

Area-Based Programming for Protection and Solutions (A2PS)

Context

Iraq hosts close to 300,000 refugees who live in camps as well as among host communities in Iraq. The majority of these refugees are from Syria and live in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, where the authorities continue to affirm their commitment that they can remain until conditions in Syria permit safe, voluntary and dignified return. Refugees from Syria like refugees from Turkey, Iran and Palestine continue to express their intention to stay in Iraq in the near future.

The 2021 Multi-Sector Needs Assessment suggests Syrian refugees live in challenging and precarious circumstances and were worse off in 2021 than 2020, citing lack of livelihoods as a key concern.

At the same time, almost 1.2 million Iraqis continue to live in protracted situations of internal displacement, most of whom live in private accommodation in urban settings. Significant barriers to return remain, such as destroyed houses, security issues, lack of essential services, and limited livelihoods opportunities in areas of origin.

Approximately 50 percent of Iraqi returnees live in locations which lack basic services, livelihoods opportunities, and are perceived as unsafe.

As a result, many displaced Iraqi individuals and families are unable or unlikely to choose to return so long as conditions in their areas of origin do not permit them to do so in safety and dignity, but struggle to integrate locally. While over 4.9 million individuals have been able to return from displacement, many continue to live in substandard and insecure conditions and remain at risk of further displacements.

Though the conflict ended in 2017, many refugees, IDPs, or IDP returnees may need to travel prohibitive distances to access healthcare or education services, lack basic services such as electricity and water, struggle to find livelihoods, and feel unwelcomed by the surrounding communities. Similarly, the needs of many impoverished families in these communities cannot be overlooked.

Compounding the extant effects of conflict and displacement, the economic impacts of the COVID pandemic and the 2020 reduction in oil prices further exacerbated socio-economic vulnerabilities.

Increasingly, a shift in focus from humanitarian to development assistance is underway in Iraq and presents various opportunities to address the challenges faced by displaced and host communities to foster sustainable protection outcomes and solutions.

What is UNHCR's Area-Based Programming for Protection and Solutions?

The A2PS approach aims to promote the sustainable integration or reintegration of those affected by forced displacement.

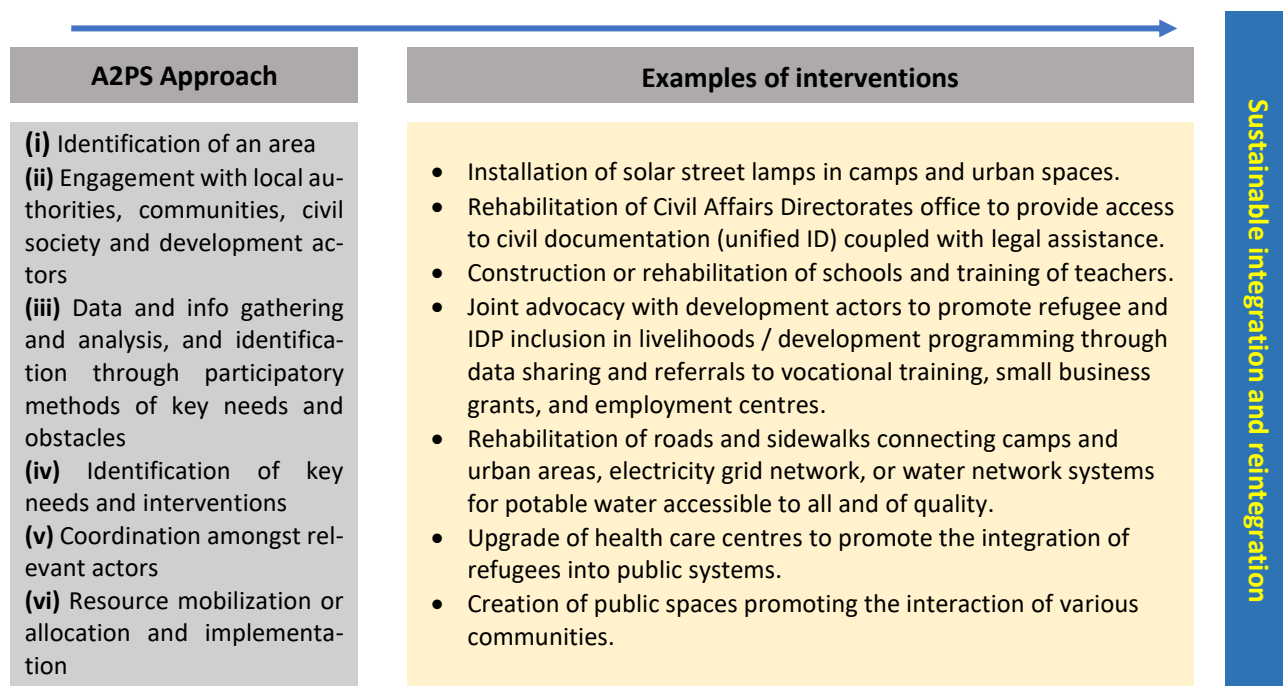
Specifically, within a geographic area, the A2PS approach seeks to identify and encourage a range of actors—*be they government, development, humanitarian, community-based organisations, community members, I/NGOs, donors, or private sector*—to work together to address obstacles to integration and social cohesion, and enhance the protection of all.

