

RETURNS WORKING GROUP- IRAQ

- ❖ **Meeting Date:** 27 April 2021
- ❖ **Meeting Time:** 11:00 am-1:00 pm
- ❖ **Location:** Zoom

In Attendance: MoMD, PUI, PPO, REACH Initiative, WFP, CWG, Mercy Corps, NCCI, UNOPS IIC, PRM Erbil, IOM, National Protection Cluster, IRC, Triangle Generation Humanitaire, USAID / BHA, OXFAM, SCI, ACF, World Vision Iraq, PWJ, CCCM Cluster, NRC, Mine Action Sub-Cluster, SDC, ECHO, PWJ, MI, COOPI, Yazda, Canfield, WFP, NRC, HAI, EUD Iraq, Social Inquiry, UNDP, CWG, ACTED, Canada Embassy, DRC, British Embassy, UN-Habitat, US Embassy, UNAMI, UN DS Advisor

Agenda Items:

- 1) **Introduction and adoption of minutes:** Review of previous minutes; Follow up on action points from previous meeting
- 2) **DSTWG update:** MoMD Presentation on the Iraq National Plan for Resolving Displacement
- 3) **IRC Presentation:** Signposts Platform in Iraq: Simaet Bhatha
- 4) **AOB**

Action Points to follow up by next meeting:

Action	By who
Check the amount of funding allocated to reconstruction and compensation and responses to unanswered questions	MoMD/ RWG
Attendees to share pending or follow up questions	Partners

Key Discussion Points/ Action:

- 1) **Introduction and adoption of minutes:** Review of previous minutes, follow up on action points from previous meeting (RWG)

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

- 2) **Context Update: Camp Update (CCCM)**

- **Jed'ah Camp:** First round of IOM facilitated returns took place during the week of the 18th of April with 85 families who were supported to return to various parts of Ninewa, Salah Al-Din, Kirkuk and Makhmour.
- **AAF:** Potential closure is currently on pause until further notice. IOM is currently drafting a plan that details the process of the Facilitated voluntary program from AAF which will be discussed with MoMD. Work is ongoing with various humanitarian and durable solutions actors in Anbar to support response for the camp.

3) MoMD Presentation on the Iraq National Plan for Resolving Displacement

(Presentation attached for more details)

The MoMD was introduced and welcomed. It was noted that the recently endorsed National Plan to Address Displacement in Iraq was commented on by the DSTF and DSTWG and is also an anchor of the National Strategy for Durable Solutions. There was great enthusiasm for the plan and everyone is eager to find out more. MoMD then opened to thank for the opportunity and noted their openness to continuing to engage with partners on their programs to support IDPs and returnees.

Key points from MoMD presentation:

- The National Plan was jointly drafted by the Ministry of Planning (MoP) and the Ministry of Migration and Displacement (MoMD). Inputs to the plan were also provided through the Durable Solutions Task Force.
- **Main objective:** The end of the displacement file by facilitating the voluntary and dignified return of IDPs and identifying alternative solutions for those who cannot return within a specified period through programs and activities.
- **Funding of Plan:** Five main mechanisms envisaged, Federal budget (eg ministries, reconstruction fund), investment, loans, grants (international and local) and other facilities (eg credit fund).
 - *National Plan Fund:* The Ministry of Planning initiated-fund has been established to collect funds for the implementation of the plan. These funds are to be collected from the various sectoral ministries and other funding streams. At the moment the fund has IQD25 billion, which MoMD perceived as inadequate for now.
- **Approaches:** Participatory method engaging stakeholders including beneficiaries through intention surveys conducted in the displacement camps identifying obstacles to return and needs across the seven governorates.
- **Leading obstacles to durable solutions:** Housing damage, lack of services and infrastructure and lack of livelihoods in areas of origin.
- **Infrastructural programs:** Across sectors, water and sanitation, roads, 120 schools and construction and equipment for 69 health facilities and energy projects.
- **National reconciliation:** Plan to constitute committees at the local level in all governorates to work on reconciliation.
- **Monitoring and Implementation:** Establishment of “Supreme Committee for relief and support for the displaced”, headed by the Minister of Migration and Displacement (replacing the Supreme Committee for Relief and Shelter).
 - Tasked with implementation of the plan, supporting IDPs, following reintegration upon return, and alternative solutions.
 - The committee consists of 16 governmental entities, including the Deputy Secretary-General of the Council of Ministers, and representatives of 11 ministries whose positions are not less than a Deputy Minister, in addition to the head of the REFAATO, as well as representatives of the National Operations Center (NOC), the Civil Defense Directorate, the Joint Operations Command (JOC), and the Labor and Vocational Training Department of the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs (MoLSA).
- **Government responsibility:** There are about 20 government entities tasked with responsibilities for certain activities under the plan across the different government sectoral ministries and committees. For example, the Ministry of Finance is tasked with

