

RETURNS WORKING GROUP- IRAQ

- ❖ **Meeting Date:** 15th August 2018
- ❖ **Meeting Time:** 10:00-11:30 hrs
- ❖ **Location:** Erbil (IOM Conference Room, Gulan Rd.) via bluejeans to Baghdad, UNDP Meeting room

In Attendance: IOM, IRCS, CRS, War Child Canada, UN FAO, Geneva Call, UN-Habitat, HLP Sub-Cluster, UNHCR, DFID, Protection Cluster, Center for Civilians in Conflict, Peace Winds Japan, Intersos, NCCI, UNDP, GIZ, MSF, Social Inquiry, French Red Cross, USIP, Solidarites International, HEKS, IMC/Health Cluster, WFP, REACH, NRC, Samaritan's Purse, DRC, USAID / OFDA, RIDPA (US Embassy), EURLO, Australian Embassy, EU Delegation, UNICEF

Agenda Items:

- 1) **Introduction and adoption of minutes:** Review of previous minutes; Follow up on action points from previous meeting
- 2) **Returns Update:** Presentation on the new Returns Dashboard
- 3) **Return Highlights:** Focus on areas of origin that have witnessed no returns. Field updates
- 4) **Mass Communications Assessment in Iraq:** Presentation by REACH on sources and channels of return related information
- 5) **Rapid Overview of Areas of Return:** Focus on Western Anbar (Ana, Qaim, Raua)
- 6) **Reconstruction, Recovery and Resilience Platform:** A presentation by UN-Habitat on the Recovery and Resilience platform
- 7) **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. It was mentioned that the Return Index will be launched for the first time, which will be examined in more detail in the coming months.

- 2) **Returns Updates:** Presentation on the new Returns Dashboard; General field updates by governorate
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i) Presentation by DTM on the Returns Dashboard:

- As focus has now shifted more towards returns, DTM started receiving more queries on return-related information. The new DTM/ RWG return dashboard collects, automates, and visualizes the crucial data on returns and available for everyone to access online on the DTM portal. Furthermore, the Return dashboard will also be available on the RWG website once the website is launched.
- The data presented is from the DTM's IDP and returnee master lists and will be updated on a monthly basis. Information includes return location, governorate of last displacement, IDPs' current district of displacement, period of displacement, shelter type etc.

Main findings:

- As of 31 July 2018, the total no. of returnees was at 3,956,610, spread across 1400 locations of return.
- The return rate is currently at 67%
- In the month of July alone, there were 52,260 returnees, which represent a 1.3% increase in returnees compared to the previous month in June.
- Ninewa still remains the highest governorate witnessing returns in July, followed by Anbar and Salah al-Din
- The governorates with the highest increase in returns in July include Ninewa (+2.3%), Salah al-Din (+1.8%), Kirkuk (+1.2%)
- For more details, the following link can be used to access the return dashboard:
<http://iraqdtm.iom.int/DTMReturnDashboards.aspx>

➤ Discussion:

- UN Habitat asked whether information was available on IDPs by their area of origin (rather than just governorate of origin) and if figures are available for the number of IDPs yet to return to these specific areas. Habitat explained that this information is crucial in helping them develop a planning framework for Mosul. DTM mentioned that the master list does not capture this information, but rather this information is available in the Integrated Location Assessment (which was last done March-May 2018). However, DTM stressed that this information only includes out of camp IDPs, so the camp figures need to be obtained from CCCM and combined with ILA's out of camp figures for the location in question.

ii) Field updates from main governorates of return (Not presented at meeting)

Main updates:

