(s) will be seen less as a (micro-) manager and more as a service provider.

The components of the two models can therefore be outlined as follows:

### 11.1 The Cash Package Model

**Figure 7: Cash package model**



#### 1. IRRINI information in Norway

The IRRINI information package provided by IOM is continued, with two main components. The first will give a) general information about the return process, including expected processing times in Norway and in Iraq; b) advice on how to obtain information about the situation in their area of return (including how to contact former residents of return centers); and c) advice on how to obtain information about reintegration support opportunities. Potential returnees would then be invited for a separate event to discuss in greater detail how they can be advised and supported in their reintegration.

#### 2. Reintegration planning and preparation in Norway

The general information session would then be followed by a separate counselling and planning session, preferably with other personnel than those who presented IRRINI in the first session. This meeting would solely focus on the returnee’s reintegration needs and how those might best be supported. BIP would be invited to introduce and discuss the business establishment model while IOM, or another job referral/training organization, would explain opportunities for job placement and training, and provide an overview of potential education paths and registration processes. Specific trainings, such as training in business establishment, language courses, and/or professional development training, can be chosen by prospective returnees in Norway as part of their return preparation. A small part of the reintegration assistance may also be issued before return takes place, upon the prospective returnee’s request.

#### 3. Return process

The present return arrangement is functioning well and should be continued, though the cash component provided at the airport should be in US dollars, and include a fixed amount for travel from the airport to home. It should be explained that this amount is also to cover their travel expenses for meetings with IOM. Further information about how to get in contact with IOM and BIP would be provided at the airport, and a tentative appointment made for the first meeting at the IOM office or sub office.

#### **4. Consultation and first cash instalment in Iraq**

The first scheduled meeting would take place within 2 - 4 weeks after return. This meeting would have three main goals. The first would explain the reintegration process, opportunities for support (including from BIP), and IOM's responsibilities. Guidelines for communication with IOM should be established. The second goal would be to organise payment/transfer of 80 per cent of the reintegration support. This would enable the returnee to make a substantial investment in their reintegration immediately, for instance by establishing a business or entering in a business partnership, or making other investments. Those returnees requiring assistance for such processes should be supported, including with further possibility for business advice from BIP, access to organizations offering micro-credit for business purposes, referral to organizations offering vocational training or to educational advisors at high schools/universities. The third goal would be to discuss the returnees' reintegration process, and if she/he is in need of additional advice, to provide assistance or referral to government institutions or organizations. This includes advice relating to tax issues, and other issues pertaining to Norway.

#### **5. Second instalment and follow-up**

Then, 4 months after the first meeting is held, a follow-up meeting would be organized with the returnees in their location. This would provide an opportunity to learn more about the returnee's reintegration process, and to respond to needs for further assistance and advice. Documentation from this meeting will not only provide data to IOM and UDI regarding reintegration choices but also help assess whether further adjustments might be required to improve the sustainability of the process. The second purpose is payment of the second instalment of the reintegration support, the remaining 20 per cent.

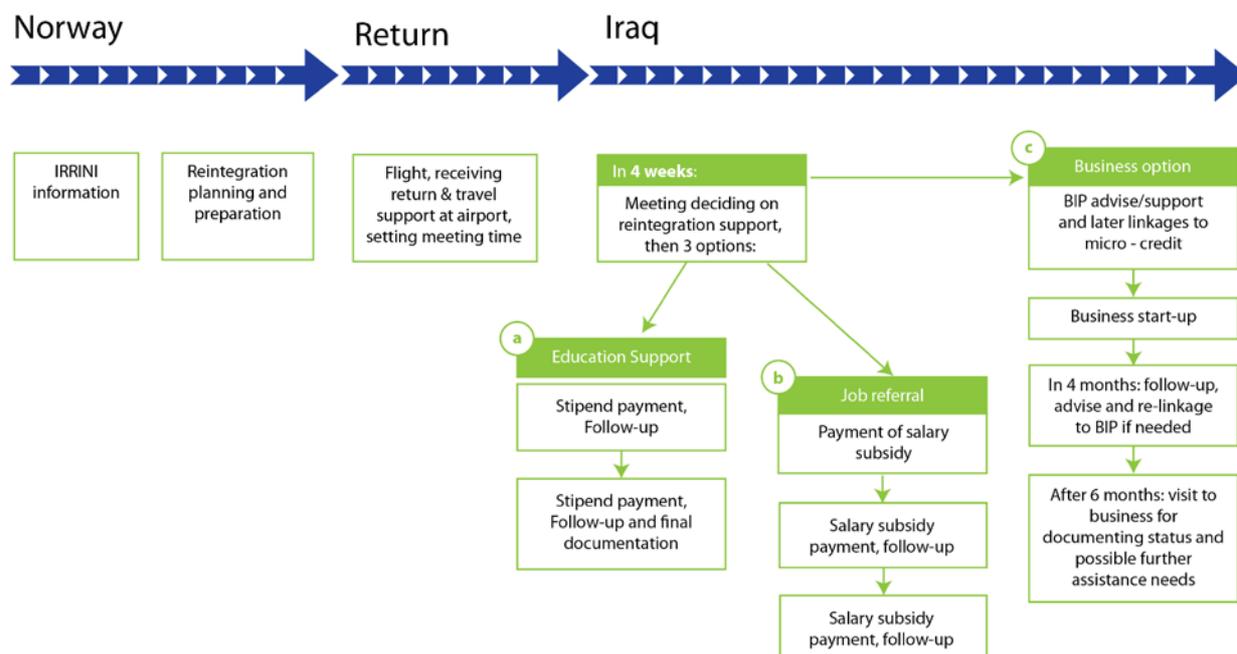
The returnee will be invited to make further contact with IOM until 1 year after return, for advice and possible support if needed.

### **11.2 The Reintegration Support Model**

This model is a modification of the present system with assisted reintegration, with an emphasis on a more personal and less bureaucratic handling of the reintegration process upon return.

The suggested changes for the process in Norway and the return process that is outlined under the cash support package should be the same in this model to ensure that the returnees are well prepared and aware of the process that awaits them upon return. However, the reintegration support model will require a more detailed reintegration planning in Norway for the returnees to reflect/consult on what will be most beneficial for his/her reintegration. It needs to emphasize how IOM can facilitate the reintegration process, and move away from a notion of controlling the returnees' use of the reintegration support.

**Figure 8: The Reintegration Model**



**1. Reintegration planning**

The first meeting should take place within 4 weeks upon return, where the reintegration plan developed in Norway is revisited and more detailed planning of the reintegration choice takes place - business establishment, job referral or education/skills development support. The division of tasks and responsibilities between the returnee and the IOM should be established, with the expected timeline for implementation. Sufficient time should be set aside for the first consultation. A written summary of the decisions made should be presented to the returnee, including details on a personal contact point at IOM for communication throughout the reintegration process.

**2. Reintegration process**

The processing time and bureaucratic procedures should be minimized by delegating authority for decisions to IOM field offices (though controlled through more frequent visits from IOM Iraq) and by allowing the returnees to purchase their goods in collaboration with IOM employees (for the business option) to ensure transparency of the cash transfers. The follow-up with the returnees would focus on any need for further advice on business development and networking, possibly supported by BIP, and information on potential micro-credit institutions.

Job referral might be considered linked with opportunities for skills enhancement to ensure returnees are better positioned to secure themselves permanent employment. For this and the education option quarterly payments should be considered, combined with a focused reintegration dialogue with the returnees.

**3. Follow-up and documentation**

Many returnees value contact after return and express a need for advice and different types of targeted assistance (including housing support) made available for the most vulnerable returnees. We therefore recommend a more thorough follow-up of the returnees for at least a six month period to determine if they are faced with specific reintegration challenges and if they can be assisted or referred to governmental offices or organisations that could be of help. The positive interaction that many in Suleimaniah enjoy with a respectful IOM indicates a willingness to engage if and when a level of

personal trust has been established. Ideally this role should be entrusted the Government of Iraq and the Kurdish Regional Government, following dialogue and possibly support from the Norwegian Government, but could alternatively be entrusted to an international or local organisation with the required knowledge and skills for mentoring and guidance.

For returnees wishing to establish a small business, BIP can still be of assistance, though more of the concrete planning for establishing businesses should be initiated in Norway. Other Iraq based organisations can be drawn on offering more specialized courses and vocational training.

There is an urgent need to establish more detailed documentation of how the returnees have succeeded with their respective reintegration efforts and what possible support they might still need. This information would additionally allow UDI and IOM to engage in a more informed discussion on the strengths and weaknesses of the reintegration options and their sustainability, as well as potentially tailor existing opportunities to better meet the needs of different groups.

UDI and Norwegian authorities are likewise advised to establish a dialogue with central and regional authorities in Iraq on the possibility of establishing more job referral centres and establishing micro-credit schemes (to the benefit of returnees from all countries).

The recommendation section below provides more detailed descriptions of suggested improvements on (A) activities taking place in Norway, and (B) activities pursued in Iraq.

## 12. Conclusions

In this section we draw out the main lessons learned from our data on various IRRINI components: provision of information, the cash grant, reintegration assistance, and follow-up support. Recommendations on how to improve the programme, seen in a holistic perspective, are set out in the following chapter.

