



RETURNS WORKING GROUP- IRAQ

- ❖ **Meeting Date:** 25 Aug 2020
- ❖ **Meeting Time:** 10:00-12:00 hrs
- ❖ **Location:** Webex connection

In Attendance: GIZ, AOO, WFP, PRM/US Consulate, Nonviolent Peaceforce, UNOPS IIC, Netherlands Embassy, NCCI, UNDP, SWEDO, REACH, Mercy Corps, US Embassy, Chemonics, GOAL, World Vision, DRC, UNHCR, CIVIC, USAID/BHA, PPO, UNAMI Human Rights Office, ICRC, Mine Action sub-cluster, ACTED, TGH, UNICEF, BICC, CCCM Cluster, Protection Cluster, HLP sub-cluster, Child Protection sub-cluster, ZFD, Solidarites, 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; Update on Emergency Tracking for Sinjar returns as well as Diyala
- 3) **Situational Update on Returns:** By RWG teams, inputs by CCCM
- 4) **RWG key areas of focus:** Summary of key workstreams of RWG
- 5) **REACH REDs Assessment Presentation:** Rummaneh and Markaz Al Ba'aj
- 6) **Presentation – Maltesers Int and BICC:** Policy Brief
- 7) **AOB**

Action Points to follow up by next meeting:

Action	By who
Share Suleymaniyah intentions survey after receiving from NPC [please request given large size of email]	RWG
RWG to have follow up discussion with NCCI advocacy regarding access issues in Sinjar and discuss potential support to advocacy	RWG/advocacy NCCI
NPC/CCCM to share decrees/national policy referred to regarding IDP ability to return to camps	CCCM & NPC
RWG to support in mapping out areas of return from which people are 're-returning' to camps to assess whether specific issues and use for purpose of advocacy	RWG
Members to share any feedback with REACH on their presentation and recent assessments – RWG to share contacts	RWG/Members
Members to share any feedback with Maltesers/BICC on their presentation and suggested policy recommendations – RWG to share contact	RWG/Members
Members can contact Mohammed – focal point for RWG in South if want updates on Diyala figures that are being triangulated- RWG to share contact	RWG

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. Information provided by Non Violent Peace Force on Ayadi and shared with group, action point on sharing Sulaymaniyeh intentions survey required further follow up [Note: Following meeting, NPC had confirmed that the intentions surveys were shared with RWG for circulation –RWG to invite members to request surveys, rather than circulation, given large size]

2) Returns Update: Update on return figures from RWG/DTM dashboard and return index; Update on Emergency Tracking for Sinjar returns as well as information in Diyalah

See Presentation for data – Note, no new data since last meeting as figures are bi-monthly, with exception of emergency tracking for Sinjar/Ba'aj and Diyala – as such, summary below focused on emergency tracking – see previous minutes for main trends more broadly

Main trends presented on emergency tracking for Sinjar/Ba'aj

- Between 7 21 August 132 families returned to Sinjar and Al Ba'aj districts. The average number of daily individual arrivals was 48 to Sinjar and 7 to Al Ba'aj . This is significantly lower than the overall daily average since June (192 to Sinjar and 20 to Al Ba'aj)
- Between 7 21 August the most common sub districts of arrival were Al Shamal 42 and Markaz Sinjar 32. Together, these two sub districts comprise 82 of all individuals that have arrived to Sinjar and Al Ba'aj since data collection commenced on 8 June
- Since 8 June, 15 469 individuals (2 850 families) have returned to Sinjar and Al Ba'aj districts in Iraq's Ninewa governorate. The majority of individuals (66) have been recorded as returnees, while 34 have been recorded as out of camp IDPs

Main trends presented on emergency tracking for Diyala

- Significant return movements began taking place to Diyala since 11 August 2020.
- As of 18 August, 332 families have been recorded as returnees to Diyala , 261 (79%) in Muqdadia district and 71 (21%) in Khanaqin district In Muqdadia district
- most returned to the villages of Hembes (109 families) and Muaskar Al Mansur (44 families) in Markaz Al Muqdadia , while in Khanaqin district the majority returned to Ahmed Hani (32 families) and Rabiah (24 families) in As Saadia sub district.
- The majority (240 families) came from locations in Diyala , while the rest came from Sulaymaniyah, Baghdad and Kirkuk. The majority came from non camp locations (292 families) while 34 families came from camps.



