

## RETURNS WORKING GROUP- IRAQ

- **Meeting Date:** 24 September 2024
- **Meeting Time:** 11:00 am-13:00 pm
- **Location:** IOM Conference Room, Erbil & Remote connection via Teams

**Attendance:** Iraqi Red Crescent Society, IVY Japan, Action for Humanity, forumZFD, IOM, UNAMI, DSTWG/RWG, DRC, Embassy of Switzerland, EJCC, CRS, UN- Habitat, GIZ-SSVPI, UNDP, ECHO, OCHA, UNWFP, bicc, Tdh-Lusanne, WRO, Mercy Hands for Humanitarian Aid & Development.

### Agenda:

1. **Introduction and adoption of minutes:** Review of July Meeting Minutes and Action Points
2. **Context Update:** DTM Update – Camp Movements Update and Results of Anbar and Diyala HH surveys measuring progress towards durable solutions.; RWG Field Updates.
3. **FVM Presentation:** FVM movement - August departures and key findings of programmatic reintegration monitoring for Hasansham U2 and Khazir M1 R2 departures.
4. **EDMCR Update:** Erbil Camps Status
5. **IOM Presentation:** Key Findings of community-based study in Al-Dujail and Yathrib subdistricts of Salah Al-Din governorate.
6. **DSTWG Update:** DS updates
7. **AOB**

### 1. Introduction and adoption of minutes: Review of previous minutes

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

### 2. Context Update: DTM Camp Movements Update and Results of Anbar and Diyala HH surveys measuring progress towards durable solutions.

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

#### Preferred Solutions: Diyala

For IDPs:

- Majority want to stay in their current location (86%)
- 13% want to return their place of origin and majority are from Khanaqin District in Diyala Governorate. Reasons for not returning are:
  - Housing destruction (80%).
  - Lack of livelihoods opportunities (73%)
  - Want to integrate, security concerns, security clearance...etc.

For Returnees:

- Almost all the returnees want to stay in their current location (97%).

#### Discussion

- **Comment from DRC:** It's great to see the household surveys being conducted in Anbar and Diyala, as it aligns with similar work being done in Nineveh and Salah al-Din with the Danish Refugee Council. DRC will conduct an activity which will focus is on female-headed households to incorporate a gender perspective, looking at access to livelihoods, security, integration, participation, and governance. The approach is qualitative, involving focus group discussions, which should complement the narrative side of DTM surveys.
- **Question:** To clarify the departure figures, you mentioned that 8,064 households have departed since the beginning of April this year. Is that the total number of households that have left, and how does this compare to the MOMD figures, which indicate 10,722 registrations since the start of the year?
- **DTM:** Yes, the figure of 8,064 households represents those who have departed since the beginning of April this year. The 10,722 figures from MOMD refers specifically to registered individuals in camps since the beginning of the year. It's important to note that the departure figure includes those who may have returned to their areas of origin without formally registering, which accounts for the discrepancy between departures and registrations. Tracking the exact movements can be challenging due to various factors, including the diverse locations people are returning to and the time it takes to gather accurate information. We're utilizing the FVM program and camp departure lists to improve tracking, but many individuals return without formal documentation.
- **Question:** Why are the households that have left camps but not returned to their areas of origin classified as secondarily displaced rather than as resettled or relocated?

- **DTM:** The classification of these households as secondarily displaced stems from the definition used by the DTM. Those who do not return to their original areas are still considered IDPs because they are moving to a third location rather than returning home. This situation reflects their ongoing vulnerability and lack of permanence in their new locations. While some households may express a desire to return to their areas of origin but face obstacles such as security concerns or blocked access, others may actively choose to integrate locally or relocate. However, until we refine our definitions and recognize these distinctions more clearly, the DTM continues to categorize them as secondarily displaced. Ultimately, it's about the intentions of the displaced individuals; those who wish to return but cannot are seen as secondarily displaced, while those choosing to remain in new areas are classified differently.
- **Question:** What criteria are used to determine when returnees can be considered integrated members of their host communities, rather than still classified as returnees?
- **DSTWG/RWG:** The criteria for considering returnees as integrated members of their host communities involve assessing their quality of life and degree of re-establishment in their new environments. As returnees achieve a standard of living comparable to that of the host community, they begin to transition away from the label of returnees. This process is influenced by various factors, such as their access to essential services, economic opportunities, and social acceptance within the community. Although there isn't a specific time frame for this transition, the aim is to recognize when returnees have sufficiently reestablished themselves, allowing them to self-identify as part of the community. It's important to note that even if government records classify them as no longer displaced, they may still face vulnerabilities linked to their past displacement, and this complexity should be considered in ongoing discussions about their status.
- **Comment from FVM:** The reintegration progress of these returnees, facilitated through the Facilitated Voluntary Movement program, is tracked over a span from the first month of their return up to one year. A critical aspect that is assessed is whether these returnees consider themselves part of the community and if they feel fully integrated. For many families, it has been found that some are indeed fully integrated and share similar living conditions and experiences with the local community

