

RETURNS WORKING GROUP IRAQ - MEETING MINUTES

- ❖ **Meeting Date:** 30 March 2021
- ❖ **Meeting Time:** 11:00 am-1:00 pm
- ❖ **Location:** Microsoft Teams

In Attendance: German Red Cross, CRS, UN-Habitat/HLP Sub-cluster, UNAMI -JAU, GIZ, NPC Coordinator, UNAMI-DSO, SWEDO, USAID / BHA, IOM DTM, HRW, Save the Children, Handicap International, Polish Humanitarian Action (PAH), TAAFI/USAID, UN-Habitat, SWEDO, PUI (Premiere Urgence Internationale), CCCM Co-Coord, PRM/RDPA@US consulate general Erbil, Social Enquiry, ECHO, ACTED, Impact Initiatives | REACH Initiative, CAPNI, JICA, DRS, UNOPS, ECHO Erbil, IMC, MH, SEDO, UNHCR, UNAMI- DSO, GIZ IQ, UNDP, WFP, Solidarities International, EU Iraq, WVI. NPC, ICRC, UNICEF, BHA/USAID, DRC,

Agenda Items:

- 1) **Introduction and adoption of minutes:** Review of previous minutes; Follow up on action points from previous meeting
- 2) **DTM Returns Update and CCCM Camp Update:** Update on displacement and return figures from DTM dashboard; Urban Displacement report, CCCM Update
- 3) **FAO and IOM Presentation:** *Study findings “Why Iraqi Displaced Farmers Do Not Return to Agriculture?”*
- 4) **DSTWG Update:** *Durable Solutions Update*
- 5) **REACH REDS- Presentation:** Yathreb and Markaz Garma
- 6) **AOB**

Key Discussion Points/ Action:

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

- No pending action points from previous meeting.
- The chair informed partners that IRC’s term as NGO co-chair ended in March and NGO-co-chair is now vacant, call for nominations would be sent out soon for interested NGOs to apply. Precillar is now the IOM RWG co-chair, while Zulfiye is dedicated to DSTWG. For the DSTWG the co-leads are IOM, UNDP and NRC – NRC’s co-chair has not yet begun but due to start in May, UNDP is hiring a dedicated focal point who will also start by May, with interim support in the meantime.

- 2) **DTM Displacement and Returns Update and CCCM Update:** Displacement and return trends and newly published Urban Displacement report, CCCM Update

CCCM updates

- Plan for Ja’dah camp still under way with a task force working on the instructions of MOMD national minister to look at solutions for families in Ja’dah. The work continues between Taskforce in Ninawa, MOMD Ninawa, IOM, UNHCR and OCHA looking at concrete ways for solution to support those families in Ja’dah camp to return.
- The Facilitated Returns program supporting the families to be able to leave the camp has started. Two thirds of the camp HHs have signed up so far. Currently, families are going through ‘come and tell visits’ in which authorities from areas of origin visit the camps and inform the IDPs about conditions in areas of origin.
- In Anbar in AAF camp, facilitated returns program also in place, but the come and tell visits are yet start. There is no timeline for the closure of the camp as communicated by the authorities

- KRI: The MoMD minister visited Sulaymaniyah recently but no concrete action points following that visit. No other updates on camp closures in the KRI.

DTM updates: Presentation (See attached presentation for full details) Latest Displacement and Return Movements

- More than 20,000 new returnees were recorded in the January-February 2021 period. Half of these (10,902) were from camps.
- Returnee figure is lower than November-December 2020 period (49,152) and is one of the lowest monthly return rates since 2015. In 2020, the monthly return average was 36,500 individuals.

Shelter Types

- **IDPs:** Notable increase in the number of IDPs in informal settlements mostly in Ninewa. Sumel, Falluja, Samarra, Kirkuk, and Mosul are districts with highest number of IDPs in critical shelters. The highest numbers of IDPs in critical shelters are recorded in the districts of Falluja, Al-Shikhan, Basrah, and Erbil.
- **Returnees:** 2,646 returnees arrived to shelters in critical condition, taking the total number residing in them to 179,742 (4% of all returnees). Most returnees in these shelters are in Ninewa (Mosul, Sinjar, Telafar) and Anbar (Fallujah, Al-Qaim)

New and secondary displacement:

- Despite the overall decrease in the total caseload of IDPs across the country, 15,017 IDPs (re)displaced, mainly between locations of displacement, including 2,706 coming from camps in Ninewa and Kirkuk.
- 1,062 individuals displaced for the first time, nearly all to Sulaymaniyah. Most of these IDPs came from Baghdad, Diyala, Salah al-Din, and Anbar due to lack of employment and basic services, and poor security situation.

