



RETURNS WORKING GROUP- IRAQ

- ❖ **Meeting Date:** 23 July 2019
- ❖ **Meeting Time:** 10:00-11:30 hrs
- ❖ **Location:** Erbil (IOM Conference Room, Gulan Rd.) via bluejeans to Baghdad, UNDP Meeting room

In Attendance: IOM, World Vision Iraq, GIZ, Mine Action Sub-Cluster, Mercy Hands, Solidarites International, DRC, CCCM Cluster, Shelter Cluster, PAO, Mercy Corps, Geneva Call, INTERSOS, Social Inquiry, Chemonics, FAO, COOPI, OCHA, Anbar Government, Sanad, ICRC, CIVIC, Blumont, SCI, MSF, NPA, PUI, UNDP, HLP Sub-Cluster, UNAMI/ JAU, IRCS, UNHCR, Protection Cluster, MOMD, UNICEF, Australian Embassy, OFDA

Agenda Items:

- 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 and Return Index round 4 findings
- 3) **Anbar Governorate Return Committee:** Presentation by the Anbar Governor Advisor for IDP Affairs on recent returns in Anbar, and 2019 priorities in Anbar to facilitate returns
- 4) **Yazidi Survivor's Grant:** Presentation by MOMD on assistance currently being given to Yazidis in form of a survivor's grant
- 5) **Mine contamination in Hamdaniya:** Presentation from Norwegian People's Aid on survey of mine contamination in Hamdaniya district as an obstacle to return
- 6) **AOB**

Key Discussion Points/ Action:

- 1) **Introduction and adoption of minutes:** Review of previous minutes; Follow up on action points from previous meeting
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- 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 representatives, Mr. Mazin Abu Risha, the Anbar governor's adviser for IDP affairs and head of the Anbar

Governorate Return Committee (GRC), and Mr. Amer Abbas from the Ministry of Migration and Displaced (MOMD).

2) Returns Update: Update on return figures from RWG/DTM dashboard and Return Index round 4 findings

(Presentation attached for more details)

Main points:

i) Return Update, DTM Round 110 (May-June 2019)

- As of June 2019, the total no. of returnees was at 4,305,138.
- In the last 6 months, there have been 139,818 new returns.
- Ninewa remains the top governorate of return by number of returnees, followed by Anbar and Salah al-Din.
- The highest percentage increase was noted in the district of Tarmia, in Baghdad, with a 37% return rate in the last 6 months.
- The highest proportion of returnees living in critical shelters are found in Baghdad and Diyala, with 7% (5,850 returnees) and 10% (21,702 returnees) respectively.

ii) Return Index

- The data for the fourth round of the Return Index was collected during the months of March and April 2019
- During Round 4, an additional 17 locations of return were assessed.
- This report also presents a comparative analysis between rounds 3 and 4.
- An increase in the number of returnees living in severe or poor conditions has been observed in comparison with the previous Report Round 3 published in March 2019. Of the 1,564 assessed return locations, 286 present severe conditions (12% or 514,644 individuals) of the returnee population.
- Compared to Round 3, the highest increase was observed in Baghdad and Anbar governorates, where an additional 8,136 and 72,456 individuals, respectively, were found to be living in severe conditions. This is mainly due to increases in the districts of Falluja in Anbar caused by a deterioration of the situation on both scales 1 and 2 (employment access, the number of armed actors and concern for harassment at checkpoints) and Mahmoudiya in Baghdad, mostly due to previously unreported house destruction.
- Salah al-Din also presents the highest intra-governorate proportion of returnees living in severe conditions (30%), along with Diyala (23%).



- Forty-two locations hosting 33,234 returnees, were identified as having the most severe return conditions. The top five of these locations remain in Tooz District in Salah al-Din Governorate, home to 5,585 returnees.

iii) Integrated Location Assessment (ILA)

- Number of Assessed Locations: 3,645
- All but 44 locations were assessed in person (others by phone due to security reasons (violence, IEDs, mines, etc.) and 1 location because of logistic reasons (no road, broken bridge, etc.).
- 67 locations were inaccessible and unassessable.
- Important to keep in mind that this is **NON-CAMP ONLY** when doing analysis and looking at figures.
- Preliminary findings will be presented at next ICCG and AWG
- Dashboards for HNO indicators will be available at the end of the month

3) **Anbar Governorate Return Committee:** Presentation by the Anbar Governor Advisor for IDP Affairs on recent returns in Anbar, and 2019 priorities in Anbar to facilitate returns

(Presentation attached for more details)

Key points from the Anbar Governor Advisor for IDP affairs:

