

RETURNS WORKING GROUP- IRAQ

- ❖ **Meeting Date:** 23 February 2021
- ❖ **Meeting Time:** 11:00 am-1:00 pm
- ❖ **Location:** Microsoft Teams

In Attendance: UNAMI/JAU, UN-Habitat, ECHO Iraq, UNMAS, PUI (Première Urgence Internationale), CRS, Peace Paradigms, ICRC, PRM, UNAMI/DSO, ICRC, IOM DTM, World Vision, PLC, SWEDO, UNHCR, JICA, ACF, REACH, Iraq Prospects Partnership Facilitator, IOM WFP, GIZ, iMMAP, GOAL, Solidarites international, IRC

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 return figures from RWG/ DTM dashboard and return index; Update on Emergency Tracking for Sinjar returns; CCCM Camp Closures
- 3) **DSTWG update:** Area Based Planning, National Plan and Strategic Framework Update
- 4) **IOM Report-Categorizing Protracted Displacement Report:** Revisiting Categories of Return Barriers
- 5) **REACH ReDS:** Markaz Daquq
- 6) **AOB**

Action Points to follow up by next meeting:

Action	By who
Sharing list of ABC induction notes and list of ABC locations	DSTWG

Key Discussion Points/ Action:

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

- The chair gave an overview of the previous meeting after the introductions, as well as a review of the agenda items.

- 2) **DTM Return Update and CCCM camp update:** Update on return figures from RWG/ DTM dashboard and return index; Update on Emergency Tracking for Sinjar returns; CCCM Camp Closures

(Presentation attached for more details on DTM updates)

- I. DTM updates
 - IDP and Returnee data remained the same as reported last month as of December: Total no. of IDPs: 1,224,108 individuals. Total no. of returnees 4,831,566 individuals (increase of 49,152 returnees)
 - Next Return Index data will be in May 2021 due to focus on displacement index.
- One year comparison**
 - Between December 2019 and December 2020, a decrease in the proportion of returnees living in severe or poor conditions has been observed from 12 per cent to 10 per cent.

- Overall, the proportion of returnees living in locations with high and medium severity stayed reasonably constant over 2020.
- However, a (temporary) notable increase in the proportion of returnees living in locations classified as high and medium severity occurred in the round collected in May – June 2020 (Round 9), which was related to the deterioration in daily public life, increased concerns about different sources of violence and worsening of the employment situation because of the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) outbreak and ensuing lockdown.

Rate of Return

- Noted that there was no real association between the return rate and severity of locations.
- Locations classified as low severity more often witnessed all displaced population returned while locations classified as high severity more often witnessed less than half displaced population returned.

Governorate Profiling: Ninewa

- It was noted that 39% of all returns in Iraq are to Ninewa, which has the largest returnee population. As of December 2020, the total number of returnees is 1.89 million individuals (out of 4.83 million nationwide).
- Over the course of 2020, the returnee population in Ninewa increased by 122,820 individuals (in comparison with 152,184 individuals in 2019).
- An additional 61,578 individuals were recorded as living in high severity conditions since December 2019, when 173,724 individuals were in severe conditions (10 per cent of the returnee population).

Camp Emergency Tracking

- Between 1 and 7 February 2021, 175 new households (837 individuals) have been recorded as arriving to non-camp settings in Ninewa governorate, primarily in the districts of Mosul, Hatra and Al-Ba'aj.
- A total of 7,093 households (36,071 individuals) have been recorded as arriving to non-camp settings since mid-October. Of the total recorded arrivals since 18 October 2020, 2,099 households (30%) have not returned to their location of origin and are now considered to be secondarily displaced, while 4,994 households (70%) have returned to their respective village or neighborhood of origin and are considered to be returnees.
- In general since October 2020 camp closures started, the majority of households have gone to Mosul, Ba'aj, Telafar, Sinjar, Kirkuk and Khanaqin districts.

