

RETURNS WORKING GROUP- IRAQ

- ❖ **Meeting Date:** 26 April 2022
- ❖ **Meeting Time:** 11:00 am-1:00 pm
- ❖ **Location:** IOM Office in Erbil & Microsoft Teams

In Attendance: UNDP/FFS, REACH, ACF, UIMS, PRM/U.S Consulate General, CCCM Cluster, Cordaid, UNICEF, TGH, DTM, DSO, War Child UK, IOM, Sorouh for Sustainable Development Foundation, Dorcas Aid International, SNFI Cluster, Malteser International, CADUS, Samaritan's Purse, GIZ, Peace Winds Japan, ICRC, Help Hilfe zur Selbsthilfe, ACTED, DG ECHO, USAID

Agenda Items:

- 1) **Introduction and adoption of minutes:** Review of previous minutes; Follow up on action points from previous meeting
- 2) **DTM, CCCM, and RWG Context Updates:** DTM, CCCM, and RWG Field Updates
- 3) **DSTWG:** DS Update
- 4) **National Protection Cluster:** Round 5: Protection Monitoring System
- 5) **REACH and ACF:** Climate Motivated Displacement: Marshlands
- 6) **AOB**

Action Points to follow up by next meeting:

Action	By who
Transition Plan Update	DSTWG and OCHA

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, CCCM Cluster, and RWG Context Updates

(See DTM and RWG presentations for more details)

DTM: Displacement and Returns Update

Latest Displacement Data (January – March 2022)

- 4,959,714 returnee individuals
- 1,184,818 IDP individuals
- Increase in returnee population continues to slow (7,482 returnees since last round)
- This increase means that the return rate is on track to maintain the trend of halving every year

- 2,000 new returnees in Baiji district in SAD, which was the most returnees by district, including 1,000 new returnees in critical shelters

Return Index

- 3 additional locations of return, but the overall number of locations remained the same due to families displacing from 2 locations previously assessed in Round 14, and the combination of two locations into one in Round 15
- Out of 2,165 return locations assessed, 453 present severe locations (12% of returnee population, or 581,112 individuals)
- Decrease of 20,802 returnees living in severe conditions since the last round
- Largest decrease of returnees living in severe conditions were recorded in Anbar (12,780) and Diyala (3,270)

Hotspots per governorate

- 30 hotspots identified across 4 governorates (SAD, Ninewa, Anbar, and Diyala)
- One hotspot removed Mugdadiya after improvements in housing reconstruction and recovery of small businesses.

Updates on ILA 7

- ILA is ongoing and datasets + dashboards can be expected by mid-August
- All return and displacement locations with 5 HHs or more are covered
- All informal sites with 5 HHs or more will be mapped
- All settlements with 15 HHs or more will be surveyed
- Next ML: April-June
- Next RI: July-September

Discussion

- **UNDP:** Return rate in Sinjar, particularly for Yazidis, is very low. Many camps in Dahuk remain full. Is there a plan from the government to close these camps? Or to facilitate the return of Yazidis?
- **CCCM:** People are slowly returning to Sinjar, while some people have ended up going back to the camps in Dahuk after deciding to not stay in Sinjar. There are still many barriers to return, such as the security situation and personal trauma. There is no indication that the government is planning to close camps, but it is important for actors to orient planning accordingly if we know that there are 100,000 people not returning soon.
- **RWG:** For some people, the obstacles to return are more significant than others. Actors need to be pragmatic to cater for those who can't return by balancing program focus on areas of return and areas of displacement to give IDPs choices.
- **CCCM:** As humanitarian assistance drops, it's a good time to look at the options for families. As people get less household assistance in camps, actors should evaluate whether their intention is to move or

whether we need to shift focus to allow for local integration. This is a big question coming up, particularly with the drop in humanitarian assistance.

