

RETURNS WORKING GROUP- IRAQ

- **Meeting Date:** 26 November 2024
- **Meeting Time:** 11:00 am-13:00 pm
- **Location:** IOM Conference Room, Erbil & Remote connection via Teams

Attendance: UNHCR, IRC, INSO, IVY-Japan, UN-Habitat, CRS, AFH, Peace Winds, UNAMI, Aid Gate Organization, IOM, REACH Initiatives, PRM Office in the U.S. Consulate General-Erbil, RWG, Peace Paradigms (PPO), Premiere Urgence Internationale (PUI), MSF Geneva, DRC, Women Rehabilitation Organization (WRO), forumZFD, EDMCR, OCHA, Ankawa Humanitarian committee AHC.

Agenda:

1. **Introduction and adoption of minutes:** Review of Meeting Minutes and Action Points
2. **Context Update:** DTM Update –Camps Movement Updates, and RWG Field Update
3. **EDMCR Update:** Situation of IDP camps in Erbil
4. **IOM FVM Presentation:** FVM Update on departures, and Reintegration Monitoring Findings for Essian and Dawadiya departures.
5. **DSTWG Update:** DS updates
6. **AOB**

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

- Endorsement of the previous meeting minutes.
- **New Action Items for Follow-up:** RWG to follow up with advocacy points for clarity on the registration and return procedures for families, particularly regarding the urgent release of the 4 million funding needed for return assistance.
- The DSTWG will share an invite for those members interested in participating in a discussion on local integration and IDP/Returnee Stocks.

2. **Context Update: DTM Update –Camps Movement Updates, and RWG Field Update**

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

MOMD Grant Receipt Status

- Out of the 7,633 arrived households, key informants reported that 37 per cent did not receive the MOMD grant, while the rest received a return, local integration or relocation grant.
- The increase of the families who did not receive the grant was due to backlog in the registration process at the Dahuk MoMD. As a result, MoMD is prioritizing those who returned earlier, leading to delays in grant distribution. Additionally, since 12 July 2024, MoMD in Dahuk has halted the approval of return facilitation letters.
- Most recorded households who didn't receive MoMD grant arrived in Sinjar, Al-Ba'aj and Mosul districts (1,521, 750 and 302 families respectively) in Ninewa Governorate.

RWG Field Update

Centre South Update: Local integration in AAF

- 1,100 displaced IDPs settle in the site
- Areas of origin: Jurf al-Sakhar and Awisat.
- Increasing requests from families in Bzibis to settle within AAF.
- MoMD decision of providing the IQD4 mil grant to IDPs in the informal site.
- About 400 HHs expressed willingness to locally integrate.

Discussion

- **Question:** Are there any updates on the planned additional compensation distributions in Ninawa and Sinjar? Specifically, is information available on who might receive these funds, considering their potential impact as a return incentive for camp residents?
- **RWG:** During a recent meeting, the Deputy Governor of Nineveh confirmed that the Iraqi Prime Minister is prioritizing compensation and infrastructure development for Sinjar. While no specific timeline was provided, it was emphasized that the allocation budget for this year and the next two years is set at 20 billion IQD annually. The Sinjar Mayor, along with relevant authorities, has submitted all Bills of Quantities (BoQs) and is awaiting the release of funds to implement projects focused on infrastructure, including education, electricity, water, and municipal services.
- **Question:** What is the exact number of IDP camps that have been officially closed to date?
- **UNHCR:** As of today, two IDP camps in Sulaymaniyah have been officially closed since the beginning of this year. In Erbil, the urban camp Harsham is almost closed, with only three families remaining. Baharka camp still houses approximately 170 families, though the government has indicated plans

to close it. However, many of these families are unable to return or relocate. No official closure date has been confirmed for Baharka or other camps in similar situations

3. DMCR Update: Erbil Camps Status

- **Harsham Camp:** Only three families remain in Harsham camp. Families are being offered three options: relocate to Erbil, rent a house independently, or relocate to Debaga camp. Plans are in place to distribute a form and conduct a FGD to better understand the preferences of these families. Camp management staff have withdrawn, and only police and Asayish are present due to items still left in the camp. There is no ongoing management within the camp, and no other staff are on-site.
- **Baharka Camp:** Many families are requesting to return to their areas of origin, and lists have been prepared for their return. Efforts are underway to expedite the process through the MoMD to secure the necessary security clearance and facilitate their departure as soon as possible. For those who do not wish to return or who have not registered for return, options include either relocation to Debaga camp or renting a house independently in Erbil. There have been discussions in the JCC with all related actors supporting these two options for the remaining families.
- **Return Updates:** Since January, 2,557 families have returned across six camps, including Harsham (249), Baharka (634), Debaga (387), U2 (444), U3 (467), and Kahzir M1 (376).
- **Camp Closure:** Harsham and Baharka camps are set to close by the end of the year, with ongoing discussions on finalizing family plans for relocation or return.

