LABOUR MARKET OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

Shatt Al-Arab District, Basra Governorate

IOM Iraq – April 2019
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<table>
<thead>
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<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Description</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BEP</td>
<td>Business Expansion Package</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BSP</td>
<td>Business Support Package</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CoC</td>
<td>Chamber of Commerce</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CoI</td>
<td>Chamber of Industries</td>
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<tr>
<td>CIP</td>
<td>Community Implementation Plan</td>
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<td>CRC</td>
<td>Community Resource Centre</td>
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<td>ESP</td>
<td>Employment Support Package</td>
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<tr>
<td>FGD</td>
<td>Focus Group Discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FT</td>
<td>Farming Training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IDP</td>
<td>Internally Displaced Person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ISIL</td>
<td>Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant</td>
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<td>IOM</td>
<td>International Organization for Migration</td>
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<tr>
<td>JP</td>
<td>Job Placement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LMA</td>
<td>Labour Market Assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NFI</td>
<td>Non-Food Items</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MoLSA</td>
<td>Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OJT</td>
<td>On-the-Job Training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SME</td>
<td>Small and Medium Enterprise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VT</td>
<td>Vocational Training</td>
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</tbody>
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Labour Market Opportunities and Challenges

1. Executive Summary

1.1. Introduction
With sub-offices across Iraq, jointly managed Community Resource Centres (CRCs), and a presence within Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (MoLSA’s) sub-offices, IOM has a field presence that allows for a community driven approach to recovery and development. Under its livelihoods programming, IOM works with a system of community engagement that has been refined through an interactive learning process, and relies on stakeholder consultation throughout the design of sustainable livelihood activities. In order to design market-led development interventions, a series of Labour Market Assessments (LMAs) were conducted. In Basra Governorate, both the Basra and the Shatt Al-Arab districts were selected for in-depth study. This LMA covers the Shatt Al-Arab district specifically.

1.2. Study Components
This LMA is based on 103 individual interviews and three youth Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with roughly 30 total participants, conducted over a two-month period between December 2018 and January 2019. Survey tools included a mix of quantitative and qualitative exercises, conducted with key informants, jobseekers, youth, consumers, and employers. It focused on three communities of Shatt Al-Arab – Al-Kibasi Kabeer, Al-Kibasi Saghir, and Al-Hota. A summary of key findings is below, followed by a fuller analysis and explanation.

1.3. Shatt Al-Arab Key Findings

1.3.1. Challenges & Opportunities Facing Youth
- In all three communities, air conditioning repair trainings were requested;
- In Al-Kabisi Kabeer, manual labour based jobs such as working in an aluminum factory or a concrete block factory were, surprisingly, noted as desirable;
- In Al-Kabisi Saghir, desirable jobs were in the service sector and included grocery store and restaurant jobs; and
- Manual labour including car repair, painting, and carpentry were mentioned as desirable jobs.

Recommendations:
Seek a training provider for air conditioning repair or on the job training opportunities.
Look at both air conditioning for homes and for vehicles.

1.3.2. Challenges & Opportunities Facing Jobseekers
- Graduates were listed most frequently (by 30% of respondents) as a group that should be a target for livelihood assistance, in addition to skilled and experienced persons (mentioned by 50% of respondents);
- Oil and its supporting industries - security, transportation, construction, and education were apparently the largest industries that were hiring people;
- All agreed that these jobs were desirable; and
- 56% of respondents noted that the jobs tend to be dominated by one group, which many suggested were the members of political parties.

Recommendations:
Support Business Support Package (BSP), Employment Support Package (ESP) and On-the-Job Training (OJT) related to car repairs and mechanics.

1.3.3. Challenges & Opportunities Facing Employers
- Businesses related to construction, agriculture and car repair were most likely to mention difficulty finding skilled labourers
- Self reported demand was lowest among construction related businesses, and highest for those working in car repair

1.3.4. Challenges & Opportunities Facing Consumers
- Electrical appliances and households items (mentioned by 23% of respondents), and medical services including even a pharmacy (mentioned by 10%) were mentioned as unavailable in the local market; and
- Consumers were not found to spend significantly different amounts of income on rent, food, gas and electricity, or transportation than in other areas of Iraq surveyed.