Four major findings from this study are that:

1. The IRRINI programme has provided a large number of Iraqi asylum seekers in Norway a more dignified alternative to what they perceive to be their only other option, a forced return.
2. The majority of the returnees give a positive assessment of the support provided by IOM, though with significant regional variations.
3. Most of those who have returned expect to remain in their area of origin, although this is true for only half the returnees in Baghdad.
4. Perceptions fostered in Norway on conditions in Iraq diverged significantly from returnees' experiences, leading to frustrated expectations.

Three main concerns with the programme that the study identified and where we suggest improvements include:

1. How dissemination of IRRINI information is organised and conveyed.
2. How IOM organises and manage the reintegration process, and whether they allocate sufficient resources to handle it.
3. Whether the current reintegration package meets the needs of the returnees.

It should be noted that the opinions of many IRRINI returnees, as well as potential returnees in Norway, were influenced negatively by the fact that the majority do not perceive the IRRINI programme to be a “voluntary” option, but rather a last resort for a dignified return when all other options have been exhausted. Moreover, in the general opinion of both Iraqis and Kurds, it is no longer possible for them to obtain asylum in Norway, regardless of their protection needs. This has spilled over into a sense of general distrust of information and initiatives taken by the Norwegian government, including the IRRINI programme.

In addition to this general tension, there are also specific concerns expressed by the returnees relating to the way information is conveyed in Norway, the difficulties of communication with IOM, and the lengthy and cumbersome process of obtaining reintegration support. The fact that different European countries provide very different reintegration packages and levels of financial assistance, causes confusion among returnees and suspicions that they are not receiving what they are entitled to through the IRRINI programme.

What moreover needs to be factored into the analysis is the context to which they return. On the one hand there has been such a rapid economic development that many of the returnees feel they have lost out as compared to those who remained back home. On the other hand, there are limited opportunities for employment in the public sector not to mention job security despite recent economic developments. Those who can't benefit from personal or political connections end up as just one of very many returning from abroad after having failed to be accepted “in Europe” or elsewhere, and thus are at the bottom of the government's priority list. If reintegration programmes are not well conceived

and implemented, returnees might easily end up contemplating another attempt for a better future outside of Iraq. Additionally, there is a real risk to the programme that returnees advise those remaining in Norway against signing up to IRRINI, as it did not meet their own expectations. Such a transnational feedback loop does exist. Two key informants from NGOs in Norway independently of each other mentioned rumours circulating among Iraqis in Norway that those who return through IRRINI do not get what they are entitled to.

## 12.1 Information about return (before departure)

The returnees have several sources for information about the IRRINI programme, though the presentations made by IOM and BIP at the reception/return centres are the ones that most directly convey information to the potential returnees. However, there are some important conclusions to be drawn from the study that influences knowledge and perceptions of the programme.

Firstly is that the returnees, as was similarly documented in the Afghanistan study, are not mentally prepared to obtain detailed information on the IRRINI programme or discuss it in earnest until they have decided to return. Secondly, an excessive use of acronyms blurs their understanding of the programme and its actors. Thirdly, the potential returnees are offered a fragmented picture, as BIP and IOM present their programmes separately. In some cases, IOM's general information about the VARP programme might be seen as not directly relevant to Iraqis seeking to return. Fourth, but not least, it is not sufficiently explained that only one part of the return and reintegration package is in cash payment upon arrival, and that the remainder is in kind, i.e. only the value of the reintegration package and not cash.

## 12.2 Individual career planning

None of the returnees interviewed in Norway or Iraq recall receiving any individual career planning or advice. The closest they got when asked about discussing the matter at all, was to refer to a pre-return interview with IOM where they might have been asked about their preferences for reintegration assistance.

In those cases where returnees paid little attention to presentations made by IOM/BIP, reviewed IRRINI material, or reflected on questions in the IOM interview, they would have been ill prepared when turning up for the first consultation with IOM in Iraq where they would have had to make their choice on reintegration support.

With such an important component lacking in the returnees' mental process of preparing for their return their choices are likely to be less based on planning for the future than on what might bring more immediate benefits.

## 12.3 The cash component

There is unanimous agreement among returnees on the importance of the cash component received upon arrival. It allows them a more dignified return. Despite not having achieved what they set out for when leaving home, they do not return completely empty handed, as they can purchase gifts for friends and family in order to facilitate their social reintegration. Not least they have cash at hand to cover expenses until manage to secure reintegration support. Some manage to use it as an additional contribution to their establishing a business. Others use it to partly repay loans taken to finance their initial journey, at least temporarily reducing the pressure on themselves and their families.

There are two concerns that need to be addressed regarding return. One is the difference in what the returnees actually receive for the cash component due to fluctuating exchange rates between the

Norwegian kroner and the US dollar. The second is that many report not receiving their entitled support for onward transportation from the airport to their final destinations upon arrival.

## 12.4 The reintegration support in Iraq

This is the most difficult part of the programme, and the one that causes most grievance among returnees. Contacting IOM for an appointment is by many described as an obstacle, rather than an encouraging start to their reintegration. The experiences from Suleimaniah demonstrate that interactions conducted in an atmosphere of mutual respect generate a high degree of trust. Following, there is the challenge of deciding on the reintegration support; for the business option, to find three quotes for procurements and have them accepted. Due to the fragmentation in the IOM management structure returnees must constantly relate to new (IOM) employees, whereas the entire application process often drags on due to lack of proper papers, quotes or the many institutions the application must go through before being approved. Shuttling back and forth between home and the IOM office adds to the resentment returnees feel towards the process, while travelling costs add insult to injury.

Many returnees enter into shorter term business arrangements to secure faster access to cash rather than pursuing business opportunities where they have past experience and therefore a greater chance of success. Inappropriate advice may be to blame in some cases – as in one example, where an experienced cook seeking employment was advised by IOM to sell cigarettes.

The team was not able to establish success or survival rates for new business ventures as the data provided by IOM was neither sufficiently broad nor specific enough to draw any firm conclusions. This does, however, indicate a rather high number of businesses that either closed or could not be monitored.<sup>81</sup> BIP's data on new business sustainability is more encouraging, covering a group of returnees that has been through a more thorough introduction and business planning process. The two datasets however, are not correlated and therefore no firm indication of sustainability can be determined. The feedback from both individual and focus group interviews indicates that a large number of the returnees feared that their businesses would not succeed.

Compiling responses from all returnees interviewed on what they regard as the biggest advantage of the IRRINI programme, most responded “the money” followed by “nothing” and then “the possibility to return to Iraq”.

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<sup>81</sup> IOM(2010): Final Report to Government of Norway: IRRINI II, Reporting period 1 July 2009 – 31 August 2010, Oslo, International Organization for Migration. However, with IRRINI III the monitoring component is made mandatory for all returnees in order to receive the second in-kind support.

**Table 29: What do you regard as the biggest advantage of the IRRINI programme?**

Answers	Frequency
The money	34
Nothing	18
Coming back to Iraq/Facilitating the return flight	13
Unspecified	7
IOM's respect for us/IOM's care for us	3
Coming back to Iraq and finding a job here	3
Little benefit	2
Don't know	2
Nothing yet	1
The help at the airport and the money	1
I got enough financial support in Norway, programme not so important	1
<b>Total (multiples not allowed)</b>	<b>85</b>

### 12.5 Individual follow-up after return

A weakness in the way IRRINI is presently organised is the lack of individual follow-up after return beyond meetings for organising reintegration support, supply of goods for businesses, or salaries for job placements. Many felt offended, as reflected in this quote from a returnee to Duhok: “They just turned up to take a picture of me in my shop, they had no interest in my business”. Interviews of IOM staff made it clear that they were overworked and did not have much time to devote to follow-up, with many serving a number of European reintegration programmes.

This lack of individual follow-up can easily add to other frustrations concerning rejected asylum applications and the IRRINI programme, cementing an opinion among returnees that neither the Norwegian government nor IOM care about what happens to them after their return.

Of greater importance is that such follow-up is limited to fulfilling the needs of especially vulnerable groups. The access to housing support is important for returnee families, with respect to facilitating their resettlement, and should be continued, with the caveat that options regarding return options are discussed more openly than current practice.<sup>82</sup>

A substantial number of returnees mentioned that they suffered physical problems after their return, and cases were mentioned of returned children in need of assistance to secure documentation to be allowed into the schooling system. Given our limited sample of returnees, one might expect this to be a problem among a larger number of returnees.

Compounding the difficulties of getting in contact with IOM, and an expectation that many likely have limited resources at their disposal or lack networks that can support them and link them up to either the IOM, relevant authorities, the UNHCR or assistance NGOs. IOM should made special efforts to ensure that the needs of vulnerable groups and individuals in vulnerable situations are identified and catered for.

The findings from Suleimaniah document that returnees are more likely to approve of the project when they are met with respect and feel that IOM is making a concerted effort maintain contact. Structured and sustained contact upon return could then serve two purposes; 1) a monitoring of vulnerable cases and a possibility to provide them timely support and, 2) a general improvement of contact between IOM and the returnees that is likely to increase trust in the IRRINI programme.

<sup>82</sup> For IRRINI III the housing allowance has been expanded to a larger group both in terms of criteria and numbers.

