



## RETURNS WORKING GROUP- IRAQ

- ❖ **Meeting Date:** 28 July 2020
- ❖ **Meeting Time:** 10:00-11:30 hrs
- ❖ **Location:** Webex connection

**In Attendance:** UNMAS, INTERSOS, Save the Children, UNAMI, Child Protection Sub-cluster, Shelter Cluster, PAO, Nonviolent Peaceforce, ASB, Nahri, Mercy Corps, DRC, CPI, UNHCR, SWEDO, Mine Action Sub-Cluster, WFP, Geneva Call, Mercy Hands, US-PRM, GIZ, CCCM Cluster, IOM

### 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; Update on Emergency Tracking for Sinjar returns; Salah Al-din Return Index Governorate Profile
- 3) **Situational Update on Returns:** Update on returns to Sinjar from Dohuk and Ninewa from OCHA; Sulaymaniyah returns to Salah Al-din ; Salah al-din governorate: Yathrib Return Follow-up Committee; Returns to Al-Auja and Tooz; Other returns; IHCHCR initiative
- 4) **Durable Solutions Network:** Update on voluntary returns project support to support durable solutions in Anbar
- 5) **AOB**

### Action Points to follow up by next meeting:

Action	By who
To share additional information of Ayadiya Needs	Nonviolent Peaceforce
To share Sulaymaniya Camps Intentions Survey	Protection Cluster

### 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.



## 2) Returns Update: Update on return figures from RWG/ DTM dashboard and return index; Update on Emergency Tracking for Sinjar returns; Salah Al-Din Return Index Governorate Profile

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*(Presentation attached for more details)*

### **Main points:**

#### i) Return Update

- As of June 2020, there are 4,718,130 returnees (individuals), while 1,381,332 individuals remain in displacement.
- 68% of IDPs live in private settings, 24% in camps, and 8% in critical shelter.
- 94% of returnees live in their habitual residence, while 4% of returnees live in critical shelter.

#### ii) Return Index round 9

- The number of returnees has continued to increase and as of 30 June 2020, an additional 115,806 returnees were identified, reaching a total of 4,706,928 returnees (784,488 households).
- Out of the 2,013 return locations assessed, 487 present severe conditions hosting 14% of the returnee population (659,082 individuals).
- The largest increases in number of returnees living in severe conditions were recorded in Ninewa (108,558), Diyala (33,546) and Anbar (19,506) governorates.

#### iii) Return Index Governorate Profile: Salah al-Din Governorate

- Salah al-Din Governorate hosts 680,000 returnees out of 4.66 million across Iraq (15%), that is, the third largest returnee population after Ninewa and Anbar governorates. It has 200,000 individuals living in high severity conditions (30 per cent of the governorate's total returnee population), that is, the largest number of returnees living in such conditions within a single governorate across the country.
- In terms of the shelter situation upon return, 36,084 returnees live in critical shelters, spread across 133 locations.
- Between September 2019 and February 2020, DTM tracked 13,842 individuals (2,307 households) who left the camps for other non-camp settings in Salah al-Din Governorate.
- Among these, 13,614 individuals (98 per cent) returned to their subdistricts of origin, while the remaining 228 (2 per cent) moved to new locations of displacement, thus becoming non-camp IDPs.
- Forty-two per cent of these are now living in high severity conditions (almost evenly split between Baiji and Al-Shirqat districts), while the remaining 58 per cent are mainly living in medium severity conditions.



#### iv) Emergency Tracking for Sinjar returns

- Since 8 June 2020, DTM has activated an Emergency Tracking assessment on the recent displacement movements to Sinjar and Al-Ba'aj districts in Ninewa governorate.
- This presentation includes an overview of these movements between 8 June and 19 July, and highlights the most updated figures for 17-19 July.
- An average of 258 individuals have arrived in Sinjar per day, while an average of 23 individuals have arrived to Al-Ba'aj per day
- Between 17-19 July, the most common sub-districts of arrival were Al-Shamal (75%) and Markaz Sinjar (15%). Together, these two sub-districts comprise 84% of all individuals that have arrived in Sinjar and Al-Ba'aj since data collection commenced on 8 June.

