

RETURNS WORKING GROUP- IRAQ

- ❖ **Meeting Date:** 13th November 2017
- ❖ **Meeting Time:** 10:00-12:00 hrs
- ❖ **Location:** Erbil (IOM Main Conference room, Ghulan Rd.) w/ VTC link to Baghdad, UNHCR Conference Room

In Attendance: National Protection Cluster, UNOPS/ IDP Call Centre, NRC, IRC, UNDP, CRS, COOPI, DFID, EU, PRM, Netherlands Consulate, UNICEF, CARITAS, People In Need, World Vision, GIZ, WFP, FAO, IOM, REACH Initiative, OCHA/ AWG, OCHA/ ICCG, ACTED, UNOPS, UNHCR, Genevacall, German Red Cross, Shelter Cluster, CCCM Cluster, Iraqi Red Crescent Society, UN- HABITAT, MSF, HEKS, IMMAP, UNMAS, PAO, HI, ACF, Intersos, MAG, HLP Sub- Cluster, UPP, SCI

Agenda Items:

- 1) **Opening:** Introduction and adoption of previous minutes
- 2) **Field/ Returns Updates:** Field Updates from main governorates of return, Update from DTM, IDP Call Centre, Update from Partners
- 3) **Mapping Returns Process:** Discussion on current returns process, Update from Mapping Taskforce
- 4) **Presentation on IDP Call Centre:** Brief overview of the IDP Call Centre and data capturing on returns
- 5) **AOB:** Assessment Registry brief from Assessment Working Group (AWG)

Key Discussion Points/ Action:

- 1) **Opening:** Introduction and adoption of previous minutes
-
- The chair discussed on the action points from the previous meeting, among which included:
 - **Area Based Approach:** Circulation of the link for the Area Based Approach/ assessments for partners to fill in. This is still an ongoing process, as more partners are yet to feed into their activities into the link.
 - **CwC Messaging:** On the Return Messaging, RWG mentioned that it is working with the CwC taskforce and Protection Cluster to look into better and more precise presentation of the messaging. It was also requested that for the CwC Winterization messages, that the

messages could be disseminated to returnees living in critical shelters out of camps, as the current messaging on winterization is only limited to in- camp population.

- **Secondary returns:** There still remains an issue on how to map out secondary displacement and returns. The intentions to return questions in the Integrated Location Assessment (ILA) done by DTM, as well as the Multi- Cluster Needs Assessment (MCNA) conducted by REACH between March- May 2017 indicate that 5% of the households who have returned intend to move to a third location in the country (refer to attachment). This means that the returns are thus not sustainable. It is also reported that some returnees are going back to camps. For instance in Kirkuk in October, some families moved from Kirkuk Centre to Laylan 3 camp due to the high rents they were paying. DTM mentioned that they focus more on flow monitoring.

Discussions:

- On the CCCM Mosul camps Exit Questionnaire (refer to attachment), as of 30th October, 14,285 people have left the camps since June 2017 (48,691 are still in camps). In addition, as of 30th October, 1,824 families have left camps, with 85% (12,172 families) returning to areas of origin. This reflects a gradual increase of 2% each week of the people returning to their areas of origin, (23rd October: 2,383 families left camps, 83% (10,348 families returning to areas of origin and 16th October: 1282 families left camps during this period, and 81% (8,066 families) returning to areas of origin). It was highlighted that there is need to see with CCCM cluster, where the remaining 15% of the people who do not return to their areas of origin go to. The three main reasons of return: i) Area is safe, ii) Humanitarian Aid Available, iii) Family reunification.
- IDP Call Centre, Protection Cluster and CCCM Cluster are piloting sampling of people for secondary returns.
- Exit survey is being done in Anbar and Salah al Din for out of camps, as well as planned national intention survey being supported by REACH through the CCCM cluster.
- UNHCR returnee updates are being published regularly for assistance in rural areas. Protection assessments were undertaken by UNHCR protection teams in Ramadi, Salah al Din, as well as reports on follow-up phone interviews conducted in Erbil with IDPs that had returned from camps East and West of Mosul. On a monthly basis, UNHCR publishes four return profiles in Anbar, Salah al Din, Diyala and Ninewa.

Action Points:

- To check with CCCM cluster if there's available data on the people who do not return to their areas of origin from the CCCM Exit Questionnaire, and why they do not return to their areas of origin after leaving the camps.
- Protection Cluster to share output of the pilot sampling for secondary returns once available.

