

Area-Based Coordination Meeting – January 12th

Attendees: RC/HC, DSTWG Co-chairs (IOM, UNDP) REACH, GIZ, IOM, NPC, ACTED, SEDO, UNDP, OCHA, NCCI, HLP/SNFI cluster, HC DS Advisor, Mercy Corps, RWG Co-chair, Oxfam, UN Habitat, ICCU representatives, WFP, UNHCR, UNICEF, ICRC, UNDP, DCO, CCI, SIF

Opening remarks provided by RC/HC

- Positive this meeting is taking place, many recent meetings and discussions, including field visits, have highlighted the urgency of responding to current needs.
- Area-based coordination, bringing together humanitarian and non-humanitarian, will be an important way to coherently articulate what we are doing and plan to do.
- Need to identify focal points, one humanitarian and one development for groups
- Importance of moving quickly, in light of current shift in displacement and return, high level of needs, and importance of being responsive and communicative to government counterparts
- Would be useful to hear from those on the call, any thoughts or concerns.

Presentation delivered by DSTWG co-chairs

Key considerations – design of ABC:

- Framing the displacement challenge with a DS lens recognizes the multi layered issues facing IDPs and returnees. Challenges encompass economic issues, security, perceived affiliations, damage to housing and a lack of access to basic services.
- Necessity to facilitate Government led processes.
- Build upon significant gains already made/what has already been achieved.
- Avoid duplication of existing processes/coordination systems.
- Respond to the urgency of the displacement challenge as compounded by recent camp closures, while acknowledging the severe needs of vulnerable populations who have returned previously.

ABC as positioned within wider DS Objectives::

- Support a Gol led response through linking with Gov planning at local level, supporting leadership and providing capacity support.
- Undertake joint programming targeted at tackling the displacement challenges.
- Provide a platform to enable a scaled-up response, make it easier for agencies and organizations to work together.

Approach of ABC:

- *Government engagement:* Importance of working closely with the government, noting significant investment already made in engaging national and local authorities with regards to identifying solutions to displacement
- *Building on existing work:* DSTWG has been set up with full intent to work through and with existing mechanisms, avoiding duplication, but rather providing a focused platform for bringing together different actors to address the specific objective of resolving displacement
- *Initial focus of DSTWG:* Initial meetings of DSTWG– with thanks to members for their active participation – have focused on developing a clearer overview and articulation of what area-level groups will be doing, including developing area level planning guidelines, ToRs for area-groups and an operational framework. This was due to feedback, when an initial list of priority locations were proposed, that organisations would be more able to express commitment to supporting coordination if it was first clear what the groups would be doing – hence priority locations have remained tentative while this work has been finalized

Overall, the work and composition of Area-level groups was summarized as follows:

- *Scope of work:*
 - o Outreach - Support government in developing and implementing DS Action Plans; identify, map and engage key partners – UN, NGOs, private sector, other working groups – humanitarian, development, stabilization and peacebuilding; convene regular meetings of focal point organisations and local authorities
 - o Planning - Lead the organisation of workshops, roundtables and other events with government counterparts and key partners to develop POAs; define priority geographic locations, sectors, population groups and other elements of POAs; support and coordinate capacity building and sensitisation of local authorities and other key stakeholders; support joint approaches to efficiently consult and seek feedback from affected groups
 - o Implementation - Facilitate exchange of information on needs, gaps and ongoing/planned activities; mobilise partners; support referral mechanisms; updating of response and service mapping; continue engagement with local authorities; share information on challenges in implementation, technical work areas, good practices, local dynamics and other issues as relevant; identify opportunities for joint approaches and collaboration; support advocacy
 - o Monitoring - Monitor implementation and progress of the PoAs
- *National DSTWG support:* At the national level, DSTWG will be highly involved in providing technical support and guidance, while overseeing these area-level efforts.
- *Membership:* Notably, area-level groups are not expected to include all actors who can support DS projects. This risks duplication with other groups and undermines the ability to rapidly guide and develop joint approaches. Rather, these are smaller 'steering groups' which are guiding the planning process who are expected to coordinate with and seek inputs and support from others. The groups are expected to bring together humanitarian, development, peacebuilding and stabilization perspectives with this objective.
- *Leadership:* Up to three focal points who can represent the perspectives of humanitarian, development, stabilization and peacebuilding, not necessarily members of DSTWG. Should be ideally based in the area, good understanding of the local context. Focal points should have the capacity to coordinate and drive localized planning, preferably with a network of stakeholders in the area.