Recommendations:
Support BSP for electrical applicant and household item vendors.
Provide business support to local pharmacies.

1.4. Overall Recommendations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sectors to target:</th>
<th>Services such as car repairs, air conditioning repairs, auto electrics, IT.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Profile to target:</td>
<td>Youth, graduates, skilled persons.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes:
- Youth in Al-Kibasi Kabeer do not want courses in haircutting, youth in Al-Kabasi Saghir and Hota would; and
- Women could receive support in the form of tailoring or hairdressing through On the Job trainings.
2. Location and Study Overview

2.1. Introduction

Recognizing that the private sector is an engine for growth, IOM works to create inclusive markets at the individual, community and institutional level. At the individual level, IOM has prioritized support to micro enterprises. This has included providing business development services (including business advisory and counselling services) and business support packages (including in-kind and cash support), all of which aim to increase income generation at the household level.

For those individuals who need capacity development support or who have more specific backgrounds like agriculture, IOM provides specialized skills development and training through Vocational Training (VT), Farming Training (FT) or On-the-Job Training (OJT), accompanied by employability assistance inclusive of in-kind items tailored to enhance individual employability. For beneficiaries who already possess relevant education or training and need to gain hands-on work experience, IOM job placement and job matching initiatives link participants with businesses in growth sectors, and agrees to pay their salaries partially or fully for 3-6 months.

At the community level, IOM provides support to slightly larger businesses – small and medium enterprises (SMEs) – to support long term job creation and the expansion of local production capacities. IOM also targets the infrastructure needed to support markets, linking livelihoods with support for the enabling environment. For example, in agricultural communities IOM may support irrigation projects. At the institutional level, IOM also provides capacity building to national and local authorities, including market assessments that seek to promote institutional change that would support local livelihoods.

2.2. LMA Overview

This and other IOM Labour Market Assessments (LMAs) are intended to provide actionable recommendations for the individual livelihood assistance that IOM provides, for multiple districts throughout Iraq. This LMA focuses on Shatt Al-Arab, a district in Basra Governorate east of Basra city, which is on the Iraq-Iran border.

2.3. Shatt Al-Arab District Overview

2.3.1. Location and Demographics

Shatt Al-Arab is a district in the Basra governorate, situated on the east bank of the important Shatt Al-Arab waterway. It has a population of approximately 80,000, its seat is the village of Al-Harita, and apart from those areas situated on or near the Shatt Al-Arab waterway, population density is low and most areas are rural or deserted due to landmine concerns.

2.3.2. Security and Displacement

Basra governorate saw heavy fighting during the Iraq War, and subsequent instability during the British military occupation that followed it. By the late 2000s, the Mahdi Army or Muqtada al-Sadr had built a stronghold in Basra, from which it was ultimately driven out during the 2008 Battle of Basra, although with fighting continuing afterwards. Accounts of the area thereafter began however to hint at the trend that would soon follow: despite relative security since 2008, critical infrastructure needs, unemployment, and growing poverty have led to undercurrents of unrest in the city and surrounding districts, including Shatt Al-Arab. In addition, the legacy of war in the area has left the district with a critical landmine problem. A March 2017 report by the Government of Iraq outlined that over 350 square kilometers of the district were contaminated by landmines.

2.3.3. Local Concerns

IOM Rapid Needs Assessments in each of the three studied communities revealed numerous problems with water infrastructure, water salinity, and water access. Some accounts have pointed out alarmingly high rates of water-related illnesses due in part to higher than normal water salinity, infrastructure shortcomings, and a number of pollution types. In addition, evidence has been found toxic waste dumping in several parts of the district by Basra oil companies and by Iranian companies, either directly or via sewage. IOM has speculated that ongoing water salinity issues could eliminate or at least severely diminish the area’s long-term agricultural viability.