- From the start, the Anbar governorate has been working to clear Anbar of ISIL extremists and to facilitate the voluntary return of IDPs, and that every return that has taken place was voluntary.
- As facilitating the return of IDPs in Anbar is a huge task, a few problems can occur from time to time, but they can be resolved quickly.
- Cooperation with local authorities, central government (including MOMD) and international partners have yielded successful results in Anbar, from the start of the displacement crisis to the return of IDPs.
- Anbar governorate fully supports voluntary returns, and currently needs support in bringing stability to liberated areas and facilitating the return of IDPs, as many areas require rehabilitation.
- Anbar has witnessed a very high return rate and is one of the top governorates of return. A high level of coordination exists between Anbar government and MOMD, security actors, international organizations and NGOs.
- Anbar is a province of tribal nature and that many IDPs feared that certain conflicts may arise within the governorate. However, coordination with international organizations and security actors has helped facilitate the return of many IDPs and so far, no security problems have been registered

among returning IDPs. Most problems were resolved through cooperation with organizations, tribal leaders and security actors.

- The Anbar government has been monitoring IDP issues and many assessment findings (e.g. CCCM surveys) largely match the findings of the Anbar government.
- Only 2 camps remain in Anbar: AAF and HTC. The camps used to host large populations but many of the IDPs were able to return and the figures are much lower now.
- The IDPs who remain in camps are mainly those whose houses have been destroyed, have security concerns and/ or lack livelihood opportunities. Therefore, support and cooperation are needed from the international community to end this displacement and suffering.
- It was previously mentioned during this RWG meeting that Ninewa has the highest number of returnees, but it is in fact Anbar that hosts the highest number of returnees.
- Anbar has several success stories, first being the prevention of the separation/ isolation of families facing security concerns from the rest of the populations. This is in contrast to places like Mosul and Salah al-Din, where perceived affiliated families have been separated from other populations in the camps. The Anbar government does not accept this separation policy and supports the mixing of populations, while acknowledging that the law should take care of the affiliated people and that women and children are not to be blamed. Secondly, there used to be a high rate of families who faced security concerns (around 70%), whereas that rate is much lower now (around 20-25%). Via the National Reconciliation Committee of the Prime Minister's office, the Anbar government was able to secure the return of most of these families (mostly women and children), while male members of these families were left to the law.
- Coordination with organizations, security actors and other government entities has led to successful results on the ground.
- Claims that armed actors are coercing people to return are untrue and any problems that do occur have been resolved rather quickly, sometimes even through a phone call. The Anbar government only supports returns if they are voluntary. We accept that a task of this size will have individual problems, but the Anbar government would like to assure partners that no coercion is taking place.
- Support to affected people should be balanced, i.e. both the IDPs in camps and the returnees in their areas of origin should be targeted.
- The Anbar government is thankful and fully supportive of the pilot project initiated by IOM and IRC in Anbar, where 250 families are being targeted in the initial stage. This would encourage more IDPs to return. Anbar government also asks other organizations to support this project as such contributions would end issues IDPs face in camps. As the local government, they permit the freedom of movement of these families and for them to visit and check their homes.
- To conclude, it is important to acknowledge the poor state of the camps and that they cannot properly shelter IDPs neither in winter nor summer, and that more support should be given to these families to try and help them return to their areas of origin.



➤ Discussion:

- The Protection Cluster questioned whether armed actors in camps threatening people, movement restrictions being imposed, humanitarian actors being denied from providing assistance, and tents being burned can be characterized as “voluntary return”.
 - The Anbar Governor Advisor reiterated that the Anbar government supports only voluntary returns and that these claims are false. Furthermore, due to the tribal nature of Anbar, the local government knows the people well and have always supported humanitarian assistance being provided to them.
 - The Protection Cluster mentioned that it is widely acknowledged and confirmed by partners on the ground that these acts of coercion have been happening. Furthermore, coordination meetings with humanitarian actors were always being arranged after these incidents have taken place, i.e. GRC meetings get called only after forced returns have already started. Coordination requires prior consultation and outcomes that every side agrees to, and that doesn't seem to be the case in Anbar. People had been segregated in Kilo 18 (before it was closed) and continue to be segregated.
 - The Anbar Governor Advisor once again explained that as Head of the Anbar GRC, who is also present on the field, he does not accept coerced returns and he is responsible for everything he says. He added that he was ready to meet any time (as was the case in the last GRC meeting in Baghdad, where he brought AOC with him), and that he can always be reached on his phone in case there are issues – adding that any problem can be resolved immediately. Furthermore, the Anbar government does not wait for the problem to happen before holding a meeting. The cooperation between the government (local and central) and organizations is very crucial, and he stressed that without the NGOs and international partners, there wouldn't be much success. Coordination with organizations is always done prior to any action. He mentioned as an example the consolidation of certain camps, where he had a different opinion on the consolidation from that of the organizations, but nevertheless went with the organizations' idea and not his. He believes that in terms of coordination with partners, Anbar has done a better job than the other governorates, and that the accusations are inaccurate. He stressed again that problems that do occur are individual and can be resolved by a phone call.
- DFID asked whether a feedback mechanism was available inside the camps, and how the Anbar government receives feedback from IDPs.
 - The Anbar Governor Advisor explained that there are teams from the Anbar governorate office within the camps that receive feedback and requests from the IDPs, and that the

Anbar government (including himself) are very close to the IDPs on the ground and are in direct contact at times.