## 13. Recommendations

Return should be a concept connected with clear opportunities for support, both before and after leaving Norway. Sustainable return starts in the country in which the person seeks asylum, not when he/she has already returned. The various assistance programmes must be made more coherent: the links between pre-departure training/assistance, Iraq-based support and follow-up must be streamlined with clear lines of accountability without establishing an overly bureaucratic structure.

With respect to qualitative improvements to the programme, we refer to Norway's international obligation to ensure returns are undertaken in safety and with dignity. The concept of "safe and dignified" return was developed in the context of refugee repatriation (see UNHCR Handbook 1996) but reflects basic human rights standards applicable to failed asylum seekers as well.<sup>83</sup>

According to the International Committee of the Red Cross (PERCO 2008), safe and dignified return implies that:

- Return is well prepared and undertaken in a humane manner, in full respect for the human rights and dignity of those affected; in this regard, persons who are obliged to return are informed about their rights and conditions in countries of origin and have access to pre-departure counselling;
- Return is sustainable and does not lead to further (secondary) displacement; to this end, returnees are given adequate time to prepare their return as well as necessary support and re-integration assistance; conditions that are conducive to return are created in the country of origin.

### 13.1 Sustainable return starts in Norway

#### Improve how information on IRRINI is provided

Increasing and improving knowledge and knowledge dissemination on the return experience to potential returnees will provide the programme with more credibility and trust. Here those who have already returned (and potentially not only from Norway) could play a larger role. It is important to separate the more general IRRINI information from a personally targeted and more elaborate return and reintegration planning process.

UDI and IOM could facilitate direct contact between potential returnees and people who have gone through the process. Videos showing people who have returned must present a nuanced picture and be actively disseminated; an overly optimistic presentation may reduce their credibility (cf. Krogh 2007: 30). Other less resource intensive measures include an IRRINI blog or a Facebook group (maintained jointly by IOM and BIP) updated with personal stories and programme information from those that have recently returned, open to questions and comments. Another idea is for reception centres to maintain email lists of those who have returned so that current residents can contact them directly. These measures would not only make information more dynamic and up-to-date but also increase the competence of potential IRRINI participants to make an informed decision, and, finally, equip reception centre staff with the kind of updated data they need to conduct meaningful conversations

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<sup>83</sup> See Council of Europe Recommendations 1547 (2002) and Human Rights Watch, 'Common Principles on Removal of Irregular Migrants and Rejected Asylum Seekers', August 2005.

about return.<sup>84</sup> Additionally, asylum applicants who do not live in reception centres could more easily access information about the programme.

### Improve the relevance of reception centre presentations

While formal presentations at reception centres with a significant Iraqi population are desirable, we suggest that IOM and BIP jointly present the reintegration options to ensure a more holistic and unified picture of the programme. Audio recordings of presentations could be made available on IOM/BIP and UDI web-pages, so that residents can access them at any time. Content should be Iraq-specific, and focused on IRRINI in particular rather than IOM's other activities. Furthermore, presentations need to be very precise about what type of assistance will be provided to the returnees, what will be in cash and what will be in kind, and what process the returnees will have to go through to obtain support. Individual counselling needs to be pursued more consistently and thoroughly.

The more structured the collaboration between IOM and BIP both in Norway and Iraq the better they will be able to draw on their different experiences in working out the details of such presentations.

### Clarify all entitlements, return process and expected time of processing

IOM and UDI should draw attention to the following through their information activities in Norway:

- Clarify the content of the reintegration package, and encourage returnees to initiate discussions on reintegration options and obtain required documents in Norway – as opposed to postponing these steps until after the return.
- Explain the limits to what IOM Iraq can do for the individual returnee upon return. IOM cannot provide jobs except in rare circumstances, and the assistance provided to returnees through the IRRINI programme differs from that of other countries and what the Kurdish Regional Government offers returnees from the region.
- For applicants who are interested in establishing a business, IOM has very limited capacity to help. Returnees need to contact BIP for developing a business idea, setting up a budget, calculating costs etc.

### Begin the reintegration process before return

Many of the respondents in this study - including asylum applicants and reception centre employees - pointed out the need for vocational training/education before returning to Iraq. Even with "fast-track" procedures it is unlikely for IRRINI applicants to return before spending at least six to eight weeks in a reception/utreisenter in Norway. Rather than spending this time idly waiting, there should be an opportunity to undergo a BIP business establishment training and planning and take short, targeted courses in topics such as English, computer literacy, first aid, birth assistance, secretarial skills, car mechanics, etc.

Unlike the pilot project previously supported at Lier Ventemottak, such initiatives need to be explicitly linked to individual plans, future reintegration support and follow-up in Iraq. This is where BIPs competence on business establishment, if utilized during the preparatory phase, could improve learning outcomes. Hopefully this would go some way towards empowering returnees to better tackle the

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<sup>84</sup> In case UDI should choose model one, IOM could still provide information in Norway, but UDI is advised to seek broader options for their implementing partner in Iraq. The partner needs to document the appropriate structure and skills required for regular local follow-up, mentoring and advising of returnees upon their return.

challenges they will be confronted with. An introductory course on micro-credit (see point B.1. below) may be beneficial.

Rather than demanding that everyone at the new “return centres” participate in some form of training, programmes should focus on those who are motivated to return. Furthermore, such opportunities should be tailored to variations in educational background, as well as language. A key point concerning training/education is that it can only succeed in contexts where frustration levels are low. Frustrated people cannot listen, learn or engage. Therefore, it is likely that “word of mouth” among the residents of the centres is central: programme integrity is enhanced when those who are actually participating and have interest in some of the initiatives talk positively about their experiences.

### Improve communication between IOM, BIP and Reception centres

IOM and BIP should coordinate their work better and pursue joint meetings regularly and more frequently. The new “return centres”, by putting more emphasis on competence building and return oriented activities, will also facilitate improved and intensified return dialogue and preparations.<sup>85</sup>

The work with return conversations must be intensified in all reception centres where the informal motivation conversation is pursued in addition to more formal motivation conversations (see also Valenta et al. 2010).

### Distribute a portion of the cash grant before return

It is extremely important for many returnees to show up with small gifts for family and friends. A dignified return and consequently improved sustainability of the programme may be facilitated if part of the cash assistance is provided before the IRRINI participant leaves Norway. One may also suggest that such a gesture on the side of Norwegian authorities would engender greater trust in the programme among current and potential returnees.

### Secure short processing time of return applications

As was practice with the former “ventemottak”, IRRINI applicants should receive priority attention from IOM and PU to reduce the waiting time once the decision to return has been made. As noted earlier, IOM, BIP and PU staff should ideally be physically present in those facilities with large numbers of potential returnees, or at least have frequent joint presence at the centres. This could be included in the design for the planned return centres.

## 13.2 Sustainable return continues in Iraq

### Maintain the present level of financial support

The reintegration assistance offered to returnees is not a substantial amount in today’s Iraqi Kurdistan. Some informants expressed their belief that more Iraqis would return if the monetary reintegration support was increased. While not doubting that an increase in the cash grant/in-kind assistance would be welcomed by prospective returnees, the team is of the opinion that only a very considerable increase would have a significant effect on the numbers of returnees.

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<sup>85</sup> For statement from the Norwegian Government concerning the new ‘retursentre’ see, [http://www.regjeringen.no/nb/dep/jd/pressesenter/pressemeldinger/2010/Regjeringen-vil-opprette-retursentre--\\_html?id=615498](http://www.regjeringen.no/nb/dep/jd/pressesenter/pressemeldinger/2010/Regjeringen-vil-opprette-retursentre--_html?id=615498), accessed 02.10.2010

Increasing the amount should therefore not be the first priority for improving the programme. However, the cash grant provided upon arrival in Iraq (or partly before departure) should be a fixed amount in US dollars, and UDI should consider whether US dollars should be used for all money transfers in the programme.

### Introduce a Cash Support Package

UDI is advised to replace the present in-kind reintegration package with a cash support package. We have argued more extensively for this option, but the main arguments include that we believe it will ease the reintegration process processing and time wise, be more dignified and empowering for the returnees and more flexible to meet diverse reintegration needs. Based on returnees' handling of their cash support we feel confident that they are capable of managing a cash grant in a responsible and well planned manner.

### Improve IOM's handling of reintegration and follow-up

The system of verification that IOM has established for the reintegration support involves so many steps that the sheer time it consumes is counter to the immediate needs of returnees: swift processing. For vulnerable returnees, who often have special needs that do not fit with the standardized scheme, the bureaucracy can become a hindrance. It follows that when those who need reintegration assistance the most are the least likely to receive it in an immediate and orderly fashion, the system needs to be improved. Moreover, many returnees express that there has been little or no meaningful follow-up by IOM. This was acknowledged by IOM's representative in Duhok, who stated that he simply had too much to do to follow-up on the ordinary returnees, and thus had to prioritize the especially vulnerable. Apart from that, returnees frequently find themselves in challenging circumstances spot upon return. It could somewhat boost the morale and the sense of dignity of the returnee to feel that there is someone who cares. This was also communicated to us by some of the beneficiaries of BIP's business training, who called for the chance to "have a cup of tea" with IOM officials. It is imperative to substantially increase the follow-up capacity of IOM staff, with respect to both man-hours and qualifications required for the mentoring and dialogue process. This is especially true in order to intercept cases where people have psychological problems or other vulnerabilities, and refer them to the appropriate institutions. Assisting with children's education should also be a priority.