Such obstacles might include insufficient electricity infrastructure capacity, a lack of classrooms for children, falling water table levels due to over-extraction, lack of jobs, or limited access to healthcare services.

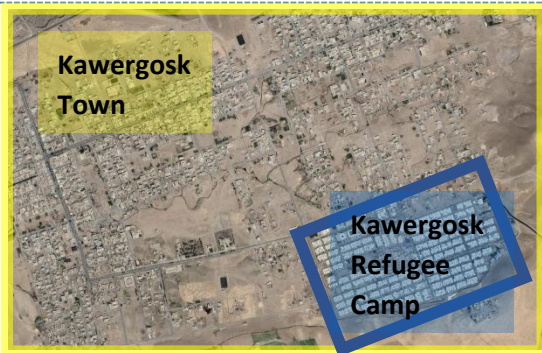
A2PS intervention characteristics

In line with its stated objectives, A2PS interventions are:

- implemented within a defined geographic area, such as a location with a large refugee population or IDPs living side-by-side with underserved host communities.
- developed to target communities rather than specific population groups, and thus consider interventions that benefit refugees, IDPs, IDP returnees, and host communities alike.
- conceived in a community-driven and participatory manner through wide consultations with affected communities.
- supported by, and involving, the local authorities, as well as aligned with local development plans.
- designed to be long-term and sustainable in nature, in particular through ensuring commitment from relevant authorities to cover care and maintenance costs.
- informed by and adapted to the local context, based on evidence and analysis, bringing on board key actors with comparative advantages.
- considered across diverse sectors, including community empowerment, basic infrastructure and services, peaceful-coexistence programmes, and local economic development, to address obstacles to integration and social cohesion in a location in a comprehensive manner.



A2PS example: Kawergosk town

Where?		Who?
About a 30 minute drive north west of Erbil, in Erbil governorate, in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq.		The Kawergisk sub-district has a population of approximately 15,000 people, including close to 8,000 Syrian refugees and 350 IDP families. Over 7,500 Syrian refugees live in Kawergosk Refugee Camp, which is located in the town.
		
What?	Why?	
Construction of a new water supply system	Currently, the entire urban area sources its water from boreholes. Due to falling water tables, they become increasingly contaminated with nitrates; samples taken from 12 of the 27 boreholes in 2019 exceeded the WHO's recommendation. UNICEF found a temporary solution and installed compact reverse osmosis units in Kawergosk camp. The compact reverse osmosis units have high operation costs, require expensive maintenance, and only benefit families living in the camp. A possible surface water catchment system that would supply drinking water to the entire urban area and the camp (sufficient for 20,000 individuals) in a sustainable and environmentally friendly manner is currently explored as more sustainable solution. The proposed system would mean both populations would have access to water without drawing on boreholes and without further impacting on groundwater levels.	
Construction of a new high school	Currently, the high school in the refugee camp is overcrowded and located in a temporary structure prone to flooding. The local high school in the community is also overcrowded. A new 12-classroom high school will be constructed close to the camp, within the community, with classroom sizes that would allow for 20 /25 students per room, accounting for a projected population increase. Importantly, both refugees and host community members would use the same school, bringing them closer together. The school will be in line with the Department of Education's standards and incorporate new technologies resulting in reduced running costs and increase student and teacher comfort, such as solar powered air conditioning and proper insulation.	
Community center renovation	The community centre is located on the main road between the camp and the town, and close to football and volleyball pitches. It will replace the two centres in the camp. The newly renovated centre will be open to all, refugees and Iraqis alike, and will provide a range of activities and services including support with administrative procedures or education, such as adult literacy. The community centre will be a space for regular and positive interactions between communities.	

