



## RETURNS WORKING GROUP- IRAQ

- ❖ **Meeting Date:** 16 April 2019
- ❖ **Meeting Time:** 10:00-11:30 hrs
- ❖ **Location:** Erbil (IOM Conference Room, Gulan Rd.) via bluejeans to Baghdad, UNDP Meeting room

**In Attendance:** IOM, UNDP, UNHCR, PUI, ACTED, WASH Cluster, Solidarites International, Chemonics, ICRC, MSF, GIZ, UN-Habitat, REACH, RPA, DRC, Mercy Hands, National Protection Cluster (NPC), CCCM Cluster, ACF, WFP, PAO, Geneva Call, MERI, World Vision Iraq, Save the Children, DFID, PRM/US Consulate, INTERSOS, UNMAS, UNFPA, UNAMI/JAU, US Embassy, CRC, MOMD, IRCS, UNICEF

### Agenda Items:

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- 1) **Introduction and adoption of minutes:** Review of previous minutes; Follow up on action points from previous meeting
- 2) **Returns Update:** Update on return figures from RWG/DTM dashboard and an in-depth analysis of protracted displacement; Key findings from 3<sup>rd</sup> report of the Return Index; Protracted displacement in- depth analysis: Overview of districts of displacement and origin
- 3) **IDP Intentions Survey:** Presentation by CCCM Cluster/ REACH on the findings of the intention survey- 2019
- 4) **Mental Health and Return:** Presentation on the impact of mental health and returns, and the linkage with protracted displacement
- 5) **Areas of no return:** Presentation by RWG on areas of no return: Focus on Saadiya, Diyala
- 6) **AOB**

### Key Discussion Points/ Action:

- 1) **Introduction and adoption of minutes:** Review of previous minutes; Follow up on action points from previous meeting
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- The Chair gave an overview of the previous meeting after the introductions, as well as a review of the agenda items.

**2) Returns Update:** Update on return figures from RWG/DTM dashboard and an in-depth analysis of protracted displacement; Key findings from 3rd report of the Return Index; Protracted displacement in-depth analysis: Overview of districts of displacement and origin

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*(Presentation attached for more details)*

**Main points:**

i) Return Update, Round 109 (March-April 2019)

- As of April 2019, the total no. of returnees was at 4,266,570.
- 144,552 returnees are living in critical shelter.
  - This is an additional 13,728 individuals since the last Round 108 (130,824 returnees living in critical shelter), which had seen a decrease from Round 107, with 132,744 living in critical shelter.
  - Data still needs to be confirmed, but it would appear the districts where there appears to be a bigger increase in returnees returning to damaged residences since the last round are Ramadi (figure more than tripled), Al-Kaim, Rutba - all in Anbar, and Baiji in Salah al Din Governorates.

ii) Return Index

- As of 28 February 2019, an additional 108,162 returnees were identified since the previous Return Index report (Round#2 collected in October 2018).
- The third Return Index round is built on both new and improved indicators and the regression model used to calculate the return index has been revised accordingly.
- 11% (472,350 individuals) are living in high severity conditions across 279 locations. This proportion is relatively similar to the previous rounds published in September and January 2019, which had respectively 11% and 10% of returnees in this high severity category.
- Ninewa and Salah al-Din governorates host the highest absolute figures of returnees living in these conditions; Salah al-Din also present the highest intra-governorate proportion of returnees in high severity conditions, along with Diyala.
- Al-Ba'aj District in Ninewa has the highest severity score at national level: there are very severe conditions in all of the 12 locations hosting 10,722 returnees. This is followed by Tooz and Sinjar Districts, which are hosting 28,542 individuals (73%) in eight locations and 43,476 individuals (73%) in 40 locations, respectively.
- The districts that host the largest number of returnees living in very severe conditions are Telefar (102,762 individuals) and Mosul (48,630 individuals) in Ninewa Governorate and Baiji (58,254 individuals) in Salah al-Din Governorate.
- There are 44 locations in Iraq, hosting 35,748 returnees (1% of the total returnee population), that have the most severe conditions when all indicators are combined. The top 5 locations with the most severe conditions are found in Salah al-Din Governorate.



