

## RETURNS WORKING GROUP- IRAQ

- ❖ **Meeting Date:** 25 January 2022
- ❖ **Meeting Time:** 11:00 am-1:00 pm
- ❖ **Location:** Microsoft Teams

**In Attendance:** National Protection Cluster, ECHO, DSTWG, NRC, UNDP FFIS, WFP, IOM, REACH Initiative, CCCM Cluster, Cash Working Group, Mercy Corps, UNAMI-DSO, SEDO, SWEDO, ACTED, GIZ, Malteser International, IVY, CADUS, Dorcas, USAID/BHA

### Agenda Items:

- 1) **Introduction and adoption of minutes:** Review of previous minutes; Follow up on action points from previous meeting
- 2) **DTM and CCCM Context Updates:** DTM--Displacement and Returns Update and updates, CCCM—camp closures and informal sites update
- 3) **IOM Research:** Barriers to Reintegration in Iraq: Safety, Security and Social Relations
- 4) **IOM DS Presentation:** Facilitated Voluntary Movements from Informal Sites
- 5) **DSTWG Update:** DS update
- 6) **REACH Initiative:** REDS Jalawla Factsheet
- 7) **AOB**

Action Points to follow up by next meeting:	
Action	By who

### Key Discussion Points/ Action:

- 1) **Introduction and adoption of minutes:** Review of previous minutes; Follow up on action points from previous meeting

- Overview of the previous meeting minutes and today's meeting agenda.
- No pending action points

- 2) **Context update:** DTM and CCCM Cluster Context Updates

*(DTM presentation attached for more details)*

#### DTM Update

Collection period is now every 3 months, round 124 data was gathered between October and December 2021. As the last data collection for 2021, trend analysis of returnee and IDP movements with previous years will also be provided.

#### Displacement and Return Data Trends

- As of December 2021, current figures stand at 4,952,232 returnee individuals in the whole country and 1,186,556 IDPs.
- Between 1 January and 31 December 2021, DTM identified 120,666 new returnees. This is lower than previous years 235,116 in 2020, 431,130 in 2019 and 944,958 in 2018.
- During the same period recorded a decrease of 37,552 internally displaced persons across the country. Also, a significant decrease compared to previous years with 190,524 in 2020, 388,200 in 2019 and 813,156 in 2018.

### Shelter conditions

#### *IDP Shelter*

- In 2021, the number of IDPs across the country living in shelters in critical condition dropped marginally, from 104,706 to 104,226 (a decrease of less than 1%). Changes varied across governorates. Significant increases in the number of IDPs living in critical shelters were noted in Baghdad (4,644; 108%), Anbar (3,618; 18%), and Diyala (282; 14%). These increases were partly offset by large decreases in the number of IDPs in critical shelters in other governorates, especially Dahuk (-6,090; -22%), Ninewa (-1,002; -5%), Erbil (-492; -39%), and Salah al-Din (-402; -2%). The decrease was due to a significant number of IDPs departing from camps following their closure or re-classification between October 2020 and February 2021.

#### *Returnee Shelter*

- Between January and December 2021, there was an increase in returnees living in critical shelters, with the number jumping by 16,398 to 193,494. In 2021, the most significant increase in the number of IDPs in critical shelters was observed in Salah al-Din governorate (20,382), representing an increase of 48 per cent from 2020. The next highest increase in the number of IDPs in critical shelters was recorded in Diyala (1,302; +5%).

### Return Index

Collection period of Round 14 gathered during October to December 2021. Eight (8) new locations assessed during the period, most new locations assessed in Ninewa.

#### *Overall severity*

- Some 2,165 return locations were assessed in Iraq with 459 locations presenting severe conditions hosting 12% of the returnee population (601,914 individuals)
- Ninewa, Salah Al-Din, Anbar and Diyala have the highest number of returnees living in high severity conditions. These locations also have the highest number of locations with high severity conditions.
- There was an increase of 8,982 returnees living in severe conditions since round 13.
- The largest increase was in Salah Al-Din (4,794 indiv) and Ninewa (3,270 indiv) while the largest decrease was observed in Diyala (1,878 indiv). For SAD, the increases were observed in Tuz and Al-Fares. Increase in high severity in Tuz was due to returns to Al-Amerli where the provision of electricity remains poor, and safety and security concerns are high. In Al-Fares it was due to returns to al-Dujeel Centre where livelihood opportunities and blocked returns are of concern. For Ninewa,

Hatra was the main district with issues related to poor provision of government services, poor access to water, concerns about ISIL attacks and high levels of residential destruction.

