During August 2016, the Iraq Internally Displaced Persons Information Centre (Iraq IIC) handled a record 7,053 calls, more than doubling the previous highest number of calls recorded in May (3,554) and pushing the total number of calls handled by the call centre past 32,000. This jump in calls was in line with expectations following the relaunch of the SMS broadcast campaign to raise awareness of the call centre and the addition of four new operators to the team. By the end of the month 99.8% of cases were classified as closed.

Requests for information on food assistance and cash assistance topped the call breakdown list, accounting for 32% and 27% of calls, respectively. Calls relating to Government services accounted for 22% of all calls.

The majority of people requesting information on food assistance called from Erbil (29%), Dahuk (24%), and Sulaymaniyah (13%). For the third month in a row, Erbil and Dahuk ranked in the top three of locations requesting information on food assistance. As with previous months, in August the majority of callers (70%) requesting information on food-security matters asked why their name had been removed from food assistance lists. Meanwhile 27% of food-related calls requested information on how to register for assistance assessment. For the second-month running, only 1% of food-related calls complained that the value of food assistance was not enough to cover needs.

Using the vulnerability matrix that the Iraq IIC designed with the World Food Programme (WFP), the call centre referred 172 families to be reassessed for food assistance in this reporting period. At the end of the month, WFP announced it had suspended its targeted criteria appeal. In April, WFP launched SCOPE, a digital cash card system to provide food assistance to displaced populations in Iraq. In August, the Iraq IIC operators were trained in the SCOPE programme and the call centre became a key complaints

7,053 calls handled in August
32,416 the total number of calls handled by the Iraq IIC since its launch

“Following feedback from your mechanism (Iraq IIC) and others, we are working with all stakeholders to improve messaging on how cash programming works”

A humanitarian agency responds to feedback from the call centre
A male caller displaced from al-Hawiga called the Iraq IIC to report waiting times at screening sites. Information on return of incoming cases closed was shared with the relevant counterpart, with 15% of callers primarily asking for information on cash assistance and 15% asking for instructions on how to return to their home areas. The majority of callers requesting cash assistance called from Kirkuk, accounting for 22% of cash calls. The number of people from Baghdad calling about cash increased six percentage points in August compared to July.

During August, the number of female callers dropped one percentage point from 18% in July to 17% in August. The priority needs for women during this period were cash, accounting for 36% of calls from women, food (38%), and Government services (16%). For 9% of women callers who had protection-related calls, 40% sought help replacing or registering official documentation.

For callers who were under 18 years of age, their priority needs reflected the needs of their adult counterparts, with 15% of callers primarily asking for information on cash assistance and 15% on Government services. Of the 11% of under 18-year-olds calling about protection-related issues, they were primarily based in Anbar and mainly sought legal assistance.

As in previous months, during August, the Iraq IIC forwarded reports of confiscated documents and possible forced relocation of people displaced from Anbar and Salah al-Din to Kirkuk to protect and human rights agencies operating in the area. Additionally, the call centre continued to share relevant partners calls from Iraqis displaced to Syria but seeking re-entry to Iraq. In September, it was reported that entry had been granted to some members of this group.

All Iraq IIC reports are available for download on the humanitarian community portal: humanitarianresponse.info. Iraq IIC data is visualized through IOM’s Community Response Map: iraq.communityresponsemap.org.