

RETURNS WORKING GROUP- IRAQ

- **Meeting Date:** 2 May 2023
- **Meeting Time:** 11:00 am-12:30 pm
- **Location:** IOM Conference Room, Erbil & Remote connection via Teams

Attendance: IOM, Tdh, OCHA, WFP, Blumont, NRC, GIZ, USAID/Iraq, UNMAS, USAID/OTI, REACH, UNDP, USAID/BHA, ACF, TDH, WFP, NP, IRC, SEDO, SDC, & WWI.

Agenda:

1. **Introduction and adoption of minutes:** Review of February minutes
2. **Context Update:** DTM Displacement and Returns Update, CCCM Update, and RWG Field Update
3. **DTM Presentation:** Progress Toward Durable Solution in Iraq, A pilot project in Ninewa Governorates.
4. **DSTWG Update:** DS Updates
5. **AOB**

1. Introduction and adoption of minutes: Review of previous minutes; Follow up on action points from the previous meeting.

- No pending action points.
- Endorsement of the previous meeting minutes.

2. Context Update: Displacement and Returns Update, CCCM Update, and RWG Field Update

(Please refer to the full presentation link for further details)

DTM Displacement and Returns Update**Departures From Jeda'a 5: Update as of 29 April:**

- 322 families arrived in 4 governorates, including 101 families who arrived as IDPs and 221 families who returned to their locations of origin.
- Two-thirds arrived in Al-Qayara and 13% in Markaz Mosul subdistricts, both in Mosul
- Top IDP subdistricts of origin: Al-Qayara (23%), Markaz Al-Hatra (20%), and Al Zab (8%)

Discussion

- Question: Reportedly, two-thirds of individuals who fled J5 and were tracked by DTM are now residing in critical shelters. So, are they residing in governmental structures or joining other family members? Please provide more detail.
 - DTM: Indeed, the vast majority of people are living in tents, including those who returned to live in their houses as their houses were torched by the community members following the liberation due to the residents' perceived affiliations to extremist groups. Despite being called returns, some are living in the gardens, adjacent to the house, and in some instances, in mosques and unfinished structures. Please get in touch with raqdtm@iom.int if you require further information about Emergency tracking.

RWG Field Update:**National Update: MoMD Grants**

- On 8 March MoMD distributed return grant to 2,006 HHs from Sinjar.
- On 16 March MoMD distributed return grant to 1,000 HHs headed by women.
- On 28 April, MoMD announced the release of the 24th batch of the return grants for 6,677 HHs.
- MoMD continues with the distribution of in-kind assistance and food baskets in Anbar, SAD, Ninewa, and other governorates.

Sinjar Context

- In March 2023, a total of 448 households and 2364 individuals returned to their areas of origin, including 85 HH to Sinjar – 198 HH to Sinuni – 165 to Taluzer/Baaj
- MOMD branch in Sinjar district supported 1000 families by distributing relief assistance, and hygiene kits.
- The month of April witnessed a decrease; 230 Households and 1267 individuals returned to their areas of origin including 78 HH to Sinjar center – 5 HH to Qayrawan – 102 HH Sinuni- 45 HH Tal Azeer/Baaj

Discussion

- Question: Concerning the expected returns to 23 locations in Al-Saadiya in Diyala supported by local authorities, do these villages fall under the 25 no-return areas?
 - RWG: Seven of the villages do not fall under the no-return areas. Please refer to the presentation link for more information, including the names of the villages with expected returns.
- Question: What's the reason for the high returns in Sinjar recently?
 - RWG: Perceived improvement in the security situation in Sinjar and as well as access to livelihood opportunities and optimism or encouragement from relatives in hometowns were cited as key reasons for returns.

CCCM Updates:**Jeddah 5 Formal Camp:**

- On Monday, 17 April, a Facilitated Voluntary Movement of 85 households took place, facilitated by IOM. Later that day, the MoMD Ninewa branch, together with JOC, NOC, and other local authorities announced that the camp would close on 19 April and families were asked to leave the camp within 48 hours.

- After the announcement, all humanitarian actors operating in the camp were asked to leave. Families' civil IDs were confiscated, and they were instructed to leave without their departure letters (The letters are necessary to apply for the MOMD return grant. By the afternoon of 18 April, all households had departed Jeddah 5)
- The DSRSG advocated on behalf of the UN for a delay of the closure with the government. However, an eventual temporary extension for one week only came through after the last families had departed.
- IOM was able to speak with 281 of the families that were evicted, while 21 families didn't respond to phone calls and 5 households (all minor-headed households) did not have contact details:
 - 260 of the families contacted were in Ninewa, of which 174 were in Qayyarah and 55 in Mosul. Other destinations included Erbil, Kirkuk, Baaj, Hatra, Telafar, Sinjar, and Salahaddin.
 - Families have reported having experienced physical assault (12 HHs), confiscation of documents (7 HHs), eviction and secondary displacement (20 HHs), and denial of access/rejection from host communities / AoOs (5 HHs).
 - The three most reported immediate needs identified were: Multi-Purpose Cash Assistance -MPCA (147), Protection (89), and Shelter (77). Other needs included access to basic services such as health, education, water, and electricity (66), food items (48), and NFIs (42).
- IOM CCCM will be supported with Emergency Cash assistance (4 trenches one-off) to families who were not registered with the IOM TRD program.