Urban Displacement in Iraq: Urban Displacement Study

Factsheets for Federal Iraq cities and KRI cities available on the DTM website: <http://iraqdtm.iom.int/DurableSolutions/ProtractedDisplacement>

Ten urban centers were selected for the study: Baghdad/Abu Ghraib, Baquba, Dahuk, Erbil, Kirkuk, Mosul, Sulaymaniyah, Tikrit, Tuz Khurmatu, and Zakho. The ten cities are all main recipients of IDPs, together they host around half of the national out-of-camp caseload of IDPs (47%)

Drivers of urban displacement

The report notes that cities are perceived to provide greater safety and security by IDPs compared to conditions in their area of origin. In addition they offer greater anonymity for households who have experienced trauma including religious minorities, better access to services such as healthcare and education and more livelihood opportunities.

Some of the factors affecting intentions:

- Overall the gender of the household head did not impact upon significantly upon intentions, with female-headed households marginally more likely to intend to stay (57%) compared with male-headed households (51%).
- Those who had been displaced prior to 2014 were considerably more likely to opt to stay in their area of displacement (63%) compared with those that were displaced more recently (51%).
- Those that no longer consider themselves displaced were more likely to intend to stay (59%) compared with those that still consider themselves displaced (51%).
- Multiple displacements appear to increase the willingness to return with nearly half of households who had endured four or more displacement intending to return (47%) compared with just 38 per cent of those who had been displaced once.
- Arab Sunnis and Kurd Sunnis were more likely than Arab and Kurd Shia to intend to stay in their current location. A comparatively low proportion of Kurd Yazidis intend to stay (39%), although they now account for 20 per cent of the total displaced population in Iraq, suggesting they may be experiencing greater difficulty in returning.

Discussion:

- Question to DTM: In light of the MOMD Minister's visit to Sulaymaniyah in which she spoke to camp IDPs from SAD, some of IDPs reported that their main obstacles to return relate to occupation of land, costs of rehabilitation, does the urban displacement study look into the intentions of IDPs based on their areas of origin and their intention to return, remain or resettle elsewhere?
- DTM responded that in the factsheet we look at the factors that affect willingness to return and that most of the IDPs displaced in Sulaymaniyah intend to remain for now. Female headed HH are most likely to stay, male head of HH due to economic opportunities as more female HH are working in the area than male heads of HH. The Sulaymaniyah fact sheet also asks the HH what would be their preferred solutions, return, relocation, stay or move abroad. When it comes to land occupation, the urban displacement report does not look into that but that information would be available in the ILA report.

3) FAO and IOM Presentation: Study finding 'Why Iraqi Displaced Farmers do no Return to Agriculture?'

The study is part of the longitudinal study between IOM Iraq and Georgetown University on access to durable solutions for Iraqi IDPs. The study started in 2016 and is ongoing. This particular study with FAO looked at a finding that while 25% of the HHs were employed in agriculture prior to displacement only 2% had returned to agriculture three years later. The research questions were therefore:

Why have many farming families not returned to areas of origin?

For those who returned, why some have not resumed farming?

For those who resumed farming, why many are not farming at full capacity?

The Context of Agriculture in Iraq: Largest non-oil sector in Iraq's economy, the largest source of employment for the rural population including women and the 3rd largest provider employment in the country. Sector faces constraints such as water scarcity, land degradation, soil salinity, land fragmentation, low productivity and limited access to credit.

Key general findings:

- Returns among farming HHs: Farming HHs who returned to their areas of origin has increased to **27%** over time (since 2016) although still lower than non-farmers (37%)
- Challenges to resume farming:
- **40%** cited Lack access to **productive inputs** (seeds, animals, feed or equipment),
- **25%** facing problems of accessing their **land**.
- Constraints in access to markets, labour, water are also mentioned as challenges to resume farming.
- Challenges among those who resumed farming:
- **35%** reported “**low prices** offered for agricultural products”,
- “lack of access to inputs (**33 %**),
- and “little or no access to irrigation” (**21%**) are the most cited challenges.
- Income from agriculture: Increased share of agriculture as income source among returned HHs (**4% to 20%**).