1. Salah al-Din:
 - IDPs living in Shaqlawa Complex and Dream City complex have been repeatedly threatened with eviction. Residents of Al-Dyoun complex were told to evict the site before 2nd August. (Source: DRC, with information from TDH & Intersos)
 - Al Alam Camp: Spike in departures in July following threats of forced returns of IDPs from Hawija currently living in Al Alam Camp. Forced returns have formally been put on hold with agreement from the Deputy Governor, but 76 HH reported to have left the camp in July. (DRC)
 - Al Alam sub-district: The local authorities have started evicting Hawija IDPs who live in informal sites in Al-alam subdistrict. They declared that the IDPs must leave these sites within 10 days, with ISF holding the IDPs' bails at the main checkpoint of Al-Alam. Over 2,700 families were staying in these settlements. These tough procedures have been put in place allegedly due to concerns that ISIS members may be staying in Al-Alam concealed as IDPs, after the new commander of Al-Alam police had received a threatening letter inside his home.
2. Ninewa:
 - The Ninewa provincial council has stated that there has been a recent increase of ISIS activities in the districts of Ba'aj, Hatra, and Talafar. (JCC)
3. Erbil:
 - According to JCC figures for July, 564 individuals were displaced to Erbil camps (Khazir, Hasansham, U2) from Ninewa, while 1,235 individuals returned to Ninewa from the Erbil camps.
4. Anbar:
 - According to Human Rights Watch, 51 families from Anbar have been blocked from returning home by Iraqi soldiers. The IDPs told the agency that the reason is unknown. (JCC)

3) Return Highlights: Focus on areas of origin that have witnessed no return

- Chair presented on districts where there has been displacement but no return, with numbers and reasons for the lack of return.

- Diyala: Baladrooz – Initial no. of out of camp IDPs was 264 individuals. Suspected reason (not fully confirmed) for not returning is that they found employment opportunities elsewhere and lack of services in AoO. The same reasons apply for lack of return to Baquba, where 6138 individuals have not returned
- Baghdad: Most of the IDPs here were not considered as IDPs by MoMD in the first place, therefore their return has not been registered. No. of IDPs that haven't returned: Al-Resafa – 4578 IDPs, Madain – 104 IDPs, Adhamia – 564 IDPs, Al Karkh – 5472 IDPs. Tarmia has witnessed no return due to unstable security.
- Babylon: only governorate with no returns. Main reasons were economic or tribal problems, and in the case of Musayib, security concerns. Most these IDPs have integrated in other governorates. The districts in question are Mahawil (84 IDPs), Musayib (31,812 IDPs), and Hilla (462 IDPs)
- SAD: Thethar district (though not considered a district by many people in SAD) is blocked or still closed. Number of affected IDPs is around 3000.
- Data collection on a sub-district level is now being collected, as there are locations in other governorates that have also witnessed no returns

➤ Discussion:

- An inquiry made on IDPs who returned and went back into secondary displacement. The chair stated that there was a huge focus on this issue a couple of months ago, and a round of presentations was made on secondary displacement (in camp and out of camp). The information was shared in June. The number of people in secondary displacement was not that significant but large enough to bring to the forefront. This information can be shared again later. The co-chair added that in Salah al-Din the secondary displacement figures were related to the forced evictions, which meant the IDPs were forced to return to areas that were not conducive to return, hence triggering secondary displacement.
- UNHCR inquired whether figures for IDPs are available by sub-district of origin, as there aren't enough details on a district level. Chair mentioned that the info was collected from ILA which was on a district level. However, the field teams are being contacted to gather numbers of people who have not returned on a sub-district level. Areas of origin are more difficult to find but data collection has begun in this regard. There will hopefully be more information on sub-district level in the coming meetings. Co-chair added as a point of note that some areas are not accessible to humanitarian partners, which adds to the challenges of collecting such data. Chair mentioned that indeed some areas, such as Jurf al Sakhr in Mahawil (Babylon), are blocked and nobody has been able to reach there

- A clarification was needed on what the term “blocked area” means. Chair clarified that the term means blocked by security forces controlling the area.
- A return update was given on Qairawan, Sinjar, which has recently witnessed 200-400 Sunni Arab returnees. The area had been previously blocked but has now started to witness returns. An analysis was done recently on the percentage of returns to Sinjar and showed that there are around 50,000 returns to Sinjar district altogether (17% rate for areas south of Mount Sinjar).