Informal sites update:

- In April, the IOM NFI team completed the distribution of replacement vouchers in the amount of 100 USD per family targeting 614 of the most vulnerable HHs in Samarra informal sites (Mixed locations).
- Following the forced eviction of IDPs from the Souq Almash informal site (ACTED-supported informal site) IOM NFI completed the distribution of emergency cash in the amount of 300,000 IQD per HH targeting 59 HHs affected by this eviction.
- In Bzeibeiz work is underway to establish a camp for the displaced HHs with the plan to install 1500 caravans and construct 150 low-cost houses. MoMD is working on preparing the ground (leveling, laying bricks, casting) through a contractor who has started to establish a site factory for the manufacturing of the caravans inside the camp, and during the next few days, 150 caravans will be completed and distributed to the IDPs from the informal AAF camp of Amiriyah al-Fallujah, and the AAF camp will be officially empty and closed. A security fence and a main gate will also be established to protect camp residents from stray animals and to provide a safe environment for IDPs. After setting up the official camp, the caravan school will be moved inside the camp and a health clinic will be established. The camp will be managed by MOMD, Anbar branch.
- MoMD has requested IOM's support in preparing the infrastructure, including laying water pipes, providing a potable water station, as well as establishing a sewage network, and constructing roads inside the camp.
- The Mayor of Amiriyah Fallujah District, Mr. Shaker Mahmoud Obaid Al-Issawi said that the camp once completed will be called (Al-Shorouk camp for IDPs) and he mentioned that displaced HHs who are in Amiriyah al-Fallujah can move to this official camp on a voluntary basis, as it will provide all the services that IDPs need to provide a decent life for their families. The project's implementation is estimated to take around four months, as Mr. Wissam mentioned.
- Earlier in April families (mixed of IDPs and Returnees) who are living in the Al-Muskarat location in Tikrit which is a military base owned by the Ministry of Defense, were asked to leave the place with very short notice because the location will be handed over to a new military division that is supposed to take over. These HHs have been living in this location prior to the 2014 crises and they continued living in this place after being displaced in 2014. The HHs expressed their concern and feel of anxiety after receiving the warning providing that the majority do not have access to shelter elsewhere to relocate.
- According to RART, the SAD government announced that the number of HHs included in this eviction is 731 HHs and that government will implement the eviction in steps starting with 49 HHs/110 individuals to be moved to the T-Shelters constructed by IOM in 2018. In addition, the local government was directed to form a committee to assess and understand barriers to relocation for the affected families in an attempt to find solutions and address the barriers. Some of the families declared that they have houses or land in Kirkuk & some in villages nearby SAD that they might go to them if they didn't find an alternative solution.

Discussion

- Question: Around 25 families are still reportedly residing close to the J5, despite the official closure having already been announced, according to information received. Could you please confirm that?
 - CCCM: In the Al Hawasim Village, which is adjacent to J5, there are some families. The local officials have given them 60 days' notice to depart. According to reports, several of the families had their tents torched and are now in urgent need of shelter.
 - ABC/Nonviolent Peaceforce: There is no one inside the camp, The Nonviolent Peaceforce team spoke with the community and security officials in Al-Hawasim, which is outside the camp's entrance. The families have been informed to leave within 60 days and there are roughly 80. The families have no choice and are unable to return to their hometown due to serious protection concerns. For the time being, ABC shared some of the information indicating the required response addressing the families' immediate humanitarian needs and the sustainable solution for their resettlement. Furthermore, a briefing note through IOM, which was compiled based on the information gotten from the ABC, and the main advocacy points were about these families well as other families who are facing issues with blocked returns.

in terms of the needs of those families being met, it has been shared with the informal Skype Coordination Group that ABC made for organizations that are able to provide services. Additionally, there's been some protection coordination through the protection platform as well as coordination of services in Mosul City, but I think those families are still in need of support.

