

ADVOCACY NOTE: MOMD RETURN GRANT

1. Background and current status:

- **Date of initial disbursement:** The Ministry of Migration and Displacement (MOMD) officially announced on 26th July 2019, that the disbursement of the return grants will begin on **Sunday, 28th July 2019**.
- **Total budget of the return grant:** At present, the total amount is now 50 billion IQD. This follows additional funds of 10 billion IQD to the initially announced 40 billion IQD. However, the amount per returnee family still remains 1.5 million IQD, but the no. of targeted returnee families shall increase.
- **No. of targeted beneficiaries:** Previous families target was 26,666, however upon receipt of the additional 10 billion IQD, such target has now increased to 33,300 families. This target was selected based on the current budget available and amount to be allocated to each family benefitting from the grant, (i.e. IQD 50 billion divide by IQD 1.5 million= 33,300).
- **Methodology of disbursement:** This will be based on the returnees who registered with MOMD, on a first come first serve basis, i.e. returnees who registered their return with MOMD since the initial returns happened. This is essentially meant to encourage more IDPs to register their return. In addition, the disbursement shall be done in 3 groups, with the first group having 12,000 families, 2nd group 11,000 families and 3rd group 10,000 families.
- **Mode of payment:** The disbursement of the grants will be done via Q cards. Understandably, the Q card system had been stopped all over Iraq. However, MOMD received exceptional permission from COMSEC to keep using the Q card to disburse the return grant, as changing the mode of payment to smart card system will add extra costs and time.
- **Vulnerable caseload:** MOMD has specified a 'humanitarian caseload' (within the total caseload of 33,300), which are essentially the most vulnerable. The total no. of this caseload is 1,333 families and is to be approved by the MOMD Minister. Nine cases have so far been approved for disbursement by the Minister. To note is that these families will receive the same amount of 1.5 million IQD, difference being their payment will be expedited regardless of the date of registration.

Below is a summary breakdown of the disbursement of the return grants per governorate for the first round. From the below summary, Ninewa followed by Anbar have the highest no. of families receiving return grants in this round.

Governorate	No. of Households to be issued with return grants (1 st round)
Ninewa	4,313
Kirkuk	977
Salah al Din	1,389
Anbar	2,325
Diyala	1,689
Baghdad	1,313
TOTAL	12,006

2. Consolidated ICCG feedback and advocacy points on the Return Grant:

i) Communication on the disbursement of the grants:

- The **methodology of the disbursement of the grants** should be communicated widely, as returnees/ IDPs seem not to be aware of the process, who is targeted and why they are targeted. For instance, on 29th July, returnees in Sinjar complained that they did not receive the return grant among those targeted in Ninewa. Given that the grant targets those who registered and on a first come first serve basis, a total of only 23 households had registered their return in Sinjar- according to MOMD database- with 6 families registered in 2018 and 7 families registered in 2019. Furthermore, the the principle behind the first come first serve methodology is unclear. With the limited amount of budget available, the usage of a targeting methodology would be a more appropriate option. The experience of the Social Safety Net programme launched in 2004 by MOLSA and reformed in 2014 with the introduction of a Proxy Mean Test (PMT), shows that the introduction of such targeting methodology (against the classic categorical targeting) allows to free a wide amount of budget and ensures a better allocation of resources to those most in need.
- **Feedback mechanism:** It is proposed that MOMD to put in place a feedback complaint mechanism to centralize/ channel all feedback from IDPs/ returnees and a means to respond to the complaints, and respond to all feedback or complaints received in a timely and confidential manner. There should also be an appeals process in place, if MoMD staff decide that a returnee HH is ineligible for arbitrary or discriminatory reasons.
- The first disbursement of the return grants for the 12,000 families was carried out on 28th July. Since then, disbursements for the second and third disbursements scheduled for 2019 has not been communicated.
- There are **several funds currently distributed (or in the process of) by MOMD/ GOI** to various affected population in addition to the return grant, i.e. Yazidi survivor's grant, livelihoods grant¹,

¹ MOMD has issued another grant since May/ June 2019- the livelihoods grant - to target various returnees in their areas of origin. The grant per family is also IQD 1.5 million per household, similar to the return grant.

as well as compensation scheme for housing, property etc. There needs to be a clear communication on the different grants - to make beneficiaries and international community aware of the various funding schemes including the methodology, beneficiaries targets, eligibility criteria, registration requirements (documents needed), timeframe etc.