- The third Return Index report will be released in the coming days.

iii) Protracted displacement

- Samples of the newly launched Districts of Displacement and Districts of Origin factsheets were shared, providing detailed breakdown of IDP information per district of displacement and origin.

➤ Discussion:

- The Chair emphasized that more focus should be shifted towards high severity areas such as Salah al-Din and Diyala, rather than Mosul/Ninewa, which seems to attract the most attention.
- An inquiry was made on whether RWG is considering RRM partners for the delivery of rapid response to IDPs and returnees in critical situations in Anbar and Salah al-Din.
  - The Chair explained that RWG's intention is to reach out to individual partners (humanitarians, development, donors, clusters etc.) to find out what particular organizations/partners can do in each area of origin to help facilitate returns. There seems to be pilot focus on Anbar, which is a good area to start with, with Salah al-Din potentially the next pilot governorate.

**3) IDP Intentions Survey: Presentation by CCCM Cluster/ REACH on the findings of the intention survey-2019**

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*(Presentation attached for more details)*

**Key points:**

- Fourth round was conducted in formal camps between January 30 and February 28, 2019, during the 11<sup>th</sup> round of REACH-CCCM Camps Profile. Data was collected in 49 camps across 10 governorates (all camps with 100 households or more).
- Over three quarters of IDP households reported originating from Ninewa governorate, and almost half of IDP households (40%) reported originating from Sinjar district.
- Intentions to return to area of origin (AoO) were overall low for IDP households, and had decreased compared to the previous round of intentions survey in formal camps (August 2018) from 9% to 5% intending to return in the long term (12 months).
- Notable variations were observed between IDP households from different governorates of origin, with up to 21% of IDP households from Anbar reporting intending to return.
- Stabilization of security in AoO continued to be the main reason for intending to return (57% of households reported it as a reason, 10% more than in August 2018).
- As shown through the intentions survey conducted in August 2018, overall reasons for not intending to return to AoO were related to housing, security, and financial means/livelihoods.

- The high proportion of IDP households citing information on conditions in AoO as a need to enable return was in line with uncertainty regarding movement intentions.
- Among the 50% of IDP households that indicated that they had concerns about safety and security conditions in their AoO, overall cited reasons were mainly related to after effects of the conflict – this was particularly the case for IDP households from Diyala and Ninewa, but to a lesser extent for IDP households from Anbar.

➤ Discussion:

- The Chair mentioned that the low intentions to return remains a concern, also citing Basateen camp (which was recently visited) as an example where none of the IDPs intend to return as their living conditions at the camp is better than in their areas of origin (AoO). The Chair added that housing and livelihoods are the areas that require the most focus from partners as they are the biggest obstacles to return. Security is handled by the state and therefore out of our hands.
- It was mentioned that other issues contributing to the lack of return are the fact that some returns are prohibited and other safety/security concerns being personalized and affecting certain profiles of people, the question being how much that is considered in the data analysis.
  - REACH explained that the survey asks IDPs what their safety concerns are, with 10-15 reasons being given. There will be more information on this in upcoming factsheets and various outputs.
- UNICEF mentioned that they had a recent meeting with GRC in Anbar, where they discussed reasons why IDPs cannot return. The two main reasons were security and basic services. A solution discussed was access to information, where UNICEF asked the government to be more flexible and see what is needed based on the AoO, hence focusing on a more specific approach rather than general (e.g. bridge rehabilitation needed in Qaim). The government also reassured that there have been no cases of forced return.
- CCCM mentioned that the findings of the survey were in line with what was expected. There has been a significant amount of return in the last few years, but that was mainly due to the ease of return and availability of resources to the returnees. However, the intentions were now expected to decrease with each round as we are currently looking at a residual caseload that may have additional vulnerabilities, cannot access their AoO, lack resources etc. CCCM also added that most of the IDPs had a good understanding of what was happening in their AoO and could not return due to certain limiting factors.
- MOMD asked whether REACH can share the tools that they used for the intentions survey, adding that the results were supposed to be shared in Arabic with MOMD.
  - CCCM mentioned that they are meeting with MOMD on Thursday (18 April) to discuss and see whether there is any synergy between the information already being collected by



CCCM/REACH and what MOMD is looking for, therefore more information will be available by then. An update about this discussion will be shared in the coming RWG meeting.