- Question: What is the capacity of the newly established Bezibz IDP camp, and do the partners have any plans to manage a further flow? Please elaborate if there are any arrangements in place already.
 - CCCM: The new Bezibz camp can currently accommodate 1150 households, most of which are from Jurf Al Sakha and Owesat. There is currently no further confirmed inward movement to the camp. According to the information that CCCM received, the government intends to only set up 1500 caravans for those who are now residing in Bezibz and the families who are from the AAF.
 - IRC: IRC was able to monitor the returns under IOM's voluntary return program on April 17. Their needs are the same as those of us who were returned via the government's program. It's important to note that the majority of these individuals claim that the camp offered far better living conditions than their hometowns. As a result, it implies that they are dealing with extremely challenging circumstances in the areas where they have returned, especially with regard to the children. There are instances in which schools are overcrowded and unable to accommodate any more students. While there is a severe need for support for women-headed families and a strong need for livelihood support in AoO. As previously mentioned, some of the people remain in tents and desperately require assistance to upgrade existing facilities. Moreover, due to the lack of assistance that legal organizations offered at the camps, the returnees currently have court proceedings that are pending and require legal representation. Therefore, there is a need to boost our advocacy efforts for the provision of basic services, funding for reconstruction and rehabilitation.
- Question: Regarding the departure letters that are issued by the MOMD. Do recipients of those letters have to be in their areas of origin to receive the grant or can they be in a secondary displacement site?
 - CCCM: The camp manager typically issues the letter of departure. In typical circumstances, there is an attachment to the letter signed by MOMD and a security official of the camp when the families are leaving on their own or under the IOM FVM program. However, considering that these families were evicted, their departure was not voluntary. The CCCM and MOMD have come to an agreement that the J5 families can only apply for their return grant with a letter from the camp management without the attachment. The families can simply pick it up at their final location. In light of the fact that people continually move, and it is difficult for CCCM to follow their movements since some do not have access to phones, CCCM has not yet distributed it. Nonetheless, CCCM is mapping their location and sending the departure letters to the IOM offices that are closest to them so that the families may pick up their departure letters.
- Question: What is the agenda of the government to take such a drastic step to close J5 because it seems too far and so far disconnected from what the UN stands for and its objectives of seeking durable solutions? How will these individuals now connect to healthcare and education to be able to truly start their lives over again?
 - CCCM: Initially, in March, the government informed CCCM that the camp should be closed within 60 days in compliance with a directive from the Prime Minister's Office. At that time, CCCM met with MOMD and told them that there are still a few more rounds of facilitated voluntary movement left and both parties also decided to press for the facilitation of additional movements throughout that time in order to ensure that IDPs had voluntary access to durable solutions. Truthfully, we were likewise astonished. Although we recognize that this tendency has begun in 2019 and is consistent with the government's plans to end displacement in Iraq. In 2023, an increase in the number of IDPs being evicted from informal sites that the government often does not recognize as IDP pockets were observed. But the government cites the IDPs' occupation of originally planned land for development-related projects as a justification. Additionally, IDPs are outpacing the ability of the local government to accept them. Speaking of J5, it has also been discussed by the government as a backup location to accommodate families returning from Syria and Al-Hol. Perhaps this serves as an additional push for this cause. The conflict between MOMD and other government entities, including other national security services, was allegedly noticed while pushing toward the closure of Jeddah 5.
 - A few families who formerly resided in Jeddah 5 now send their children to Jabbar 5 so they can take the final examinations. No family members were permitted to enter the camp; just children were. This is undoubtedly a problem for the rest of the family, especially since they lack the departure letter and are concerned about their own safety as well as the difficulties they may encounter at checkpoints.

3. IOM DTM Presentation: Progress Toward Durable Solution in Iraq, A pilot project in Ninewa Governorate

(Please refer to the full presentation link for further details)

Methodology & Objectives

- **What?** measuring the progress towards durable solutions.
- **How?** HH survey with sample size and design allowing for comparison between three groups and generalizing the finding at the subdistrict level. A total of 8,042 HHs interviewed.
- **Why?** To examine key obstacles and characteristics impeding progress towards durable solutions through comparison among IDPs, returnees, and the population who never left their location of origin following the 2014 crisis.
- To define the proportion of the IDP and returnee population that have overcome displacement- or return-related vulnerabilities.

Housing situation

- Overall, the housing situation is where you can see the biggest difference.
- The portion of IDP and returnee households living in good conditions is considerably smaller in the 'low progress' group than in the 'medium' and 'high'.

Main barriers:

- There is a correlation between time spent in the same location as well as preferable solutions and progress. Instability prevents advancing toward solutions or even deciding on the preferable scenario.
- Lack of proper housing, documentation, and stable income are the main factors impeding progress.

- Home destruction remains the most common reason for not having returned, followed closely by the lack of livelihood opportunities at the origin.
- Access to livelihood is problematic for all three groups.

Discussion

4. DS Updates: DSTWG, and ABC Updates

(Please refer to the full presentation link for further details)

DS Compact

- A draft DS Compact outlining areas of engagement between the GOI/KRG, and the UN has been drafted and under review of the RC for discussion with authorities.
- Draft DS Compact contains a series of 13 "commitments" and operationalizes the National Plan, Interagency Strategic Framework, and Pillar 5 of UNSDCF
- The Compact will be supported by exist. data sources & evidence with a prioritized overview of sectors, population groups, and geographic areas in need of support
- The draft Compact will be discussed at the DSTF (May 4) while, simultaneous, the RC is engaging with the Government of Iraq (Federal and KRG) re the Compact

5. AOB

- Next RWG meeting is scheduled for June 20, 2023.