4) Yazidi survivor's grant: Presentation by MOMD on assistance currently being given to Yazidis in form of a survivor's grant

(Presentation attached for more details)

Key points:

- 899 individuals have been identified as Yezidi survivors.
- They live in camps in the Kurdistan region, especially in Duhok.
- They mostly descend from Northern Iraq, specifically Sinjar and Bashiqa in Ninewa.
- The number of kidnapped Yezidis was 6,417 individuals, 3,451 of whom have been freed.
- In terms of relief, the ministry distributes assistance to in-camp Yazidi families on a monthly basis
- Other MOMD efforts towards Yazidi survivors include distribution of financial grants to Yazidis living in the Kurdistan region, checking/ monitoring their monthly needs, providing legal assistance/ guarantees.
- Date of first grant disbursement: 18 April 2019
- Reasons for grant: 1) Compensate Yezidi survivors 2) Implementation of Decision 735-679 of the High Committee for the Relief and Shelter of Displaced families
- 730 grants have been received by survivors as of 22 July 2019
- The amount of the grant is 2,000,000 (2 million) IQD, provided to each Yezidi survivor
- The grants are distributed directly by MOMD teams
- Challenges and issues
 - The name and status description given to Yezidis (abductees)
 - Psychological situation
 - Lack of stability
 - Camps / Housing
 - Ratios of females to males
 - Social/ religious stigma
 - Unemployment
 - Fate unknown, unclear future
- Proposed solutions
 - Form a joint team to visit the survivors
 - Prioritize them in terms of service provision
 - Include them in the social protection network
 - Schools for psychological rehabilitation



- Issue religious directives that support the position of Yazidis (both male and female)
- Medium- and long-term proposals
 - Including them in income-generating programs
 - Effective contribution to their return and protection
 - Continuous communication and follow-up with the Yazidis in question

➤ Discussion:

- IOM inquired on what source of data MOMD used to identify the 899 Yazidi survivors.
 - MOMD mentioned that the data comes from a combination of data sources from MOMD and international organizations that work in KRI, as well through coordination with the KRG's Ministry of Interior
- DFID asked what the current level of coordination is between MOMD and other organizations that aid Yazidis, since many organizations target Yazidis for assistance.
 - MOMD explained that they hold monthly meetings with organizations and are in close communication with them.

5) Mine contamination in Hamdaniya: Presentation from Norwegian People's Aid on survey of mine contamination in Hamdaniya district as an obstacle to return

(Presentation, including lists of assessed villages, attached for more details)

Key points:

- According to 2019 HNO (MCNA/ Intentions survey)
 - 22% of IDPs in camps cited explosive hazards as top reason for not intending to return
 - 12% of IDPs outside of camps cited explosive hazards as top reason for not intending to return
 - 6% of returnee households reported having members disabled due to explosive hazards
- NPA is conducting a comprehensive survey on 'Explosive Ordnance' contamination in several districts in Ninewa.
- Details on the actual contamination situation of villages MAY assist in a more informed decision for those IDPs with AoO of these villages considering return.
- NPA cannot assure 100% safety. NPA makes the application of 'all reasonable effort' in accordance with International Mine Action Standards (IMAS).
- The situation on the ground may change and the local authorities should be contacted for updates.
- 39 villages had no evidence of contamination can be found

- 57 villages had some evidence, i.e. spots – singular items of UXO/IED's located and reported to ISF for disposal, but no evidence of explosive ordnance denying use of HLP exists.
- 42 villages had evidence of explosives, i.e.:
 - Spots – singular items of UXO/IED's located and reported to ISF for disposal
 - Hazardous Area – areas identified where multiple IED's are laid
 - Areas are mapped and records held with local authorities
- Purpose: Aid in impacting returnee decision-making by removing or reducing the fear of return, based on the actual evidence gained by NPA's Non-technical Survey results, conducted in accordance with International Mine Action Standards.
- Implementation
 - NPA has a 5-person team whom has Risk Education tasking authorisation from the Directorate of Mine Action (DMA) for Mosul, Hamdaniya and Tarkaif Districts and could pass the message directly if access to relevant IDPs is possible.
 - NPA could provide this information in the form of a 'factsheet' handout for protection cluster partners to pass onto IDPs from relevant AoO's.
 - Partners would be asked to measure the activity via completing a simple form (Survey 123 Form)
 - In February 2020, feedback will be sought on how the information is received, level of interest, does it achieve the purpose or not would be requested from partners.
 - If results have significant impact, implementation may be considered for wider scale