



## RETURNS WORKING GROUP- IRAQ

- ❖ **Meeting Date:** 27 May 2020
- ❖ **Meeting Time:** 10:00-11:30 hrs
- ❖ **Location:** Webex connection

**In Attendance:** US Embassy, Australian Embassy, Shelter Cluster, Protection Cluster, CCCM Cluster, HLP Sub-cluster, Child Protection Sub-cluster, INTERSOS, OTI, COOPI, GIZ, ICRC, Social Inquiry, UNICEF, PAO, IQCM, Baghdad Organization, Mercy Hands, Mercy Corps, World Vision, PPO, TGH, Handicap International, ACTED, OCHA, UN-Habitat, UNDP, IOM

### Agenda Items:

- 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 return index; Return Index methodological report
- 3) **Situational Update on Returns:** Update on spontaneous returns and evictions from sub-national teams (KRI, Centre/ South and Ninewa/ Kirkuk
- 4) **Camp Closure and Consolidation:** Update by CCCM cluster on position paper on camp closure and consolidation
- 5) **Shelter rehabilitation for conflict affected population in Iraq:** Joint presentation from Shelter Cluster and UN- Habitat on war damaged shelter rehabilitation in Iraq
- 6) **AOB**

### Action Points to follow up by next meeting:

Action	By who
CCCM position paper to be shared	RWG
General GRC updates for recent meetings (SAD, Anbar, Diyala)	OCHA

## 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 return index; Methodological Return Index reports

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*(Presentation attached for more details)*

### Main points:

i) Return Update

- Total no. of returnees (as of April 2020): 4,705,182 individuals. Total no. of IDPs: 1,389,540 individuals
- 68% of IDPs live in private settings, 24% in camps, and 8% in critical shelter.
- 95% of returnees live in their habitual residence, while 3% of returnees live in critical shelter.
- Ninewa has received around 6,000 new returns since Feb 2020. Main reasons for return: improving security situation, issuing of security clearance and rehabilitation of houses (mainly in Wana sub-district with NGO help)
- 4,000 new returns in Salah al-Din. Main reasons: to rehabilitate habitual residence (with NGO help in Baiji, but in Al-Fares returnees will do it themselves), issuing of security clearance by PMF and some improvement in security situation.
- 3,000 new returns in Anbar. Main reasons: improvement of security and services.

ii) Return Index methodological reports

- Methodological overview: This document presents a short overview of the methodology and guiding principles of the Return Index.
- The report aims to provide general insights on how the Return Index was constructed in Iraq by delving into its most important building blocks, as well as discussing lessons learned during the design and implementation process. The report covers two aspects:
  - a) The indicator framework design with statistical modelling, and
  - b) The data analysis and dissemination.
- Both the building blocks and lessons learned can be used as blueprints to replicate the Return Index in other countries and displacement crises.

### 3) **Situational update on returns:** Update on spontaneous returns and evictions from sub- national teams (KRI, Centre/ South and Ninewa/ Kirkuk)

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#### 1) **Centre-South Iraq**

##### Key updates:

- **Anbar**
  - In late April 2020, MoMD in coordination with the local government of Anbar and Anbar Operations Command facilitated the return of 23 families from HTC to Saqlawiyah, Falluja (center and Husay) and Jazerat Al-Khaldiyah. These families reported urgent needs for shelter/NFI, livelihoods and cash assistance at their AoOs.
- **Salah al-Din**
  - 10 families left Al-Karama IDP camp for their areas of origin in Baiji, Seniya and Shirqat. The five families who had returned to Shirqat had to leave their homes again due to their affiliation with ISIL and risks of potential retaliation by the local communities. This event would increase the necessity of engaging the local and host communities in any potential return project, especially for families with perceived ISIL affiliation.
  - MoMD distributed 1,000 general assistance packages to 1,000 returnee families in Markaz Tuz and Sleiman Beg. MoMD also distributed 2,000 kits to IDPs and returnees in southern Salah al-din (mainly Samarra, Balad, Dhulo'eyah and Dijeel).
  - Shafaq news source: Tribal elders in Shirqat district announced on 5<sup>th</sup> May 2020 an agreement and consensus to deport families of ISIL affiliation present in the district, due to the escalation of attacks and terrorist incidents in several regions of the country, hence leading them to consider these families a source of threat to the security of the province. Nothing of note has happened so far in this regard, but RWG and other partners are monitoring the situation and will update accordingly.
- **Diyala**
  - MoMD provided around 800 returnee families in Baquba, Jalawlaa and Saadiyah with food rations and hygiene kits
  - On 11<sup>th</sup> May 2020, several UN agencies received a copy of the Diyala governor's letter ordering Diyala Operations Command (DOC) to close Sa'ad camp within 10 days and move its residents to Al-Wand 1 camp in Khanaqin. The letter refers to a decision of the Diyala GRC. However, the Diyala GRC has not decided to close the camp, but to revisit the situation in the camp in June. The closure would affect 118 households, who in an intentions survey last year (Sep 2019) had expressed that they did not want to move to Al-Wand camps, due to lack of job opportunities, services and social cohesion issues.