II. Key CCCM updates:

- Ninewa: The MOMD Minister visited Jeddah camp, meeting briefly with IDPs who returned to the camp. The Minister had committed to a joint plan earlier, and a meeting between MOMD and IOM/ UN to discuss the closure of the camp.
- Anbar: no closure announced and no specific plan has been discussed.
- KRI: The MOMD Minister stated that the situation in KRI is different and that camp closure will not go ahead for the time being.

Discussion:

- DTM was asked if governorate profiles will be available on the DTM website.
 - DTM confirmed that the government profiles will be available on the DTM website, and an email will be sent out.
- A question was posed to DTM on whether the low return rate for the Sinjar/Ba-aj Emergency Tracking was related to possible Turkish attacks on Sinjar and overall perception among Yazidi population that the Sinjar Agreement has not seen concrete action on the ground.

- It was explained that a direct correlation is not captured since such questions were not asked to IDPs as the ET focuses on returning IDPs and returnees in the areas of return.
- REACH also mentioned that they conducted an assessment in Markaz Sinjar related to returns and durable solutions that can be found in this [link](#).
- NPC asked if there is further information regarding arrivals in Diyala, following reports of return to former areas of no return (Saadiya sub-district) – i.e. is still unclear if their designation as areas of no return (AONR) is still correct. Areas within Khanaqin district are mostly the areas of no return within Diyala, but not all.
 - DTM mentioned that there were two locations (previously considered locations of no return) in Khanaqin that did witness new returns in ML 119, reportedly due to the improved security situation.
 - RWG added that there will be an AONR update next week. However, Saadiya still has 25 locations that are still areas of no return (39 in Diyala in total), and no locations in Saadiya seemed to have opened during ML119.
 - The NPC added that they generally find that regardless of intentions or even obtaining clearance - as noted above - there are barriers to return, including denial by PMF/security actors, lack of services in these areas and total destruction of housing. But the DS ABC for Jalawla/Muqdadiya/Saadiya will hopefully yield some results from that side given the need for more than humanitarian intervention.

3) **DSTWG update:** Area Based Planning, National Plan and Strategic Framework Update (DSTWG co-chair)

(Presentation attached for more details)

- III. DS update
 - Recap provided on the DS mechanism, the scope of DSTWG work as well as the creation of the Area Based Coordination (ABC) Groups
 - Areas:
 - 7 groups, not exhaustive, but are the current starting points. The DSTWG is already reviewing the potential to add other areas. Areas selected on basis of where there is evidence of needs, availability of actors to respond, accessibility, government support. However, there may be other areas where there is insufficient partner presence, limited authority support, which is also a priority, to mobilize and advocate. However, initial stages of DSTWG, being pragmatic and starting with where we can build momentum quickly.
 - Can share contact of focal points, members were selected with wide outreach, through RWG mailing list, DSTWG and recommendations and referrals by OCHA, NGO representatives. Membership will be reviewed after an initial period as there is a need for focal points and members to commit.
 - The area groups are small planning and steering bodies i.e. they have been intentionally kept small to avoid duplication with the many existing groups, and have been designed to have a very concrete objective of developing plans for durable solutions at the area level.
 - Groups are at early stages, first meetings taking place this week/next
 - Work completed to date by the DSTWG:
 - Developing an operation framework for DS

- Preparing guidelines for the areas groups – guidelines on how to prepare plans of action, how to conduct roundtables, guidance on work plans etc.
- Induction sessions were complete for ABC groups on the 11th and 15th February. The session recording and presentations can be accessed on the links below:
Session 1 [Recording & Presentation](#)
Session 2 [Recording & Presentation](#)
- Technical sub groups have also been launched e.g. on Facilitated movements, as well as on monitoring and analysis. Recognition that as DS is a nexus approach we want to build on existing report, rather than duplicate reporting-work in progress.
- Current status/next steps:
 - The area groups need to reach out to other actors to ensure that any plan developed is the outcome of a wider consultation process. However, need some time to set up and they will be in touch soon. Welcome to proactively reach out to focal points but also a key priority in first meetings is to map out all the different actors and plan an engagement approach, which is realistic and feasible without taking many months.
 - Partners wishing to contact the focal points for their areas can reach out to the DSTWG at the following emails: zkazim@iom.int , bmellicker@iom.int , hilary.murphy@undp.org , ismael.frioud1@un.org .
- Final comments:
The co-chair explained that it is important to note that DS activities are not just beginning. There are very few activities that can be considered as DS in and of themselves (e.g. facilitated movements), more often it is an activity e.g. humanitarian, stabilization, development etc which contributes to the achievement of DS. We are trying to organize ourselves better, better coordinate, bring more coherence to the approach and reframe activities towards this specific objective.

