



## RETURNS WORKING GROUP- IRAQ

- ❖ **Meeting Date:** 19 June 2019
- ❖ **Meeting Time:** 10:00-11:30 hrs
- ❖ **Location:** Erbil (OCHA Conference Room, UN Compound) via bluejeans to Baghdad, OCHA Conference room

**In Attendance:** IOM, KRG-JCC, Prime Minister's Office- National Reconciliation Committee, DFID, UNDP, REACH, GIZ, SIF, PUI, Nonviolent Peaceforce, ICRC, ICRI Ta'afi, SEDO, Sama Iraq, USIP, MSF, WVI, PAO, OCHA, MERI, INTERSOS, UIMS, UN-Habitat, Handicap International, WFP, Protection Cluster, CCCM, ACTED, Mercy Corps, Mercy Hands, Blumont, UNICEF, US Embassy, Shareteah, HLP Sub-cluster, Child Protection Sub-cluster, QANDIL, UNHCR, IRCS, NRC

### Agenda Items:

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- 1) **Introduction and adoption of minutes:** Review of previous minutes; Follow up on action points from previous meeting
- 2) **Returns Update:** Update on return figures from RWG/DTM dashboard, Return Index and updates on the Integrated Location Assessment (ILA) IV
- 3) **JCC Humanitarian Situation Update:** Presentation by JCC on return requirements to Sinjar- joint assessment between Erbil and Baghdad
- 4) **Returns in Anbar:** Presentation by OCHA on the current situation on Anbar camps and forced evictions
- 5) **Area Based Assessment – Fallujah:** Presentation by REACH on the findings of the area-based assessment conducted in Fallujah city
- 6) **Proposed Solutions Framework:** Presentation and initial discussions on the process of operationalizing available information into strategies to support sustainable solutions

### Key Discussion Points/ Action:

- 1) **Introduction and adoption of minutes:** Review of previous minutes; Follow up on action points from previous meeting
  - The Chair gave an overview of the previous meeting after the introductions, as well as a review of the agenda items. The Chair also acknowledged the presence of two government counterparts: Mr. Hoshang, Director of JCC (KRG), and Mr. Sameer Adnan, a representative of the Prime Minister's office- National Reconciliation Committee in Baghdad.

## 2) Returns Update: Update on return figures from RWG/DTM dashboard, Return Index and updates on the Integrated Location Assessment (ILA) IV

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*(Presentation attached for more details)*

### **Main points:**

#### i) Return Update, (March-April 2019)

- As of April 2019, the total no. of returnees was at 4,266,882.
- The top governorates of return are Ninewa (39%), Anbar (31%) and Salah al-Din (15%)
- 144,552 returnees are living in critical shelter.
  - Mosul district hosts the largest number of returnees in critical shelter, numbering 29,982 individuals.

#### ii) Return Index

- The data for the fourth round of the Return Index was collected during the months of March and April 2019.
- It uses the same model with 16 different indicators, grouped in two scales.
- It includes a thematic briefing on reconciliation.

#### iii) Integrated Location Assessment (ILA) IV

- The ILA collects detailed information on IDP and returnee families living in locations identified through the DTM master lists. It covers over 4,000 locations.
- Each location can have up to 3 Key Informants (KI): one to answer the location-level/demographics, 1 IDP representative and/or 1 returnee representative to inform on needs and specifics for the group; end up with about 9000 KI
- The questionnaire includes general information and demography in the assessed locations, infrastructure and services, safety and security, IDP intentions and reasons, freedom of movement, living conditions, school attendance, sectoral needs, social cohesion etc.
- **Timeframe**
  - Data collection: May 1-June 30 2019
  - Data cleaning: until around July 20
  - Dataset online: August 1<sup>st</sup>
  - Factsheets: aiming for August 20
  - Final report: end of September

#### ➤ Discussion:



- The RWG Chair noted that the latest Return Index round shows that Salah al-Din and Diyala are the governorates with the most severe conditions, i.e. they host a higher percentage of returnees living in conditions of high severity.