- **PRM:** It appears that MOMD has a plan if the Erbil/Baghdad plan to normalize the situation fails, then MOMD might opt to replace tents with hard shelter/cement/concrete. This could lead to camp consolidation or other options
- **IOM:** Many Yazidi IDPs remain in their areas of displacement due to a lack of safety and services in their areas of origin. This has been a dilemma in the response for a long time, as while work should be done in areas where IDPs plan to stay in the long-term, but it's important to continue creating material conditions for sustainable return should people want to return. A recent IOM assessment showed that among the main reasons for not returning is housing, lack of livelihoods, and lack of services.
- **DSO:** Caseload of Yazidis in Dahuk is being handled by the ICCG and HCT as there are many complexities attached to the reasons why people are not returning

CCCM Update

Camps

- Transition discussions are ongoing looking at what will happen in coming months in terms of humanitarian assistance, including discussions with returns and DS colleagues
- General high-level government engagement on KRI camps, including meeting on the Sunni Endowment, and meetings with the HC, UN agencies, and the governors of SAD and Sulaymaniyah looking at options for return.
- Committee formed by KRG on camp consolidation, with some small camps that could be consolidated.
- MOMD assistance to KRI camps is now ongoing on a regular basis.

Informal Sites

- Evictions ongoing in some informal sites in Samarra, leading to secondary displacement within Samarra, some returning to AoOs in southern SAD, some remaining in the sites, and some moving to Balad train station which continues to have humanitarian access challenges.

RWG Field Update

(Full presentation for more details)

Kurdistan Region

Dahuk Movements

- 52 individuals departed camps, with families mainly returning to Sinjar and two families returning to Bashiqa
- Reasons for return include lack of livelihoods in AoD, family reunification in AoO

- Some families who returned to Sinjar are in secondary displacement due to challenges related to housing, basic services, and livelihoods in their AoO

Reverse Movements

- Between March and April, 22 families applied to DMCR to return from Sinjar to Dahuk
- Since 2021, 471 families have requested to return to Dahuk due to a lack of safety and security, poor basic services (especially medical services), and limited livelihood opportunities

Erbil Movements

- In March, 120 individuals departed from East Mosul and Erbil Urban Camps to Ba'aj, Sinjar, Makhmour, Qaraj East, and West Mosul
- Some families returned to their AoO while others went into secondary displacement due to limited livelihood opportunities and tribal issues in their AoO

Sulaymaniyah Movements

- In March, 185 individuals departed to Balad, Kifri, Anbar, Baghdad, while some left camps and moved to urban areas within Sulaymaniyah
- Reasons for departure include the desire to return to their AoO, limited livelihood opportunities in AoD, and concerns regarding the decrease in assistance in camps

HC Visit to Sulaymaniyah

- On 28 March, the HC met with the governors of Sulaymaniyah and SAD, Head of Sunni Endowment, REFAATO representatives, DMCR and MOMD, as well as UN agencies and RWG
- The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the main obstacles faced by IDPs, identify areas of mutual collaboration between UN agencies, government counterparts, as well as the transition and decrease in humanitarian assistance

Center-South Updates

Return Movements

- 80 returns to Anbar, with the most common obstacles including documentation, livelihoods, and access to shelter
- 35 returns to Diyala, and 57 returns to SAD, with obstacles including shelter and access to essential services

Potential Returns to Babil

- A list of around 2,400 HHs from Al-Eskandaria villages has been shared by MOMD with JOC to obtain security clearance for their return. After obtaining security clearance, JOC will send the final approval to MOMD and local authorities in Babil

- Out of the 2,400 HHs, the initial plan of the local authorities plan to facilitate the return of 690 HHs who live in Al-Eskandaria city center

National Update

- On April 11th, the MOMD minister (OIC) led the monthly meeting of the Supreme Committee for Relief and Support for the Displaced to mobilize
- The main purpose of the meeting was to mobilize MOMD to ensure the on-time distribution of in-kind assistance and increase the access of IDPs to civil documentation
- Joint efforts between MoMD and MoLSA facilitated the registration of 813 IDP heads of households from several locations in the Social Safety Net. This is pending extra allocation to MoLSA, which will enable the ministry to proceed with finalizing the inclusion of registered HHs in their databases
- The approval of KRI authorities for the security clearance of residents of Khazir and Hasan Sham camps is still on hold