granting agricultural loans, the Ministry of Interior and the Supreme Judicial Council are responsible for addressing unlawful housing occupation, MOI also looks at addressing the legal status of IDPs, demining activities are under the Ministry of Defense and so on.

- Recommendations to partners:
 - Collaborate the efforts of organizations and unify them with the MoMD
 - Discuss organizations' plans in order to integrate roles and reduce efforts and losses
 - International partners to inform MoMD of their roles in light of the presentation of the national plan
 - To hold continuous meetings with international organizations
 - The international organizations to provide more efforts towards supporting the voluntary returns and return projects

Discussion:

A number of questions from partners were received ahead of the meeting and were posed by the RWG on behalf of those who submitted.

- Has money been allocated in the current national budget towards the implementation of the national plan and if so how much?
 - MoMD noted that the federal government has the main responsibility to fund the plan through various sectoral ministries and the projects under local government. The ministry commented that the current funds available in the national fund is IQD 25 billion, this amount is a fraction of what would be needed for example to build 20 of the 120 schools needed under the plan. MoMD reiterated that the different sectoral ministries are responsible for implementing the plan activities in the different governorates.
- Has compensation moved under the reconstruction fund and is there any further information in this regard?
 - Not having full information and requiring more follow-up, MoMD explained that when it comes to compensation for damaged property, there are local compensation committees active at the governorate level who receive the compensation files and allocate the amounts. The cases are then referred to the central committee in Baghdad, who will then approve the compensations which will be disbursed by the local committees. There have been cases of compensation claims received in Ninewa, Anbar and Salah al-Din. The committees have specific funding allocated to them. The mandate of the reconstruction fund is to provide housing to populations. However, cooperation between the compensation committees and reconstruction schemes is expected moving forward.
- Will an official English translation of the national plan be available?
 - MoMD confirmed that an English translation is available and that they can share it with RWG. RWG noted that they were aware that there is an English translation of the previous version which was developed at the end of December/early January but are aware that there have since been some minor changes and would hope to the translation that captures the new changes.
- While the main focus seems to be return, how does MoMD plan to support people who cannot return home and need other solutions?
 - MoMD confirmed that under Decree 888 MoMD branches have been supporting IDPs to locally integrate and while this has already commenced in southern governorates where such applications have been received, there is an intention to extend this to other governorates. This has entailed MoMD branches registering families intending to integrate in areas of displacement. When asked about where

exactly this was taking place, the example of the southern governorates was provided. Overall, there is an intention to support local integration, but it was perceived as an exceptional option for now. RWG noted that we know that the group would be eager to see that this is based on preference rather than on a specific quota of 'acceptable local integration levels' per area.