Furthermore, there is a significant risk in moving larger groups of people during the COVID-19 period. UNHCR reported that Khanaqin residents and Khanaqin camps refuse to receive IDPs from Saad camp because of conflict-related tensions and stretched services. DRC contacted several IDPs families from Sa'ad and found that the families were not aware of instructions to close the camp and to move them. Partners agreed that the closure of Saad camp is not acceptable at such a short notice and time, and agreed on the need for advocacy against this order. A major reason for the closure is the Government's concerns about the quality of services and security concerns in the camp.

- On 14th May 2020, OCHA addressed a letter to the Diyala Governor asking them to postpone his decision and requested a meeting to discuss the entire issue. The meeting is expected to take place in early June 2020.
- **Baghdad**
  - On 29 January 2020, the Baghdad Government advised the Baghdad Operations Command (BOC) to evict all IDP from the Al-Shams settlement in Abu Ghraib by 16 February so that construction of the unfinished building complex can resume. The residents were given an option to return to their areas of origin at their own expense (transport provided to Fallujah) or move to Al-Ahl camp in Baghdad. Residents expressed that neither option was acceptable.
  - After an intervention by OCHA, IOM and the Protection WG on behalf of the humanitarian community, the Baghdad Deputy Governor's Office agreed to postpone the resumption of construction activity and the deadline of closure of the Al-Shams informal settlement until the end of the academic year in May. According to OCHA and the GRC Secretariat's discussions with Baghdad authorities, this deadline might be revisited in light of the of the COVID-19-related curfew and the extension of the school year; however, the site closure could be implemented on short-notice any time after the end of May. The PWG followed up with key informants (KIs) and camp management in Al Shams, who said that there was no communication from the official site or the contractor. Therefore, residents and KIs assumed that the eviction has been postponed until the COVID-19 situation has improved and end of the academic year.
  - Humanitarian partners agreed to conduct an intentions survey on a household level to identify safe, dignified and voluntary solutions and discuss them at a Baghdad GRC meeting. The intentions survey was carried out at Al-Shams between 9 and 11 February 2020 by IOM, with support from LCN. IOM presented the results at a meeting on 27 February 2020. Results showed that only 9% of households are planning to return to their areas of origin voluntarily; 47% are making alternative plans, but only because they have been threatened with eviction, and 44% do not plan to return, The survey also showed that



economic opportunities and housing were the two main reasons for households not planning to return. Several clusters and agencies are currently discussing options for the residents of Al-Shams to ensure proper planning before the Baghdad government opts for the idea of eviction once again.

#### Discussion:

- The Protection Cluster mentioned that during returns from Al-Karama to east Shirqat, the five families who had attempted to return were driven back by security forces. In the follow up discussions between different actors and Shirqat's local tribal leaders and security forces, it was discovered that a) as the security situation deteriorates, communities in Shirqat do not feel that sponsorship mechanisms in Al-Karama are enough to sanction the return of these households (HHs) and b) Regardless of ongoing reconciliation activities, when security incidents do flair up, people tend to get nervous.
- The Protection Cluster further mentioned that they are working together at cluster level [ICCG/GCM] for Baghdad and Diyala on solutions regarding Al Shams and Sa'ad camp, considering the long-term discussion of these issues over the last few months. One of the critical components of this discussion has been the voluntary nature of return. So far, it is unlikely that the Baghdad government will evict Shams IDPs due to the school year and COVID-19 pandemic.
- The Chair noted that many families originating from Diyala and Salah al-Din are from areas of no return (including blocked areas), hence the importance of these ongoing discussions.