Recommendations:

1. Improvement in security conditions
2. Rehabilitation of productive assets
3. Improve access to agriculture inputs
4. Maintain and incentivize the interest in agriculture
5. Increase investment in agricultural sector
6. Increase access to credit
7. Promote income generating activities
8. Address food insecurity for returned and displaced farmers household

Discussion:

- Presenters were asked whether there is a reason why the youth are less likely to return to farming than older heads of HH or why there is low interest among the youth? No specific insights – youth are similarly affected by factors related to difficulties in accessing inputs, land irrigation sources and agriculture is considered a low productivity sector so many don't see a future in the sector.
- Question on how those who lost their agricultural assets get help for recovery? It was noted that loss of assets impedes on return to agricultural sector and we have made a recommendation for productive assets to be rehabilitated.
- If such a low percentage of those who used to farm are returning to agriculture as their main source of income what are the livelihood sectors that they are returning to? Presenters noted that public sector employment (public works), cash for work schemes and the informal sector (services, businesses, non-informal agricultural sectors) are the main alternative sectors HH resorted to with 20% returning to agriculture as the main source and the 80% are not
- Are there reasons why the Ninewa Plain or Al-Jazeera in Ninewa were not include in the study? The presenters explained that the study was longitudinal and HH were sampled according to a specific criteria and not focused on a particular agricultural location in Iraq, so the cohort is representative of the HH displaced between 2014 and 2015 from 7 governorates of origin to 4 governorates of displacement. However, half of the sample

was from Ninewa and Anbar because they made up a portion of the first waves of displacement. It is a random sample and not targeted to IDPs to a particular location or those who were employed in agriculture.

4) **DSTWG Update:** General durable solutions update (see presentation for full details)

General Updates

- Government National Plan was officially endorsed last week by COMSEC.
- DSTF meeting recently held on 21 March included donor representatives for the first time, who will now join every alternate meeting. Meeting focused on the operational framework and its finalization.
- DSTWG last meeting held on 8 March, discussion on the area based groups, how they can be supported, the possibility of adding new groups to the 7 which are in place, the subgroups setup in the DSTWG.

Operational and Strategic Framework

- Document providing overall summary of key DS objectives, approaches and coordination modality in Iraq – has been endorsed by DSTF and will be shared once some of the data has been updated.
- The document will form the basis of localized durable solutions plans of action that are being developed.
- Sub groups have been established as part of DSTWG to expand upon specific aspects of the operational framework, as per agreement with DSTWG members noting that further guidance is needed for specific objectives to frame around the specific goal of achieving durable solutions
- Sub groups include, for now, facilitated movements, social cohesion and peacebuilding, monitoring and analysis and Housing/HLP
- Groups are time bound, tasked with building on existing guidelines and frameworks, reviewing how they can be applied/adjusted for DS objectives e.g. what sort of housing support would be appropriate for IDPs attempting to locally integrate in urban centres?
- A monitoring and analysis sub group has been set up to assess how to track progress towards DS and to measure DS outcomes within the context of Iraq, including a review of existing indicators, and mapping of DS related activities.

Area-based group Updates

- Currently 7 groups: West Anbar, East Anbar, Sinjar, Ba'aj, Hawija, Muqadadiya/Jalawla/Saadiya and Shirqat/Baiji.
- Groups are currently engaged in preparatory work for the plan of action, identifying issues, collecting data and mapping out key stakeholders who will be engaged in the process and engaging local authorities.
- Once they have finalized the priority locations and identification of key stakeholders, the next steps would be consulting other local and international actors, arranging the authority roundtable and the preparing for how community engagement will done.

5) REACH ReDS: Yathreb and Markaz Garma (See presentation for more details)

I. [Yathreb](#) Findings

- In general, most KIs noted that community members felt safe in Yathreb. Despite this, safety and security reportedly continued to be barriers to the return of IDP KIs originally from Yathreb displaced elsewhere, mostly related to the presence of armed actors.
- Damaged or destroyed housing; lack of basic public services and job opportunities; and concerns around housing, land and property (HLP) are also reported as other barrier to return. KIs report a reduction in employment opportunities compared with prior to 2014.
- Generally, in terms of social cohesion indicators, there were no reported obstacles to the interaction between groups and their participation in social events by the majority of KIs.

II. [Markaz Garma](#) Findings

- Overall, Markaz Al-Garma was perceived to have a positive environment in terms of security, and community integration and acceptance.
- Rehabilitation and livelihoods were reportedly the most needed interventions in Markaz Al-Garma to encourage further returns. Damaged/destroyed housing was the most persistent challenge to sustainable (re)integration and returns.
- Some KIs reported that girls were slightly less involved in education than boys, mainly due to the limited number of available schools for girls in Markaz Al-Garma. This was also linked to trusted transport.

Next factsheet will be for Markaz Mosul.

6) AOB

- No AOB