Expansion of Primary Health Care Centres	Currently, distinct Primary Health Care Centres (PHCC) serve the town and the camp populations separately resulting in a duplication of services and inefficiencies. Further, the PHCC in the camp is in a temporary structure which needs considerable refurbishment. The new PHCC will have sufficient capacity to serve both populations at the same time (> 22,000 people), offering services that are uncurrently. As a result, the camp PHCC will be closed, increasing cost efficiency and the sustainability of health care provision for refugees.
How?	UNHCR worked with the Erbil Directorate for Migration and Crisis Response, local authorities, including the Mayor's office and Municipality, and conducted a number of focus groups with refugees, IDPs, and host communities to identify key projects. Among others, the Erbil General Directorate of Health, the Erbil General Directorate of Education, the Directorate of Surrounding Water, UNICEF, and the World Health Organization, were consulted on technical issues. The Municipality provided the land, the Mayor's office took charge of electricity and water provision for the PHCC, and the Directorate of Health will provide equipment, medicines and staffing.

A2PS example: al-Shirqat District

Where?	Al-Shirqat district is located in the north of Salah al-Din governorate, approximately 300 km to the north of Baghdad.
Who?	Al-Shirqat District has an estimated population of 330,000, of which around 162,000 are IDP returnees and 3,400 are IDPs from other locations. Intention surveys indicate that a further 75,000 individuals have intention to return to al-Shirqat in the near future. Approximately 3,000 of those who have returned and another 4,200 who hope to return, are perceived as having affiliation to extremist groups.
What?	Why?
Rehabilitation of water treatment plants	In al-Shirqat, certain areas are affected by limited access to water. Many returnee families in particular do not have sufficient access to water for domestic or drinking purposes. Through the rehabilitation of three water treatment plants, access to potable water is expanded in Al-Hunga, Al-Kanous, and Al-khmesat villages in al-Shirqat district. Each water treatment plant benefits between 3,000 and 5,000 individuals. 
Rehabilitation of electricity infrastructure	 Similarly, certain locations in al-Shirqat district face issues with the provision of electricity. Through the rehabilitation of the electricity network and the installation of electricity transformers, access to electricity has been improved and expanded. The plan is to install transformers in ten target locations, with each transformer benefitting between 250 and 300 individuals.

Rehabilitation of National ID Centre	Civil documentation is a key protection safeguard. Without proper identification, Iraqis are at risk of arrest, in particular at checkpoints, their children may be denied enrolment in school, or they may be denied medical services, among other challenges. IDP returnees lack valid ID cards in over 75 percent of locations in al-Shirqat district. In al-Shirqat, UNHCR supported the rehabilitation of the National Identification Document Centre, thus enhancing direct access to civil documentation across the district. At the same time, UNHCR and partners provide legal assistance to support IDPs and returnees to process applications and obtain documentation. 
Housing, Land, and Property assistance and shelter rehabilitation	Many homes in al-Shirqat require rehabilitation work and many families lack proper housing, land, and property (HLP) documentation. Illegal occupation of private residences is an issue in some locations. UNHCR seeks to support families through awareness-raising on HLP issues and rights and HLP legal assistance. UNHCR consulted with UNDP, IOM and UNHABITAT that are active in this field to ensure activities are coordinated. It is proposed that up to 2,300 homes will be rehabilitated in different areas in al-Shirqat district.
Social cohesion	Given the recent history of the district and the presence of families with perceived affiliation to extremists, the promotion of social cohesion will be key to support the sustainability of returns. Across 98 percent of locations in al-Shirqat, families are reported to have been blocked from returning. In this regard, a variety of community mobilization and peaceful coexistence activities will be made available through the community centre in Shirqat town. Such activities might include strengthening partnerships with local tribe leaders and authorities to build opportunities for

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