We suggest therefore the following for IOM:

- Improve procedures to ensure a swift and less bureaucratic processing of reintegration applications. Each returnee should be assigned one personal contact point in the IOM with overall responsibility for overseeing that this individual's case is properly processed and that the person is immediately informed if any additional action needs to be made on his/her part. As a structural measure, this would facilitate contact between IOM and the returnee and is likely to inspire more trust among returnees than if confronted with a faceless bureaucracy.
- Review the division of responsibility and task between field offices in Iraq and the Iraq office in Jordan to ensure that more decisions are made inside Iraq, potentially by seconding main office staff on a rotation basis to the field offices. A separate unit can pay random and unannounced visits to offices for spot checks on financial management and the fund/in kind distribution to returnees.
- Train IOM staff in treating returnees as customers in need of support and advice during the reintegration process, rather than someone that need to have their entitlements controlled.
- Provide increased individual follow-up and ensure that IOM staff (or other contracted actors) have the required qualifications and available capacity to enter into a dialogue and mentoring process with the returnees. It is especially important to have staff-members that are qualified

to help vulnerable returnees in seeking assistance, not least women and children and those that might suffer psychological problems upon their return.

- Whereas returnees in Duhok complained that they had to spend considerable time and effort in order to receive the reintegration assistance they felt entitled to, including making several day trips to Erbil, it is clearly a positive measure by IOM to appoint a resident representative in Duhok who can be more accessible at a much lower cost to returnees. The current representative is overworked, as one person is not sufficient to deal with the high number of returnees to Duhok and the Zakho region. Our general recommendation is therefore for IOM to have a policy of establishing permanent offices in locations with a major return.

## Make BIP more visible and relevant

BIP above all needs to be more visible and boost its outreach activity. It should start to engage with returnees considering business establishment while they are still in Norway. Hardly any of our informants knew about the organization and few recalled having been to the courses offered. This is statistically peculiar, as the sample is large enough to be able to cover BIP beneficiaries and the team met a selection of returnees at the BIP office that sought to maintain their networks or seek advice when they struggled to obtain contact with IOM offices. Implementing BIP in the courses provided at the new “return centres” in Norway (see suggestion above), may also facilitate this. BIP should increase their efforts aimed at aiding returnees engaged in the business sector. Among possible strategies we suggest emphasizing the importance of network building, sharing experiences with other returnees, developing viable business plans and gaining access to credit schemes.

Structural challenges relating to BIP’s low visibility include that it cannot offer cash to generate interest in the programme; its institutional capacity is limited and returnees to regions other than Erbil are reluctant to travel to BIP training sessions; and that IOM’s marketing of BIP is suboptimal. In addition, there is a risk that returnees refer to the director and primus motor of the organization, Dr. Hussein, rather than to the organization. Likewise, several confuse BIP with IOM. Both these factors may be less serious vis-a-vis individual returnees, but they certainly have detrimental effects on BIP’s organizational profile.

## Secure reintegration information and analyse impact and sustainability

The study has documented that there is limited data on the impact and sustainability of the reintegration of the IRRINI participants, which reduces the ability to arrive at meaningful analyses on impact and sustainability. UDI should take steps to ensure that requirements for documenting the impact of IRRINI are included in contracts with the organizations involved. Transparent recording methods are sine qua non to obtaining quality data and informing knowledgeable decision making regarding adjustments to the program.

## Finally, to be pursued by UDI

All return programmes to Iraq can benefit from closer coordination between European governments, dialogue with central and regional governments and not least: greater standardisation of assistance packages. A common donor evaluation of the respective return programmes to ie. Iraq, and their ability to secure a sustained return could be a good starting point for such a standardization process.

Nepotism within the public sector adds to the difficulty in obtaining employment, though the central and regional government(s) are under pressure from returnees and the public in general to assist them with jobseeking. It is therefore advisable to establish a dialogue between Norwegian and Iraqi authorities on how they might be able offer support to an increasingly large returnee population in need of job referral services, business opportunities or further education or specialisation within the

context of current labour market conditions. One recommendation that UDI can convey to Iraqi authorities is for the establishment of a micro-credit programme to assist returnees and the general population in establishing a business, the KRG could serve both macropolitical interests and facilitate the reintegration of a sizeable number of returnees.

ECRE (2005) considers cooperation with countries of origin in what they call “a spirit of solidarity” at all stages of the return process a pre-requisite to achieving sustainable return.

This cooperation can include political, financial and economic support, improving the chances of successful reintegration as well as ensuring returns take place to start with.



## Annex I – Terms of Reference

# Kvalifikasjonsgrunnlag

## Evaluering

av

Program for tilbakevending og frivillig retur til Irak

IRRINI – Information, Return, and Reintegration of Iraqi Nationals to Iraq

Saksnummer 09/3298

## 1. Innledning

Utlendingsdirektoratet (UDI), heretter kalt Oppdragsgiver, innbyr med dette til en konkurranse med forhandling etter reglene i Forskrift om offentlige anskaffelser del III. Anskaffelsen gjennomføres i to trinn, og innledes med denne kvalifiseringen. I denne fasen vil det skje en kvalitativ utvelgelse av de leverandører som får tilbud om å delta i konkurranse om den endelige kontrakten. Utvelgelsen vil skje blant de leverandører som oppfyller minimumskravene (kvalifikasjonskravene) basert på ”best kvalifisert” prinsippet. Det vil bli invitert minimum 3 leverandører til å levere tilbud, forutsatt at leverandørene oppfyller minimumskravene satt til deltakelse i konkurransen.

Alle referanser til ”leverandør” i dette kvalifikasjonsgrunnlag skal i det følgende forstås som referanse til leverandør i henhold til denne kvalifiseringen, og til den senere avtale som konkurransen resulterer i.

UDI skal iverksette en evaluering av IRRINI - programmet for retur og tilbakevending til Irak (Information, Return and Reintegration of Iraqi Nationals to Iraq). For nærmere informasjon om evalueringen, se punkt 4. Hovedhensikten med evalueringen er at den skal gjennom å analysere erfaringer fra IRRINI - programmet bidra med kunnskap som kan overføres til det pågående utviklingsarbeidet med frivillig retur og arbeid med å øke antall frivillige returnerer fra Norge.

## 2. Om oppdragsgiver – Utlendingsdirektoratet (UDI)

Utlendingsdirektoratet skal iverksette flyktning-, innvandrings- og migrasjonspolitikken på Arbeids- og inkluderingsdepartementets ansvarsområde. En sentral del av direktoratets virksomhet gjelder behandling av saker etter utlendings- og statsborgerloven og ansvaret for mottak av flyktninger.

Utlendingsdirektoratet har som mål at norsk innvandrings- og flyktningpolitikk skal iverksettes så effektivt, korrekt og hensynsfullt som mulig.

UDI har også en rolle som sentralt fagorgan på området. I samspill og dialog med departementet er UDI en premissleverandør for politikk- og regelverksutforming. UDIs arbeid bygger på analyser av eget arbeid, kunnskap fra forsknings- og utviklingsprogrammer og grundig kunnskap om nasjonale og internasjonale utviklingstrekk.

Direktoratet er etablert med hovedkontor i Oslo. Direktoratet har nå ca. 1300 ansatte.

Direktoratet ledes av direktør Ida Børresen. For ytterligere informasjon vises det til [www.udi.no](http://www.udi.no)

## 3. Bakgrunn for planlagt avtale

### 3.1 IRRINI - programmet for retur og tilbakevending til Irak

IRRINI - programmet ble etablert i 2008 og er vedtatt videreført med IRRINI II frem til 01.07.2010. Programmet innebærer økonomisk støtte, informasjon og rådgivning samt praktisk reetableringsstøtte tilsvarende et visst beløp. Målgruppen for IRRINI - programmet er både irakiske asylsøkere med avslag på asylsøknaden og irakere med oppholdstillatelse i Norge som ønsker å vende tilbake til sitt opprinnelsesland. Siden oppstarten av IRRINI og frem til 1.7.2009, har 245 returnert og 28 tilbakevendt til Irak gjennom programmet.

Ved siden av IOMs drift av IRRINI - programmet er Business Innovation Programs (BIP) tilknyttet reintegreringsprogrammet. BIP er en norsk stiftelse som jobber på oppdrag fra norske myndigheter. Både BIP og IOM driver informasjonsvirksomhet om programmet. Dessuten tilbyr begge individuell informasjon og rådgivning til de som vurderer å returnere/vende tilbake. BIP er ansvarlig for opplæring i entreprenørskap, samt utvikling av konkrete forretningsplaner og etablering av egen virksomhet i Irak.

I tillegg til IRRINI - programmet er det iverksatt retur og tilbakevendingsprogrammer til Afghanistan og Burundi. Dette er henholdsvis IRRANA (Information, Return and Reintegration of Afghan Nationals to Afghanistan) og AVRFSB (Information, Return and Reintegration of Burundi Nationals to Burundi). Disse tre tilbakevendings- og returprogrammene drives av IOM (International Organization for Migration) og finansieres av UDI.