➤ **Advocacy points:**

The international community requests MOMD to:

- Enhance and streamline the communication of the return grants' methodology to effectively inform IDPs/ returnees, as well as the date of the forthcoming 2nd and 3rd disbursements.
- Revisit the principle of the first come first serve methodology, so as to prioritize the ones most in need. With the limited amount of budget for return grants available, the harmonization of a targeting methodology would be a more appropriate option in order to maximize the usage of the available resources.
- Put in place a feedback complaint mechanism to centralize/ channel all feedback from IDPs/ returnees as well as an appeals process for returnees that may be ineligible for the grant.
- Clarify whether if a returnee household receives one type of grant from MOMD, if that makes them ineligible for another type of grant.

ii) **Registration:**

- While there are more than 717,000 families who have already returned to their area of origin, **only 244,970 families have been registered** in MOMD database as of 18th August 2019, with additional 181,053 families return files received but not registered in the MOMD database.
- Initially, displaced families reportedly **did not register their return** with MOMD so they could continue to **benefit from IDP assistance or they had no incentive in registering as a returnee due to the lack of benefit in doing so (financial or otherwise)**, and **return to displacement sites** should conditions in the areas of origin not be conducive forfor durable return. However, since the disbursement of the first return grant, returnee families are now registering all at once, and MOMD branches in the governorates are overwhelmed with the number of families coming to register daily. Furthermore, MOMD have continually expressed the need to strengthen their capacity to be able to carry out registration due to the manual data entry as well as lack of sufficient staff to complete the registration in a timely manner.
- **Data protection:** The names of families to benefit from the return grant are published on MOMD website, which includes all the details of the head of household receiving the grant and thus has protection implications i.e. returnees – especially the most vulnerable, including female-headed households - are thereby exposed to risk of theft, exploitation and abuse.

➤ **Advocacy points:**

The international community calls on MOMD to:

- Advice if there is a mechanism/ plan to increase the number of returnees registered in their database, and the support required- both from the government and international community- to speed up the registration process.
- Clarify the types of documentation needed for returnees to provide in order to register with MoMD (e.g. civil ID card, nationality certificate, PDS card, etc.), whether a departure letter issued by CCCM actor to prove that they were displaced, and if so- how non-camp IDPs can prove that they were displaced.
- Safeguard IDP/ returnee data, by limiting the amount of returnee data information published on MOMD website.

iii) Funding ‘shortfalls’:

- While a total of 50 billion IQD has been allocated for the return grant in 2019 to benefit 333,000 returnee families (**4% of the entire returnee population**), this leaves approximately 4684,000 returnee families (out of the total 717,000 displaced families who have already returned to their area of origin) yet to benefit from the return grant. An **additional 1.02 trillion IQD will be required (approximately USD 855 million)** to meet this gap and reach the remaining returnee population.
- Pursuant to this, MOMD states that **IQD 420 billion was reallocated from the Ministry’s budget** in 2019 to other ministries, thus they are unable to augment additional resources to the return grant.

➤ **Advocacy points:**

In this regard, the humanitarian community:

- Requests the **plan for allocation** and disbursement of funds in the coming years to meet the remaining returnee caseload.
- **Scale up of the return grant** in the coming year to reach more returnee households. With only 333,000 returnees reached in 2019, should the trend and allocation of the return grant continue at IQD 50 billion each year, this would take **21 years to complete the disbursement** of the return grant to all returnees.

iv) Methodology:

- **Families with perceived affiliation:** The return grant targets only those families who have registered their return. In this regard, families with perceived affiliation to extremist groups are bound to not benefit from this grant- as they cannot return due to lack of security clearance, or not allowed to return by tribal leaders upon return to their area of origin.
- **Blocked returns:** In addition, families who face additional obstacles to return related to tribal or security issues, i.e. blocked returns by security actors in areas of origin, illegal occupation of their housing by others, tribal related issues etc. and are at risk of protracted displacement and will not be able access the return grants.

- **Vulnerability:** Returnee families who initially registered their return early on in 2015 and 2016 when return movements were first witnessed may not always be vulnerable, as the conditions in their area of origin may not be severe- allowing them to return and restart their lives.
 - Furthermore, if those who returned earlier are the only ones who will benefit (for the time being, given budgetary constraints), there isn't much incentive for more recent returnees to register their return with MoMD.
 - In addition, if data on individuals unable to return is not tracked by MoMD specifically, the issuance of grants may not reach the most vulnerable or the category of most vulnerable may be based on gender and status rather than inability to return which may not truly serve the most vulnerable.

- **Humanitarian caseload:** The criteria used to identify the 'humanitarian caseload' of 1,333 families is not known, which may raise additional concerns from beneficiaries.
 - **Advocacy points:**
 - Need for enhanced coordination regarding the grant between MOMD and local governorates who are planning to close camps, as well as coordination with local authority and international partners and flexibility in the timeline of issuance of grants so as to ensure returnees who are unable to return are prioritized and offered grants.
 - **Mode of payment:** Advocate for alternative payment methods to be established in cases where returnees never possessed or no longer possess Q cards. For instance, cash disbursements are used for the Yezidi survivor grant.
 - **Humanitarian caseload:** MOMD should provide information on what vulnerability criteria is used. This way humanitarian partners can disseminate such information among returnees, and possibly assist in the identification of the most vulnerable.