

## RETURNS WORKING GROUP- IRAQ

- ❖ **Meeting Date:** 19<sup>th</sup> September 2018
- ❖ **Meeting Time:** 10:00-11:30 hrs
- ❖ **Location:** Erbil (IOM Conference Room, Gulan Rd.) via bluejeans to Baghdad, UNDP Meeting room

**In Attendance:** MOMD, USAID/OFDA, DOS/PRM, US Consulate, Canada Embassy, DFID, UNDP, Mercy Corps, IOM, French Red Cross, War Child Canada, MAG, HLP Sub Cluster/UN Habitat, MASC/UNMAS, WHH, CwC Taskforce, UNHCR, Qandil, DRC, WFP, ICRC, ACTED, Social Inquiry, Dary Human, MSF, HRW, FAO, REACH, CRS, OCHA, PWJ, IRCS, GIZ, Samaritan's Purse, Geneva Call, Shelter Cluster, World Vision, Internews, RIRP, UNICEF

### Agenda Items:

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- 1) **Introduction and adoption of minutes:** Review of previous minutes; Follow up on action points from previous meeting
- 2) **Returns Update:** Update from DTM; Field updates- Update on areas of origin that have witnessed no returns
- 3) **Government Return Committees:** Update from OCHA on national and field level GRC meetings
- 4) **Government update on returns:** Presentation by MOMD on assistance provided to returnees and other issues concerning returns
- 5) **IDP Intentions Survey:** Presentation by REACH on preliminary survey of IDP households living in formal camps, informal settlements and other out of camp settlements
- 6) **AOB:**

### Key Discussion Points/ Action:

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- 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. As a point to note, the Chair recognized the presence of two MOMD colleagues, the Head of International Relations division and Head of Middle division, who will be presenting on the MOMD's work regarding returnees.

2) **Returns Updates:** Update from DTM; Update on areas of origin that have witnessed no returns

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i) Presentation on DTM update:

*(Presentation attached for more details)*

**Main findings:**

- As of 31 August 2018, the total no. of returnees was at 4,028,964, spread across 1479 locations of return. 1,920,456 IDPs remain.
- The return rate is currently at 68%, and there are 38 districts of return in total
- In the month of August alone, there were 72,354 returnees, which represent a 1.8% increase in returnees compared to the previous month in July.
- Ninewa still remains the highest governorate witnessing returns in August, followed by Anbar and Salah al-Din.
- The governorates with the highest increase in returns in August include Ninewa (+3.3%), Erbil (+3.3%), Kirkuk (+2.1%).
- Babylon remains the only governorate that has witnessed no return.
- A total of 10 districts have witnessed no return. Tarmia in Baghdad Governorate is the latest district to witness returns.
- For more details, the following link can be used to access the return dashboard:  
<http://iraqdtm.iom.int/DTMReturnDashboards.aspx>

➤ Discussion:

- GIZ asked what the phrase “districts of no return” exactly means. Chair clarified that these are districts where people were initially displaced from but never returned.
- Inquiry made on how the number of initial IDPs from no return areas were defined. It was explained that these data are based on the findings from the DTM Integrated Location Assessment (ILA III) done between March-May 2018, as well previous ILAs from 2016-2017. More information in next section below.

ii) Update on areas of origin that have witnessed no return

*(Infographic attached for more details)*

- The chair presented on districts where there has been displacement but no return, with numbers and reasons for the lack of return. The only change from last month is that Tarmia district in Baghdad is no longer in the infographic as it has started witnessing return due to perceived improvement in security. Every other information remains the same.

iii) Field updates from main governorates of return (not presented)

**1. GENERAL**

- Despite the decision to withdraw Hashd (PMU) forces from the cities and disputed areas, these forces are still present in all liberated areas (source: JCC)
- JCMC Report 8: Statistics of the Ministry of Migration and Displacement on the IDPs, returnees and closed camps as of 12 August 2018, as follows:

The total number of closed camps across Iraq was 32; of them 5 were in Erbil, 8 in Anbar, 2 in Diyala, 7 in Baghdad, 6 in Dahuk, 1 in Kirkuk and 3 in Salah al-Din.

**2. SALAH AL-DIN**

- On 27 August, a coordination meeting, under the request of the Balad mayor, was held at Samarra Operations Command HQ in Samarra district. Topics of discussion were the security situation and potential return to these mentioned areas. During the meeting Samarra operations commander agreed on the following points:

- 1) Allow the return of IDPs who are not affiliated to ISIL to Al-Refaat and Muhadet Balad area (including the families in Balad train station).
- 2) Secure the area of return through the transfer of ISF troops from Samarra OC to those areas.
- 3) Clearing the area from mines and IEDs through coordination with the explosive treatment units (EOD) in SAD Operation Command.
- 4) The security clearing centre will be in Asim Bin Thabit primary school close to Balad train station, where 20-30 return badges will be issued daily.