Discussion & Questions:

- Question on whether there is information on Hawiga returns or specific tracking?
 - DTM noted that no specific tracking had taken place and there was no notable shift in returns to Hawiga
- Question on reasons for why Sinjar returns had increased from Dohuk [referring to initial increase rather than previous slow down]
 - RWG & DTM highlighted points from previous meetings i.e. that this was largely prompted by restrictions in movement between governorates which meant people could no longer move freely to collect salaries, visit family, attend work in areas of origin [pull factors], while losing jobs [push factors] in locations of displacement worsening conditions/their situation. This, coupled with an increase in confidence as more people moved has likely contributed to the movements.
- Question on whether IOM is planning to provide support to Sinjar/Ba'aj returns through their returns packages/go and see visits etc
 - IOM responded that they do provide return packages to select camps and are exploring possibilities, for now some distributions were completed in Ba'aj and some cash distributions for Sinjar returnees, but not movements – under discussion
- Access issues highlighted for NGOs regarding Sinjar/Ba'a, with request for support from RWG:
 - RWG clarified that this is no related to recent restrictions imposed due to suspected/confirmed case of COVID in Sinjar – was clarified that this is separate to that and part of on-going issue. West Ninewa operations command restricting access- RWG confirmed that separate discussion will be arranged with NCCI advocacy to discuss – Action point.

Further inputs on above in next section

3) Situational update on returns – RWG and inputs from CCCM

Key updates for Ninewa

- Ninewa IDps still returning to Erbil camps, secondarily displaced after attempts to return, main reasons highlighted due to lack of job opportunities, inability to pay rent, security
- Returns to Sinjar and Baaj slowed down, movement suspended due to COVID cases in 4 camps in Dohuk, however restrictions were lifted around 20th of month. As of yesterday more than 100 households have moved after restrictions were lifted
- Approx 10 days ago authorities confirmed 1 case and 1 suspected case of COVID, so restrictions were introduced for movements, non-essential businesses closed



- Fear of COVID 19 transmission created some tensions between host and returnees, but somewhat improved with sensitization and messaging
- Departures from Ninewa camps, continues in individual numbers dependent on camp lock downs
- 2 return movements from Al Hole reported in Ninewa, households entered through rabea and to sinui – specialized actors are following up on this
- CCCM also complimented that continue to receive arrivals as failed returnees, more than 150 -160 households who returned to debaga, were civil servants in Mosul but couldn't find houses to rent. COVID creates challenges, new arrivals/returnees can cause issues with isolation. Families in debaga are worried that these families will bring COVID – but we're also seeing this with Hasan Shams camps

Discussion & Questions:

- Question of ability to return to camps 'as failed returns' given there had been reports the official policy is that once people leave camps they can't come back
 - NPC: It depends on the area and camp e.g. if there are some households that departed due to COVID 19, had ad hoc reports of households that left with symptoms, unconfirmed, but were unable to receive services in city centres and then returned to camps but weren't allowed to. Then there are those with perceived affiliation or complex profile, in places like Anbar, trying to reenter HTC or AAF and haven't been allowed back in. Ultimately, it comes down to security and not just camp management and authorities.
 - CCCM: National instruction received is that they should not be welcomed back to camps. However, if security actors allow then camp management can register them if they have their card. It's easier when people haven't received departure letter when they left. One of main challenges is when registered as IDPs and returnees, can lead to duplication of assistance -this is the main reason the government have restricted ability to come back to camps. But it is case by case
 - NPC: Government has made this policy clear, however there are challenges with return, especially lack of documentation, e.g. in AAF no departure letters are provided to IDPs, so difficult to even register as a returnee so it can lead to being in limbo in terms of their status as IDP vs returnees. Protection perspective, if they need services in camps, should be accommodated.
 - RWG – can look at mapping out cases where people are coming back and from where- to look at the situation in areas of return
- Question on national instructions noted above – who has taken this decision?
 - CCCM clarifies that it is a national instruction but will look for specific decree or documentation. NPC noted – there have been different directions over the last few years,



last August, there was a decree from national security council resolution which was related to Ninewa but was then eventually understood to be in all camps.