- Decreases in Diyala were mainly in Al-Khalis due to improvements in access to essential services such as water and electricity.
- Hotspots: 1 subdistrict (Al Dujeel centre) was removed due to improved recovery of small business, daily public life and checkpoint issues resolved and now have 30 hotspots.

#### *Trends*

- Between December 2020 and December 2021, the returnee population grew by 120,666 individuals (from 484,548 in 2020 to 601,914 people) equivalent to roughly 20,111 households.
- The percentage change in the returnee population between rounds of data collection, slowed significantly in 2021 (2.5%) compared with 2020 (5%) and 2019 (10%).
- Between December 2020 and December 2021, the proportion of returnees in locations of high severity rose from 10 to 12 per cent, an increase of around 117,000 individuals.

\*DTM will provide alternative administrative boundaries which OCHA uses (same dataset will be used on a tab), but a separate email will be sent with information and link once this is available.

### **CCCM Cluster Update**

#### Informal Sites

##### *Eviction Threats*

- Ongoing and longstanding eviction threats in Zummar (Telafar), Mosul and Balad train station informal sites. Samarra Operations Command gave eviction notice in early December but following humanitarian engagement with authorities, SOC confirmed to OCHA in early January that no further eviction action would be taken. Twenty-nine households did depart the site in December to AoO, but the majority remain (101 HHs). Access blockages to the site were reported earlier this week but have now been resolved.
- Evictions and potentially access issues should be expected to reoccur, thus making the need to support durable solution opportunities very important. CCCM and other working on this for Balad and other sites---more information in the IOM FVM update.
- CCCM Cluster is aware of the eviction threat from Samarra informal sites. OCHA, Protection actors and IOM are present in the area and gathering information to inform appropriate engagement.

#### Camps

- MoMD assistance is being distributed in the KRI camps this month (food, hygiene kits and kerosene) but not consistently across all camp areas. Unclear to what extent the assistance will continue into the year.

#### Discussion

- Question: AFF, has IOM done any survey for IDPs in the camp to see those who are willing to stay or return, if they could share?

- CCCM Cluster and IOM TRD: Yes. There has been some work from the IOM TRD team on understanding intentions to facilitate voluntary returns. So far there have been two registrations last year for the FVM program, however IOM does not do full-fledged intentions surveys of the whole camp because the program relies on people approaching and registering their intentions. There is a plan to reopen registrations after some families indicated interest. We will have more information after.
- CCCM Cluster: Since the reclassification of AAF to an informal site, the population has remained stable and government operations in the camp have not changed significantly.
- Question: Request for clarity on the classification of camps, there is some information regarding camps in Ninewa and disputed areas, that some are closed, and only informal sites remain, difference in definition.
  - CCCM Cluster: Only update in the recent months was the reclassification of AAF in federal Iraq (reclassified in November 2021). There are still 26 camps in the country, with Jeddah 5 as the remaining formal camp in federal Iraq.

### 3) Report--Obstacles to Returnee Reintegration in Iraq: Safety, Security and Social Relations: IOM Research

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*(See attached document for full presentation)*

#### Overview

- In February 2021 IOM Iraq, Social Inquiry and Returns Working Group and Social Inquiry produced a report, [Home Again? Categorizing Obstacles to Returnee Reintegration in Iraq](#). Safety, security and social relations issues represented the most significant barrier to sustainable reintegration for returnees in Iraq.
- At the end of 2021, data showed that 800,000 families have returned home.
- Comparative analysis is also provided for October 2020 and September 2021.

#### Methodology

- In line with the IDP reintegration framework of the Expert Group on Refugee and IDP Statistics (EGRIS)
- Analysis is based on the framework's three criteria (and their sub-criteria)
  - Risk of violence
  - Physical protection
  - Freedom of movement
- Data is adopted from existing DTM sources collected in return locations:
  - Return Index
  - Integrated Location Assessment
  - Master List

#### Returnee Overview

- Ninewa, Anbar and Salah Al-Din had the highest number of returnees but commensurate with the number of returnees.
- Nationally return rate is 80% and rates vary between governorates with Anbar, Erbil and SAD having the highest rates while Baghdad and Ninewa have lower rates of return.