## **2) Kurdistan Region (KRI)**

#### Key updates:

- Erbil – return from Hasanshamic/Khazer camps
  - **Background:** In January 2020, 17 villages were identified as part of an agreement between KRG and Ninewa authorities to facilitate the return of Arab IDPs originally from areas falling within the disputed territory between the KRG and the central government of Iraq. Hasanshamic and Khazer areas are part of the agreement, with most of the concerned IDPs living in Hasanshamic/Khazer camps. However, as of the date of reporting, this agreement has been suspended until further notice.
  - BCF (Hasanshamic/Khazer camp management) confirmed that around 15 families left Hasanshamic/Khazer camps and returned to their areas of origin (AoOs) during the last two months. No further details are known about the specific AoOs of the returnees, but BCF confirmed that all the IDPs were from areas surrounding Mosul. BCF also confirmed that



they have not been accepting any new arrivals since March 2020 due to the COVID-19 restrictions.

- Sulaymaniyah
  - On 30 April, Sulaymaniyah JCC instructed Ashty camp management to notify 35 families with members employed with the military to leave the camp. The timeline has not been identified. The families protested this decision and said that they do not want to leave due to security concerns in their AoO, also adding that they do not wish to move to out of camp locations within Sulaymaniyah.
  - JCC's justification is that military personnel have regular income and camps should be for those who are in need. Military personnel have asked JCCC to allow them to travel to their place of duty outside of KRI but due to the COVID-19 movement restrictions, IDPs and even host communities have not been permitted to move between governorates, except those who obtain clearance from the KRG Ministry of Interior by applying through the official online form. IDPs working in the military who insisted on traveling to their duty stations were reportedly told to either leave the camps with their families or leave their duties. JCCC requested advice from its HQ in Erbil on how to deal with such cases and no further action will be taken until instructions are received from JCCC HQ.
- Dahuk-Sinjar return
  - **Background:** On 30 April, Mr. Waleed Al Omari - head of Coexistence and Community Peace Committee (CCPC)/ COMSEC Baghdad, who is responsible for the minorities issues in Ninewa, mentioned that they started registration of Yazidi IDPs in Dahuk camps who have expressed interest in returning to their homes in Sinjar and surrounding areas. He further mentioned that there was an increase in interest of people to return, given the COVID-19 curfew restrictions and the lack of income, as well as the current harvest season available in the AoOs.
  - On 19th May, CCPC held a meeting in Baghdad attended by IOM, UNHCR, UN Habitat and UNAMI to discuss the return of 300 Yazidis (around 50-60 HHs) that an interest to return from Dahuk camps to Sinjar. A list of their names has been shared with different agencies to map out support needed and offered by UN agencies.
  - Action points:
    - IOM and UNHCR to coordinate together and communicate with IDPs and conduct an assessment.
    - CCPC to liaise with the government and lobby to get access letters for assessment teams after COVID curfew is lifted.
    - A follow-up meeting to take place in 2-3 weeks to further discuss the pilot phase and work progress.



- As of 26<sup>th</sup> May, JCCC Dahuk mentioned that they are unaware of any surveys or return plans for Sinjar IDPs, and that nothing in this regard has been communicated to them.

#### Discussion:

- The Protection Cluster confirmed that there is ongoing follow up and a planned intentions survey to be launched soon. The main concerns/ doubts are regarding the voluntariness of return. Regarding IDP families in camps who have military personnel members, a position paper is being developed. In any case, needs and vulnerabilities should continue being considered.