### 3) JCC Humanitarian Situation Update: Presentation by JCC on return requirements to Sinjar- joint assessment between Erbil and Baghdad

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#### Key points:

- A joint committee was formed between Erbil and Baghdad, with several ministries also participating.
  - From KRG: Ministry of Interior, Duhok Governorate,
  - From Baghdad: MOMD, Ministry of Interior, Sinjar Administration representative
- The committee conducted an -assessment of the situation in Sinjar, which aimed to identify the key obstacles and solutions, as well what is needed to facilitate the return of IDPs (especially Yezidis) to Sinjar.
- Main issues in Sinjar:
  - Security problems arising from the presence of formal and informal armed groups, each of whom have their own agenda and not necessarily the federal government's.
  - Resurgence of ISIL groups.
  - Fear of Turkish airstrikes due to the presence of forces affiliated with PKK.
  - Fear of tribal conflict, especially retaliatory attacks.
  - Fear of IEDs and other explosives, especially in agricultural areas.
  - Lack of financial means or incentives. Many IDPs fear they will lose all assistance should they return to their areas. Humanitarian agencies have not confirmed whether they will continue assistance of these IDPs upon return.
  - Lack of programs that assist returnees.
  - Lack of recognized administration and elected representatives. The current administration has been formed by the present actors in Sinjar but has not been recognized by KRG, Ninewa governorate and Baghdad (GoI). The administration in Sinjar reportedly represents a small minority of the current population. This administrative gap has caused the cancellation of projects.
  - Lack of services
- Recommendations:
  - There should be a political agreement on the administration (that is also accepted by the Government of Iraq), which is key to facilitating everything that follows.
  - Handover of daily security to the local police.

- Deliver a tailored financial program to support the return of IDPs, including financial assistance (around 4-5 million IQD), which they can use to rebuild their houses and livelihoods.

➤ Discussion:

- The RWG Chair noted that there should indeed be more agency focus on rural areas due to the agricultural lands in those areas which are still contaminated, also adding that a service mapping of Sinjar will be made soon.
- The Protection Cluster mentioned that there was recent joint mission to the Sinjar mountains led by OCHA which aimed to assess the nature of the site for the purpose of assistance provision. One of the recommendations of the revision of the notes will be published shortly, in which it confirms that there are indeed multiple armed actors on the ground. One of the main recommendations to humanitarian partners interested in working in the area is to conduct a risk mitigation analysis in terms of to what extent we can push interventions without breaching humanitarian principles, as humanitarian actors should always try to strike a balance in between humanitarian imperative and not compromising ourselves too much. Humanitarian partners are also waiting to see what the KRG and federal Iraqi government can do together to address some of the issues through their joint assessment.
- JCC added that the Sinjar IDPs currently don't trust anyone (regardless of the authorities in the area), and there should be more focus towards rebuilding that trust through practical action.

**4) Returns in Anbar:** Presentation by OCHA on the current situation on Anbar camps and forced evictions

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**Key points:**

- Escalation of evictions in Anbar began on Thursday (13 June), when Anbar Operations Command (AOC) entered HTC and AAF camps and threatened IDPs from Qaim and Garma to return to their areas of origin, having identified 357 families from Qaim and 140 families from Garma. To strengthen their position and coerce people into returning, AOC imposed severe movement restrictions on IDPs from those two districts, gave them an extremely short notice period to leave the camps, maintained armed actors to carry out evictions, forced IDPs to sign an undertaking stating that the return is voluntary when leaving the camps, and falsely announcing that they have obtained security clearance for the majority (consequently, many families were sent back to the camps by armed actors after they had attempted to return). No considerations were made for the safe return of IDPs. Hence, the Humanitarian Coordinator (HC) wrote to the National Operations Centre (NOC) and the Prime Minister's office stating the issue, and an immediate stop was put to all returns.



- The situation arose again on Tuesday (18 June), when once again AOC entered the camps announcing that IDPs from Ramadi and Fallujah must leave. People are currently being rounded up. The National Operations Centre are currently in contact with the Prime Minister's office to speak to AOC. Talks are underway to reach an agreement that would be satisfactory and dignified to all sides involved.

➤ Discussion:

- UIMS mentioned that they are monitoring returns in Anbar step by step and confirmed OCHA's point that all returns from 13 June have been involuntary and forced by the Army. UIMS also added that a meeting took place in AAF on 17<sup>th</sup> June between camp management and AOC to discuss return issues and return procedures, where they agreed to merge some camps that held low numbers of families. UIMS played a basic role in coordinating between the local government and the federal government concerning this return and continues to send updates on involuntary returns to UN agencies, donors and MOMD.
- OCHA reiterated that government actors (including JCMC and MOMD) in Anbar continue insisting to the Prime Minister and National Operations Centre that these returns are voluntary, a problem that needs to be addressed by government colleagues in Anbar.
  - The PM representative mentioned that the government supports voluntary returns and that he will follow up whatever issues that may arise, also suggesting that a delegation comprised of government representatives and UN agencies be formed to visit the camps and confirm the issue of forced returns.
- OCHA mentioned that they understand there are reasons behind security actors pushing for returns. However, as willing as humanitarian partners are in working with the government, AOC are not even working with their own government, while rarely heeding orders from above. Threats against IDPs must stop.

