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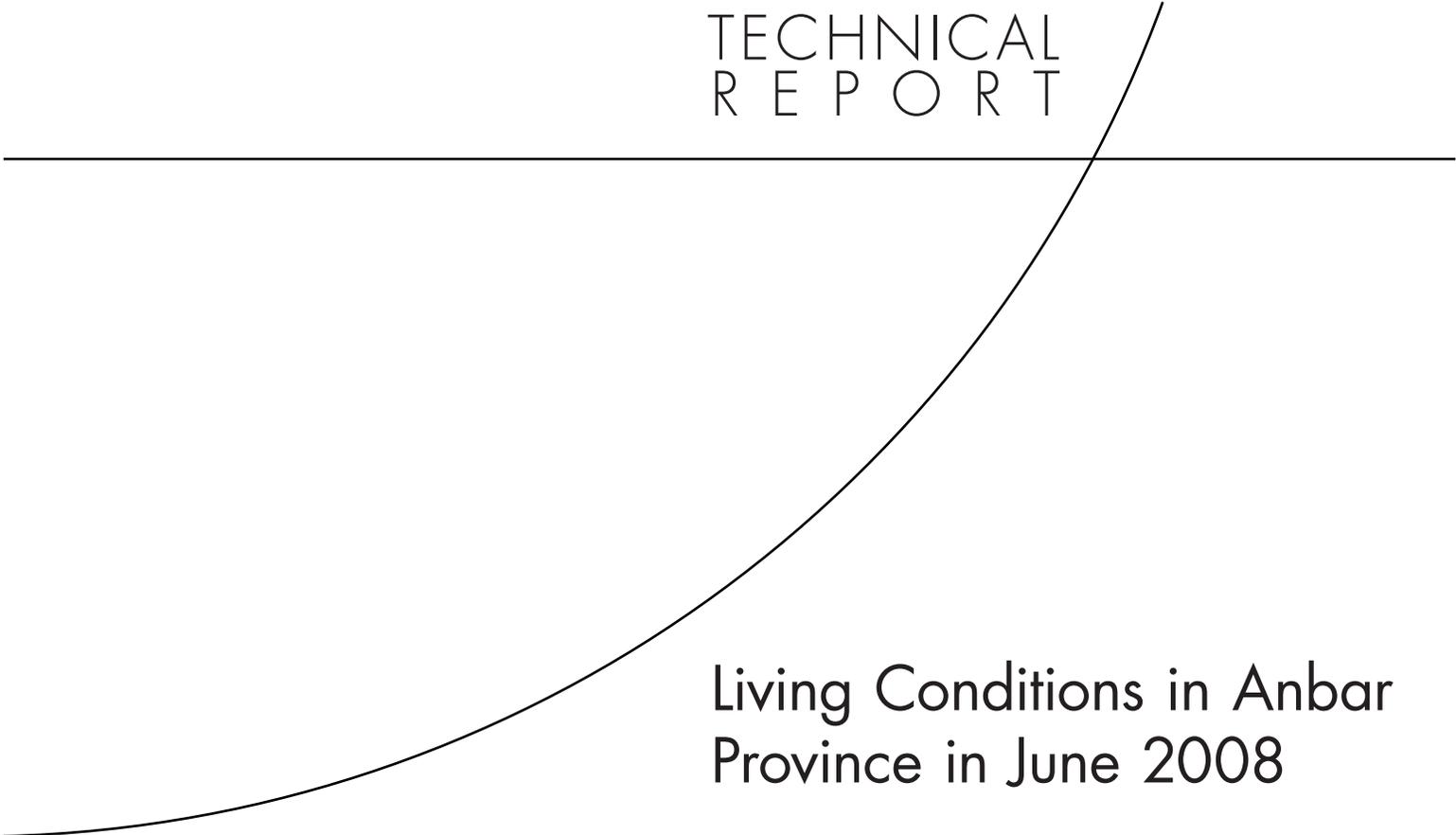
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R E P O R T



Living Conditions in Anbar Province in June 2008

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Summary

In Iraq's Anbar Province, the local population is, as is typical in any counterinsurgency campaign, the center of gravity. For the forces of order to appeal to the people, security forces need not only to engage in combat but also to understand the people—their concerns, their hopes, their grievances, and how they think and live. To gain a better understanding of how Anbaris live, the RAND Corporation conducted a survey of living conditions in the province. Face-to-face interviews were conducted with a random sample of 1,200 heads of Anbari households (here, defined as a family and other related individuals normally living in one housing unit) between May 28 and June 10, 2008. Interviews were conducted by local Anbaris, who were trained over four days by instructors who had attended a separate training course held outside Iraq and conducted by RAND and subcontractor staff. While one might expect respondents to react with some hesitancy toward a survey asking questions about their daily lives, the response rate averaged 71 percent, a figure on par with response rates for similar surveys in other Middle Eastern countries. The survey produced a wealth of data, which are available to researchers upon request from RAND. The survey's main findings are summarized below.

Demographics

Violence has left its mark on Anbaris: Many households are headed by widows. Of the 1,200 households surveyed in 2008, females headed 171, or 14 percent—a 4-percent increase over the 2004 figure reported by the Iraqi government.¹ In light of the importance that Anbaris place on minimizing contact between women and men outside their families, when entering homes, both Iraqi security forces and U.S. forces need to be aware that the home may be headed by a female and must offer her due respect and courtesy.