Discussion

- On local authorities facilitating the return of 690 HHs from Al-Eskandaria city center, what kind of assistance will the authorities provide? Is it security clearance or reconstruction of basic infrastructure or some other material assistance?
 - RWG: It is still too early to consider the local authorities' plans to support the return to villages of Al-Eskandaria, however, the financial means and intentions exist and that's why the DSTWG is planning to organize a DS workshop for the authorities in Babil to enable them to draft initial plans for this purpose
- **CCCM:** For Khazir and Hasan Sham camps, what kind of security clearance is this and for which residents?
 - RWG: According to JOC and MoMD, the federal government has no data about the residents of these camps. Therefore, they want to conduct the security clearance to obtain this data, and to support the potential future return of IDPs from these camps to their AoOs.
- Do we know the progress made to resolve the access of IDPs to civil documentation, and what steps has the government already taken?
 - **Protection Cluster:** the Minister is open to granting or allowing all Iraqi citizens to be able to access civil documentation including those with perceived ISIS affiliation. Mobile missions are also ongoing by UNHCR, its partners, and MOI, while the first unified card mobile mission was conducted to Jeda'a 5 due to the difficulties these families face in proving their areas of origin
- Is there any additional information the next steps the RCHC is planning to take with regards to the situation of returns to SAD, following the meeting in Sulaymaniah?
 - **RWG:** We may need to wait for the report following the HC's visit soon.

3) DSTWG Update: DS Update

(Presentation attached for more details)

General DSTWG Updates

- TORs for ABC and DSTWG – Endorsed by DSTF on Apr 5 following multiple rounds of review
- East Anbar ABC Focal Point – UNHCR selected as 2nd focal point; Mercy Hands selected as 3rd focal point by DSTF
- Transition – Discussions between ICCG and DSTWG has started on modalities of the transition, with further meetings to take place

DSTWG sub-Group Updates

- Housing & HLP: Guidance note on ‘HLP and HLP dispute mediation’ has been shared, and the guidance note on ‘Integration of informal sites in urban areas’ is forthcoming
- Facilitated Movements: Objectives of the initial TORs have been completed, while the group had a brainstorming workshop on informal sites with ABC Mosul
- Monitoring & Assessment: Presenting potential DS-related questions in upcoming MCNA

ABC Updates

- Kirkuk: Inter-agency fact finding mission to Daquq and Dibis planned for May
- Sinjar: PoA finalized and endorsed by authorities
- Ba’aj: PoA under finalization
- Diyala: ABC coordination in practice conducted
- East Anbar: UNHCR + Mercy Hands confirmed as additional FPs working with IOM. Deep-dive (Al-Garma) scheduled for April 27th
- West Anbar: Deep-dive session (Al Sagra and Rayhana) on April 26th
- SAD: Deep-dive (Al-Seniyah) April 28th.

Discussion

- Regarding the POA overall analysis, how were activities categorized as humanitarian/development?
 - RWG: Activities were analyzed using the Specific Objectives (SOs) in the DS framework, while some activities in the POAs are tagged whether they are funded by the HRP or not. The specific types of activities were also analyzed to determine which categorization they fall under
- There has been talk that the ABCs will replace the clusters once the current HRP is dissolved. It remains unclear how the ABCs would function or the kind of mechanism they would follow to replace the clusters, so could this be clarified?
 - **DSTWG**: An initial discussion has taken place with ICCG, and many more will follow regarding the modalities and to what extent ABCs are able to take over that role
 - **RWG action point**: To get an update next month from OCHA and DSTWG on this

4) National Protection Cluster: Round 5: Protection Monitoring System

(Presentation attached for more details)

- 2,646 KI (1,758 male and 888 female) interviews were conducted by 10 organizations in 18 governorates, 71 districts, and 128 sub-districts
- The majority of KIs were IDPs, returnees, private sector workers, community or tribal leaders and outreach volunteers
- Limited changes from the last round conducted, in 2021