#### RWG Field Update:

**Area of No Return Islopy Village, Hatra:** Hatra has the highest number of locations of no return in the country and in Ninewa with 54 locations. On 9 September the RWG facilitated a DS discussion with the Ninewa Local authorities to address the obstacles to return. Key concerns were:

- Housing destruction of mud houses
- Access to services, water, electricity, schools
- Presence of PMF in the village
- Families expressed the intention to return
- Concerns will be raised to Ninewa JCF

#### Discussion

- **Question:** What is the current status of educational services in the camps?
  - **EDMCR:** Currently, the education services in the camps are still ongoing. The schools are set to start soon, with teachers coming into the camps for the remaining students. If the number of students drops below 150, the schools may close. Unfortunately, there are no additional services being provided by MoMD at this time.
  - **Question:** How can families follow up on receiving their grants if they have not yet received them?
  - **RWG:** Families who have not received their grants can follow up by contacting their respective branches in their governorates. They need to provide any missing information or documentation to settle their files. Once the required documents are submitted and the files are completed, they will be able to receive the grant, as has been the case with many others who successfully registered and settled their documentation.
  - **Question:** Could you please clarify whether the suspension of registrations on July 12th impacted all camps or only specific regions? We have received information indicating that registrations were suspended in Dahuk, but I would like to confirm the status for the Erbil camps. Has registration resumed there?
  - **DMCR:** Yes, registration has continued in the Erbil camps, with departures scheduled for next week, particularly in Debaga, where preparations are underway for IDPs to return. However, in Dahuk, registration has been postponed while they await the establishment of a committee to oversee the process.
3. **FVM Presentation: FVM movement - August departures and key findings of programmatic reintegration monitoring for Hasansham U2 and Khazir M1 R2 departures**

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

## Reintegration Monitoring: Hasansham U2 and Khazir M1 camps

### Community Acceptance and Social Cohesion

- 94% reported feeling completely or very accepted by the community. None of the households reported tensions or discrimination between community members.
- 77% reported complete or a lot of trust in the community members and tribes in AoR.
- 28% reported the presence of someone who can help the household when having financial or non-financial issues.
- 6% reported they still feel displaced rather than feeling at home. The reported reasons were that they did not return to their area of origin (5 households) and lack of livelihoods (3 households).

### Discussion

- **Question:** When mentioning families have been re-located and re-integrated in other communities, any idea if they have easily changed their residency to the new resided locations? As this is essential in accessing various services including MoLSA SSN.
- **FVM:** Families have faced challenges in changing their residency, particularly in obtaining residency cards necessary for accessing services such as the MoLSA SSN. Advocacy efforts are ongoing with the MoMD to address these issues, and updates will be provided in the upcoming RWG meeting.
- **Question:** Why do the children only attend school for three days or more per week instead of every day? Is it due to challenges such as high school fees, or is it because the children are working?
- **FVM:** The children attend school three days or more due to several potential reasons, including financial challenges, the cost of education, or the necessity of working. Despite attending for only part of the week, many households believe their children are regularly going to school, as they still attend the majority of the time. The situation is likely affected by household conditions, school schedules, or logistical constraints such as shifts in school attendance.
- **Question:** What incentives are available for returnees in the programme, and what are the criteria for eligibility?
- **FVM:** Returnees through the FVM program are eligible for two types of grants, which include transportation assistance from their area of displacement to their area of origin. Additionally, a socio-economic survey is conducted to assess the vulnerability of each household, considering factors like their severity of living conditions and area of origin. Based on this assessment, households may be selected for either housing rehabilitation support or livelihood assistance. However, all returnees are eligible to receive the grant regardless of other support types.