### 3) **Situational update on returns:** Update on returns to Sinjar from Dohuk and Ninewa; Sulaymaniyah returns to Salah Al-din; Salah al-din governorate: Yathrib Return Follow-up Committee; Returns to Al-Auja and Tooz; Other returns; IHCHCR initiative

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#### i) Updates on returns to Sinjar and Baaj:

- According to the updates received from the Joint Crisis Coordination Center on 21 July (JCCC), about 2,251 families (13,506 individuals) have returned to Sinjar district since the beginning of June 2020. The majority are Yazidis who were IDPs in Duhok camps and non-camp locations, with less than 10% of Muslims who returned to south of Sinjar (mainly to Rambousy and Qabosia village).
- The returnees are mainly returning to Sinjar, Sinuni center, Al-Qahtania center, Sinjar mountain, Qayrawan center, and Aljazeera complex, in addition to a few other locations.
- The main reasons for this new wave of return are reportedly; first to re-join family members that are working with security/military forces and are not able to return to Duhok due to the lockdown and preventative measures. The second reason is to find better job opportunities in Sinjar since opportunities are very scarce in Duhok.
- The Mayor of Sinjar reported that between 16,000 to 20,000 houses were damaged in the area during the conflict, therefore only 65 percent of the returnees were able to return to their houses, while 35 percent of the returnees have reportedly ended up as IDPs in the other locations in secondary displacement.
- Sinjar MoMD committee has been established in Sinjar, under the jurisdiction of the Telafar MoMD department. The registration of returnees for the return grants is ongoing.
- The Mayor of Sinjar has announced that they are planning to start a range of infrastructure rehabilitation projects especially in the new return areas.



- The OCHA Ninewa sub office is working in collaboration with the OCHA Dohuk sub office on developing a response matrix to capture the response interventions. Once finalized will be shared with all relevant partners.
- Drinking water, shelter and primary healthcare were identified as priority needs.
- HLP-related concerns are also on the increase due to the occupation of other people's houses by some returnee families. MoMD has requested for shelter support for 200 families that are reportedly occupying other people's houses.
- The Mayor of Sinjar reported that the number of returnees recently substantially decreased due to following reasons: Lack of public services, mainly water and electricity; Shelter damage; Presence of illegal security forces in the area (especially in the mountain); Social tensions among different ethno-religious groups of the community especially between Sunni Muslims and Yazidis.

Discussion:

- The HLP sub-cluster added the following points:
  - To address the needs related to the phenomenon of the secondary occupations of the houses and other HLP related issues in Sinjar, the HLP Sub-cluster (HLP SC) has established an ad hoc HLP Task Force to better coordinate and improve the response towards Sinjar and to address the recent HLP concerns.
  - The Compensation Sub-committee Office is opened, and it is located to the Agriculture Directorate/Admiration building in Sinjar but not yet fully operational due to lack of logistic and office furniture.
  - HLP SC has been working closely with the Office of Migration and Displacement in Sinjar requesting from the court, Migration Office and Compensation Office in Sinjar to receive the list of the logistic needs in order to speed up the process of opening the offices. HLP Sub-cluster has been following this issue closely and has been advocating with its partners constantly to open the compensation office in Sinjar
- WFP asked whether needs regarding livelihoods and food security have been prioritized in Sinjar.
  - OCHA explained that the current prioritized needs are the immediate needs presented at the current time, and that needs concerning livelihoods and food will be discussed in the future. DORCAS recently conducted a multi-sectoral assessment of the area, which has been shared with partners – this assessment will be helpful in finding other humanitarian needs.
  - The contact details to obtain the assessment conducted by DORCAS is [s.oraha@iraq.dorcass.org](mailto:s.oraha@iraq.dorcass.org)
- Geneva Call asked whether returnees have faced security issues from local groups and what ethno-religious groups were the returnees a part of.



- OCHA is currently monitoring the situation in the area, and so far, no security concerns have been reported except the illegal occupation of property.
- An inquiry was made on whether there were any forced returns.
  - OCHA mentioned that all returns have so far been completely voluntary, according to several sources.

