

- **Meeting Date:** 26 September 2023
- **Meeting Time:** 11:00 am-13:00 pm
- **Location:** IOM Conference Room, Erbil & Remote connection via Teams

Attendance: Hammurabi Human Rights Organization, UNHCR, ICRC, RWG-IOM, IOM DTM, Blumont, UNMAS, Solidarites International, GIZ, Save the Children, US Embassy, Baghdad/PRM, Malteser International, NCCI, USAID, ICRI-Ta'afi, IOM, UNFPA, icrcs, UNOCHA, WRO, ECHO, USAID/BHA,DRC,MSF Switzerland, UNAMI, TdH Italy, and SEDO

Agenda:

1. **Introduction and adoption of minutes:** Introduction and adoption of minutes Review of August minutes
2. **Context Update:** DTM Updates: Master List, Return Index, Displacement Index, and Sinjar Emergency Tracking; and RWG Field Update.
3. **IOM Presentation:** Facilitated Voluntary Movement Update
4. **DSTWG Update:** DS updates
5. **NCCI Phase Down Announcement & AOB**

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

- **Action Point:** Coordinate with the IOM CCCM Team and Legal Team to share a comprehensive list of informal sites in Baaj under the threat of eviction with OCHA, in order to facilitate joint advocacy initiatives.
Update: The list has been shared, and OCHA and IOM are currently actively engaged in advocacy efforts
- Endorsement of the previous meeting minutes.

2. **Context Update: DTM Updates: Master List, Return Index, Displacement Index, and Sinjar Emergency Tracking; and RWG Field Update**

(Please refer to the full presentation link for further details)

Return Index: Deterioration of conditions.

- **Ninewa Governorate**
 - **Sinjar District**
Not enough electricity due to interruptions in the transmission line related to greater use of electricity during the summer
 - **Telefar District**
Concerns over harassment at checkpoints from PMF
- **Diyala Governorate**
 - **Al Khalis District**
Insufficient electricity and water supply
Presence of multiple security actors (army, local police, national security, PMF)
- **Baghdad Governorate**
 - **Mahmoudiya and Tarmia Districts**
Insufficient electricity supply and water scarcity
Poor provision of government services
Worsening agricultural activities in Al-Yousifya subdistrict in Mahmoudiya District due to reduced water levels in nearby rivers

Discussion

- Question: In light of the unusual displacement from Sulaimaniya, can you elaborate on any specific incidents that may have led to this displacement over the past few months? Are there any notable factors, such as rocket attacks from Iran or other sources, that could be attributed as the main causes, particularly in the Sulaimaniya region? Is it known whether the numbers presented in the recent movement data for Sulaimaniya are indicative of households or individuals?
 - DTM: These are individuals, Recent movements from Suli make up a relatively small portion (about 1%) compared to the total displacement during the peak of the ISIS crisis. Nonetheless, there is a notable trend of ongoing displacement, particularly in Suli, which consistently records the highest number of recent movements. The primary reason for this appears to be the relatively low volume of people being displaced for the first time. While DTM doesn't have extensive tracking or independent data collection to fully understand the reasons behind these movements, further follow-ups with field teams may shed light on this. It's also worth mentioning that most recent events in Suli are related to secondary displacement, with a lesser extent of issues connected to failures.
- Question: Regarding the severity of living conditions, did DTM evaluate access to housing as well? Could more information about access to healthcare be provided, particularly concerning the challenges mentioned in one instance?

- DTM: DTM offers a handy dashboard for both the displacement index and the return index, breaking down severity levels in thematic categories, including infrastructure and services, particularly healthcare access. In the Al-Amirya Sub-district, challenges in accessing healthcare are evident. This dashboard serves as a valuable tool to comprehend the factors contributing to high severity in specific sub-districts and allows for comparisons to identify areas where healthcare access is most severe. While DTM may not have specific details for this particular case, this tool provides a broad understanding of how different locations compare on these indicators, serving as a starting point for further assessment.

RWG Field Update

MoMD minister meets heads of branches.

- MoMD released and distributed the 27 and 28 rounds of the return grants that included more than 17,000 families.
- 16,000 return grants suspended since 2019, MoMD started reviewing per minister instructions.