Losing a father is common: Approximately 20 percent of 8-year-olds and almost 40 percent of 20-year-olds have suffered such a loss. The coming of age of large numbers of fatherless young men in a society that puts a premium on revenge is a highly worrisome development for a region emerging from civil war.

¹ Throughout this report, 2004 data are from Ministry of Planning and Development Cooperation, *Iraq Living Conditions Survey 2004*, Vol. II: *Analytical Report*, Baghdad: Central Organization for Statistics and Information Technology, Ministry of Planning and Development Cooperation, 2005, unless otherwise noted.

Employment

No men over age 23—and no females of any age—are unemployed. Most employment occurs in small, private enterprises. Women are rarely in the labor force (i.e., they are rarely working or actively looking for work), but when they are, their wages are comparable to what men earn. **Because the survey shows that young people eventually find work, Iraqi government and U.S. assistance programs should be focused on training rather than on employment generation. This focus will help raise the potential lifetime earnings of young people by providing them with better skills.** Construction, retail and wholesale trade, and transport are the major employment sectors.

Income and Standards of Living

As a province, al-Anbar is recovering economically. Households have more income—and many more consumer durables—than they had four years ago. Nevertheless, most households depend on several sources of income; salaried (mainly government) jobs are uncommon. Anbaris earn most of their income from work of one sort or another. With the great exception of food rations, which almost everyone receives, only a small percentage of income arises from transfers. More money comes from rentals and property sales, but the percentage of income arising from the sale of large assets (e.g., houses) has declined sharply from 2007 levels—a sign that economic distress is dissipating. Higher levels of education are not correlated with higher incomes. However, they *are* associated with a greater likelihood of holding a salaried job.

Ownership of ovens, stoves, televisions, and satellite receivers is universal. Half of all families even have cars. **Every household has access to a cell phone, and all report their service is reliable.** Internet access is common, but almost everyone must visit a cybercafé to use the Internet. Anbaris do continue to experience difficulty in obtaining big-ticket items. Savings, whether held in banks or in gold, are modest. Faced with unexpected expenses, such as weddings or funerals, the typical household needs help.

Education

The population in al-Anbar is for the most part a literate one. Both urban and rural inhabitants have similar rates of literacy; there is also little variation by gender. Virtually all children under the age of 16 are reported to be receiving education. However, a substantial share of Anbaris over the age of 55 received little or no education. Reflecting nationwide patterns of school attendance, about as many Anbaris in the general population are currently enrolled in some type of educational institution as are not. When young Anbaris are not literate, it is usually the result of a lack of access to schools due to their destruction during the war, a lack of transportation, and concerns that it is still too dangerous to attend.

Health

According to respondents, the four greatest problems with health care in al-Anbar are (1) the fact that a large number of health care professionals have left Iraq, (2) the lack of supplies and equipment, (3) the limited range of health services available nearby, and (4) unsanitary facilities.

When Anbaris become ill, 40 percent go to licensed physicians. A smaller portion go to nurses, but a considerable percentage uses unlicensed pharmacists (drugs are easily dispensed in al-Anbar). Nongovernmental and international organizations provide a large part of the population with the kind of services they used to get from government-run health care centers. Health care remains relatively inexpensive: Depending on the services sought, only 20–40 percent of all households report that affordability is a problem. Yet, Anbaris find it difficult to get appointments with professionals, a problem largely due to the fact that so many professionals have fled the province.

Housing and Public Infrastructure

Crowded living conditions, limited access to water, and sporadic supplies of electric power remain problems in al-Anbar. In the average household—with its seven or eight people—members sleep in one of three bedrooms. Electric power supply remains erratic, with over half of all households experiencing daily outages; in a quarter of all households, the power is off more often than on. All households supplement power from the grid with power from diesel-powered generators, which are shared with neighbors, operated by a neighborhood cooperative, or run by a private local company. Water supply is also unreliable. **However, survey respondents report that access to health care, electricity, and water is improving, although access levels are still unsatisfactory to much of the population.**

Anbaris have better access to mosques than to police stations. Ninety percent of the population can get to a mosque within 15 minutes. Less than 5 percent can get to a police station that quickly.

The Effects of War

In light of the levels of violence in al-Anbar since 2003, it is unsurprising that nearly all respondents report having been affected by war. **Nearly half of households say that a household member has been killed as a result of the conflict.** Many report that household members have disappeared, been detained, or been arrested. Exposure to crime is another byproduct of the violent conflict.

Eighteen percent of the households surveyed reported that at least one member had relocated since 2003. Violence was the main reason cited for leaving. Roughly half (59 percent) of survey respondents said that the household member who left migrated to Syria; the other members went to Jordan (12 percent), Egypt (8 percent), Sweden (6 percent), and elsewhere (15 percent).

Agriculture

Surprisingly, the role of agriculture was similar in urban and rural households. The divide between urban and rural cultures in al-Anbar is blurred; nearly everyone lives near the Euphrates and in relatively densely populated areas. **Forty percent of all households—urban and rural alike—own agricultural land; roughly the same percentage farm it, although farming is typically a secondary source of income and food.** Rural and urban households are equally as likely to own livestock. As levels of violence fell and economic activity increased between 2007 and 2008, holdings of livestock rose.