#### ii) Returns to Ninewa

- On 25 and 26 July, the MoMD Minister visited Khazer and Hasan Sham camps, Asian and Sheikhan camps in Sheikhan, Yazidi representatives in Sheikhan as well as Erbil authorities. During her visits, the minister discussed supporting all returnees, encouraging IDPs to return voluntary and government support to rehabilitate and improve services in areas of origin. Discussions with Erbil authorities also included approaches on how to overcome the security obstacles that impede the return of the displaced families to areas of origin.
- The presence of youth councils have been noted in five locations in Ninewa: Hatimia, Tal Banat, Rambousi, Markaz Qahtaniya and Hardan village.

#### iii) Return to southern Salah al-Din

- In late June 2020, MoMD facilitated the return of 35 IDP families (200) from Ashti camp to Yathrib sub-district and Al-Shihaby and Al-Ajeliyah villages in Dijeel district. Some families have settled in their own houses, while others are staying with relatives and friends because their houses are destroyed.
- Sulaymaniyah Task Team formed, comprising of Suly Protection Cluster, CCCM, RWG and OCHA.
- Intentions survey currently underway in Suly camps.
- The Iraqi Federal Ministry of Migration and Displacement (MoMD) set a goal to accomplish returns by the end of 2020.
- Tribal reconciliation efforts lead directly by the governor, early signs of success in these processes in Balad district, Yathrib sub-district.
- Main obstacles to return: Shelter damage; Lack of basic services including drinking water; Lack of security; Social cohesion concerns (blocked returns, illegal occupation of private houses).
- In July 2020, the Yathrib mayor established a return follow-up committee, to be chaired by the mayor and includes representatives of several relevant ministries. The committee identifies returnees' immediate short-term and long-term needs
- Additional needs communicated to SAD sub-national clusters' partners through OCHA.

#### iv) Return to Al-Auja



- In June, Salah Al-Din governor chaired a coordination meeting with aid partners to discuss the return to Al-Auja
- The Governor emphasized that the village would need all kinds of support, esp shelter rehabilitation, mine clearance, MPCA and WASH.
- Initial steps will be taken by local government.
- Estimated IDPs from Al-Auja range between 3,000-4,000 HHs.
- Presence of PMF units and lack of services are the most reported obstacles to return.
- No specific time on when the IDPs will start returning to their AoOs in Al-Auja.

v) Other returns (KRI updates)

- Between March to 25 July 2020. 150 HH returned from Erbil camps to their AoO, the vast majority heading to Ninewa
- Some of the returnees have family members employed in the Iraq federal security forces, who decided to return due to COVID-19 movement restrictions.
- The federal government did not send the salaries of the displaced schoolteachers to their areas of displacement – teachers had to receive their salaries in their AoO.
- More IDPs have registered their names and expressed their interest to return in the coming weeks.
- MoMD Erbil reported that there is ongoing return of on average 15-20 HHs a week.

vi) IHCHR Returns Initiative

- The High Commission for Human Rights in Iraq (IHCHR) proposed a “National Initiative for the Voluntary Return of IDPs” to the Iraqi prime minister on 24th June 2020
- The initiative included 22 proposed activities (the important ones listed in the attached presentation)

Discussion:

- Save the Children enquired about the Sinjar/Ba’aj Youth Councils (YC), their composition, functions and where they are found.
  - RWG elaborated that the YC had been noted in Hatimiya, Tal Banat and Hardan areas in Sinjar and also in Qahtaniya and Rambusi ares in Ba’aj.
  - They appear to be grass root entities formed by the returnees themselves who coordinate with local government and aid agencies willing to support these locations.

The YC identify local needs and gaps and have also been engaged with supporting community cleanup activities, cleaning house, clearing roads and public buildings.