- Intentions surveys indicate that 94% of returnees intend to remain in areas of origin, although this rate also varies per governorate, e.g. in Diyala the rate is 78% with 12% of the returnees not intending to remain. Drought in Ninewa and southern governorates may affect the intentions of returnees and also security concerns in Muqdadiya.

#### Examples of findings in the report

##### Criteria 1: Risk of Violence

- Threat of ISIL attacks: Between 2020 and 2021 the percentage of returnees living in areas with concerns of ISIL attacks increased from 49% to 55%. District hotspots are Mosul, Telafar and Heet.
- Violence related to security forces or armed groups: Increased from 7% to 9% between 2020 and 2021. Hotspots being Sinjar, Al Khalis and Baiji.
- Concerns related to revenge attacks: Increased from 8% to 9% with hotspots all being in Ninewa, Telafar and Sinjar.
- Etho-religious tensions, notably Anbar (Fallujah) saw 4,831 increase of returnees living in locations with these tensions compared with 2020.

##### Criteria 2: Physical Protection

- Consistent data between the 2 years with about 46% of returnees living in areas with 3 or more security actors. Telafar, Fallujah and Ramadi with the highest number of returnees living in such locations

##### Criteria 3: Freedom of Movement

- Consistent data between 2020 and 2021 with 22% of returnees reporting movement restrictions. Effect of covid-19 measures also noted.
- While majority of returnees (89%) are in locations that do not require permits to move, 11% require permits.
- Forced returns, 17% of returnees are in locations where families were forced to return.

#### Discussion

- Question: Clarification of the returnees intending to return versus those not intending to remain?
  - Correction: 94% nationwide intend to remain and 6% do not, with variation in governorates with Diyala recording the lowest.
- Question: Clarification does the report also include intentions of IDPs in camps and those in informal sites.
  - The data in the report only focuses on returnees and not on IDPs whether in-camp or out of camp. REACH Intentions Survey data however could help those looking for IDP intentions.
- Question: Any chance the research team will conduct a similar analysis from the IDP perspective?
  - There are two ILA assessments which are done annually looking at IDP intentions. Intention data is collected at location level so you are likely to get more granular information. CCCM added that REACH is conducting an informal site assessment which will include intentions, DS related preference and livelihood information and may be out in February.
- Question: Regarding the Anbar increase, do we know whether the increase is due to more families returning or tensions increasing?
  - The report goes into detail at the location level.

#### 4) IOM DS Presentation: Facilitated Voluntary Movements from Informal Sites

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*(Presentation attached for more details)*

##### Objective

- Present on the planned expansion of the IOM facilitated voluntary movement program into informal sites, including target locations and sites

##### Informal Sites in Iraq

- 477 informal sites in Iraq, use of CCCM Cluster definition including having more than 5 IDP HH, sub-standard shelter, families living there as a group etc.

##### Facilitated Voluntary Movement (FVM)

- Assistance to IDPs to make decisions about preferred pathways to durable solutions (primarily return and relocation. To date focus on camps (J5, AAF and Al-Salamiya) and that is where methodology was developed but now expanding to informal sites
- IDPs are informed about the programme, facilitation of go and see, come and tell visits (information sessions about areas of origin or destination etc., programme also includes support to families with category 2 (social cohesion, community, tribal tension) barriers, transportation, reinstallation and departure grants. IDPs can withdraw from the process at any stage of the process. Referrals to other service providers e.g for those families who need civil documentation. For those IDPs returning to IOM communities, eligible HH provided with livelihood and shelter support.
- In IOM communities, providing Livelihoods and Shelter support for eligible HHs

##### FVM in informal sites

- FVM is not the only solution for HH in informal sites, other families might seek local integration. Different interventions may be required for the other solutions such as formalization of sights or seeking alternative location etc.
- Close work done with the CCCM Cluster and the FVM sub-group to come up with criteria. CCCM Cluster has created a tool to help better shape prioritization of informal sites.
- Site selection process requires analysis of different factors, willingness of IDPs to return, IDPs being allowed to return, whether the location is impacted by the presence of many informal sites. Factors which may count against a site being selected include if majority of IDPs are not intending to return, the return of IDPs is blocked or if site is under imminent threat of eviction (this would militate against the voluntariness of the return) etc. Site specific assessment also conducted and more in-depth information on preferences of IDPs.
- Coordination with stakeholders especially IDPs, host communities and the local authorities.
- Second step includes the sensitization and registration to explain the program, principles and may open to a wider catchment (may include IDPs in surrounding communities), information to make an informed decision. Analysis of risks eg if there are any protection risks. Verification process etc.
- Step 3 Come and tell/Go and see, to help option for families to gather as much information to help decision making.
- Next step will include coordination with areas of origin for security clearance, so far main counterpart has been MOMD but may be another local authority for informal sites.