- The DTM Coordinator mentioned that the proportion of IDPs needing information seems high and that more work needs to be done in this area, suggesting that through coordination with CCCM and partners, information can be disseminated to IDPs in the form of CwC products.
  - NPC explained that humanitarian actors cannot provide specific information on specific areas (i.e. the full extent), as many concerns are individualized. For this reason, Know Before You Go (KBYG) messages were developed to help IDPs obtain information through their own means, leading to a more informed decision. NPC added that we should refrain from singling out main reasons for lack of return due to the complexity of the situation, and that partners should focus on looking at the overall situation.
  - The Co-chair mentioned that at the time of the development of KBYG messages, it was discussed with protection and CCCM partners if instead we could advocate to have the government representative to share information about areas of origin in camps. The government is only entity accountable to share this information with IDPs in camps.

#### 4) **Mental Health and Return:** Presentation on the impact of mental health and returns, and the linkage with protracted displacement

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*(Presentation attached for more details)*

##### **Key points:**

- The research aims to understand:
  - Prevalence of mental health concerns among remaining IDP populations;
  - What factors in displacement and conditions in place of return correlate with mental health.
- 31% of camp and non-camp displaced households report “fear/trauma” as a reason for not returning to place of origin
- 29% of non-camp IDPs self-reported having fair to poor mental health
- 13% of IDPs in the sample meet the criteria for PTSD, with women meeting these criteria at a rate 4 times higher than men (20% compared to 5%) based on symptoms and frequency.
- 21% of IDPs in the sample meet the criteria for depression, disaggregated into 15% for moderate depression, 3% for moderately severe depression, and 3% for severe depression.
- Depression symptomology is twice as high in women than men (28% compared to 14%).
- 28% of IDPs in the sample report somatoform symptoms, again with women reporting more than men (44% compared to 12%).

- IDPs in camps are less likely to meet criteria for depression, PTSD, or a co-incidence of both as compared to their non-camp counterparts.
- IDPs who do not have information on physical/social conditions in the places of origin are more likely to meet criteria for depression, PTSD, and co-incidence of both. The same holds true for IDPs whose houses have been or remained destroyed in their places of origin.
- IDPs who fear what happened before happening again in their places of origin are more likely to have depression symptoms.
- Takeaways:
  - Women heads of household in this sample are particularly vulnerable in terms of mental health and tend to have become heads of household due to violence and conflict. They are predominantly found in Anbar camps and displaced in Kirkuk and Salah al-Din.
  - Men seem to underreport symptoms but that does not mean they are not vulnerable. Their experiences of trauma are relatively similar to women's. Compared to similar studies in other contexts, their symptoms are lower indicating the need for further examination of this.
  - Mental health services and outreach need to be extended or enhanced toward out-of-camp populations. In doing this, such services need to be better available to host community members as well as they may not have the care they need either. Related to this, study of the mental health of the Iraq-wide population would also be warranted, not only to understand the rate of need of care but to better put IDP prevalence into perspective.
  - Economic and housing insecurity remain critical priorities to address among IDPs in Iraq. Addressing lack of occupation among both camp and non-camp populations would potentially help in alleviating a stressor negatively influencing mental health. Furthermore, policies or practices forcing IDPs out of their housing, whether people are evicted or face the risk of it, are also detrimental to mental health outcomes. This must be taken into account in planning of camp closure and included in any plans for relocating IDPs. With respect to non-camp IDPs, an important aspect is to identify potential protection issues among those who rent housing.
  - Collective blame and negative labelling and judgement felt by some IDPs is also particularly detrimental to mental health, across all indices used in the research. The general narrative and perception of IDPs, particularly those from central governorates, needs to shift. This can take place at a more local level through specific social cohesion or reconciliation arrangements to help families resolve their displacement, but also must come from the wider-state itself.
  - Connected to the above, forced separation of family members is a significant hurdle for IDPs to deal with, both materially and emotionally. In particular, lack of information as to the whereabouts of a family member, when or if they will ever come home, and/or what happened to them make it difficult to gain closure and move on from such a traumatic loss. It also obscures a more public reckoning with what happened during and after conflict to ensure such events do not happen again. This must extend to all victims across displacement locations.