IRRANA - programmet har blitt evaluert i 2008. (Se Strand m.fl. 2008. Return with Dignity. Return to What? Review of the Voluntary Return Programme to Afghanistan.) Studien ga viktig informasjon om hvordan reintegreringsprogrammet virket for de frivillig returnerte. Erfaringen fra IRRANA evalueringen er tatt videre i utviklingen av IRRINI - programmet. Gjennom denne planlagte evalueringen ønsker UDI å få ny forskningsbasert kunnskap om tilbakevendings- og returprogrammet IRRINI.

## 4. Generelt om avtalen

UDI har til intensjon å inngå avtale om evaluering av IRRINI - programmet. Den valgte leverandøren vil studere følgende komponenter av tilbakevendings- og returprogrammet:

- Returinformasjon (før avreise).
- Individuell karriereplanlegging/rådgivning (før avreise).
- Kontantbeløpkomponent.
- Reintegreringstøtte i hjemlandet i form av yrkesrettede kurs, yrkesformidling, oppfølging av karriereplanlegging etc.
- Individuell oppfølging etter retur.

Fokus skal legges på særskilte aktiviteter knyttet til forberedelser til retur i Norge, gjennomføringen av programmet i Irak og eventuelle virkninger av programmet på reetablering og varig retur. Det skal anlegges et helhetlig perspektiv slik at alle relevante programkomponenter skal sees i sammenheng.

Studien skal gi kunnskap om hvordan IRRINI - programmets ulike komponenter kan sies å virke inn på beslutningen om å returnere frivillig til Irak og gi innsikt i hvorvidt programmet samlet eller delvis medvirker til en bærekraftig retur og reintegrering i opprinnelseslandet. Studien skal utarbeide forslag til hvordan returprogrammet på best mulig måte kan ivareta returnerte asylsøkeres behov for støtte i reetableringsfasen i Irak.

### 4.1 Prosjekt mål for evalueringen

Av konkrete mål for prosjektet kan nevnes:

- Vurdere effekten av informasjon om returprogrammet i mottak på asylsøkernes ønske om å returnere frivillig.
- Vurdere betydningen av individuell karriereplanlegging i Norge på sannsynligheten for vellykket reetablering og reintegrering i hjemlandet.

- Beskrive deltakelse og nytteverdi av ulike etableringstiltak/kurs i entreprenørskap for returnerte i Irak drevet av IOM/BIP.
- Gi økt kunnskap om reintegreringsprosessen til de som har returnert frivillig.
- Gi økt kunnskap om betydningen av ulike insentiver for asylsøkernes ønske om å delta i returprogrammet.
- Gi en beskrivelse og vurdering av sentrale aktørers rolle i programmet.
- Identifisere og vurdere andre mulige tiltak/faktorer som kan ha betydning for valget om å returnere og for en vellykket reintegrering i Irak.
- Gi en vurdering om, og eventuelt se på i hvilken grad de returnertes nettverk i hjemlandet og familiesituasjon har betydning for valget om å returnere frivillig.
- Gi en vurdering av hvorvidt IRRINI - programmet imøtekommer sårbare gruppers behov.
- Gi forslag til videreutvikling og styrking av IRRINI - programmet.

## 4.2 Metode i evalueringen

Metoden kan bestå av intervjuer, deltakende observasjon og dokumentgjennomgang. Leverandør oppfordres til selv eventuelt å foreslå andre metodiske tilnærminger så fremt disse kan begrunnes og gjennomføres innenfor prosjektets rammer.

Studien skal finne sted i Norge så vel som i Irak. I Norge forutsettes det at en gjør seg kjent med informasjonsarbeidet overfor asylsøkere på mottak. Dette innebærer tilstedeværelse ved informasjonsmøter om frivillig retur og karrieremuligheter gitt av ulike aktører.

Feltarbeidet i Irak vil omfatte tilstedeværelse på oppfølging ved karriereplanlegging, kurs i entreprenørskap og yrkesrettede kurs. Videre vil feltarbeidet omfatte besøk på arbeidsplasser hvor returnerte er formidlet til og besøk i oppstartede virksomheter.

Mulige informanter i tillegg til de returnerte og tilbakevendte i Irak, samt målgruppen for programmet som befinner seg i Norge, omfatter nøkkelpersoner i norsk forvaltning, irakiske myndigheter, IOM, BIP, mottaksansatte og aktuelle frivillige organisasjoner. Prosjektets rammer tilsier at en foretar et representativt utvalg av mottak og informanter. Det er opp til forskerne å gjøre avtaler om besøk og datainnsamling i Norge så vel som i Irak.

## 4.3 Rammebetingelser for avtalen

Det er ønskelig at arbeidet startes opp i 2009 og tenkes i utgangspunktet fullført innen utgangen av 2010.

Prosjektet har en samlet kostnadsramme på maksimalt NOK 1.500.000,- og en antatt tidsramme på 12 måneder fra prosjektets oppstart. Det presiseres at alle utgifter, inkludert MVA, tolk, reise og oppholdsutgifter skal dekkes innenfor prosjektrammen.

Leverandøren forplikter seg til å levere en sluttrapport som skal presentere en samlet beskrivelse og vurdering av returprogrammets innvirkning på de returnertes reetablerings- og reintegreringssituasjon i hjemlandet. På bakgrunn av erfaringene fra Irak og i Norge skal prosjektet komme med tydelige og konkrete forslag til tiltak som kan overføres til norske myndigheters pågående arbeid i utviklingen av retur- og reintegreringsprogram for flere land.

Sluttrapport skal foreligge på engelsk, med et fyldig sammendrag på engelsk og norsk. Ved oppdragets avslutning skal prosjektansvarlig være disponibel for å kunne presentere sentrale funn i prosjektet ved inntil tre anledninger på ulønnet oppdrag for oppdragsgiver.

#### 4.4 Kriterier for vurdering av tilbud om avtale

UDI vil foreta en totalvurdering av tilbudene ut i fra følgende kriterier:

- Prosjektmedarbeidernes kompetanse: et tilbud der en seniorforsker har hovedansvar for gjennomføring av prosjektet vil bli foretrukket. Vektlegges 40%.
- Løsnings- og metodebeskrivelse/problemforståelse. Vektlegges 40%.
- Progresjon i fremdriftsplan/kapasitet til å gjennomføre prosjektet etter stipulert tidsramme. Vektlegges 10 %.
- Pris (forslag til løsning må være innenfor rammen). Vektlegges 10 %.

### 5. Frister og fremdriftsplan

#### 5.1 Frist for å levere kvalifikasjonssøknad

Søknadsfristen er 1.9.2009, og dokumentene skal være oppdragsgiver i hende innen kl 13:00. Oppdragsgiver tar ikke ansvar for eventuelle forsinkelser i postgang eller tilsvarende, det er således Leverandørs ansvar at kvalifikasjonssøknaden ankommer tidsnok.

#### 5.2 Tentativ fremdriftsplan

Aktivitet	Dato
Kunngjøring av konkurranse	Uke 29
Frist for spørsmål til kvalifikasjonsgrunnlaget	25.08.09
Frist for levering av kvalifikasjonssøknad	01.09.09
Beslutning om hvem som blir kvalifisert og får tilsendt innbydelse til å levere tilbud	10.09.09
Utsendelse av konkurransegrunnlaget til kvalifiserte leverandører	11.09.09
Innleveringsfrist for tilbud	12.10.09
Forhandlinger og evaluering	Uke 42,43,44
Beslutning om tildeling av kontrakt	30.10.09
Klagefrist	10.11.09
Kontraktsinngåelse	Ca. 20.11.09

Planen er tentativ og det må påregnes endringer i denne. Leverandørene vil bli holdt orientert om eventuelle endringer, særlig etter at søknadene er innlevert.

### 5.3 Vedståelsesfrist

Kvalifikasjonssøknaden skal være gyldig i minimum 90 dager fra søknadsfristen.

## 6. Kommunikasjon

### 6.1 Kontaktperson hos oppdragsgiver

Navn: Lene Freng, RMA/RTE

Epost: lefr@udi.no

### 6.2 Skriftlighet

All kommunikasjon vedrørende kvalifikasjonssøknaden skal rettes skriftlig per e-post til Oppdragsgiver ved angitt kontaktperson innen de angitte tidsfrister. E-post skal være merket "Sak 09/3298– IRRINI evaluering". Det skal ikke være kontakt/kommunikasjon med andre personer hos Oppdragsgiver enn oppgitt kontaktperson.

### 6.3 Oppdatering av kvalifikasjonsgrunnlaget/svar på innkomne spørsmål

Eventuelle oppdateringer av kvalifikasjonsgrunnlaget og svar på innkomne spørsmål vil bli lagt ut på [www.doffin.no](http://www.doffin.no). Leverandører som har meldt sin interesse gjennom å registrere seg på nettstedet, vil automatisk få tilsendt en e-post hver gang det legges ut ny informasjon vedrørende anskaffelsen.

### 6.4 Språk

Alle dokumenter/kommunikasjon som omhandler denne kvalifikasjonssøknaden skal være/foregå på norsk. Det gjøres oppmerksom på at det samme kravet ventelig også vil gjelde for den senere tilbudsfasen.