Discussion:

- A question was posed regarding work/actors operating in Jeddah camp relating to reconciliation and tribal acceptance.
 - DSTWG responded that the IOM focal point for the camp may provide additional information and links.
 - RWG also suggested linkages with the Peace and Reconciliation Working Group.
 - UNHCR added that the MOMD minister established a committee including some UN agencies and MOMD representatives in Jeddah a few days ago and the intention was to address some of the issues faced by IDPs in the camp including those related to social cohesion.
- The importance of government involvement was noted and a concern raised that based on their experience on governorate level engagement, plans agreed upon with authorities would easily get scrapped due to interference from the national government (via sudden decisions made by a governor, which affected committee efforts).
- Query on building on existing work, such as the work with GRCs in the areas, and lessons learnt from governorate level engagement when final decisions were ultimately made in Baghdad through the PM's office and not starting from scratch.
 - DSTWG noted that many of the members and focal points of the ABCs are people who were active participants in those discussions, they will be building on that work, referring back to those conversations, likely will be many of the same

authority counterparts engaged, however GRCs did have a big focus on camps and returns and there is a general recognition of the need for a new approach, fresh start and reframing of the conversation which may be challenging under the established GRCs. Hence in some instances, GRCs may be the chosen platform to engage, elsewhere not, it will be tailored and discussed at the area level as part of broader stakeholder mapping and engagement. Also well noted on many lessons learned, the ABCs will not be immune to pre-existing challenges, such as coordination challenges between governorates and federal, however this will be taken into consideration. Moreover, the RC/HC has been working, along with DSTF representatives, to identify ways to ensure a feedback loop between national and local level authorities with regards to this work, building on the national plan (which is still pending finalization).

- It was noted that there is a recognition that DS activities include humanitarian, stabilization and peace building activities partners may need to ensure that when it comes to reporting, that they accurately note those activities under the HRP for example.
 - Noted the importance of clarifying reporting, as it's not clear to partners and also an issue relating to how this work will be funded. Was noted that there are currently efforts to map out different activities which contribute to DS, whether they are captured in existing reporting mechanisms or not, how we may need to collect info. For now, partners should continue reporting as they are. With regards to more macro discussions over funding etc, this is being addressed at a different level i.e. RC/HC, DSTF.
- Commenting on meaningful engagement with local authorities, it was mentioned that the ABC for Sinjar represented by the focal points (UNDP, UNHCR and IOM) met with the Ninewa governor representative Ali Omar to discuss efforts on the ground in return areas, whereby he stated that they were ready to facilitate actions and interventions on the area and national level and would like to be kept in the loop on projects and support to returnees.
 - DSTWG mentioned that a lot of RWG's work has been brought under the DSTWG and they ensured there are linkages between processes, with government counterparts also briefed on this. There will always be individual organization activities but the goal of the DSTWG is to come up with a more coherent plan.

4) IOM Report-Categorizing Protracted Displacement Report: Revisiting Categories of Return Barriers

(Presentation attached for more details)

IV. IOM Report

- Produced by IOM and Social Inquiry following the 2018 report, Reasons Remain: Categorizing Protracted Displacement.
- Slow rate of return noting that as of December 2020, significantly more IDPs are at risk of protracted displacement compared with September 2018.
- The report aims to provide an evidence base in support of continued strategy development and monitoring relating to the resolution of protracted displacement in Iraq by updating the overview of the displacement and return context, updating the framework highlighting

different return barriers based on perceptions of those in displacement and insights of those in return locations.