##### Target Sites

- Planned governorates for now are Ninewa and Anbar. For Ninewa still awaiting some confirmation on some of the sites.
- **Ninewa** (Wadi Aqab Cemetery Site and Al Halamat Site, Al Mulawatha Site and Azzizya Site, Intisar Souq al Ma'ash (and unnamed site nearby), Hawi Kaneesa Sites
- **Anbar** (Kilo 7, Amiryat Al Fallujah)

### Discussion

- Question: What has the uptake been of families with category 2 barriers so far?
  - Families were always able to register in the programme independent of their barriers and IOM would then consider their barriers as part of the registration profiling and as capacity within IOM grew to facilitate returns for these families, more families have been supported.
- Question: What challenges does IOM foresee in working in informal sites and does IOM have any targets for 2022?
  - There are some potential challenges, for example whether once people leave if they will return to the site, for camps, once families leave, they are not allowed to return, whereas these sites are more open and we will need to monitor that. We will also need to closely look at who are we supporting and whether they are eligible for support, are they considered an IDP, etc. IOM may also need to keep in mind the communities surrounding the areas, income or services issues. On the issue of targets IOM has comparable targets for camps but not for informal camps right now.
  - If there are any organizations working in any of the sites targeted and would like to collaborate with the FVM team please contact Valentina at [vbacchin@iom.int](mailto:vbacchin@iom.int)

### 5) DSTWG update: DS Updates

*(Presentation attached for more details)*

#### *DSTWG General Updates*

- As reported last month the DSTWG co-chairs and support had a retreat in December
- Retreat overview
  - Evaluated performance of DSTWG co-chairs and support
  - Prioritized activities for DSTWG in 2022
  - Developed draft DSTWG workplan 2022
  - Developed tools for ABC-level referral system
  - Proposal: One day DSTWG member + ABC FP retreat in Erbil on 28 February

#### *ABC Updates*

- ABC Mosul: Roundtable conducted in December. Priority locations discussed with authorities (Markaz Mosul, Hamam Al-Aleel, Al Qayara and Baashiqa). Options such as local integration and relocation considered and area dependent.
  - POA currently under drafting and to be shared in February.
- ABC Diyala: ABC meeting held on 13 January to discuss community consultations.
- ABC East Anbar: Community consultations preparations underway.
- ABC West Anbar: POA partner feedback closed on 20 January.

- ABC Hawiga: POA partner feedback closed on 20 January and fact-finding mission underway on 25 January.

## 6) REACH Returns and Durable Solutions Assessment: Jalawla Sub-district, Khanaqin, Diyala

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(See full presentation on this [link](#))

### Key Findings

- Most reported barriers to return are damaged/destroyed housing (including challenges to accessing rehabilitation, limited livelihood opportunities, limited access to basic public services (esp healthcare), fear of being perceived as affiliated with ISIL and fear of contracting covid-19.
- Access to housing/Tenure: majority of returnees HH own housing and have HLP documents proving ownership, IDP households are renting as they have never owned housing in sub-district.
  - Those with housing challenges lacked financial resources to rehabilitate homes, lack of support from the government and from aid actors.
- Access to basic services: KIs reported the lack of attention from government due to the rural nature of the sub-district and corresponding lack of budget allocation and a lack of public employees (including municipal workers)
- Access to livelihoods: KIs reported lack of employment opportunities especially for the youth, limited livelihood projects being implemented, reliance on government employment (reports of bribes needed to access government jobs). KIs reported that revitalization of the agricultural economy and activation of private sector could alleviate issues.
- Safety and security perceptions: KIs reported that returnee, and all IDPs groups felt safe in the sub-district. Tribal authorities within the subdistrict, while formal security forces perceived as most effective for disputes between the district and other areas.

### Discussion

- Question: Will the fact sheet indicate where the IDPs who are not from Jalawla are from?
  - Yes, partners will be able to identify the locations of origin and where the HH in Jalawla are displaced within the district.

### AOB

- Next RWG meeting scheduled for last Tuesday of February. Online meetings to continue until covid-19 situation is more stable.