Discussion

- Question: Could RWG please provide additional information about the return grant program, including its funding source? Specifically, is the funding coming from the National Budget Fund or another source? Additionally, how many individuals are anticipated to benefit from the program for the remainder of 2023, and does RWG has any projections or estimates regarding the program's outcomes and impact? How does RWG track the departures and returns of J1 individuals to their areas of origin, especially considering the notable increase in J1 returnees to the Anbar area?
 - RWG: The return grant process has been accelerated, with a significant portion of funding allocated through the 2023 budget law. However, it's important to note that the allocated funds may not cover all registered IDPs seeking assistance for their return. The distribution operates on a first-come, first-served basis, with exceptions made according to specific criteria, such as households headed by women or particular regions. Plans for future rounds are subject to change based on procedures, documentation, and the use of key cards for grant disbursement. While tracking returnees is ongoing, precise numbers, especially for regions like Jeddah, may not always be readily available due to various factors, including community dynamics. Nonetheless, we will ensure IOM CCCM and protection colleagues to reach out to you with the information about tracking J1 families and their integration. Also, the Durable solution team is actively monitoring their conditions and integration process, more details soon will be communicated bilaterally.
- Question: What is the prioritization criteria used for listing names to receive the return grant, and how is a high priority determined for individuals or households?
 - RWG: The return grant program typically follows a 'first come, first serve' policy, prioritizing those who returned and registered early, usually in 2016. Exceptions can be made for regions like Babylon, recent returnees, female-headed households, or IDPs in severe conditions. While some variations may occur in practice, registration date with MOMD remains the primary criterion for grant allocation.
- Question: Regarding the movement in Erbil, is it voluntary, and is there a sponsorship mechanism or any facilitation provided to the IDPs?
 - RWG: Yes, returns are voluntary, and coordination mainly involves BCF before moving on to MOMD. The households returning from Hassan Sham are primarily spontaneous returns and not part of a sponsored or facilitated return program. These returns have occurred following the approval for families to return to the 13 villages in the vicinity. While some households may have received assistance.
 - IOM FVM: At present, there are plans for assessments in the 13 villages near Hassan Sham. However, as for facilitated voluntary movement or specific intentions regarding these villages, it appears that a decision on this matter is yet to be finalized. Currently, the program is focused on obtaining security clearances for families in Hassan Sham 2 camp, and some of these families may be from the 13 villages. We are waiting for their final decisions on whether they wish to leave the camp or remain.
- Question: Is there any indication if the list of villages near Hassan Sham that was previously mentioned comprises all the villages permitted for return, or are there any further villages that are currently prohibited from return?
 - RWG: It's indeed a fact that there are currently two or three villages near Hassan Sham that have not witnessed any returns yet. However, this isn't due to a lack of approval; rather, it's because the conditions in these villages are not yet conducive for people to return comfortably. Some areas may require improvements for them to be suitable for living, and in some cases, farmers are still awaiting security clearances.
- Questions: On the eviction threats, is IOM or other partners taking actions on that in terms of advocacy with local and central authorities in order to find alternative solutions for the people of concern? Also. Have the made efforts by authorities had any positive impact on communities?
 - RWG: DSTWG is actively engaging with the government on this matter. This includes ABC discussions with the government about the situations of informal settlements and advocating for their needs. It's important to note that advocating for informal settlements can be challenging, as the government often views these cases as people residing on government land. However, DSTWG is working diligently to strike a balance between humanitarian concerns and government perspectives in these situations.
 - OCHA: OCH is currently following up with the Ninewa authorities to understand the nature of the eviction, timeframe, locations, as well as any possible alternatives for those at risk of eviction. We hope to gather comprehensive information on this matter soon. However, it's essential to acknowledge

that eviction issues are complex. The government often perceives individuals residing on government lands as 'illegal occupiers,' so any advocacy efforts need to be initiated cautiously.

- Question: Concerning the challenges faced by returnees to the villages of Hassan Sham, particularly regarding the lack of services like education, and how can we advocate for their needs effectively, perhaps through interagency assessments or higher-level advocacy?
 - RWG: Partners discussed conducting an interagency assessment during the last meeting to address challenges in Hassan Sham villages, such as the lack of schools and water. They are awaiting feedback from local authorities who have conducted their assessment and are planning activities. According to JCC, some arrangements have been made for returning families to use camp schools temporarily.
- Question: Has MOMD been sharing data regarding the grants provided to individuals who choose to stay and integrate? If so, how can we access this data?
 - RWG: MOMD regularly shares grant data. Typically, this information is sent out every three to four months via the RWG mailing list. This data includes a breakdown of grants distributed for both return and local integration, with the most recent breakdown shared around the end of July. If you need this information, you can request it, or it can be extracted from the last document shared. MOMD provides this data to keep stakeholders informed. Additionally, there was a specific mention of one round of grants going to local integration in the Southern governorates, benefiting 1128 families.