According to Sheik Athab Abad Muhammad the return process and the security clearance will begin around 7<sup>th</sup> September.

**3. NINEWA**

- Former Yezidi MP announced that so far only 10% of Yezidi IDPs have returned to their homes (JCC).
- 19 villages in Sinuni (Sinjar district) near the Syrian border witnessed the return of 517 Arab families (3102 individuals).
- Highlights from the JCC Press Release from 4<sup>th</sup> August 2018 on the Yezidi genocide:
  - 1) ISIS enslaved 6417 Yezidis, of which 3548 are women and 2869 are men.

2) There are still 3117 Yezidis (1452 female and 1665 male) remaining under ISIS enslavement, with their whereabouts unknown.

- The Ninewa Provincial Council and minority representatives have called on the Federal government of Iraq to end the demographic change in the Ninewa Plains (JCC).

### 3) Governorate Return Committees: Update from OCHA on national and field level GRC meetings

*(GRC update attached for more information)*

Main points:

- **Anbar:** The biggest problem is the restriction on movement of people in AAF. OCHA is hopeful that this issue can be discussed with the new governor. Discussions are currently taking place with technical advisor for relief and IDPs, who is willing to listen to a proposal, which will be submitted soon. The technical advisor also highlighted the fact that reconciliation had taken place, leading to the return of 65 affiliated families to Heet. He has also called on reconciliation actors to persist further so that more of these families could return.  
There are 47 families in Kilo 18 camp who have absolute restrictions on movement, essentially staying in a detention camp within the camp. More advocacy needed in this regard.
- **Baghdad:** It has been agreed to constitute and convene a GRC, even though there aren't many households left in central Baghdad.
- **Diyala:** An invitation had been sent out to convene the GRC. Not much has happened since then.
- **Kirkuk:** The last of the IDPs left Daquq camp on 12<sup>th</sup> September and moved to Laylan camp. Daquq is officially closed and there will be a 2-week period in which partners and the government will decide what to do with the assets.
- **SAD:** evictions continue to happen in Qadisiya complex to make space for people who are being evicted from Dream City, which is a private complex. The people identified for eviction are from Baiji and Tal Aboajeel. People displaced from Siniya are allowed to move to Qadisiya. A local sheikh in the area helped to stop some evictions from Qadisiya to Shirqat by sponsorship. There seems to be an agenda pushed by the governor to empty the complexes.  
IDPs staying in Shahama camp seem to have the option to either move to Shirqat or be sponsored out of Shahama.  
\*Al-Shahama issue (as more info keeps rolling in): Al-Shahama camp currently hosts 126 families/482 individuals. The "Al-Shahama Committee", initiated by UNHCR with the Salah al-Din authorities in April 2018 to allow for sponsorship of IDPs out of the camp, remained inactive for the past two months, and has not been reactivated by the authorities despite concerted efforts by

UNHCR. On 26 July 2018, Salah al-Din Operations Command issued an order instructing all security agencies to implement measures for the closure of the camp and return of IDPs to their areas of origin, except for families from Shirqat, who were expected to be relocated to other camps. However, Al-Shahama camp closure was recently postponed by the Salah al-Din Operation Command till further notice.

- **Ninewa:** there will be no evictions as previously reported, due to advocacy and the fact that other governors were not happy with the return of some these people.

➤ Discussion:

- It was asked why the 47 families in Kilo 18 are being held, and whether they have been accused of anything. OCHA stated these families have not been accused of anything but they are being held due to having at least one family member affiliated with ISIS. However, the reasons continue to be vague. Furthermore, all families in AAF are being treated the same way as those 47 families in Kilo 18. Inquiry was also made on whether these families are being held in separate parts of the camp. OCHA clarified that they are held in the camp, but they cannot leave the camp. NPC pointed that other families (besides the 47 families) in Kilo 18 camp also seem to have restrictions. OCHA said that this point contradicts what the partner in the area reported but will find out more about this. It was then mentioned that though the absolute restrictions concern only 47 families, the restrictions on the other 541 families in Kilo 18 are increasing and need sponsorship from their sector leaders. MOMD mentioned that the reasons for the lack of return for these families is more than just security and lack of services. Many families have affiliation with ISIS and destroyed houses. The other reasons are livelihood issues of FHHs, who depend mostly on MOMD assistance, as well as political-economic issues within Anbar and the high rate of pollution in the area. OCHA stated that the main issue here is the restriction of movement of IDPs in camps, not reasons why they cannot return. Furthermore, these families are *perceived* to be affiliated, sometimes without proof. MOMD clarified that it is not within its mandate to identify families as ISIS or not, as that is the local government's duty.
- UNICEF mentioned that there was a meeting to close Shahama camp, as it is like a prison and restricts movement. One of the agreed points was the approval by SAD operations commander to close Shahama 1 camp. Shirqat IDPs will be allowed to move to Shahama 2, while IDPs from Kirkuk and other districts will return to their areas of origin. This exception made for Shirqat IDPs is due to the unstable security situation in Shirqat. However, IDPs from other governorates should be given more options. OCHA will advocate on this point.
- An inquiry was made asking whether a red ID card was given to ISIS-affiliated families. OCHA said they are not aware.

