

Durable Solutions Technical Working Group (DSTWG) – Summary of Meeting

Kick-Off Meeting - Wednesday 25th November

Co-chairs/Facilitators: Bradley Mellicker, IOM, Hilary Murphy, UNDP, Zulfiye Kazim, IOM

Attendees: 21 selected representatives from UN agencies, clusters, working groups and other entities: UNDP, UNMAS, IOM, OCHA, NPC, Shelter/HLP cluster, ICRC, UNICEF, UNHCR, ICCG, UN-Habitat, DS Advisor RC/HC office, GIZ, Cash Consortium Iraq - NGO representatives from DRC and NCCI in absence of elected NGO representatives (vote near completion).

INTRODUCTION

Objective of the meeting is to ‘catch-up’ those not involved in earlier discussions as well as to start off as operationally focused as possible by outlining immediate action-oriented next steps. Agenda as follows:

- Introduction
- Overview of DSTWG and Expectations of Group
- Updates on Discussions with the Government at National Level
- Presentation of the Operational Framework
- Area-Based Coordination Mechanism
- AOB

OPENING OF THE MEETING BY THE RESIDENT COORDINATOR

The Resident coordinator joined the meeting for the first 10 min to provide opening remarks. Key points:

- The importance of DS, in the context of Iraq, was emphasized. It is seen as a bridge between humanitarian and development. This is in light of camp closures but also beyond, addressing one of the government’s major priorities. However, in light of camp closures, international partners, via this group, have a real way of supporting IDPs together
- This group is expected to be action-oriented and move quickly. A number of priority areas have been suggested by OCHA to be the focus of area based coordination, including Sinjar, Balad, Ramadi and Al-Bakar, although this can be expanded and reviewed. Action plans should be created for priority locations on an accelerated basis.
- New DS advisor to Resident coordinator, Ismael Frioud, introduced to the group.

OVERVIEW OF THE DSTWG AND EXPECTATION OF THE GROUP

The DSTF was established in April 2020 providing an overarching framework and coordination platform to lead discussions with the government - as well as among international actors - regarding the strategy and way forward for resolving protracted displacement. The DSTF endorsed a durable solutions coordination mechanism, including a review of the terms of references (ToRs) of the RWG, the creation of a DSTWG, and area level coordination bodies which will rely on existing structures where feasible. The DSTWG, co-chaired by IOM, UNDP and an NGO (to be confirmed) is an operational & technical platform to design durable solutions programmes and approaches, as well as oversee implementation of area-level projects.

DSTF drafted and adopted a chapeau document serving as a precursor of a national framework / strategy:

- Chapeau frames the issue in the Iraqi context as a transitional issue in resolving protracted displacement as part of longer-term processes to support durable solutions;

- The work of DSTF is as a nexus mechanism between humanitarian and development;
- Chapeau prioritises all IDPs in camps, highly vulnerable IDPs out of camps, and returnees in areas with the most severe conditions.

One of the first tasks of DSTWG is to develop an operational framework for durable solutions in Iraq, which will frame implementation of DS programming in Iraq. It includes as well a mechanism for implementation, namely through area-based coordination at local level.

The DSTWG is expected to work quickly, recognizing that it is not starting from scratch. There are numerous lessons learned to build upon, as well as significant work by numerous partners. This includes, for example, the work of UNDP's Funding Facility for Stabilisation (FFS), facilitated voluntary returns and the work of the Durable Solutions Network (DSN), the outcomes of the round tables held with the KRI and Ninewa authorities on durable solutions held by RWG, data and information dissemination mechanisms on DS that have been producing a rich body of evidence for the past several years and significant programming to improve conditions in communities around Iraq.

- Finalize the operational framework that the DSTF started drafting;
- Establish area-based coordination and plans;
- Begin broader national-level work around development of technical methodologies and tools, policy, advocacy and other issues.

The DSTWG will have six NGO members. The vote on the six NGOs is currently taking place and will be finalized by 26 November 2020. The NGOs who will be members of the DSTWG will take part in the work highlighted in the above three focus areas.

ENGAGEMENT WITH GOVERNMENT: NATIONAL LEVEL DISCUSSIONS

At national level, the main discussions on durable solutions have been held with MoP and MOMD. The DSTF approached the government to indicate it was working on a durable solutions strategy (the chapeau). The government confirmed they would be preparing a plan for solving protracted displacement and would be pleased to work jointly with the DSTF. DSTF representatives began to engage, through technical meetings, to provide guidance and support to this process.

MOMD prepared an initial draft of the strategy, although this was subsequently handed to MoP to finalise. Overall camps and areas of return remain the main priorities of the government.

The latest draft of the government's national plan was shared for inputs with DSTF. Overall, the plan is comprehensive, although feedback has been provided to MoP that greater reference to IDPs out of camps and to alternative solutions to return would be important. The plan, overall, provides a strong entry point for further discussions, particularly in recognition of the fact that much of the detailed planning will take place at the local level, with the national plan providing an overarching framework. Further technical engagement continues as the plan is finalized, in particular as it relates to implementation. Three points were raised during discussions:

- *To what level are the local authorities informed about the discussions happening at national level? We cannot assume, nor realistically expect, that all conversations are trickling down to local authorities, which is precisely why, in line with principles of 'best practice' of DS programming, we need local level plans. National government also recognizes and encourages local level discussions – there is a need*

to support this as DSTWG. This offers more opportunities as local authorities understand their communities well and, from experience, are sometimes more open to nuanced discussions around integration, return and so forth based on the observed reality.