### **3) Kirkuk-Ninewa**

#### Key updates:

- Ninewa
  - Returns to the Old City of Mosul started increasing before Ramadan. As of last week, 175 HHs have already returned. Most of the IDPs had been staying in East Mosul neighborhoods prior to return. The main reasons for return are the improvement of basic services, inability to pay monthly rents, rehabilitation of houses and assistance provided through humanitarian partners. Khazrag, Bab Lish and Farooq neighborhoods received the highest number of returnees. Returns are expected to continue after Eid, essentially with the COVID-19 lockdown ongoing.
  - On 13 May, 10 HHs (50 individuals) returned to Qazal Quio Village, Tel Afar District. These HHs returned from Baghdad, Najaf and Kerbala. The reason for return is that these HHs have security staff members who have been transferred to West Ninewa Operation Commands (WNOC). As the HQ of WNOC is Tel Afar Airport, which is close to their village, the households decided that it was the right time to return. This is the first permanent return to the village, as other HHs currently live in Markaz Tel Afar.
  - On 22nd April, 88 HHs (466 individuals) departed Salamiya camp and returned voluntarily to Ba'aj (52 HHs), Sinjar (13 HHs), Markaz Mosul (9 HHs) and Tel Afar (4 HHs). The ISF conducted security clearance in the camp and MOMD supported with transportation. HHs also received food prior to leaving the camp. A second round of IDPs is expected to depart Salamiya in the coming days, a caseload that is part of the IOM facilitated Returns Project. The round includes around 114 HHs, 40 of whom originate from Ba'aj and the rest from Qayrawan. Security forces will facilitate the security clearance procedures in the camp.
- Kirkuk
  - Informal eviction of 50 HHs took place from Tuz (Sheikh Abed village). PMF brigade 52 informed HHs to leave due to their affiliation to ISIL and unsafe location (area close to



mountains where ISIL activities are taking place). 27 HHs that had security clearance returned to Sulaiman Beg sub-district while the rest (23 HHs), who had clearance issues, moved to Markaz Tuz. Despite the destroyed housing in Sulaiman Beg, IDPs preferred staying near their AoO.

#### **4) Camp consolidation and closure:** Update by CCCM cluster on position paper on camp closure and consolidation

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*(Position paper attached for more details)*

Key points:

- A third position note has been released by CCCM (updated as of May), which analyzes the situation of each camp.
- MOMD mentioned that camp closures and consolidation will remain on standby but voluntary returns will continue.
- Government did not proceed with evictions from Saad camp.
- There were discussions to consolidate Al-Wand 1 and 2 but the situation requires further assessment.
- The position note only reflects formal camps, not other settings.

Discussion:

- The Chair noted the importance of also addressing out of camp IDPs, who make up 70% of the total IDP population in Iraq.

#### **5) Situational update on returns:** Joint presentation from Shelter Cluster and UN- Habitat on war damaged shelter rehabilitation in Iraq

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*(Presentations attached for more details)*

##### 1) Shelter Cluster

Highlights on war-damaged shelter (WDS):

- Targeted house: 71,025. Of those, 44,727 have been completed, 11,950 are ongoing and 14,348 are planned. Online WDS dashboard available and shows more details on the projects.
- Targeted beneficiaries: Humanitarian programs (48%): a) socio-economically vulnerable (SEVAT) b) Stabilization programs (52%): blanket (neighborhood based)
- Focus:





- Category 2 damages: “heavily damaged but not structurally compromised” (1,800 – 2,500 USD/HH)
- Few light cat. 3: “heavily damaged and structurally compromised” (2,500 – 3,500 USD/HH)
- Gap in cat. 3 and 4 (“destroyed”): only 4,310 units provided so far (6% of overall achievement) for cat. 4, mainly refugee housing units (RHUs)
- **WDS rehabilitation challenges:** demining, debris removal, sheer scale of destruction, HLP barriers, lack of social housing.
- **Ways forward:** low target in HRP 2020; low-cost transitional shelter solutions
- Even with resource availability, access challenges and timeframe, and now C-19 pandemic, remain major constrains.

## 2) UN-Habitat

### What UN-Habitat is doing:

#### Operational

- a) Emergency shelter response
  - Cash for shelter grants
  - Sealing off kit purchase vouchers
  - Rental subsidy relief
- b) Housing rehabilitation and construction
  - Damaged housing rehabilitation (category 2 & 3)
  - Low cost/transitional housing construction
  - Vocational training and job creation (housing and civil works)
  - Integrated urban planning perspective (land use, open spaces and services)

#### Normative

- Compensation law (note: presentation last RWG meeting)
- National Housing Policy 2010 and National Housing Policy Modification 2017; and Housing Reconstruction Strategy 2019
- New Law on Informal Settlements

## 6) AOB: Compensation CwC leaflets and posters

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- UN-Habitat and RWG collaborated on developing communication with communities (CwC) materials highlighting property compensation guidelines in Iraq, particularly leaflets and posters (both Arabic and English versions). Partners interesting in disseminating the leaflets and posters in their areas of intervention may contact RWG to receive the copies, pending availability.