- Main barriers looked at:
 - Housing
 - Livelihoods
 - Basic Services
 - Social cohesion (perceived ISIL affiliation and Ethno-religious, tribal and political dynamics)
- Recommendations looked at exacerbating factors and re-integration obstacles.

Discussion:

- Asked if there are any plans to decrease the distrust between different ethnicities and groups. PAO are working in Hamdaniya district and have formed several associations of different ethno-religious groups to help build trust between different groups. PAO have also supported religious leaders in relaying messages of social cohesion.
 - It was noted that the best course of action is to refer to partners working in this area. The report provides a snapshot of the existing communities which will then allow partners to respond accordingly.
- Question posed about what transitional justice can do for the returnees in return areas and whether the relevant stakeholders including the GOI worked on transitional justice with a focus on addressing some of the key return barriers.
- iMMAP mentioned that their security incidents reports will be discontinued after this month due to the lack of funding from IHF.
- A partner asked if the report had been shared with the CPCC.
 - IOM explained that it was disseminated through the IOM mailing list but will make sure to get it to the CPCC.
 - It was noted that the Coexistence and Communal Peace Committee (CCPC) had recently changed its name to CDSP (Committee for Dialogue and Social Peace)
- RWG asked whether the report distinguishes between blocked return due to community rejection versus blocked due to security actor occupation of housing or HLP secondary occupation proper.
 - IOM explained that they are categorized separately. While there is always an overlap between several issues, a direct correlation between these two issues has not been flagged.

5) REACH ReDS: Markaz Daquq

(Presentation attached for more details)

V. REACH Findings

- Based on KI sources and indicative (purposive sample)
- In regards to safety and security: Markaz Daquq is perceived to have a positive environment in terms of security and community acceptance.
- Transition area for internally displaced persons (IDPs) originally from other areas of origin (AoO) outside the sub-district.
- Perceived improvement in the safety and security situation has created a pull factor for returns to Markaz Daquq, returns were reported to be mainly attributed to push factors in

areas of displacement (AoD) including ongoing processes linked to the closure or consolidation of all IDP camps in Iraq.

- Community members feel safe in Markaz Daquq, there are no restrictions of movements and that there are no specific groups that are not welcomed.
- The movements into Markaz Daquq were reportedly affecting positively and negatively the perception of access to assistance across the different respondent groups:
- Access to services, recent returns reportedly contributed to increased access to assistance due to the response by different governmental and humanitarian actors to the recent returns (3 KIs).
- Some reported a decrease in the level of household assistance due to increased demand (6 KIs).
- Persistent reported challenges to sustainable (re)integration and return included: damaged homes, lack of basic services and job opportunities, and concerns around housing, land and property (HLP).

HLP

- IDPs and returnees persistently reported to have less access to housing, housing rehabilitation, basic public services and being more at risk of eviction. This is commonly attributed to the lack of relationships and connections in the community.
- Damaged or destroyed housing; and concerns around housing, land and property (HLP) as some households do not have the needed documents to claim their properties are reported barriers to return and to sustainable (re)integration.
- Majority of IDP households resorted to illegal tenure occupation. Other IDP households resided in houses under a verbal rental agreement.

Community inter-relations

- KIs reported that the interaction between different population groups in Markaz Daquq was promoted by the friendship, kinship ties and work relationship between community members.
- Majority of returnee KIs reported that the lack of harmony between some groups was the main barrier for interaction.
- Disputes occurred within neighbourhoods and between villages in Markaz Daquq, and that it is expected that further returns to Markaz Daquq will increase the number of disputes between households.

Discussion:

- OCHA suggested uploading all needs assessments and reports on the Iraq Assessment Registry, as in this way everyone will have access to them in one place. Some of ReDS reports are there, but not all.

6) AOB

- PLC mentioned that there is an urgent need for food and other items in Sardasht camp on Sinjar mountain and they plan to distribute food baskets and NFIs there imminently.