



RETURNS WORKING GROUP- IRAQ

- ❖ **Meeting Date:** 26 March 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, German Consulate, Geneva Call, PUI, WASH Cluster, CRS, IRCS, PAO, WHH, Oxfam, PWJ, MERI, DRC, War Child Canada, REACH, World Vision, UNDP, Solidarites International, WHO, Mercy Hands, ICRI, CCCM Cluster, Social Inquiry, HLP Sub-cluster, National Protection Cluster, NCCI, INTERSOS, Handicap International, Sanad, OCHA, UIMS, MSF, INSO, Baghdad Organization, PRM, DFID, UNFPA, UNHCR, ICRC, UNICEF

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 an in-depth analysis of protracted displacement
- 3) **Governorate Return Committees (GRC):** Update by OCHA/ CCCM on the recent developments of the GRCs
- 4) **Focus on Local Integration:** Presentation on the determinants of IDP Integration into host communities in Iraq
- 5) **Services and infrastructure in return areas (SIRA):** Presentation by REACH on the SIRA: focus on Shirqat- Salah al Din
- 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

(Presentation and factsheets attached for more details)

Main points:

i) Return Update

- As of February 2019, the total no. of returnees was at 4,211,982.
- 1,744,980 individuals remain in displacement.
- 130,764 returnees are living in critical shelter, which makes up 3% of the total returnee population.
- A total of 472,350 returnees live in conditions of high severity, as per the Return Index.
- The new Return Index report will be released very soon. The correlation between the different indicators have been updated.

ii) Protracted displacement

- More focus placed on out-of-camp IDPs as less information is available on them as compared to camp IDPs.
- Around one third of total out-of-camp IDPs are staying in 2 districts: Mosul and Erbil.
- 41% of the total caseload of current IDPs are originally from 2 districts: Mosul and Sinjar. 25% are from Ba'aj, Hawiga, Baiji, Falluja, Ramadi and Telafar.
- 61% of all IDPs are currently considered as being in protracted displacement when looking at the length of their displacement (latest wave being post-April 2015). In reality, nearly all IDPs are “at risk” of protracted displacement.
- Obstacles to return: IDPs in stationary districts reported house destruction; lack of HLP documentation and fear of ethno-religious change at origin. IDPs in dynamic districts reported lower levels of residential damage and better security at the location of origin – their greatest obstacle to return is in fact the lack of employment/livelihood opportunities at origin.

iii) Obstacles to Return: geographic breakdown

- Areas of displacement reporting high levels of housing destruction as obstacle to return:
 - Both in-camp and out-of-camp IDPs in Anbar and Kerbala
 - Out-of-camp IDPs in Erbil and Salah-al-Din
 - In-camp IDPs in Baghdad
- Areas of displacement reporting lack of livelihoods or basic services as obstacle to return:
 - Out-of-camp IDPs in Dohuk, Kerbala and Salah-al-Din
 - In-camp IDPs in Baghdad
- Areas of displacement reporting high levels of social cohesion issues as obstacle to return:
 - Out-of-camp IDPs in Babylon



- In-camp IDPs in Kerbala and Sulaimaniyah
- Areas of displacement reporting high levels of security issues as obstacle to return:
 - IDPs in Sulaymaniyah, both camp and non-camp
 - Out-of-camp IDPs in Dahuk
 - In-camp IDPs in Diyala
 - Out-of-camp IDPs in Najaf and in-camp IDPs in Dahuk and Kirkuk reported presence of mines as a main obstacle more than other governorates.
 - Out-of-camp IDPs in Kirkuk were the most common to report movement restrictions as an obstacle.
- A little over 33% of all IDPs reported fear/trauma as a main obstacle to return

➤ Discussion:

- The Chair mentioned that there has been more focus on protracted displacement as many IDPs have not yet returned to their areas more than a year after full liberation was declared throughout Iraq. Some obstacles can be addressed by the humanitarian and development community, such as housing, mental health and livelihoods, while issues to do with security and political factors should be addressed by the government.
- UNHCR asked whether IDPs who experienced secondary displacement (i.e. were not displaced for consecutive months) are also captured in the protracted displacement numbers.
 - DTM explained that the IDPs' first date of displacement is used to calculate protracted displacement figures, regardless of how many displacements they had experienced.