- Follow-up question – where are people returning back from Ninewa to Erbil camps – information suggests it is Mosul town and surrounding villages.
- RWG – can talk with CCCM, NPC and OCHA colleagues regarding where there may be cases of being blocked to return to camps, if helpful, to support advocacy at local level. However, want to be cautious not to raise alarm to loudly if, in reality, there are many local cases where it is being allowed (i.e. don't want to undermine that). Can discuss separately with colleagues.
- Question regarding number of returns from Al Hole:
 - RWG noted small numbers, while also flagging that if anyone wants more information better to reach out as keeping information topline for a large group given sensitivities for this group – being left to specialized actors for support and follow-up.

Key Updates Centre/South

- Al Shams: Witnessed departure of 17 HHs to aoo in Al Qaim – OCHA facilitated communication between various operations command to support smooth movement. Also preparing plan, will be shared with Baghdad and Anbar sub national ICCG for inputs
- Diyala – expecting 1000 households to return – more info to follow
- Markaz Tuz and Amerili – 18 HHs return to area of origin, another 30 expected to return to Abo Hassan villages in Amerli following reconciliation. Main obstacles are destruction and public infrastructure.
- Diyala: between 11th to 20th August seen returns, there are big challenges in areas of origin e.g. water system, health services, electricity. Sadayieh IDPs are allowed to return to areas which were blocked but very limited services. However, actual returnees much less than what is declared online, e.g. people wanted compensation before return for Jbarra.. There are quite a lot of differences between figures provided by MOMD, security etc. RWG is leading process of compiling available data, sharing with GRC and ICCG members (including from DTM) – can contact Mohammed if want to receive updates.
- Saad camp – information on security and public services was a concern for residents, so following working session with local authorities convened on 12th August, the DOC visited the camp on 19th August to provide information on security information in areas of origin. Protection monitoring was present to ensure messages were to share information. RWG also supported to bring other representatives to talk of public services to share information on the general situation.



- Salahadeen – return task force was established to follow return of IDPs from Suly camps to SAD, includes RWG, CCCM, OCHA, protection – regular meetings for general coordination and advocacy
- Yathrib return follow up committee -as of 15th of August department of water extended water pipe to improve access to water, agricultural campaigns/cash for work, department of water and electricity connected water station to electricity link

Discussion:

- Question – why is Yatrib specifically being highlighted out of interest
 - Local government has supported return of households back to area of origin in Yatrib, over 300HHS, lack of basic services was a key concern, so to strive for durable solutions, there was support to government to set up the committee to create more accountability for supporting recent returnees- villages are mostly empty and hardly any services – also connected this committee to JCMC representative in salahadeen to advocate for further financial allocation to Yatrib – local authority driven and led (RWG supporting, providing guidance)
- Comment: Important to highlight that we have a broad challenge of sustainable returns – as there are challenges with basic services in areas of origin. E.g. Returns to Muqdadiyah (diyala), very few households entered diyala from outside, 2 from Kirkuk, 43 from Suly, rest from within diyala, handful from Baghdad. While helpful to see committees, we have a general issue of sustaining returns, unless there is a wider and more substantive discussion with humanitarian and development actors e.g. big water infrastructure campaigns. Need better connections with these actors and creating a context for returns.
 - RWG - Well noted, we have a few issues. Firstly we will be going into plans of action in next section. Want to note that this can be a) information break down – there are likely more activities that are known – agreed need to improve linkages b) we have this challenge in all contexts – no clear platform for coordination with stabilization, various platforms c) finally, reality is that communities/areas are not going to be 'prepared' ahead of returns in full, and that it is likely that returns will prompt interventions – certainly not ideal but hopefully plans of action will somewhat address that
 - Comment by partner: Government lead is important, need to be owned e.g. things like Yatrib is good practice to have these committees.
 - RWG: Best practice, indeed, is for government to lead. Committee can be one way of looking at good practice, lessons learned.
 - Comment: While people are resilient they won't wait for government and humanitarians- so need to be realistic as possible on sustainability of returns