### 6.5 Feil/uklarheter i kvalifikasjonsgrunnlaget

Dersom en leverandør oppdager feil, mangler, utelatelser eller uklarheter i kvalifikasjonsgrunnlaget, plikter leverandøren å varsle Oppdragsgiver uten ugrunnet opphold om dette. Dette gjelder uavhengig av om forholdet har konsekvenser for utforming av søknaden.

## 7. Andre bestemmelser

### 7.1 Konfidensialitet

Dette kvalifikasjonsgrunnlaget og all eventuell tilleggsinformasjon er Oppdragsgivers eiendom og skal ikke komme tredjepart i hende, med mindre tredjepart er en mulig underleverandør.

Kvalifikasjonsgrunnlaget må ikke kopieres for andre formål enn å utarbeide den søknad oppdragsgiver her ber om.

Leverandøren må undertegne taushetserklæring dersom vi finner behov for det.

## 7.2 Kostnader i forbindelse med søknads-/tilbudsprosessen

Leverandøren har ikke krav på noen form for godtgjørelse i forbindelse med utarbeidelse av kvalifikasjonssøknad eller et eventuelt senere tilbud.

## 8. Behandling av søknad

### 8.1 Åpning

Det vil ikke bli foretatt offentlig åpning av kvalifikasjonssøknadene.

### 8.2 Avvisning/avlysning

Oppdragsgiver vil avvise for sent innkomne søknader.

De leverandører som ikke oppfyller de angitte kvalifikasjonskrav og krav til fremlagt dokumentasjon vil bli avvist etter reglene i Forskrift om offentlige anskaffelser.

En nærmere begrunnelse for avvisning vil snarest mulig bli gitt den berørte leverandør. Ved en eventuell avlysning av konkurransen vil alle deltakerne i konkurransen få en skriftlig meddelelse. Ved avlysning før søknadsfristen vil slik meddelelse bli gitt via e-postutsendelse fra [www.doffin.no](http://www.doffin.no).

### 8.3 Retur av søknadene

Oppdragsgiver vil ikke returnere mottatte søknader. Søknadene vil bli makulert av Oppdragsgiver etter tre år.

## 9. Kvalifikasjons- og dokumentasjonskrav

### 9.1 Juridisk stilling

Kvalifikasjonskrav	Dokumentasjonskrav
Lovlig etablert foretak	Firmaattest

### 9.2 Leverandørens finansielle og økonomiske stilling

Kvalifikasjonskrav	Dokumentasjonskrav
Tilstrekkelig økonomisk kapasitet til å gjennomføre kontrakten	Kredittvurdering (komplett) fra anerkjent kredittvurderingsselskap. Alternativt kan årsregnskap for siste to år fremlegges som dokumentasjon

### 9.3 Leverandørens kvalifikasjoner

Det må kunne dokumenteres metodisk kompetanse og erfaring som er relevant for prosjektet. Det er viktig med erfaring fra feltarbeid i land i og etter konflikt samt flukt og migrasjonskompetanse. Kjennskap til norsk flyktningpolitikk og asylsøkeres situasjon i mottak er en fordel. Det er ønskelig med landkunnskap om Irak.

Det er videre ønskelig at den ansvarlige forsker tilhører et større fagmiljø. For øvrig bør vedkommende som har hovedansvar for avtalen å være oppdatert på temaet slik det fremkommer gjennom ulike publikasjoner og politikkdokumenter, i Norge og internasjonalt.

Utdanningsbakgrunn og metodisk kompetanse skal dokumenteres for alle medarbeiderne og vedlegges søknaden. Relevant dokumentasjon for utdanning vil for eksempel være bekreftelse fra utdanningssted. Forskerkompetanse må dokumenteres og vedlegges søknaden. Herunder vil det være relevant å vedlegge et utvalg artikler eller publikasjoner som prosjektleder har skrevet i egenskap av forsker. Leverandøren bes opplyse om minimum 2 tilsvarende oppdrag som prosjektansvarlig har gjennomført siste tre år, med referansepersoner og telefonnummer.

### 9.4 Obligatoriske dokumentasjonskrav

Skatteattest og MVA-attest, ikke eldre enn 6 måneder, utstedt av den kompetente myndighet, som bekrefter at tilbyder har oppfylt sine forpliktelser med hensyn til betaling av skatter, trygdeavgifter og MVA. Skatteattestene skrives ut av skatteoppkreverkontoret i den kommunen hvor leverandøren har sitt hovedkontor og av skattefogden i tilsvarende fylke. Det gjøres oppmerksom på at det praktiseres at leverandører med restanser til skatteattestene blir avvist. Det vil kunne gjøres unntak fra denne regelen i tilfelle leverandør er i en tvistesak med skattemyndighetene. I så fall må det legges frem dokumentasjon rundt saken som en del av kvalifikasjonssøknaden (eller man har inngått avtale med skatte- myndighetene om avbetaling av skatterestansene).

### 9.5 HMS – egenerklæring, jf Vedlegg 1.

Leverandøren skal sammen med tilbudet levere en egenerklæring hvor det framgår at ansatte i Leverandørens egen organisasjon og hans underleverandører ikke har dårlige lønns- og arbeidsvilkår enn det som følger av tariffavtaler, regulativ eller det som er normalt for vedkommende sted og yrke.

## 10. Utvelgelse (kvalifikasjonskriterier)

De leverandører som oppfyller kvalifikasjonskravene i forrige punkt vil få sine kvalifikasjoner vurdert basert på hvem som er best kvalifisert iht. kravene angitt i punkt 9.3.

## 11. Utforming av søknaden

Søknaden skal gi en komplett besvarelse til kvalifikasjonsgrunnlaget. Søknaden vil være et uttømmende grunnlag for vurdering av leverandørens egnethet til å utføre leveransen basert på kvalifikasjonskravene.

### 11.1 Innleveringsform

Det vil kun aksepteres skriftlig innleverte kvalifikasjonssøknader. Søknader innsendt kun på e-post vil bli avvist.

Det skal leveres to komplette eksemplarer i papirversjon. I tillegg skal det leveres ett eksemplar på CD-Rom eller minnepenn (Word/Excel-format, ev. PDF-format). Ved avvik vil papirversjonen legges til grunn.

## 11.2 Innleveringssted

Søknaden skal leveres i nøytral, lukket konvolutt som tydelig merkes med følgende tekst:

”Søknad om kvalifikasjon, FOU-prosjekt; Evaluering av program for tilbakevending og frivillig retur til Irak - IRRINI; 09/3298 v/ Lene Freng, RMA/RTE. Åpnes kun av adressat.

Søknaden skal leveres til:

Resepsjonen UDI  
Hausmannsgate 21  
0032 Oslo

Alternativt kan søknaden sendes til:

Utlendingsdirektoratet  
Postboks 8108 Dep  
0032 Oslo

Leverandør er selv ansvarlig for at søknader, uavhengig av leveringsmåte, ankommer UDI innen angitt tidsfrist. UDI tar ikke ansvar for eventuelle forsinkelser i postgang eller liknende.

## 11.3 Disposisjon for kvalifikasjonssøknaden

Leverandøren er selv ansvarlig for at alle spørsmål, krav og avklaringspunkter i søknaden besvares/belyses og dokumenteres.

Søknaden skal presenteres i henhold til den disposisjonen som følger under, bak nummererte skillekort, i angitt rekkefølge:

1. Følgebrev med aksept av vilkår i kvalifikasjonsgrunnlaget. Eventuelle forbehold og forutsetninger skal fremgå av følgebrevet. Dersom ikke annet fremgår av søknaden anses alle vilkår som akseptert ved innsendelse.
2. Firmaattest.
3. Attest på betalt skatt og arbeidsgiveravgift fra kemnerkontoret og Attest på betalt merverdiavgift fra skattefogdkontoret.
4. HMS-egenerklæring.
5. Finansiell og økonomisk stilling (kredittvurdering eller siste to års regnskap).
6. Oversikt og sammendrag av leverandørenes kvalifikasjoner samt referanser. Se punkt 9.3.

## 11.4 Følgebrev

Følgebrevet skal være datert og underskrevet av person(er) som har fullmakt til å binde leverandør. Brevet skal for øvrig innholde:

**Fullt juridisk navn til leverandør.**

**Leverandørs adresse.**

**Leverandørs kontaktperson med telefonnummer og e-postadresse.**

**Kortfattet beskrivelse av hvordan et eventuelt oppdrag er tenkt gjennomført.**

## Annex II – Interview guides

### A – Interview guide for Norway

- Explain the aim of the research project.
- Confirm confidentiality of interview, and explain to the interviewee that he or she will not be mentioned or quoted by name, or in any other way identified in the report. Personal information will be anonymized for research purposes and deleted when the evaluation is complete.
- It is completely voluntarily for them to participate, and they might withdraw from the interview and the study at any time and without that holding any negative consequences for them – all data relating to them will immediately be made anonymous.
- Only a limited number of researchers from CMI and PRIO will have access to the data from the interviews, no other – including representatives from any authority – will have access.
- Stress that interview is not to persuade people to return.
- Stress that interview and research will not have any influence on their asylum status.
- Based on the above, confirm willingness to answer questions and inform them that the research team can be contacted at the following emails /phones if they wish to withdraw from the study or require further information .....