- To check with DTM if there is a way to track/ capture returns in areas of arrival, as opposed to areas of displacement.
 - **Update on RWG structure:** At the previous meeting it was discussed that the RWG was previously co- chaired by NRC, and that the co- chair position had been vacant since February 2017. Partners were invited to express interest for the co- chair position, and after consultations with several agencies, DRC (Bruce Spires) was selected to be co- chair of the RWG, and will support this role until end December 2017. Further discussions on the co- chair will continue to be discussed in the New Year.

2) Field Updates: Field Updates from main governorates of return, Update from DTM, IDP Call Centre, Update from Partners (refer to attached presentation)

i) Update from DTM (Presentation attached for more details):

- **From 30 September to 31 October:**
 - As of 31 October 2017, the DTM has identified 3,173,088 internally displaced persons (528,848 families) displaced after January 2014, dispersed across 99 districts and 3,719 locations in Iraq. For the same period, DTM has also identified 2,624,430 returnees (437,405 families).
 - Overall, the total number of identified IDPs decreased by approximately 1%. Decreases were recorded across 10 of Iraq's 18 governorates, with drops of 26% (93,294 individuals) in Kirkuk, 6% (16,530) in Baghdad, 5% in Salah al-Din (18,348) and 4% (39,804) in Ninewa.
 - The returnee population increased by 15% during the month of October, triple the increase of the previous monitoring period. The governorate with by far the highest number of returnees was Kirkuk, which saw an almost 30-fold increase (reaching 185,004 individuals) partly due to the end of the Hawiga crisis.
- **Emergency Tracking- Disputed areas:**
 - **7th November:** 183,780 people are currently displaced. Current total for returnees from this crisis is 167,034.
 - **9th November:** 181,662 people are currently displaced. Current total for returnees from this crisis is 167,964

➤ **Overview of Returnees by Governorate of Return:**

- As of 31 October 2017, a total of 2,624,430 individuals reportedly returned to their location of origin, meaning that the number of returnees in Iraq has surged by 15% - triple the increase recorded in the previous month.
- 45% of Iraq's returnee population is in Anbar, where almost all are concentrated in Fallujah, Ramadi and Heet districts. Outside of Anbar governorate, the top districts for returns are Mosul in Ninewa governorate (hosting 8% of Iraq's returnees) and Tikrit in Salah al-Din (7%).
- The governorate hosting the second largest returnee population is Ninewa, with 20% of Iraq's total returnees. The third is Salah al-Din with 17%.

➤ **Overview of Returnees by Last Governorate of Displacement**

- During the month of October, IDPs have been returning mostly from Anbar, Erbil, Baghdad, Kirkuk and Ninewa Governorates. Of Iraq's 2.3 million returnees, 21% were last displaced to Anbar, 14% to Erbil, 13% to Baghdad and 10% to Ninewa.
- 99% of the returnees last displaced in Anbar were internally displaced within the governorate.
- In the case of the 363,366 individuals who returned from Erbil governorate, 41% returned to Anbar governorate, 22% to Ninewa and 20% to Salah al-Din. The number of IDPs returning from Erbil increased by 20% compared to the previous monitoring period.
- The governorate with by far the biggest increase in IDPs leaving to return to their location of origin was Sulaymaniyah, where numbers more than doubled to reach 232,728.

ii) Updates from the field (refer to attached presentation for details)

Discussions:

- Zummar: OCHA is trying to figure out access points, as the current missions take 3 hours to access the areas. The access is currently easier from Mosul. People are also opting to return due to the upcoming elections. While some returns have taken place in Zummar, there is no real determination if people originate from these areas. Need data to determine whether the tribes originate from the return locations.
- Housing, Land and property (HLP) issues are also becoming more and more prominent, as there is increase of occupation of returnee houses in the areas of origin. Most disputed areas are currently facing these issues.
- Yathrib: there are serious cases of families who cannot return home due to integration issues. UNDP is working with the Prime Minister's Office on the reconciliation issue. UNDP is also working with NRC on families that cannot return home, and are trying to run dialogues locally and also trying

to ensure that groups and various representation are involved everywhere. Pilot will be done in Yathrib.