- Inquiry made on what the reasons were for the evictions that were eventually put on hold in Ninewa. OCHA stated that it was only a matter of moving non-Ninewa IDPs to their governorates of origin.

#### 4) **Government Update on Returns:** Presentation by MOMD on assistance provided to returnees and other issues concerning returns

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*(MOMD presentation and MOMD returnee data attached will be shared separately)*

##### **Key points:**

- Reasons for data discrepancy between MOMD HQ and branches: 1) There are many actual returnees who have not registered with MOMD; they prefer to stay registered as IDPs as IDP benefits outweigh those of returnees (in terms of aid from MOMD and organizations). 2) Lack of trust between returnees and local government.
  - If more aid can be diverted to returnees, this would encourage more people to register as returnees.
  - MOMD has already distributed 3000 air coolers to returnees in Baghdad.
  - It is easier for international organizations to deliver aid to IDPs in camps, which contributes to the delay of return to areas of origin.
  - 60% of MOMD assistance will be allocated to returnees, while 40% will be allocated to IDPs. This will include the distribution of food and non-food items to returnees.
  - MOMD branches in liberated areas in return governorates have been subject to destruction and looting. As a result, many families have not been registered in the MOMD branch database due to lack of equipment, leading to a huge discrepancy between HQ and branch data. Therefore, there is a need for the improvement of the registration process with help from UNHCR and IOM.
  - Obstacles to return are also available in hard copy and will be shared.
- Discussion:
- Co-chair asked whether MOMD has allocated grants to returnees, and how that process works. MOMD stated that the high compensation committee has allocated 1,500,000 IQD to returnees. Once Ministry of Finance (MoF) has transferred this allocation, MOMD will start handing out the grants. Regarding modality, the grant will be paid through Q cards, with which MOMD has a partnership. The grant will be paid directly once the family registers its return. For the time being, MOMD is waiting for this money to be transferred from MoF.
  - Co-chair also asked what MOMD's plans are on reconciliation. MOMD said that this is a complicated issue and will require funds and time. MOMD has submitted a reconciliation proposal to the High Committee of Reconciliation. The MOMD mandate deals with displacement and return, and reconciliation is an issue tackled by a higher committee which is under COMSEC, and international organizations in the governorates.

- Inquiry was made on whether there is a plan for the distribution of kerosene during winter. MOMD mentioned that there is an agreement between the Ministry of Oil and MOMD to provide fuels in camps and return areas for free. For each family, 50 litres has been allocated per month. **UNHCR and MOMD have also partnered to distribute fuel in different camps.**
- Inquiry made on how MOMD can verify a person's status as returnee. The MOMD branch of displacement confirms to the branch in area of origin that the concerned IDPs have returned. The returnee's file of displacement will then be closed. It is the local government's duty to register the return, while MOMD authenticates the return.

5) **IDP Return Survey:** Presentation by REACH on preliminary survey of IDP households living in formal camps, informal settlements and other out of camp settlements

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*(See presentation attached for more details)*

➤ Discussion:

- REACH mentioned that it will be working with CCCM in the coming weeks to publish new products regarding movement intentions.
- Inquiry made on whether the MCNA will include nuances (e.g. male or female-headed HHs) that may not be shown in top-level data. REACH mentioned that this information will indeed be included. The dataset is even public.

6) **AOB**

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- The chair presented the Know Before You Go flyers (copies were distributed at the meeting) and mentioned that they have been tested in several camps. The final leaflets also incorporated feedback from IDPs. The KBYG initiative started due to IDPs not having enough information on areas of origin, hence resulting in secondary displacement. KBYG would help IDPs make an informed decision on return.

➤ Discussion:

- Inquiry made on whether there have been any developments regarding Community Resource Centers (CRC). CRC chair mentioned that she could present an update in the next meeting.
- CwC announced that they will roll out KBYG in center-south, in cooperation with Protection Working Group in Baghdad.