- Comment: A lot of advocacy by NGOs on GRCs, strengthening them, yatrib could be lesson learned, is this something we want see across other areas, how does this link to returns follow up committee, NGO targeting is towards GRCs – haven't seen high level representation there or meaningful engagement from governor and deputy governor level. Open to group
- Comment: Agreement that there are issues with GRC commitments, e.g. not notifying information about returns in Diyala, even MOMD was informed in the last minute. Has been a lot of effort by OCHA to direct advocacy notes to strengthen commitments of GRC but not always happening.
- Comment: Been an on-going discussion on how to advocate with the government - having something which is governorate led at local level is best way forward – the GRCs were first set up for camp closures, but has evolved to be more stab, development and broader durable solutions but not reflected in ToRs, Been told that we should use GRC for advocacy and main platform but not being respected/listened or people not adhering to what is being agreed during meeting.
- RWG- there seems to be different schools of thought, everyone acknowledges need to improve, some feel we need to push for recognition and strength of platform, others look for other ways. Important to note that even if GRCs aren't functioning well, it doesn't stop government engagement, it just happens through other channels/identifying key influential stakeholders. Possible to ask DSTF to highlight this at national level – and this will be taken into account at DSTF and they are working on structure – we can await feedback.
- Question: Speaking of engaging government, question on why they don't attend RWG meeting?
 - RWG: Good question, indeed not sure of past engagement but we definitely engage closely with MOMD and others – to be explained shortly. Quite challenging, given format of remote participation and translation requirements to rely on webex and therefore not currently the main platform we're engaging with them on – a lot is done at sub national level which we'll explain shortly.

4) RWG Key Areas of Focus

(see presentation for more details)

Key points:

- Wanted to outline some of the key workstreams of the RWG given that there have been some questions on areas of focus. Key premise of RWG work is there we are not only humanitarian, it is



more all encompassing and in line with durable solutions guidelines and principles, we believe in the importance of ensuring that the government are the leads and working with them on all aspects of work to achieve sustainable approaches.

- Firstly, outlined team structure and clarified that the teams on the ground are also seconded to government counterparts and are the GRC secretariats that are providing government support
- Outlined various tasks such as sit reps, grant mapping, return process mapping, governorate profiles, capacity building for government
- Explained that will be working on governorate plans of action which are ultimately owned and driven by government.

Discussion:

- Question by NP on whether return process mapping will be updated as they have information for ayadiyah. RWG confirmed would link with team member who is focused on this area.
- Question regarding how RWGs work on POA links with ICCGs given that this was supposed to be led by GRC secretariat.
 - RWG explained that GRC secretariat overseen by RWG and these are not RWG plans, these are governorate plans, owned by the government, and we are here to facilitate and support the process- doesn't sit in humanitarian architecture hence not with ICCGs but absolutely need their inputs and support given that there will be a big humanitarian component. Have been in close discussions with OCHA and sub national ICCG colleagues with this in mind, to see how we can proceed and will likely be presented at national ICCG. This is all under the directive/guidance of the national strategy and approach by DSTF.
 - Follow up question by another partner on how this links to previous plans that had been developed e.g. in Ninewa, led by OCHA. RWG confirmed that this is a new approach, ensuring government led, not something we draft, discuss among our selves and present to the government but something we brainstorm with them first and which they're involved with from the offset. Had discussed this with OCHA ninewa the day before the meeting and agreed on a general approach, will be presenting at GCM tomorrow and when we have more clarity on next steps after government scoping/brainstorming we can bring to group.

5) REACH REDs Presentation

(Presentations attached for more details)

Key points:



- Outlined key findings – explained that assessment is intended to get a better sense of durable solutions and feasibility of achieving durable solutions in specific areas which are expecting/anticipating returns and other solutions -working with RWG.
- Presenting pilot project – if any inputs welcome.
- Will also be presenting in various working groups in coming weeks e.g. Anbar Sub national ICCG, emergency livelihood cluster also

Discussion:

- Question – where did disputes occur, what type? – Disputes were between neighbourhoods, but we don't have information on so much detail
- Question: Are movements from camps or out of camps? Noted as both
- Question: Are there any NGOs working on providing basic needs? or rehabilitation projects in Markaz Baaj and Yazidi areas of Baaj? UNDP: UNDP is already working in Ba'aj in several sectors (Education, Health, Electricity, etc.)

6) Maltesers/BICC policy brief

(Presentations attached for more details)

Key Points:

- Background – done research in KRI, funded by Germans, joined hands with Maltesers international, led by BICC- conducted a workshop with a range of practitioners to agree on policy recommendations relating to reintegration in Iraq
- Outlined recommendations which are included in the presentation.

Discussion:

- Question – who were participants of workshops? 25 participants, including some on this call, also university of Dohuk. Workshop was virtual
- Will this be shared with donors? Policy brief is not yet finalized, but were considering donor community. We will share with RWG to share more widely.
- Comment – also intending to share with Iraqi government and would welcome support in advocacy efforts.