- *As IDPs out of camp are not mentioned substantially in the government's durable solutions plans, up to what point do we consider someone being an IDP? When does someone stop being an IDP?* This is a technical question, one we also need to have with the government.
- *What is the role of the DSTWG when there is an imminent camp closure?* There can be two case scenarios, one where the government closes the camp imminently, and one where the closure of the camp is planned in advance. If there is advanced planning, we can adopt DS approaches, where we can identify obstacles to solving displacement, organize dignified movements, coordinate response in areas of origin, If sudden, the pre-departure activities are challenging. More time is needed to identify households, and immediate emergency assistance may be required by humanitarian actors while communities are provided longer-term durable solutions support. OCHA has worked on some guidance regarding rapid closures. Area based coordination feeds into this work.

THE DURABLE SOLUTIONS OPERATIONAL FRAMEWORK

An operational framework has been developed to support in developing contextualized area-based plans. The framework outlines three objectives:

1. Increasing the sustainability and quality of returns through the overall improvement of conditions in areas of return
 - Area-based approaches to improving conditions in areas of return
 - Target group: returnees, host communities and other residents in high severity locations
2. Increasing the sustainability and quality of local integration and settlement elsewhere through individual- and area-based support to vulnerable IDPs
 - Area-based approaches to supporting sustainable local integration and settlement elsewhere
 - Target: out of camp IDPs in critical shelter or in high severity locations, along with host communities
3. Resolving displacement for those in priority displacement sites through facilitated movements
 - Identification of obstacles and facilitation / accompaniment to support solutions, e.g. facilitated voluntary returns
 - Target: IDPs in camps, out of camp IDPs in the most difficult conditions

Objectives 1 and 2 are related to area-based approaches. They aim to understand critical needs in target communities across multiple sectors, as well as the availability of services to improve those conditions (including housing, basic services, livelihood opportunities, social cohesion, peace-building and other programmes), and seeks to scale them up where needed. Examples were given regarding UNDP's FFS, which aims at stabilization supporting including infrastructure and housing. Objective 3 builds on some of the work of IOM and other partners under the DSN to facilitate returns and accompany people in camps back to their areas of origin. This is not a stand-alone objective but links with other area-based approaches. It involves identification of IDPs in camp and out of camp settings before the returns, supporting go-and-see visits, ensuring voluntary and informed decision-making, and supporting IDPs during and after departure.

AREA-BASED COORDINATION

DSTWG will take an area-based coordination and planning approach, in particular to avoid top-down planning and maintaining an action-oriented approach. Area based coordination mechanisms will be reflective of different stakeholders, including humanitarian, development and peace.

There are many types of areas that could be considered and a broad range of criteria, e.g. level of government commitment to work jointly, presence of other actors, high degree of vulnerable populations, locations with conditions in high severity, etc. An area could be defined by shared conditions, context of an influx of returnees, displacement needs and other factors, but more discussion is required to agree criteria. Potential scenarios include:

- Hotspot areas of origin of returnees;
- Areas of displacement with existing or future facilitated return operations;
- Areas of displacement with potential longer-term presence of IDPs that are in the process of integrating locally.

UNDP and IOM are already committed to support a Sinjar area-based plan and welcome interested operational actors to join. Discussions will kick-off soon while further areas for planning are reviewed. Discussion and Comments by attendees:

- A durable solutions effort means that the DSTWG will be operating at scale and will propose a package of support to include housing, infrastructure, livelihoods, social cohesion, etc.
- In terms of outcomes of durable solutions, does the DSTWG prioritize outcomes? If main desired outcomes are not defined for a specific area, and too many outcomes are suggested, there is a risk of not fulfilling any of the set outcomes. The DSTWG must discuss what are the minimum objectives it wants to achieve in a set area.
- Need to define criteria for prioritizing areas -e.g. do we look at conflict, do we look at high number of returns? We want to provide guiding criteria which do not become overly prescriptive, and defining criteria is not a prerequisite for continuing with areas where we have a clear rationale.
- Need to consider how the DS work is linked with UNSDCF and HRP.

Was noted by DSTWG that these are the questions we need to define as part of our efforts to finalise the operational framework. We can discuss further in planned break-out sessions – see below.

NEXT STEPS

- Next meeting to be convened within 10 days. In the meantime, break-out sessions to be convened to finalise the operational framework, covering the three objectives, area-based coordination (and how we prioritise locations), and the boundaries of humanitarian, DS and development.
- The DSTWG will organize a catch-up session for the elected NGOs who will be members of the DSTWG so that they can join the break-out groups and revise the operational framework.
- All members, regardless of group, are invited to comment on/review the operational framework.
- DSTWG will start establishing area-based groups immediately, particularly when there are actors ready to begin to operate. Groups are expected to feedback to the DSTWG and to lean on existing mechanisms in place, rather than duplicate them. By the next meeting a list of first priority area-based groups and locations will be finalized and the outcomes of the break-out discussions will be shared to finalise the framework.