3) Governorate Return Committees (GRC): Update by OCHA/ CCCM on the recent developments of the GRCs

(GRC update attached for more details)

Key points:

1. ANBAR

- There has been an increase in targeted coercive returns out of AAF and HTC camps by Anbar Operations Command (AOC) and local leaders within certain communities in Anbar. Camp residents originating from Saqlawia, Hussay and Garma are being targeted with such pressure. Local leaders would first visit the camps and gather the residents, proceeding to pressure them via shaming, threats and confiscating security clearance badges. Furthermore, local mukhtars from those areas of origin are threatening to add names of IDPs who refuse to return to an online list of ISIL-affiliated families. As a result, the last month has seen the return of households in AAF and

HTC camps to their areas of origin as follows: 81 families to Saqlawia and 22 to Hussay. There have been no returns to Garma yet, with around 400 households from Garma staying across both camps. There are reports that high level officers from AOC are visiting the areas of origin to pressure local leaders to visit the camps and make their people return.

- The Co-chair mentioned that based on an assessment conducted by one of the partner is Garma, it seems that the area is not conducive for a safe and dignified return. It was reported that lack of services, security issues and contamination are preventing IDPs to return.
- In terms of advocacy, partners on the ground have been working with AOC to try and ensure that convoys only include truly voluntary returns. OCHA is in communication with the Council of Ministers on this issue. Protection partners are following up on returns. A GRC meeting for Anbar is being planned for the near future.

2. BAGHDAD

- Al Amel camp was closed on 28th February, with 80 families residing there at the time. 32 of these households moved to Al Ahel camp. The remaining 48 families have either moved to family housing or rented a house in the area.
- In the lead-up to the camp closure, some families in Amel camp attempted to return to Garma but returned to Baghdad to Ahel camp due to a lack of services.

3. SALAH AL-DIN

- There are unconfirmed rumours that all SAD camps will be closed by mid-2019.

➤ Discussion:

- Protection Cluster mentioned that the HCT meeting that was held the previous day, where issues concerning AAF and HTC protection concerns, including forced returns and security badge confiscation, were included in the critical protection incident note and presented at the meeting. The same issue should have been raised by the HC with government counterpart in a meeting she had some days ago. However, the results from this meeting are still unclear. Despite pushes to convene GRC meetings, it has been difficult to make it happen due to issues ranging from a change in political representatives of the government to decisions already taken without the knowledge of the wider humanitarian community.
- CCCM added that there have been cases of secondary displacement from Saqlawia, where families who had security clearance had returned to their areas of origin only to find it blocked by security actors and are now primarily staying in tents in areas that have no services. There were also reports from protection partners that 4 individuals have been detained by local authorities after they attempted to return to Saqlawia, despite having security clearance. Their fate is currently



unknown. In terms of advocacy, OCHA is attempting to bring in new stakeholders (particularly those who were influential during the Bzebiz crisis negotiations) to the next GRC meeting process.

- The RWG Chair added that an initiative planned for this year is providing the GRCs with information regarding conditions in areas of return/origin to support informed decision on areas of return prior to initiating camp closures.

4) **Focus on Local Integration:** Presentation on the determinants of IDP Integration into host communities in Iraq

(Presentation attached for more details)

Key points:

- The research aims to understand:
 - What impacts the likelihood of IDPs in feeling integrated within the host locations;
 - What impacts the likelihood of the host community in being willing to accommodate the IDP population
- The research relies on data on IDPs hosted in Baghdad and Sulaymaniyah governorates from IOM Longitudinal Study and additional survey to host communities in Baghdad and Sulaymaniyah. The total sample was almost 1,600 interviews.
- The Inter-Agency Standing Committee's (IASC) Framework for Durable Solutions for Internally Displaced Persons is the standard metric for determining IDP integration. However, the IASC Framework for Durable Solutions:
 - It does not account for the "identificational" aspects of it
 - It is one way, and does not assess the Host Community acceptance of IDPs
- IDPs who are displaced within their districts of origin are twice as likely to have high feelings of belonging to the host community but are less likely to report positive life satisfaction as compared to other IDPs.
- Being protractedly displaced plays a slightly negative role in perceived satisfaction, while not affecting any other indicator of integration.
- The economic situation of IDPs when they are first displaced facilitates their feelings of integration.
- Safety is the structural factor with the highest positive contribution to integration if measured as feelings of belonging and acceptance.
- Strong social capital is positively correlated with likelihood of integration, but can have negative impacts when it is too rigid.