IOM Community Assessments of the studied communities revealed several other local concerns including the lack of effective sewage systems; schools in disrepair; health centers lacking sufficient supplies, equipment, and staff; poor electrical networks and efficiency. Food and Non-Food Items (NFI) are available from a number of shops located throughout the district and are more readily available across the river in Basra city. Additionally, locals in the studied areas – in addition to those in Basra district – have reported high incidences of illegal drug use, prompting safety concerns in the studied communities.
### Consumer Spending Snapshot

**Key Weekly Expenses:**
- The typical consumer in Shatt Al-Arab district reported spending an average of 61.5 USD on food expenses per week.

**Key Monthly Expenses:**
- 40% of survey respondents reported having a monthly transportation expense, averaging 40 USD per month;
- 40% of survey respondents reported having a monthly combustibles expense, averaging 49 USD per month;
- 100% of respondents also reported a monthly water expense, averaging 12 USD per month;
- 83% of respondents reported monthly expenses on temptation goods, averaging 43.2 USD per month; and
- Finally, only 3% of respondents reported monthly rent expenses averaging 120 USD per month.

A more thorough breakdown of consumer expenditure based on the collected data is presented in the Findings section below.

### 2.4. LMA Methodology Overview

The LMA process took two months to complete. Three communities in Musayab district were selected for surveying in depth – Hay Al-Ataba, Al-Hamiyah-Al-Mutaqedin, and Al-Doob. Some of the data for this LMA also comes from Hilla district, a neighboring area also in Babylon governorate. After a two-day training, surveyors interviewed key informants, jobseekers, average consumers, youth, and local businesses. Where possible, surveys were collected evenly across these three locations. Below is an explanation of the surveys conducted:

#### 2.4.1. Key Informant Interviews

13 key informant interviews were conducted with representatives of local government as well as representatives of large companies based in Basra governorate. The majority of these were from or responsible for Basra district, but were able to speak to issues in Shatt Al-Arab as well. One key informant was from Shatt Al-Arab itself.

#### 2.4.2. Youth Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)

Youth FGDs were designed to identify bottlenecks to youth employment and training preferences. They were conducted by soliciting participation from members of each of the studied communities. Three FGDs were conducted with participants aged between 15-25 in Shatt Al-Arab.

#### 2.4.3. Jobseeker Surveys

The jobseeker survey is designed to identify preferences of unemployed and underemployed workers. In Shatt Al-Arab, 30 jobseekers were identified and surveyed. The survey purpose was outlined for each jobseeker survey, and informed consent was obtained from those surveyed.

#### 2.4.4. Employer Surveys

30 Employer surveys were also conducted in Shatt Al-Arab district, in order to provide a representative sample of the local market. Employers were initially provided an advance copy of the handout materials and then later contacted for follow-up interviews. The map below shows the locations of the surveyed employers in Basra district as well as the 30 employers surveyed in Shatt Al-Arab district:

![Figure 1. Shatt Al-Arab Surveyed Employer Locations](image)

#### 2.4.5. Consumer Surveys

The consumer survey was designed to triangulate data related to demand, income, and vulnerability. In Shatt Al-Arab, 30 respondents were identified by approaching members of the public in commercial or industrial districts and asking to speak with them. There were no restrictions on the demographic profiles of participants, but IOM sought diversity of groups within the population to the extent possible.

The table below outlines the types and number of surveys conducted for Shatt Al-Arab district.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tools</th>
<th>No. Conducted</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Key Informant Interviews</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth Focus Group Discussions</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jobseeker Surveys</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Sector Employer Surveys</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consumer Surveys</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 1. Surveys conducted in Shatt Al-Arab for labour market analysis*
3. Findings

3.1. Key Informant Interviews

Prior to 2014, agriculture in general, including wheat and barley, vegetables, buckthorn, and dates, was the largest sector in the area. Supporting industries including fertilizer, plastics, fodder, livestock and dairy products were also active and employed local residents. This potential is increasingly threatened by the water salinity issue mentioned above.