- A partner asked about the referenced informal settlements in the plan and what MoMD's plans in supporting these settlements in the DS response is?
 - MoMD stated that they are a governmental entity and are responsible for following instructions received by the federal government, and therefore cannot deal with families who are not registered with MoMD. There have been discussions to facilitate DS for IDPs in settlements by providing them better shelter but there has so far been little progress in this regard due to financial constraints. However, humanitarian response is expected to continue for them, and hope there will be attempts to consider them more within future plans. One of the solutions sought after by the Gol is to provide low-cost shelter and basic services to IDPs in these settlements.
- How does MoMD see the international community's/ NGOs' role? How will they coordinate with these actors?
 - It was noted that constant coordination and bilateral meetings are needed with partners, and their ideas and plans would be welcome in implementing DS. Since MoMD has shared the government plan, it is open to cooperating with all partners, but in some areas the level of cooperation has been low as partners have not shared information on their projects with MoMD and they are encouraged to share their projects and plans.
- How will the reconstruction projects be implemented? Through companies or local livelihood projects for example cash for work, or a combination of both?
 - MoMD explained that their role in implementing the national plan is related more to coordination rather than implementation or reconstruction. The MoP, who takes the lead in the implementation of the plan, welcomes ideas, and MoMD would encourage further suggestions and would be happy to share them with MoP. RWG also added that based on engagement with MoP, there is flexibility and openness on how projects will be implemented.
- Once IDPs leave the camps, is there a system to track where they relocate, so that agencies can provide assistance?
 - MoMD noted that unfortunately there is no proper tracking system in place to follow up on IDPs although they had planned to have such a system but due to lack of funding, this did not come to fruition. MoMD have also heard that DTM conducts some sort of tracking of IDPs. However, despite this the branch offices have been useful in doing what they can. For example, several families returning from Sulaimaniyah to Salah al-Din needed shelter and through the MoMD branch in Salah al-Din, they were able to provide them with caravans. Additionally, MoMD field teams are providing in-kind assistance to returnees for up to a year after their return. MoMD also noted that they are also aware that DTM is also tracking returnees which captures the kind of information MoMD would rely on to identify the needs of returnees and IDPs.
- The meeting closed thanking MoMD. RWG also emphasized to MoMD that there were many questions regarding the budget and general approach to implementation as international and non-governmental partners know that there is a limit to a plan unless we commit to taking it forward to action so this is what is of the highest interest. MoMD also

concluded by urging partners to engage with the ministry by sharing their plans and projects towards supporting the implementation of the Plan. A comment was made that it would be useful to have further meetings with government counterparts at the RWG, and it was noted that the RWG could facilitate meetings with technical counterparts, while ministerial engagement continues at the DSTF level.

- Additional follow up questions are welcome and for those whose questions were not answered, RWG will do their best to follow-up with MoMD for answers.

4) IRC Presentation: Signposts Platform in Iraq: Simaet Bhatha

(Presentation attached for more details)

Key points:

- Signpost: A global project that provides accurate, accessible, impartial and timely information to people in times of crisis.
- In Iraq the platform was launched in 2020 to empower conflict affected communities with information to use the available service mapping tools to find relevant information, especially legal rights information. The Facebook page has a moderator who responds to messages via private message, Whatsapp or Viber. They also have a protection escalation protocol to deal with messages that are considered of an acute protection nature (internal referral).
- Simaet Bhatha: An interactive online platform that provides two-way communication and information services on legal rights and procedures and protection issues, in addition to an interactive service mapping tool, to support vulnerable communities in Iraq and KRI. Links: [Website](#) and [Facebook](#)
- Partners are invited to collaborate on the platform to add their information on the service mapping by contacting Shan at Shan.Baker@rescue.org

Discussion:

- CCCM asked on how the platform links to the IIC and how they complement each other, also asking what the outreach for this or if there is anything IRC would like to see happen in this regard.
 - IRC noted attempts to collaborate with the IIC and beyond alerting users of the platform to the existence of the information centre and sharing their contact details, there was not yet any direct coordination and welcomed contacts to allow this.
 - Regarding the referral system, the coordination will start by sending an email to the focal point, after which an officer from IRC will reach out to them. There will also be a consent form to be signed.
 - There is currently no internal referral system but IRC are open to working on linking to referral systems within other organizations.
- MASC complimented on the importance and usefulness of the platform noting that such a facility was important for conflict affected communities.
- NPC suggested that it would be beneficial to discuss bilaterally to ensure that the service mapping covers all the activities as well as discuss referral systems to ensure that confidentiality is maintained.
 - IRC stated that they are open to bilateral discussions and ready to collaborate further in this regard.

No AOB