Date (dd/mm/yy): \_\_\_/\_\_\_/\_\_\_

Place: \_\_\_\_\_

Interview number: \_\_\_\_\_

## Section 1: Personal information

### 1.1 Age (circle one)

<20      20-29      30-39      40-49      50-59      60-69      >70

### 1.2 Gender (circle one)

Male      Female

### 1.3 Place of origin/habitat in Iraq

### 1.4 Ethnicity

### 1.5 Education

None      Primary school      Secondary school      Vocational school      University

#### 1.5.1 Any education obtained in Norway?

### 1.6 Family

1.6.1 Marital status

1.6.2 Number of dependent children

1.6.3 Number of grown children

1.6.4 Other dependent relatives (parents, etc)

1.6.5 Relatives in Norway

1.6.6 Relatives previously in Norway but returned to Iraq

Where?

1.6.7 Close relatives elsewhere outside Iraq

1.6.8 Do you regularly send financial aid to any Iraqi either in Iraq or elsewhere?

1.6.9 Have you or your family any special physical or mental needs for support during your stay in Norway? If so, what kinds of needs?

### 1.7 Employment in Iraq? What type?

### 1.8 Employment in Norway? What type?

## Section 2. Flight to Norway

### 2.1 What year and month did you leave Iraq?

- 2.1.1 Reason for leaving Iraq
- 2.1.2 Did you travel alone or with others?
- 2.1.3 How did you finance your travel?

If loan, how much? Who guaranteed the loan?

### 2.2 What year and month did you arrive in Norway?

### 2.3 Why did you choose Norway?

### 2.4 Where have you lived in Norway?

### 2.5 Legal status in Norway? Principal or dependent?

- 2.5.1 Asylum application failed
- 2.5.2 Still awaiting an initial decision or appeal outcome
- 2.5.3 Refugee/humanitarian status
  - 2.5.3.1 Do you have the right to bring your family to Norway?

## Section 3. Perspectives on Return to Iraq

### 3.1 Have you ever considered returning to Iraq?

Never	
Thought about it	
Registered with IRRINI	
Returned on exploratory visit	
Planning to return without assistance	

#### 3.1.1 For those considering or decided to return, where would you go back to?

##### 3.1.1.1. Have you lived there before?

##### 3.1.1.2 Have you visited there since you left? If so, what were the circumstances?

### 3.2 What are/were the factors that need(ed) to be in place in your home area before you considered/would consider applying for a voluntary return programme?

General security and stability	
Personal security	
Job	
Money	

Housing	
Healthcare	
Education	
Basic services – clean water, electricity, etc.	
Democracy	
Legal status	
Better economic situation	
Other	

3.3 If you were against going at first, is there anything in particular that made you (would make you) change your mind and decide to go?

3.4 What are the practical obstacles or considerations that you are currently dealing with, or that might make the difference between you returning or not returning?

You might like to focus on some or all of the following ideas

- Having a job at home
- Finish training here
- Getting documents from the police/embassy
- Arranging to get your own house back
- Finding some sort of accommodation
- Terms of government assistance
- Information about possibility of employment on return
- Family commitment/support
- Attitudes in home community?
- Special assistance available for you/family member

3.5 Is returning discussed within your family? Is yes, by whom and why? If no, why not?

3.6 Is return discussed amongst your friends or within the Iraqi community? Is yes, what are the main issues you have discussed? If no, why not?

3.6.1 Do you feel that return is encouraged (or approved of) by members of your community?

If yes, how? If not, how is this expressed?

3.7 Where do you get information about conditions in your part Iraq?

Family or friends at home	
Media	
Internet	
Staff at reception centre	
IOM	
BIP	
Iraqi Embassy	
Other	

3.7.1 What sources of information do you think are the most reliable and objective? For example information from Iraqis inside Iraq compared to information received from Iraqis or Norwegians in Norway?

## Section 4: Role of IRRINI

4.1 Have you ever heard of any assistance for return offered by the Norwegian or Iraqi government or another agency?

If so, name the programmes, and where/how you found out about them.

4.1.1 What do these programmes offer?

Cash assistance	
Help with return transport (air ticket etc)	
Help with rebuilding your house	
Help with starting your own business	
Help with education	
Help with job placement	
Other type of training	
Other	

4.1.2 Which kind of assistance do you think is most useful?

4.1.3 Which kind of assistance would make a difference in making a decision to return? How?

4.1.4 For those enrolled in the IOM programme (IRRINI), have you received individual carrier planning in Norway? If so, how useful was it?

4.2 What (else) would make a difference in helping you to return and resettle? (Ask in general and prompt with ideas below)

More money	
More help with return	
A new house	
A firm job offer	
More training/individualized career planning	
Opportunity to go and visit before returning	
Other	

4.3 Do you feel you have enough information about return programmes?

4.4 Do you feel you have enough information about return conditions at home?

4.5 What should the Norwegian government do to help people who want to return?

4.6 What should the Iraqi government/Kurdish authorities do to help people who want to return?

Thank you for your help in offering this interview.

Is there anyone else you know we could ask to interview?

## B – Interview guide for Iraq

- Thank the interviewee for coming
- Explain the aim of the research project.
- Confirm confidentiality of interview, and explain to the interviewee that he or she will not be mentioned or quoted by name, or in any other way identified in the report. Personal information will be anonymized for research purposes and deleted when the evaluation is complete.
- It is completely voluntarily for them to participate, and they might withdraw from the interview and the study at any time and without that holding any negative consequences for them – all data relating to them will immediately be made anonymous.
- Only a limited number of researchers from CMI, PRIO and UoD will have access to the data from the interviews, no other – including representatives from any authority – will have access.
- Stress that interview is not to persuade people to return from Norway.
- Based on the above, confirm willingness to answer questions and inform them that the research team can be contacted at the following emails /phones if they wish to withdraw from the study or require further information .....
- Tick the correct box (es) where needed.

## Background

Date:.....

Place of interview: Alone/with family/others:

1. Gender Male Female

1.1 Year of birth:

1.2 Current place of residence in Iraq:

1.3 Ethnicity:

1.4 Languages, both national and foreign:

1.5 Religion:

1.6 Married? Yes No

1.6.1 No. of children? 0 1 2 3 4 More

1.6.2 If yes, were your wife/husband/children in Norway? Yes No

1.7 Do you have special physical or mental needs? Yes No

1.7.1. (If family was in Norway)

Do your wife/husband/children have such needs? Yes No

1.8 Do you have relatives in Norway? Yes No

1.9 Have relatives returned? Yes No

1.10 When did you leave Iraq? Year: Month:

1.11 When did you arrive in Norway? Year: Month:

1.12 Place(s) of residence in Norway?

1.13 Type(s) of residence in Norway? Private Reception centre

1.14 What is your education? 1.14.1 Can you read/write: Yes No

1.15 What is the education of your children?

1.16 Education obtained in Norway for you/family?

1.17 What was your occupation before leaving Iraq?

1.18 What is your occupation after the return to Iraq?

1.19 Did you work in Norway?

If yes: what type of job?

.....

## Flight and return

2. Why did you leave Iraq?

2.1 Did you travel alone or with others?

Alone With family With friends With others

Others, please specify:

2.2 Who did you consult about leaving?

Family in Iraq Family abroad Friends Noone

Others, please specify:

For women

2.2.1 Who made the decision to leave Iraq?

Yourself  Husband (if married)  Together (if married)  Others (specify)

For married women

2.2.2 Who left Iraq first?

Yourself  Husband  Together

2.3 How did you finance your travel?

From savings  Family support  Loan

Otherwise, please specify:

2.3.1. If loan: who guaranteed for the loan?

2.4 Why did you choose Norway?

2.5 What was your asylum/refugee status in Norway?

Asylum status  Humanitarian Protection  MUF  Application denied

Comments, if any, from MUF's (Temporary Asylum without Right for Family Unification):

For women 2.6.1. Did you face any problems in Norway?

No  Yes

If yes, was it related to  your husband (if married)  Children  Others

2.6 Why did you choose to return?

2.7 Who did you consult before deciding to return?

Family in Iraq  Family abroad  Friends  None

Others, please specify:

2.8 How long time did it take from you registered for return with IOM until you left Norway?

For women 2.8.1. Who decided to return?

Yourself  Husband (if married)  Together (if married)  Others (specify)

For women 2.8.2. If husband or others decided, why was this decision made?

For women 2.8.3 Were you happy about returning?