## 4. DMCR Update: Erbil Camps Status

- Currently, 1,177 families across six camps have received security clearance for departure. Last week, Harsham camp saw its final departure, leaving 11 families, 9 of whom are awaiting security clearance. The closure of Harsham camp is expected within 2-3 weeks, and in Baherka camp, 300 families remain, with 145 expected to return this week.
- Focus group discussions are planned to address the needs of families unable to return, especially as MoI authorities have allowed them to reside outside the camps. In Debaga camp, 500 families have registered to return, and MoMD is processing their paperwork.
- A recent EJCC meeting recommended conducting a survey to identify the most suitable camp for continued operation following the consolidation of three camps. Hassan Sham U2 is viewed as the top choice, emphasizing security considerations. Maintenance issues persist in East Mosul camps, where limited fuel deliveries and insufficient generator maintenance have caused power disruptions. There has also been no food parcel distribution.
- Currently, 102 families are awaiting security clearance to return in EMCs, and discussions are ongoing about the future of those unable to go back once MoMD withdraws support

### Discussion

- **Question:** What is the procedure for IDPs who do not wish to return to Mosul but prefer to stay in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI)?
- **EDMCR:** IDPs who decide not to return to Mosul or other areas outside of the KRI can request to stay in Erbil or other parts of the region. If they approach the camp management or relevant authorities with this request, a different procedure is initiated. The MoMD will still issue a letter for them to receive a return grant for Mosul, but their family can stay in Erbil if they have the proper security clearance. Local integration is possible, but it requires an initial request from the IDP families.
- **Question:** Are the upcoming departures from Baharka and Debaga camps for families registered before July 11th, or are they part of a new registration procedure agreed upon by the KRI government and the MoMD?
- **EDMCR:** The families scheduled for departure next week from Baharka and Debaga camps were registered in August, not before July 11th. A list of 1,177 families was submitted to the MoMD in August, and security clearance for these families was obtained last week. The MoMD continues to process forms and manage transportation for IDPs, including those departing to Salahadin and other areas. While the procedure is ongoing in Erbil, it is unclear if the same process is still active in Duhok camps.

- **Question:** With 102 families in East Mosul camps awaiting clearance to return, how many families will remain in the camps after their departure, and will there be enough space in U2 and U3 camps to accommodate them?
- **EDMCR:** Once the 102 families depart, approximately 70 families will remain in U2 camp, and around 115 families will remain in Khazir M1 camp. U3 camp currently has no families registered for departure. Regarding space, a detailed survey is planned to assess which camp is best suited to remain operational. U3 offers the best services in the area, while U2 and Khazir M1 lack similar amenities. A final decision will be made after considering service availability and security factors.

## 5. IOM Presentation: Key Findings of community-based study in Al-Dujail and Yathrib subdistricts of Salah Al-Din governorate.

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

### Challenges After Return

- **Housing:** The majority of houses are damaged or destroyed (10 out of 10 returnee FGDs).
- **Limited access to basic services** including water, electricity and education.
- **Lack of job opportunities:** Some families considering returning to displacement areas. Canal 34 (female FGD).
- **Agricultural:** Restrictions on bringing fertilizers into the area, forcing residents to give their land to other families. Al-Ajeelya (male and female FGDs).
- **Female Heads of Households:** Both female and male returnee FGD participants agreed that living conditions are particularly difficult for female

### Discussion

- **Question:** What did the assessment reveal about social cohesion issues and factors affecting people's decisions to return to their original places?
- **IOM:** The assessment found that host communities and returnees generally view each other positively, with no major incidents reported between the groups. While some members expressed concerns about returnees receiving more compensation and support, others recognized this aid as justified. Focus group discussions highlighted that host communities are assisting returnees in rehabilitating damaged homes, seeing their return as advantageous for local livelihoods and the area's recovery. However, one tribe in Salahaddin remains unable to return due to ongoing tribal conflicts.

## 6. DSTWG Update: DS updates

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

### DSTF (18 September 2024)

- High Committee Meeting on 12 August 2024, chaired by MoMD Minister and attended by both KRG and GOI authorities
- Main Issues and challenges raised (Sinjar Agreement, continuation of services by the GOI, documentation and needs and priorities in areas of origin)
- Recommendations awaiting to be approved by the Prime Minister

### AOB

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- **NRC Withdrawal and Co-Chair Position:** NRC has withdrawn from its role as co-chair of the DSC Working Group due to funding constraints. DRC is seeking an NGO to fill this co-chair position. Interested organizations should contact Jovita at [jovita.sandaite@drc.ngo](mailto:jovita.sandaite@drc.ngo). The application deadline is September 29th.
- **Next RWG Meeting:** The next RWG meeting is scheduled for October 29th, 2024.