Currently, the most common employer of residents includes oil companies, private companies, the agriculture sector, and government jobs. Those seeking government jobs reportedly face the most competition, while agriculture and the private sector were felt to have the most potential for growth. Some governmental support was mentioned for agriculture, livestock, and the oil and plastic industry, and private investment was noted to be present in every industry. Yet no UN or international programs were known to be active in developing the area.

3.2. Youth Needs and Priorities

Three FGDs were completed, in Al-Kibasi Kabeer, Al-Kibasi Saghir, and Al-Hota. The majority of participants, 90% of participants across the three groups, felt that there were no issues of insecurity in their communities. All, however, agreed that more employment opportunities would make youth less likely to join military actors.

Al-Kibasi Kabeer

In Al-Kibasi Kabeer, youth felt that training courses in haircutting and metalworking are oversaturated, while mobile repair and AC equipment repair are in need. Manual labour based jobs such as working in an aluminum factory or a concrete block factory were, surprisingly, noted as desirable. All participants preferred to work for themselves. Trainings requested in Al-Kibasi Kabeer included car and home air conditioning repair courses for men and tailoring courses for women.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tailoring</th>
<th>33%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Car air conditioning</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home air conditioning</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. Requested Training Courses Al-Kibasi Kabeer

Al-Kibasi Saghir

In Al-Kibasi Saghir, youth felt that there were no oversaturated training courses, and mentioned that plumbing and haircutting skills are in demand. Desirable jobs were in the service sector and included grocery store and restaurant jobs, yet youth also mentioned preferring to work for themselves than to be an employee. Finally, requested training types included car air conditioning repair and car mechanic courses for males, and tailoring and hairdressing for females.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hairdressing</th>
<th>25%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Car air conditioning</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Car mechanic</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tailoring</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3. Requested Training Courses Al-Kibasi Saghir

Al-Hota

In Al-Hota, three youth mentioned issues of insecurity, which they felt that employment opportunities would help. Haircutting courses were reportedly oversaturated, while metalworking, carpentry, and mobile and air conditioning skills are reportedly in need. Manual labour including car repair, painting, and carpentry were mentioned as desirable jobs, and all preferred to work for themselves than for an employer. Here, again, car repairs, air conditioning and electric installation trainings were requested for men, while tailoring and hairdressing trainings were requested for women. Reportedly, hairdressing has a high demand in the community.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hairdressing</th>
<th>25%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Car air conditioning</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Car mechanic</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tailoring</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4. Requested Training Courses in Al-Hota
3.3. Jobseeker Needs and Priorities

In Shatt Al-Arab, graduates and youth were mentioned most frequently as the most likely demographic group to be out of work. Only one respondent mentioned women, and another mentioned unskilled persons. Reflecting this, youth and university graduates were also listed most frequently (by 30% of respondents) as a group that should be a target for livelihood assistance, in addition to skilled and experienced persons (mentioned by 50% of respondents).

There is no job centre or similar service in their community, and 96% of residents feel that people tend to migrate for work- mostly to countries abroad. Oil and its supporting industries- security, transportation, construction, and education were apparently the largest industries that were hiring people. All agreed that these jobs were desirable. However, 56% of respondents noted that the jobs tend to be dominated by one group, which many suggested were the members of political parties. Industry and agriculture were most frequently mentioned as sectors that should invest in the community, while grocery stores were the number one businesses that respondents thought was successful.

3.4. Employer Needs and Priorities

Employers surveyed in Shatt Al-Arab generally were similar to their competitors except for an engine repair shop and a wood painting workshop. Most reported difficulties in the previous five years, especially agricultural workers who had experienced an increase in the salinity of their water which had made it nearly impossible to purchase livestock. A poultry farmer also mentioned increasing competition with imports from outside Iraq. No employers reported challenges with suppliers, and only one noted that customers sometimes didn’t want to pay in cash, which was weakening the buying and selling process.

Businesses related to construction, agriculture and car repair were most likely to mention difficulty finding skilled labourers. Self reported demand was lowest among construction related businesses, and highest for those working in car repair.