No  Yes - explain

## Information in Norway

3.1 How did you get to know about the IRRINI return programme?

Media  Friends  IOM  Internet  At reception centres

From other asylum seekers  Differently, please specify:

3.2 What information did you receive about the return programme?

3.3. What organizations did you get information from?

3.4 To what extent did the information you got from these sources influence your decision to return?

Very much    To some extent    To a small extent    Not at all    Don't know

3.5 How did you get information about the situation in your part of Iraq?

Media    Friends IOM    BIP    Internet    At reception centres    Family

If media or others, please specify:

3.6 In Norway: Did you talk about/register for business/ employment/education opportunities in Iraq with IOM?

Yes    No

## Assistance for return

4.1 Did you receive any assistance to prepare your return from Norway?

4.1.1 How useful was this assistance?

Very useful    Somewhat useful    Of little use    Not useful    Don't know

4.2 How well organized was the return travel to Iraq?

Very well    Fairly well    Unsatisfactory    Very badly    Don't know

4.3 Where did you stay when you returned?

With family    Own property    Rented property

Elsewhere, please specify:

4.4 Did you return to where you lived before leaving for Norway?    Yes    No

4.5 How do you assess the information you received from IOM at the airport?

Very good Fair    Not enough    Incorrect    Don't know

## Reintegration assistance

5 When did you return to Iraq?

5.1 What assistance/cash support did you receive upon arrival at the airport in Iraq?

5.1.2 What have you spent the money received at the airport on?

5.1.3 How important has the money received at the airport been for you?

Very    Somewhat    Of limited importance Not important    Don't know

5.1.4 (If returned after 1 July 2009) Did you apply for housing support? Yes    No

5.2. Did you choose a) business startup option; b) job referral or c) education/vocational training?

Select one of the following options (5.2.1 or 5.2.2 or 5.2.3):

5.2.1 Did you select the small business start-up option? If so:

5.2.1.1 What business did you select?

Why did you select this business?

5.2.1.3 How did IOM assist you in choosing this business?

5.2.1.4 How did IOM assist you with purchases for your business?



No      Yes, whom:

7.3 What are your plans now (please explain)?

7.4 Will you remain in the area you returned to or go somewhere else?

Remain      Go somewhere else      Don't know

7.4.1 If somewhere else, please specify...

7.5 Have any of your relatives/friends left for Europe after your return?      No      Yes

7.6 Is the situation after return very different from what you had expected?      No      Yes

If yes, how is it different?

7.7 What do you regard as your biggest advantage from the programme?

7.8 Can you provide some advice on how the programme can be improved?

Are there any others you know that have returned that you can advise us to contact?

· Thank the interviewee for time and cooperation

Comments:

## Annex III – Introduction letter

Dear Sir/Madam

Your ref.:                      Our ref.: IRRINI - Iraq                      Bergen, 14.04.10

### REVIEW OF NORWEGIAN SUPPORT FOR VOLUNTARY RETURN TO IRAQ

This letter is to inform you that the Norwegian Directorate of Immigration (UDI) has commissioned the Chr. Michelsen Institute (CMI) to review a project supporting the return of Iraqi citizens from Norway to Iraq. The programme is named “Information, Return and Reintegration of Iraqi Nationals to Iraq (IRRINI)”. The review is undertaken in collaboration between Chr. Michelsen Institute (CMI), International Peace Research Institute, Oslo (PRIO) and the University of Dohuk (UoD).

We are contacting you because you have been registered with and assisted through the IRRINI programme. We wish here to explain the nature of the review, our review methodology and ask for an interview with you.

The main task of the project is to obtain more knowledge of how and to what extent the different IRRINI project components contribute towards the decision of voluntary return to Iraq and provide insight into which extent the programme, totally or partially, leads to sustainable return and reintegration in Iraq.

The study shall develop suggestions for how the voluntary return programme in the best possible manner can ensure appropriate support to reintegration in Iraq.

For the review team to obtain contact with relevant informants have we received a list from Norwegian Authorities over those persons who have registered themselves with the IRRINI programme. The list contains information about name, gender, age, year of arrival in Norway and for return to Iraq, if there were any family member in Norway and the home area in Iraq. If you don't wish to take part in the review will we delete the information that contains your personal details.

The review team will conduct interviews in Norway, Baghdad and Iraqi Kurdistan with organisations and individuals involved in the programme. We hope to include as many as possible of you that returned through the IRRINI programme.

Those who agree to be interviewed will be granted full anonymity in all reporting from the study, we will not use any names in the report or in other way disclose your identity. All personal data will be kept in separate files and deleted after the research is completed by late 2010. Only a limited number of researchers at CMI and PRIO will have access to the data you provide in the interviews, no one else – including representatives from any authority – will have access to the data.

We would also like to point out that it is entirely voluntary for you to take part in this study, and you free to withdraw from the study at any time and without providing us with any reason without this holding any consequences for you. And if you chose to withdraw yourself, all data relating to you will immediately be made anonymous.

We expect the interview to take about 1- hour, and you can choose if you wish to be interviewed in Arabic, Kurdish or English.

You will be contacted through the International Organization for Migration (IOM) or Business Innovation Programs (BIP) for a time and place for the interview. If you want to contact us for further questions please either email me on [arne.strand@cmi.no](mailto:arne.strand@cmi.no) or call me at + 47 90604776 or mobile no 07700526213

We hope you will be willing to be interviewed and we are looking very much forward to meeting you and learning about your views on and experience from the IRRINI programme.

Yours sincerely

Arne Strand

Teamleader

## Annex IV – Interview Lists

### Norway

<b>Name (Position)</b>	<b>Organisation/background</b>
Christiane Seehausen (Project Leader)	Norwegian Peace Centre (NPC)
Haje Keli	Iraqi-born participant at a return pilot project by NPC
Chro Borhan	Iraqi-born participant at a return pilot project by NPC
David Bergan (Senior Consultant)	Norwegian People's Aid (NPA)
Hawdam Salih (Consultant, previously NOAS representative at the Torshov Transit Centre pilot project)	Norwegian Organization for Asylum Seekers (NOAS)
NGO staff member requested anonymity	NGO
Faraj Kamil Ahmad (Chairman)	The Iraqi Kurdish Asylum Seekers and Refugees Organization in Norway (IKAF)
Tonje Sommerset (Team Leader) Sidsel Braaten (Team Leader)	Torshov Transit Centre
Antonio Polosa (Chief of Mission) Yahya Chalank (Information Assistant) Diana Cartier (Programme Support Officer/Coordinator)	International Organization for Migration - Oslo (IOM)
Nils Olav Refsdal (Adviser, Dept of Strategy and Coordination, Statistics and Analysis Division) Zibelin Beck (Iraq desk) Petter Sterud Hansen (former project manager at Torshov)	Norwegian Directorate of Immigration (UDI)

Knut Felberg (Return Attaché)	Ministry of Justice and the Police
Jon Steinar Ostgard (General Manager) Bjørn Reite (Project Manager) Abdulrahman Abbas (Project Coordinator)	Business Innovation Programs (BIP)
Dr. Espen Gran	(previously at Ministry of Labor)
Morten Tjessem	(previously at NOAS)

## Jordan

<b>Name (Position)</b>	<b>Organization/background</b>
Amela Mujagic (Programme Officer) Husam Nino (Operations Officer) Salwa Faouri (Programme Assistant) Hekmat Sharabi (Reintegration Program Assistant)	IOM Regional Operations Center, Amman
Dr. Elle Abouaoun (Programme Manager)	Danish Refugee Council (DRC)
Petter Ølberg (Ambassador) Cathrine Elisabeth Fari (Second Secretary, Immigration Issues)	Royal Norwegian Embassy in Amman, Jordan
Zaito T. Tahir (Director)	Erbil Ministry of Social Affairs

## Iraq

<b>Name (Position)</b>	<b>Organization/background</b>
Hekmat Sharabi (Reintegration Program Assistant) Wria Rashid (Reintegration Program Assistant)	International Organization for Migration (IOM) – Erbil
Nawzad Hadi Mawlood (Governor)	Governorate of Erbil
Shilan Abdulgani (Member of Parliament)	Parliament of Kurdistan
Zaito T. Tahir (Director)	Erbil Ministry of Social Affairs, Kurdistan Regional Government
Fershad Atrushi (Member of Parliament)	Parliament of Iraq
Muhammed Ali Elias Ma'rouf (Coworker, Dohuk)	Business Innovation Programme (BIP)
Hoshang Mohammed (Coworker)	Department of Foreign Relations, Kurdistan Regional Government
Govand Shafeeq Tawfeeq (Coworker)	Business Innovation Programs (BIP), Erbil
Dr. Asmat M. Khalid (President)	University of Duhok
Jihad Zero (Acting Programme Coordinator, Head of Administration)	Association of Experts in the Fields of Migration and Development Cooperation (AGEF)
Lajan Bajalan (Coworker)	Business Innovation Programs (BIP)
Prof. Dr. Nazar M.S. Numan (Chairman)	The Higher Institute of Planning, University of Duhok
Dr. Arif Hito (Child and Adolescent Psychiatrist)	Ministry of Labour & Social Affairs, Kurdistan Regional Government
Dr. Hussein Falamarz Tahir (Project Manager)	Business Innovation Programs (BIP)
Omar Karim Ahmad (Coworker)	Business Innovation Programs (BIP)
Aso Karim	Previously at Norwegian Refugee Council

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INDEXING TERMS

Voluntary return

Reintegration

Iraq

The Information, Return, and Reintegration of Iraqi Nationals to Iraq (IRRINI) programme was established in 2008 by the Norwegian Directorate of Immigration (UDI) to facilitate the voluntary return and reintegration of persons from Iraq.

The study provides knowledge on how the various components of the IRRINI programme influences the decision for voluntary return to Iraq and insight into how the programme, wholly or partially, contributes to a sustainable return and reintegration. The opinions and perspectives of the returnees are central to the study.

The study discusses different models of reintegration support and provides a number of suggestions for how a more sustainable return process can be initiated in Norway and secured upon return to Iraq.