**5) Area Based Assessment – Fallujah:** Presentation by REACH on the findings of the area-based assessment conducted in Fallujah city

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*(Presentation attached for more details)*

**Key points:**

- 18% of IDPs from Fallujah district residing in camps intended to return to their area of origin (AoO) in the 12 months following the data collection, compared to only 5% of in-camp IDPs nationally
- Top three reasons for not intending to return:
  - Lack of financial means

- Home damaged or destroyed
- Perceived lack of livelihood generating activities
- Nearly all of the assessed population were returnee households (99%).
- Average length of displacement was approximately 2.5 years.
- None of the households intended to move from their current location in the 3 months after data collection.
- Top three self-reported priority needs were employment (63%), medical care (62%), and food (32%).
- Only 33% of adult individuals were reportedly earning an income.
- Residents between the age of 18 to 29 were most commonly without work (76%).
- 47% of all adult males were actively seeking work (and 8% of all females).
- Fewer employment opportunities were reportedly available in Fallujah, compared to pre-ISIL levels.
- All residents actively seeking work reported facing obstacles. The primary obstacles to employment were increased competition (86%) and lack of family/personal connections (27%).
- 18% of residents required access to health services or treatment (including medicine) in the three months prior to data collection.
- Especially lack of medicines for chronic diseases.
- 5% of school-aged children (6-17 years) in Fallujah were not attending formal education during last school year.
- 87% of households with piped water as primary drinking water source reported that the piped water was not clean enough to drink.
- In some neighbourhoods not all HH have access to public grid electricity.
- Solid waste collection not (sufficiently) available in some neighborhoods. Especially in (rural) north and south of Fallujah lack of services. Residents are reportedly dumping waste in open areas.
- 22% of households reported their current living space is damaged.
- 10% of households reported to have lost or had stolen land or property since June 2016.

**6) Proposed Solutions Framework:** Presentation and initial discussions on the process of operationalizing available information into strategies to support sustainable solutions

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*(Presentation attached for more details)*

**Key points:**

- Nearly two-thirds of IDPs plan to remain in their places of displacement over the next 12 months.
- IDPs originally from Diyala and Baghdad governorates are less willing to return within the year. IDPs from Salah al-Din and Kirkuk governorates are more likely to report that they want to return within the year than the average.



- Locations with ethno-religious diversity and severe social cohesion and safety issues are more likely to have housing destruction than those with homogeneous populations or less severe social cohesion and safety issues.
- Obstacles to return are overlapping and non-exclusive; 'material' obstacles like housing, basic services and livelihoods also have more complex social cohesion and security issues which must be addressed first or concurrently with the material ones.
- Operationalization/ Ongoing work
  - Roundtable discussion on protracted displacement: Held in Erbil on 15th May, 2019 and brought together humanitarian, development, donors and KRI government stakeholders. Purpose was to:
    - i) Present and discuss in-depth findings of various researches conducted recently on protracted displacement, drivers of integration, mental health as an obstacle to return and conditions in areas of return and displacement.
    - ii) To provide a platform to begin the process of operationalizing the information into strategies and frameworks to support durable solutions for IDPs.
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- How can we better facilitate durable solutions?
  - We need to prioritize assistance on the basis of geography, population groups and categories, i.e. service or material interventions, social cohesion, negotiation, and adopt a data driven approach
  - More intensive engagement with national, governorate and local authorities to prioritize interventions, prioritize geographic areas and unblock areas of return.
  - However, the success of this engagement depends on the scale up of activities in key sectors, both humanitarian and recovery. This includes, especially, reconciliation, rehabilitation of basic services, sustainable livelihood and shelter for categories 3 and 4.
  - Create **clear and achievable operational plans** at local level that donors can support

➤ Discussion:

- DFID inquired on how this proposed solutions framework link to the GRC ToR and the Principled Return Framework.

- IOM explained that the proposed framework is still a skeleton document. The GRC is still the primary vehicle through which activities are implemented and prioritized and strategies are developed at governorate level, so the framework is not meant to compete but rather to guide. Furthermore, the Principled Returns Framework underpins this proposed framework and that this framework is meant to be more on the operational side, whereas the Principled Returns Framework is meant to be used as a guide to uphold certain principles related to return.
- The RWG Co-chair added that GRC is more of a humanitarian coordination platform with very little link to development and recovery. The idea of the proposed solutions framework is to include development actors as well as the government in order to ensure sustainable returns. In addition, the co-chair added that the current framework is under revision by ICCG and by other partners.