3.5. Consumer Needs and Priorities

The average income among consumers surveyed was 252.6 USD. Only four of the participants or their family members had saving. Two participants saved 15-25% of their savings every month, while another two reported saving 100% of their monthly income.

Electrical appliances and households items (mentioned by 23% of respondents), and medical services including even a pharmacy (mentioned by 10%) were mentioned as unavailable on the local market. Lack of infrastructure, capital, loans, and the inability to buy cars or obtain a shop to sell goods from were also mentioned. No participants mentioned traveling outside the city to purchase any goods or services, reinforcing transportation issues highlighted and possibly low purchasing power.

Consumers were not found to spend significantly different amounts of income on rent, food, gas and electricity, or transportation than in other areas of Iraq surveyed.

Spending patterns are shown in the table below^7:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Expense</th>
<th>% of Participants with expense</th>
<th>Average local expense (USD)</th>
<th>Average national expense (USD)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Weekly</td>
<td>Food</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>83.6</td>
<td>97.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rent</td>
<td>43.3%</td>
<td>158.5</td>
<td>151.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Combustibles</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>58.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Transport services</td>
<td>86.7%</td>
<td>36.7</td>
<td>49.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Temptation goods</td>
<td>56.7%</td>
<td>65.8</td>
<td>64.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Recreation</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>75.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Water</td>
<td>96.7%</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>20.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Phone, cable and internet</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>19.2</td>
<td>37.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monthly</td>
<td>Education</td>
<td>86.7%</td>
<td>350.8</td>
<td>372.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Medical expenses</td>
<td>93.3%</td>
<td>299.6</td>
<td>496.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Repairs</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>131.9</td>
<td>485.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Household appliances</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>147.9</td>
<td>215.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Purchase of vehicle such as car, bike, motorbike</td>
<td>13.3%</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>1604.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yearly</td>
<td>Family events</td>
<td>36.7%</td>
<td>906.8</td>
<td>808.82</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

^7 Please note that this data is self-reported and therefore subject to some isolated calculation errors and information bias.
3.6. Community Implementation Plan (CIP) Recommendations

Based on the surveys conducted and data collected, IOM developed an initial list of potential community interventions, or Community Implementation Plans (CIPs) in Shatt Al-Arab to help address various identified infrastructure and livelihood issues.

Given the extreme water issues identified in Basra governorate overall and particularly in this district, infrastructure recommendations included activities to improve and rehabilitate water plants and pumping mechanisms, and to clean sediment in freshwater storage tanks. Additional recommendations were to help build additional classrooms at an area school in Al-Kibasi Saghir, and to establish a new dental facility in Al-Kibasi Kabeer.

Livelihoods recommendations focused on agriculture, which as mentioned was the area’s primary income-generating sector prior to 2014. Training on and establishment of drip irrigation systems, with water tanks and filters, were recommended. However, these recommendations should take into account the issues of water pollution and salinity. These problems should be considered first, or the investment into agricultural activities risks being ultimately unproductive.

Finally, community engagement recommendations a community project to dredge irrigation channels in the Al-Kibasi Kabeer area, as well as projects to rehabilitate, resupply, and beautify area schools in both Al-Kibasi Kabeer and Al-Hota.

4. Conclusions

Shatt Al-Arab is a tight knit area with a low percent of families in the area not originally from the area. Residents tend not to travel outside of the limits of their immediate locations for goods and services, which may be further reinforcing limited market connectivity with the rest of Iraq. IOM should prioritize assistance to the transportation sector, especially car related services such as trainings or job placements in air conditioning repair for cars. Electronic appliances and household goods were also mentioned as scarce, and present an opportunity for small businesses to pop up around. The need for a pharmacy also presents an opportunity.

Finally, a high rate of university graduates, joblessness, and underemployment means that there should be plenty of skilled labour to match up with existing employer needs, where not already met. Service provider mapping for OJT can be combined with the employer surveys already collected for a better sense of these possibilities, but sticking generally to the fields of air conditioning and repair services in itself will go a long way towards addressing the desirability of and market appropriateness of, IOM’s interventions.