➤ Discussion:

- The Chair mentioned that it's important to note how many partners are working in mental health and psychosocial issues since 31% of IDPs (approximately 527,000 of the total IDP caseload) have reported fear/trauma as a reason to not return, which is a relatively huge caseload.



- The CRC Chair mentioned that Community Resource Centers have been established in some areas of return, and that partners are free to reach out to CRC in case they need space to conduct their activities related to Mental Health and Psychosocial support.
- An inquiry was made as to whether children were included in the survey.
  - Social Inquiry explained that children are not included in the survey as the subject is too intense.
  - NPC added that Save the Children are doing a task review on the mental health of children, and that partners interested in knowing more about children's perspective on this matter can reach out to Save the Children.
  - Save the Children mentioned that they are looking at children's mental health on several levels, including community interventions and technical psychiatric support. Anyone interested in that information can reach out to Save the Children.

#### **5) Areas of no return: Presentation by RWG on areas of no return: Focus on Saadiya, Diyala**

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*(Presentation attached for more details)*

##### **Key points:**

- Saadiya sub- district has the highest no. of locations (17 locations) in Diyala which have not witnessed return.
- In general, Khanaqin district, including Saadiyah city, used to be controlled by the Peshmerga, however now it seemed to be controlled by Shia militia.
- Particularly, Saadiyah and Jalawla are of strategic importance due to their location near KRI and Iran (al-Akhbar 2014). Many months of fighting hit the two cities hard.
- Some armed groups have been accused of harassing Sunni inhabitants and returnees in liberated areas. The violence against Sunni civilians seem to have been sectarian inspired, with Sunni civilians automatically assumed to be collaborators with extremist groups.
- The destruction of houses and other civilian buildings in Sunni areas seemed to aim at preventing Sunni IDPs from returning and pushing the ones that stayed to other areas, thereby altering the sectarian makeup of the governorate.
- The IDPs do intend to return within a 6-month timeframe. Approx. 80% of IDPs expressed their willingness to return, and only 20% of IDPs prefer to stay in location of displacement. 484 families from the 17 villages have requested to return.
- Obstacles to return:
  - The lists containing names which have been cleared have been tampered with, and the local authorities received the list with some names which have been crossed out. It is reported that

- these names are crossed out by the security forces, and this is linked to family issues within the Bani Weiss tribe.
- Some families did not request for security clearance, it was just brought to them and they were told to return to Saadiyah centre and not their villages. The families who have security clearance do not want to declare having the clearance as they will be forced to leave the camps.
  - The people from the 17 villages (around 5,050 families, mostly Arab Sunni,) approximately 4,425 have security clearance but are not allowed to return due to lack of security. Instead they are allowed to return to surrounding villages. At the moment, it seems that the 17 villages are empty, and nobody managed to return. It is further reported that there are still operations by extremist groups in these villages, but the military is controlling the area (though it is unknown which security actors are present in the area). However, it is difficult to validate this information as there is no access to these villages.
  - Tribal issues mainly from the Bani Weiss tribe- problems exist within the same tribe and within family members. The issues with the tribe stem from family members accusing other families of being affiliated with extremist groups, and some families wanting to take leadership of the tribe.

➤ Discussion:

- The Chair mentioned as a point to highlight that during the last RWG visit to this area, they were given a security clearance list in which some names were crossed out by certain security actors, which is a cause for concern. This could be linked to tribal issues that is widespread in Saadiyah. We are aware that there are issues within the same tribe living in this area, which may be due to accusations of perceived affiliation with extremist groups or a power struggle for the leadership of the tribe. Furthermore, IDPs reportedly have to pay a bribe of \$1200 to get their names back on the security clearance list. Finally, filing a compensation is another issue the IDPs are facing. This process requires 2 witnesses to verify that the house in question is damaged and therefore eligible for compensation. However, as there is no access available to these villages, that would not be possible.

## 6) AOB

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- The Chair emphasized the importance of working on one area as opposed to spreading out between several different areas. RWG will be in touch with partners extensively in the next 2 months to further discuss what work can be done in the areas in question.