**4) Durable Solutions Network:** Update on voluntary returns project support to support durable solutions in Anbar

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*(Presentation attached for more details)*



#### Key points:

- Progress of voluntary returns project summarized. Projects have so far targeted IDPs in AAF, Salamiya 2 and Hamam Al-Aleel camps.
- Progress in Anbar:
  - 446 HH reached
  - 119 HH participated in go and see visits
  - 40 HH returned to Markaz Fallujah and Al Amriyah- Husi
- Round 1 interventions:
  - Time bound and limited coverage help desks: Households frequently inquired on whether they could still register to depart. Limited number of households were able to approach the desk and some households felt excluded.
  - Sensitization and registration: Sensitization was camp wide which drew households outside the targeted areas to the help desks. Service specific information was not shared.
  - Risks Assessments: Perceptions on returns and stakeholder mapping
  - Go and See Visits: Participation of renters vs. property owners; Host community sensitization
  - Engagement of government and local authorities: Unilateral engagement with government counterparts (Anbar GRC)
  - Departures: Drop-outs after clearances/visits
- Round 2 interventions – lessons from the field:
  - Category of households (Cat 1 vs. Cat 2)
  - Managing expectations
  - Specific needs individuals
  - Transitional Shelter
  - Education impacting departures
  - Tracking movement and return registration
  - Facilitating Freedom of movement
  - Government Engagement
  - Information Gaps
  - Service Coverage

#### Discussion:

- RWG inquired on whether there are any intervention plans by the DSN for households who fall under category 2 (IDPs who face security and access challenges due to perceived affiliation).



- The DSN have started engaging with the Technical Committee (TCC) on category 2 families and have been interacting with social cohesion actors to work on developing a category 2 workflow. These conversations are ongoing.
- RWG inquired whether other camps and locations will be targeted in the future.
  - The DSN intends to expand operations into other locations by mobilizing resources and engage with partners.
- The Protection Cluster asked whether all HHs from the first 50 HHs who were expected to return from AAF camp were able to return, as there have been reports that not all families were able to return due to shelter damage.
  - IOM explained that although 50 HHs had registered for these first departures, 10 HHs were not able return due to complexities related to the security clearance process- in the end, 40 HHs departed the camp in this first group. The interventions also include demining services before departure and arranging transitional shelter while category 2-4 houses are being rehabilitated by the DSN. The purpose of the intervention is to address shelter and other obstacles that these 40 HHs have. The HHs will stay with relatives or in rented housing while their homes are being rehabilitated.

## 5) AOB: additional updates

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Key updates:

### i) CCCM Cluster update: Closure of Saad camp, Diyala

- An eviction letter was issued by the Governor's office a few months ago. Despite the advocacy efforts, Saad camp will begin closure on 16<sup>th</sup> August if COVID-19 restrictions are not in place.
- IDPs who will not return to their areas of origin or locally integrate in Baquba will move to Al-Wand camp. The agreement gave three weeks of preparation from 16<sup>th</sup> August to move IDPs to Al-Wand camp. IDPs intending to return will be given 3-6 months to return to their areas of origin.
- Of the 110 HHs who were surveyed, 60% preferred to stay in Baquba, 13% were willing to return to their areas of origin and 27% prefer to either move to Al-Wand or seek alternative solutions.
- No further updates on other camps in the country.

### ii) Ayadiya sub-district, Telafar (by Nonviolent Peaceforce)

- A follow up is currently being done on the planned return of around 25 families from Yahyawa camp to Ayadiya. The main challenge is the worsening situation of water access since May. NP asked if there are any development and stabilization partners who could assist in addressing this need.





- Local authorities from Ayadiya have updated the process to return by including the registration of housing to reduce the chances of illegal housing occupation.

### iii) Protection Cluster update

- CCCM colleagues in Sulaymaniya recently completed an intention survey of IDPs who originate from Salah al-Din in Ashti and Arbat IDP camps, a total of 1,713 households (HHs). The majority are originally from Yathrib, Balad and Al-Auja.
  - Less than 10% stated that they would return in the next 12 months
  - More than 60% stated lack of security clearance as a barrier to return
  - 65% do not think it is safe to return
  - 60% have not visited since their displacement
- There have been discussions on Suly and Salah al-Din level with OCHA and RWG, and the general consensus is that families wishing to either remain in Suly due to lack of services in the area of origin or return should be allowed to do so.

### Discussion:

- NP to share additional information for Ayadiya to be circulated with minutes.
- RWG asked Protection Cluster to share the full intention survey results.