- Rabeaa: there's potential risk in Rabeaa in people being accused of being perpetrators. There are no reports on reconciliation.
- There are instances where returnees have been expelled from their areas of return, as they are being accused of having affiliation with ISIS. Need to look into this, as more and more families are facing expulsion, as expelled families and families not cleared to return are now in protracted displacement as cannot return. There needs to be a messaging on authentication, as otherwise this leaves room for misuse.
- In addition, bombing/burning houses of returnees allegedly having links with extremists is one of the collective punishment forms which has been on rise. In October, 750 houses in east Shirqat were reportedly bombed/burned.
- A clarification was made by UNHCR about the acceptable language to refer to extremely vulnerable and stigmatised families. Incidents of collective punishment against families perceived to be affiliated with extremist groups are ongoing creating growing protection problem in areas retaken from extremist groups in Iraq. There has been an ongoing debate in the Protection Cluster's SAG about how these families should be referred to. There are serious concerns with use phrases such as "families of individuals perceived to be affiliated to extremists" or similar, as such families are arbitrarily perceived to be affiliated with extremists without any due process or judicial oversight and use of this terminology could potentially legitimize or contribute to the continued discrimination and stigmatization of these families (often extremely vulnerable women and children.)
- There is currently no message on exemptions on those who will be forced to return. Coercive methods are being used such as confiscating IDs. Forced returns are escalating, and have been reported recently in Anbar in Ana, Al- Qaim, East Anbar, Salah al Din etc. In SAD, 29 sites were mapped over the past three weeks, where forced returns took place. Need advocacy at HCT level and Prime Minister's office level.
- Protection concerns related to forced returns should be taken into consideration e.g.: forced returns, conditions of post returns including tribal conflicts, revenge attacks etc.
- Kirkuk: Forced returns is a re- emerging issue, and need to negotiate per group against forced return. For families who cannot return, they should give a reason why they cannot return and timeframe. There is a clear push for people to go back due to the upcoming elections.

Action Points:

- To establish a small group/ taskforce to look into the reconciliation issue.
- It was also suggested that a presentation on what has been done/will be done in related to reconciliation can be given by UNDP at the next RWG meeting.

- To develop CwC messaging focusing on exemptions.
 - To look into alternatives to return.
- iii) IDP Call Centre (refer to dashboards links below)

[Iraq IIC Iraq IIC Dashboard 2017: Q3 and Q4](#)
[Iraq IIC Dashboard 2017: Q1 & Q2](#)
[Fortnightly Iraq IIC Bulletin 1-15 November](#)

3) **Mapping Returns Process:** Discussion on current returns process, Update from Mapping Taskforce

- In response to partners' requests on the returns process, a mapping taskforce was established within the RWG, to map out the various returns process from the camp until the area of origin/return.
- Two return profiles aiming to capture return processes were done for Anbar and Salah al Din in June 2017, where a flowchart was developed. However, it is paramount to note that the returns process differs from governorate to governorate, district to district, and is very fluid (can change within 3 months).
- The lead of the mapping taskforce provided an overview of the process for collecting the information for the flow chart as well as the return profiles, and emphasized on the governorate level distinctions and the need to annex the barriers to return.
- In the past and still in some areas, it is not mandatory for IDPs to register with MOMD prior to returning. However, there are now increasing cases of secondary registration once returnees have gone back to their areas of origin, and in some areas IDPs are not being allowed at all to return, until they register with MOMD.
- Among the issues that were raised on the return process was that some IDPs have complained that they are being requested to pay bribes in order to be able to return. In addition, it was reported that some people who are associated with prominent tribes were most susceptible to this issue.

Discussion:

- It was also mentioned that DRC and UPP are currently working on anti- fraud messaging in urban governorates- which also include videos, which will aim to address the issue of bribes.
- Partners agreed that it was indeed helpful to have this kind of qualitative information, and presented in the return process flow chart and the detailed profiles.
- It was further suggested to add annexes to the return process to make it more comprehensive (e.g.: Annex on the vetting process, etc.).

Action Points:

- To continue to work on return profiles for Ninewa and other major areas of return.
- To re- establish small working group to look into this issue.

4) Presentation on IDP call centre: Brief overview of the IDP Call Centre and data capturing on returns (refer to attached dashboard)

- Refer to dashboard links below:
- [Iraq IIC Iraq IIC Dashboard 2017: Q3 and Q4](#)
- [Iraq IIC Dashboard 2017: Q1 & Q2](#)
- [Fortnightly Iraq IIC Bulletin 1-15 November](#)

5) AOB:

- i) Assessment Registry brief from Assessment Working Group (AWG)
 - The Assessment Registry is now available, which aims to capture information on various assessments conducted across the country. A total of 179 assessments had been recorded in the assessment registry as of 18th September 2017, and this is base only on reported assessments. This figure could be higher, as it does not represent all the assessments conducted across the country, but the ones reported. Partners are encouraged to fill in their assessments on the assessment registry, which captures assessments per cluster and geographical area, hence this could reduce the need of partners conducting multiple assessments in areas where similar assessments could have been done- and instead divert the resources towards implementation.
 - Next meeting will be held in a month's time.

Action Point:

- RWG to circulate link of the Assessment Registry to partners, so they can insert/ register current or planned assessments already undertaken.