DSTWG is not starting from scratch:

- There has been engagement at the national level with the government, led by the RC/HC for the finalization of the national plan with technical input provided by some UN agency members of DSTWG. Through this engagement, there has been the opportunity to sensitise on our understanding of durable solutions, importance of considering a range of solutions, gaining a better understanding of the perspective of national authorities. This provides a strong foundation and backdrop for localized planning
- At the local level, previous work by a range of actors, including the returns working group, has taken place to organize round tables on durable solutions, training to the government on durable solutions, plans of action for governorate level durable solutions plans which we can build upon.
- In addition, a lot of work is on-going, stabilization work, peace and reconciliation, facilitated movements – the idea is to scale up, re-focus some of this work and to bring these together to achieve DS objectives
- DSTWG will bring together all these efforts, with a DS lens and focus.

Initial Priority Areas Outlined:

- DSTWG members agreed that there should be a combination of factors taken into consideration when selecting areas for area-level planning – this includes whether there are actors on the ground, from across the spectrum of development, stabilization, humanitarian and peacebuilding, who can support these planning processes and implement DS projects, whether there is support and buy-in from local authorities, access/feasibility to work in the areas, evidence base (return index, assessments, DTM on high needs) – areas will usually be district level but will depend on the location e.g. in some cases an 'area' may include returns from X location to Y location, in which case the project includes a wider area of displacement location and destination.

- With this in mind, some original areas were put forward, including propositions by OCHA, based on data, and where there are existing projects – partners were asked whether they may be able to support with coordination for these locations. These areas are not exhaustive, they were considered ‘a starting point’ – there is also acknowledgement that there may be areas where there isn’t partner presence, and we need to advocate for this, or where there is a lack of buy-in from local authorities, that we need to work on building and developing – the ‘starting points’ were simply locations where the combination of factors were conducive to quickly kick-starting in line with the goal of being action-oriented.

Next Steps in Jan/Feb:

- Finalisation of the operational framework document
- Endorsement of ABC ToRs
- Finalisation of priority area list
- Continued development of technical guidelines and materials to guide area-level work
- Launch more meetings with partners and others interested in supporting area-level plans
- Convening roundtables with local government in those areas
- Drafting plans of action with the government

Overview of Sinjar area-group – example of expected approach in practice

- Brief presentation on work completed to date to kick start Sinjar area-level planning was outlined. UNDP, IOM and UNHCR have come together for initial meetings (3 in December), largely focusing on existing planned programming and ways to link this together to have a joint approach
- Mapping of existing coordination mechanisms and local authority structures has taken place, a repository has been set up to share information and assessments, planned programming by each actor has been summarized, proposed government engagement approach has been developed
- Joint programming
- Next steps is to engage additional partners, engage with government counterparts to put forward proposed approach and seek inputs, including a roundtable workshop, preceded by a discussion with the governor, building on previous engagement and roundtables.

Brief by OCHA on how area-level groups can engage with existing mechanisms

- Importance of avoiding duplication was emphasized, which will primarily take place through ensuring presence and involvement of those from existing groups, as well as building on existing information e.g. response mapping.
- Extensive service mapping has been undertaken by OCHA and is available for DS partners.
- Importance of having the right type of coordination engagement within the appropriate platforms was noted

Discussion:

- Question on process for engaging with local authorities, is there an established mechanism or structure – was noted that a key first step in area-level planning is quickly mapping out the key stakeholders, existing committees and mechanisms and ensuring that work is conducted through the bodies that already exist where relevant.
- Question of whether the areas outlined are the complete list or others can be added – was clarified that the locations are ‘starting points’ and open to discussion and further additions
- Question over how area level groups may coordinate with GRCs, and what the role of GRCs will be moving forward – was clarified that this is important and will be addressed separately
- Question from a number of participants on whether they can join area groups. Was noted that anyone who is interested can reach out and once groups are finalized, with clear focal points, these will be communicated (expected to be imminent) – at the same time was noted that groups that will steer planning will be smaller while a wide range of partners will be involved through outreach that will take place through existing platforms.

- Question on how these area-level efforts will link with the national plan that has been developed by the government. Was noted that the final, updated plan, has been received, and as a next step, taken forward by DSTF, there will be discussions with the government to ensure there is coherence between local efforts and national efforts- including mechanisms to update on area-level planning and a forum to bring forward issues, to the national level, that may need more centralized support. However, vision is to avoid a centralized 'management' of localized planning, in line with best practice, rather ensuring a feedback loop and awareness/support from the national level.
- Question on IM capacity and assessment initiatives to support planning and response mapping – was noted by DSTWG that dedicated IM support is being identified for the working group to support area-level groups, as well as efforts to work on developing indicators to monitor progress towards durable solutions - certainly a priority but will be developed in parallel to kick-starting area-level planning and coordination.

Final remarks from RC/HC:

- The support and interest from participants of the call was noted
- Looking forward to seeing all these efforts move forward, to be action-oriented and timely.