Key Findings

- 16% of KIs report safety and security incidents involving armed, or security actors happen sometimes or frequently (highest in Ninewa 19%), (Diyala 18%) and (Anbar 17%)
- 9% of KIs report that presences of armed and security actors is the main security issue among communities (highest in SAD 15%, and Anbar 13%) and 5% of KIs report civilian death or injury caused by UXO or landmines as the second main issue (highest in SAD 44% and Ninewa 27%)
- 13% of KIs report that mistreatment including verbal and/or physical assault is the main security issue of violence and violations against civilians (highest in SAD 33%)
- 15% of KIs report that violations of the right to life and physical integrity against civilians occur sometimes or frequently
- 18% of KIs report restrictions on freedom of movement to other district/governorates
- 40% of KIs report that some or most people are facing issues to obtain or renew their civil documentation
- 16% of KIs report that social tensions and conflict occur sometimes or frequently
- 45% of KIs report that some or most people face HLP issues
- 34% of KIs assess the protection situation of women and children as negative

Link to full dashboard:

<https://app.powerbi.com/view?r=eyJrjoiOGU3MzVIMTctYmY4Ny00ZDFiLWEwNTctN2Y4OWFiZWU0NWU3E3liwidCl6lmU1YzMTOTgxLTY2NjQtNDEzNC04YTBlTY1NDNkMmFmODBiZSIsImMiOjh9&pageName=ReportSection>

Discussion

- Regarding the unified cards mentioned previously, would IDPs be able to renew their card from outside their areas of origin?
 - **Protection Cluster:** It's believed that this barrier will remain, as a residency card or a mukhtar support letter is needed to obtain this card. Therefore, as things stands, it doesn't seem as the unified cards will resolve this issue.
- Is there a breakdown of what type of HLP issues are faced?
 - **Protection Cluster:** This can be seen in the full dashboard, which has been attached
- For mobile missions, how are families/people informed? IOM would be interested in supporting outreach, particularly in locations where IOM has community centers
 - **Protection Cluster:** Will put IOM in touch with UNHCR, who are mainly coordinating the mobile missions

(Presentation attached for more details)

- Objective: To provide information on climate motivated displacement in Southern Iraq, specifically in Al-Basra, Maysan, and Thi Qar governorates where marshlands have been a critical source of livelihoods for the community
- Methodology: The analysis uses qualitative data drawn from 12 FGDs and 8 KIs conducted in the marshlands of Al-Basra, Maysan, and Thi Qar governorates

Key Findings

- FGD participants representing marshland residents reported reduced water level in the past 5 years (12/12 FGDs)
 - Reported reasons: Climate change (10/12 FGDs), dam construction (11/12 FGDs)
- 11 FGD participants and all KIs reported water level changes contributing to a decrease in livelihoods
- 7 FGD participants reported access to sufficient quantity and quality food worsening among HHs in the marshlands
- 8 FGD participants reported worsening access to quantity and quality of water for drinking and domestic purposes in Mejar Al-Kabir and Al-Chilbayish districts
- FGD findings suggest that many households (11 FGDs) intended to relocate to other areas, with the main reasons being:
 - Lack of job opportunities
 - Changes in marshland negatively affecting livelihoods
 - Drought
- Some FGD participants reported that HHs may stay in their current location due to:
 - Difficult adapting to the lifestyle in urban areas
 - Difficulty leaving their lands
 - Difficulty finding jobs elsewhere
- Geospatial system (GIS) of the marshlands seems to contradict reports by marshland FGD participants and KIs that the water level has decreased over the past 5 years
 - This may be attributed to the decrease in yearly precipitation since 2018

Discussion

- How significant are the marshlands for food production in Iraq?
 - **REACH:** Will revert on this when more information is obtained
- Were government authorities present in the KIs, due to their importance in mitigating the hardships mentioned and the support needed from their side?
 - **REACH:** There may have been one or two in Basra, but this needs to be checked
- In terms of support needed by farmers, is this an accessibility issue or an affordability issue?
 - **REACH:** Both apply, as farmers need to be able to afford the inputs they need
- DTM have been tracking climate motivated displacement, mainly focusing on returnees. While the focus was on Ninewa, is it similar for Basra?
 - **DTM:** Climate motivated displacement is tracked each quarter by DTM. One potential follow-up point would be to look at the marshland layer, and apply it over the locations of displacement to see how it relates to the number of people displaced in the marshland areas.

AOB

Next RWG meeting will be in person and online.