4) Mass Communications

- A presentation was made by REACH on Mass communications, which highlights the sources of information that IDPs receive on their areas of origin before returning. So far, mass communications assessments have been done in northern Iraq (Dahuk, Erbil, Sulaymaniyah, Ninewa). This was a survey of 2,000 households and focus group discussions with 100 participants.
- The assessment includes representative findings at governorate level

Key findings:

(See presentation and mass communications factsheets attached for more details)

- Discussion:
 - NPC noted that organizations always mention, as part of the Know Before You Go (KBYG) messages, that humanitarian organizations may not always be able to provide accurate information, keeping in mind we should not to do harm by giving false information. NPC also mentioned that in-camp IDPs in Ninewa only have 7% trust in national authorities compared to 26% for out of camp IDPs, which is linked to the ongoing issues with incursions of security actors in the camps in Ninewa (security actors linked to the Iraqi authorities – therefore distrust).
 - A comment was made regarding the importance of having a general analysis on mass communications and more information on the barriers to providing more information that would help better inform return. REACH stated that women faced a barrier in terms of literacy level, technology literacy, and access to a device in the household (may not have permission)
 - A point was made that age groups should also be included, as well as the medium of communication (social media etc.) being used to receive information. REACH mentioned that though there was no age disaggregation, but there was to some extent a presence of young people in the FGDs. There was also a preference towards Facebook Messenger and Facebook groups for

the age groups in general. It should also be noted that the majority of IDPs used regular phone calls.

- The chair noted some interesting statistics from the findings, which were: 1) that over 80% of IDPs reportedly did not receive information from humanitarians. 2) Almost all received information from family. 3) Almost all IDPs cited authorities as the least trusted source of information. Humanitarians will have to figure out how they can provide more information to IDPs, moving forward.
- An inquiry was made on whether IDPs wanted more information or if the information they're receiving is not accurate, considering the graphs are indicating that livelihoods and security are the main topics of information received and the topics that have the most information gaps at the same time. It was also asked whether IDPs can know that the information is not trusted if they haven't returned. REACH mentioned that there may not necessarily be information gaps but rather that the situation changes, and many IDPs wait to see what happens. For the second question, it was clarified that IDPs were receiving information from friends and families who were in the areas of origin (AoOs) or had visited the AoO in 30 days prior to the assessment, which added a higher level of trust compared to family and friends who were not in the area of origin.

5) Rapid Overview of Areas of Return (ROAR) – Western Anbar (Qaim, Ana, Rawa)

A general overview was given by REACH on the situation in Ana, Qaim and Rawa in Western Anbar. **Main findings:**

(See presentation attached for more details)

- Discussion:
 - Chair stressed that there has been a lot of secondary displacement from Western Anbar. Main reason is due to lack of shelter and contaminated agricultural fields, as agriculture is a major source of livelihood. There are also no agencies present to clear these fields, which is a point that needs addressing due to the major effect it has on returns. This issue will be flagged to Mine Action. NPC added that there were barriers regarding mine clearance, which was first the high cost of such an activity and secondly, there were only two registered and accredited mine clearance organizations as of May 31 – now there are eight. In terms of private houses, only the ISF are legally allowed to clear those. As long as there isn't a legal framework, organizations cannot send staff to clear houses, as the ISF is the only entity legally permitted to do so. This issue should be flagged and used as an advocacy point. The Chair mentioned that the list of houses that ISF have cleared is not available and that this gap will continue to be explored.

6) Reconstruction, Recovery and Resilience Platform: A presentation by UN Habitat on the RRR platform

(See presentation attached for more details)

Main points: (refer to attached presentation)

- Discussion:
 - EU delegation asked whether the platform has data available as a spreadsheet. Habitat mentioned that it is available and can be exported online from the platform. The website is set to launch in 2 weeks.
 - Chair asked whether there are plans to advocate this to other UN agencies and NGOs, as there are many NGOs working on reconstruction projects, but they are not being reported. Habitat is hosting IM meetings to teach these organizations on the platforms (Two meetings have taken place so far). Habitat is also reaching out to NGOs via NCCI.
 - Chair asked what other governmental agencies are involved in this platform. Habitat mentioned that the Ministry of Planning is in charge of collecting the investment projects being planned across the whole country. A dataset on these projects is currently being prepared. DEFATO projects are also included.
 - Inquiry was made on what part of Mosul is being covered. Habitat stressed that the RRR platform covers all affected governorates and districts involved, not just east or west Mosul.
 - Inquiry made whether Habitat is coordinating with IDP Call Center to collect info. Habitat is aware of the Call Center's interest and will reach out to them