

Irregular pathways: Probing Migration Dynamics in Iraq and the Significance of Information Campaigns

Final Report · April 2024

The Project MIRAMI

The project MIRAMI aims at raising awareness among potential irregular migrants from Iraq about the risks and consequences of irregular migration and informing them about potential legal pathways or their rights in the countries of destination. In doing so, the project shall contribute to (1) increased safe legal migration from Iraq, (2) reduced irregular migration and (3) improved access to information, thus providing concrete support to potential Iraqi migrants.

Research conducted under MIRAMI:

- Background report
- Returnee report
- Survey among potential migrants in Iraq
- Stakeholder mapping & Interviews
- Validation meetings
- Final research report

The MIRAMI Research Final Report

MIRAMI final report is a **synthesis document**, integrating the major findings and lessons from all the different research strands to guide the design of migration information campaigns.

MIRAMI research analyses potential (irregular) migrants' **information needs and gaps**, their migration **histories, intentions, motivations, and decision-making processes**, as well as **key influencers and channels** likely to reach them.

The research conducted under MIRAMI builds on ICMPD's existing practical experience in migration awareness campaigns in Iraq through the Migrant Resource Centre (MRC) in Baghdad and is based on primary data collected in the three Kurdistan region's governorates of Erbil, Dohuk, and Sulaymaniyah.



What drives irregular migration from Iraq

- **Profile:** potential migrants from Iraq are **young, male, single, and living with their parents**. They are generally **well-educated** and **actively engaged in the labour market**. Dohuk residents seem to have a higher inclination towards migration. On the other hand, potential irregular migrants tend to be even younger (18-25), male, single, employed full-time, and typically have completed high school. They are most likely to originate from **Sulaymaniyah**.
- **Drivers:** Lack of economic opportunities and bad quality of life are the two primary drivers of migration, followed by political instability and lack of personal freedom.
- **Europe as a destination:** The main pull factors to Europe include better economic opportunities and quality of life. Factors such as political stability, peace and safety, and job opportunities in specific industries, further contribute to its appeal.
- **Irregular migration:** The primary motivations for irregular migration are time and money, as it is perceived as faster and more cost-effective than regular one. The fact that many other migrants have been migrating irregularly in the past is another factor in considering this path. Among our sample, however, irregular migration is not a very popular choice.

- **Key influencers:** While many potential migrants do not rely on anyone when making decisions about migration, others turn to their **family members in Iraq** for guidance, which often discourages them from migrating. Government officials also have a significant influence on potential migrants, primarily in encouraging migration.
- **Type of information:** potential migrants seem to value information on the **cost of the migration** journey, as well as on **legal processes and requirements** for migration, while information regarding the potential risks of irregular migration is less commonly sought for.

How do potential irregular migrants prepare for their journeys?

- While many have not taken any preparatory steps, some have started to **gather information** on their desired destination country and reach out to friends and family for assistance. Applying for a visa and contacting an agent are not seen as priorities.
- **Financing:** Potential migrants commonly rely on personal savings to fund their journey, followed by sponsorship from parents and siblings. Older individuals resort to selling houses and assets to finance their journey.
- **Key supporters:** Family in Iraq is the most significant source of support for potential migrants, mostly providing financial resources, followed by friends abroad who mainly offer informational assistance and occasional connections with agents. Government, NGOs, and returnees are not considered primary sources of support.
- The most significant challenge faced by potential migrants during the preparation is **securing the required funds**. Other challenges include obtaining the required documents, making arrangements in the destination country, and finding credible agents or information on destination country.

Sources of information and messengers

- **Social media platforms** are the most common source of information for potential migrants, particularly among younger individuals, followed by **family and friends and other migrants**. Older individuals rely more on governmental websites or agencies.
- **Family members in Iraq** would be the most relevant messenger to leverage considering their strong influence on migration decisions. Returnees are perceived as less influential in migrants' decision-making process, though using them as messengers remains relevant. Governmental officials are also seen as credible messengers, as well as community leaders and other migrants.
- Potential migrants seem to be **positively confident** about the accuracy of information they have gathered on migration options. This confidence level increases when the information has been acquired from **governmental sources** or the **MRC**.
- Potential migrants also feel relatively **informed** of their legal rights as migrants. Their lack of knowledge seems to be concerning the **asylum procedure** and **documents for migration**.

Lessons for designing an effective migration information campaign

- **Tailor the campaign messages** to the different needs of potential migrants, their different backgrounds, age groups, and locations.
- Social media and traditional channels of communication might work, but implementers should also **focus on more direct and engaging experiences**.
- **The right choice of messengers** (one that is personally known to potential migrants) is fundamental to enhance campaign impact.
- Information alone might not be enough if it is not accompanied by **concrete and tailored alternatives to irregular migration** through policy changes and stakeholder engagement.

The more targeted the campaign, the stronger its impact!

 **Rothschildplatz 4**
1020 Vienna, Austria



Christina Khoury
christina.khoury@icmpd.org
Marco Mogiani
marco.mogiani@icmpd.org

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