3. IOM Presentation: Facilitated Voluntary Movement Update

(Please refer to the full presentation link for further details)

July-September 2023: 245 households returned/relocated through IOM FVM program over 1,400 individuals.

- 127 households returned to Ramadi, Amiriyah Al-Falluja, Falluja, and Qaim from AAF and Kilo 18 informal sites in Anbar.
- 18 households returned to Tal-Azer and Seebay Shekhedre (Baaj) from Bersive 1 camps in Dohuk.
- 66 households returned to Tal-Azer from Mount Sinjar (Sardashte)
- 6 households returned to Arab Fares and Egeidat villages (Diyala).

Discussion

- When local authorities deny relocation approvals, what steps are being taken to address this issue and ensure the safety of IDPs affected by these denials?
 - FVM: In cases where security clearances for relocation are denied by local authorities, FVM standard practice is not to facilitate returns or relocations if there is a rejection. This situation primarily affects IDP families from blocked areas, such as Kirkuk. Rejections for relocation are often linked to political and security concerns. Currently, FVM is in negotiations to explore the possibility of relocating these families through the FVM program, provided they are willing to leave the camp. It's worth noting that while many families face challenges related to relocation approvals, some individuals manage to obtain individual approvals through their connections with local authorities and mayors. This dynamic is also observed in cases of security rejections regarding relocation.

4. DSTWG and ABC Updates

(Please refer to the full presentation link for further details)

Compact/Roadmap update

- The first attempt at the Compact met with reluctance from the Gol, mainly due to a misunderstanding regarding its possible roll-out in parallel to the National Plan for Returning IDPs
- Agreement was reached to rename the Compact as a Roadmap, to be developed hand in hand with the Gol
- The Supreme Committee will be convened for the RC to present the Roadmap concept and ensure Government buy-in
- The development of the Roadmap will therefore begin with technical Workshops at the Ministry level to propose with Durable Solutions to the needs identified by the Gol

Discussion

- Question: what monitoring and evaluation processes will be put in place for the JCFs, you know, to assess the effectiveness or efficiency of the JCFs after their establishment?
 - DSTWG: At the moment, when we examine the structure, it appears that the JCFs, being a joint government and aid agency forum, will have accountability lines directed towards both the DSTF and COMSEC. Consequently, there will be elements within them accountable to various ministries in terms of their activities and responses. However, it's still early to determine the precise framework for monitoring processes. What we do know is that accountability lines will exist between the DSF and government bodies since both entities will have a mixed membership.
- Question: Is the closure of IDP camps included in the roadmap, as mentioned by the Minister of Placement and Migration, in collaboration with the United Nations, to facilitate the return of IDPs to their homelands? Could you provide more details regarding the objectives and strategies outlined in this process?
 - DSTWG: We don't have enough information regarding the news article yet to fully comment. The national plan's primary focus is on IDPs in camps and addresses displacement. The roadmap plans to build on some of the challenges identified in the National Plan, looking closely at obstacles hindering people from returning, local integration, or relocation, encompassing a broader scope, both for IDPs inside and outside camps. The UN's policy always emphasizes IDPs' right to choose their path. There is a plan for a joint workshop between the different ministries under the leadership of MoMD and the UN agencies to discuss the parameters of the Roadmap.

5. AOB

- NCCI, which has been operating in Iraq for two decades, is undergoing a phasedown in 2023 due to a decision by the Board of Directors. This process has entailed a gradual reduction in services provided to approximately 250 partner NGOs, resulting in significant staff reductions and reduced working hours. Moving forward, NCCI will exclusively offer services aligned with its current funding, with certain support functions such as resolving administrative issues or providing information no longer accessible to partners. The organization will officially close its operations in Iraq on November 1st. Meanwhile, NCCI has initiated elections for NGOs to assume its roles on representational bodies, aiming to conclude the process by October 15th and ensure that no NGO holds dual voting rights on specific issues.
- The call for interest for DS Training 2023 was issued on September 21. Foundational principles of durable solutions, frameworks at national and international levels, and the Iraq context, along with coordination mechanisms, will be covered in the training. Participants can choose to take the training in English, Arabic, or Kurdish. Whether the training will be conducted in person or online will be determined based on survey responses. The deadline for survey responses is September 28, 2023, and all RWG members are encouraged to participate in survey.
- Next RWG meeting is scheduled for **October 31, 2023**.