- IDPs living in subdistricts with higher levels of poverty and lower host community confidence in institutions and democracy report a higher degree of integration than those living in more affluent and institutionally strong areas.
- Different measures of social capital reported from the IDPs perspective, including trust in their host community and perceived cultural affinity, are strongly linked with all measures of integration.
- Barriers to IDP movement are also critical barriers to integration.
- Negative experiences and interactions IDPs have in displacement, including exclusion from housing, public services, or employment, are correlated with low integration.
- Host community residents who do not own their homes are less likely to hold positive views in relation to the IDPs living in their locations. They view IDPs as competitors for accessing housing.
- Relative economic wellbeing is associated with higher acceptance of IDPs across all indicators, particularly with regards to IDPs remaining indefinitely.
- Perceived marginalization by NGOs, UN, and international community has negative effect on host community views of the IDPs living in their locations.
- Greater perception of ethno-religious diversity in hosting locations pre-2014 increases the likelihood of host community members to have positive feelings about IDPs in general and in their ability to choose where they wish to reside in displacement.
- Host communities who are frustrated with current levels of public service provision or with aid provision directed toward them are less likely to accept IDPs across two indicators—residing in their locations in general and staying indefinitely.
- The view that there are no job opportunities available to working age populations in a location also decreases the likelihood of host community members accepting IDPs' presence in their locations in general and indefinitely.
- Host communities who feel they are more marginalized than the IDPs residing in their locations are less likely to accept their presence, regardless of time period.
- Host communities who feel IDPs are not integrated or are a security threat tend to hold more negative views across all three acceptance indicators.

➤ Discussion:

- The report will be released in the coming week.
- The Chair mentioned as a point to note that there is no formal government policy on local integration or relocation. Adding on the findings from the presentation, she mentioned that IDPs are most likely to feel integrated unless the host community are also assisted, hence emphasized the need for community integration support targeting both IDPs as well as host communities.



- The Chair mentioned that there are examples of integration in KRI, where IDPs have been issued KRI residence cards, hence allowing them to remain in KRI. There are cases of IDPs from Anbar who choose not to return or register their return in order to keep their KRI residence cards.
- An inquiry was made as to whether the locations of the host communities studied were in the district of origin of IDPs or other areas (i.e. the type of locations). Social Inquiry explained that the IDPs were in out-of-camp locations spread across different areas. SI added that the study found that IDPs were most likely to integrate with communities who have been living in their current neighborhoods for 20+ years, due to a stronger social cohesion and the fixed nature of the location. Newer neighborhoods/ construction created new communities.
- A further explanation was requested regarding the finding that female-headed households (FHH) tended to have more negative correlations in their responses. Social Inquiry explained that FHH IDPs tended to feel higher levels of integration, whereas FHHs in host communities were less accepting of IDPs. The reason is not yet known as this issue was not studied in depth and the data was not compact enough. This may be due to the configuration of the society.

5) Services and infrastructure in return areas: Presentation by REACH on the SIRA: focus on Shirqat – Salad al-Din

(Presentation attached for more details)

Key points:

- Data was collected from 21 October to 22 November 2018.
- Approximately 123,000 residents had returned at time of data collection.
- Intentions findings August 2018: only 5% of IDP households from the district planned to return in the next 12 months.
- Both water and electricity services restored to a semi-functional level in most areas. Although water treatment consistently reported as a concern.
- Legal services have resumed to pre-crisis level, with the exception of the land registry not opening.
- Level of healthcare services reportedly far worse than before ISIL.
- Prescription medication no longer provided by the government, leading to increased reliance on more expensive private pharmacies.
- Destruction and theft of medical equipment, staff shortages, and increased cost of treatment has led to increased barriers in accessing treatment.
- Reported staff shortages in schools, overcrowded classes and a lack of teaching materials.
- Government and security forces previously primary employers, now few opportunities.

- Agriculture previously a major employer, but challenges for people to return due to a lack of capital, destruction and theft of equipment, and fear of land contamination.
- Increase in residents searching for work outside Shirqat.
- PDS distributions were reportedly less frequent and of lower and less quality and quantity than pre-crisis levels.
- Cost of food and non-food items reported to have increased due to increased tariffs and checkpoints.
- Considerable shelter damage on the east bank, with much yet to be repaired.
- Armed groups still pose a considerable threat, with reports of movement and presence in nearby area.
- Reported areas of land contaminated with explosives, targeted attacks, and indiscriminate IEDs are all security concerns.
- East bank and rural areas have movement restrictions at night due to concerns over armed group movements.

➤ Discussion:

- The Chair mentioned that RWG recently went to Shirqat, pointing out that 5 villages in Shirqat had not witnessed any returns. The majority of IDPs from those villages had security clearance but could not return primarily due to a lack of livelihood opportunities.
- HLP sub- cluster mentioned that although land registries are closed in Shirqat, land registration and other HLP cases will be processed through the mayor or mukhtar's office.
- WHO mentioned that they had conducted similar studies covering Shirqat and other governorates (Ninewa, SAD, Kirkuk, Anbar), which assess the availability or lack thereof of health services in the assessed locations, adding that a separate conversation can be held to see how results converge and compare with other studies. The reports and dashboards are online and can be shared with partners.

6) AOB

- The Chair mentioned that a discussion had taken place with Protection and CCCM clusters in the previous week to discuss moving towards looking at durable solutions, adding that they are currently looking to collect success stories of local integration, as well as using the Global Durable Solution indicator library to operationalize solutions across the country.