Discussion

- **Question:** What is the current situation with the fuel and generator issues in the East Mosul camps?
- **DMCR:** Since last week, the generators in the East Mosul camps have been malfunctioning due to a shortage of fuel and lack of maintenance. We have submitted a formal request for fuel and maintenance to the MoMD and the Mol, and UNHCR has been informed of the issue. However, no response has been received so far. The generators, which supply power to 27 units for 9 hours, require a substantial amount of fuel and ongoing maintenance. The camps are currently without electricity.
- **Question:** What is the current status of the camp consolidation?
- **DMCR:** The camp consolidation process is currently on hold as we are waiting to conduct a FGD with the families to gather their input. In the previous FGD with UNHCR, the families expressed resistance to moving from one camp to another. Concerns regarding their future, potential return, and the support they would receive were raised. These concerns are being addressed, and efforts are underway to find ways to assist the families. Meanwhile, the decision has been made to consolidate U2 and U1 camps into U3. Improvements are being made to U3 in collaboration with the Ministry to ensure it becomes a suitable living space for families.
- **Question:** What steps are being taken to address the concerns of families remaining in Harsham and Baharka camps?
- **DMCR:** We are collaborating with the MoMD to understand and address the concerns of the families still in Harsham and Baharka. A FGD is planned for next week, with participation from UNHCR and BCF, to gather feedback from the families and determine their needs. In Harsham, only three families remain, and their situation can be resolved more easily. However, in Baharka, some families are refusing to leave the camp or return, so we will use the FGD to explore possible solutions for them.
- **Question:** Can you provide information on the areas of origin of families refusing to leave the camps and the current status of camp management by BCF?
- **DMCR:** We are planning to conduct a survey next week during the FGD to determine the areas of origin of the families who are refusing to leave the camps. Once the data is collected, we will share it with IOM and UNHCR to explore potential solutions for these families. Regarding camp management, BCF is still managing Baharka camp. However, they have withdrawn from Harsham camp since only three families remain there. Currently, the police and Asayish are managing Harsham.
- **Question:** Is the fuel issue affecting all remaining open camps, or is it specific to certain camps like those in East Mosul?
- **UNHCR:** The fuel issue primarily affects the East Mosul camps, as MOMD provides the fuel for the generators that supply electricity. However, the main challenge is not just the fuel but also the maintenance of the generators, including oil, filters, and salaries for the maintenance staff. The funds for these are stuck at the MoMD due to cash payment restrictions. Currently, U3 camp is completely without electricity, which significantly increases protection risks, especially at night. Efforts are underway to address this through coordination with MOMD, and if needed, alternative support may come through the JCCC. Additionally, the kerosene needed for heating is being processed through the Ministry of Oil, and there is hope that it will be distributed to all camps soon.
- **DMCR:** MOMD had previously provided 105,000 liters of diesel per month for the generators, but the maintenance costs for each generator are about \$250 per month. With 27 generators in operation, the total cost is significant. However, MOMD is currently not providing the necessary support.

4. IOM FVM Presentation: FVM Update on departures, and Reintegration Monitoring Findings for Essian and Dawadiya departures

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

FVM – Supporting DS Pathways: DS pathways supported

- 1,766 households returned to their AoOs.
- 524 households relocated to other areas.
- 72 households have locally integrated in Amiriya Al Falluja center in Anbar.

Reintegration Monitoring: Essian and Dawadia Camp:

Education:

- 70% of households reportedly had children of school age.
- 70% reported that all their children (of school age) attended school 3 days or more per week and did not face any challenges at school.
- Of those households reporting that all or some of their children did not attend school perceived that There is no school close enough to their house.

Discussion

- **Question:** It was mentioned that baseline and end line monitoring are conducted then four- and nine-month intervals. Have any of the current end line monitoring phases been completed, and how does the rehabilitation of homes impact the 23% of individuals who still consider themselves displaced due to housing issues, and has any change in their perception been observed?
- **FVM:** The data collection process is conducted in two phases: baseline and end line. Currently, end line data is being collected for camps where households returned in March, such as Hasansham Camp. These phases allow for an assessment of changes in the displaced population's perceptions and situation. In the coming months, additional data will be available, allowing for comparisons and deeper analysis.
- **Question:** Who owns the houses being rented by returnees in Sinjar, and what arrangements are typically made?
- **FVM:** The houses being rented by returnees in Sinjar are generally owned by individuals from the local community, not by government authorities. Many of these owners were originally from Sinjar but have since moved away. These owners often rent their properties to returnees through personal connections, as the families usually know each other. In some cases, the owners belong to Muslim Sunni families who are unable to return themselves. This information is based on firsthand experiences rather than formal research.
- **Question:** What are the main reasons preventing households from receiving the 4M IQD grant, and what is the status of payments?
- **FVM:** According to households, the primary obstacle is the lack of clarity regarding their eligibility status. While 93% of households are registered, 99% of them reported not receiving the grant, believing they are still on a waiting list. Many attribute the delay to a lack of budget, while others (74 households) are unsure of the reasons, and 10 households cite documentation issues. Households continue to plan their futures based on the anticipated grant.
- **RWG:** MoMD has communicated to the RC that there are some challenges in funding, stating that MoMD grant payments are deferred until January due to unspecified difficulties, as confirmed by an email from the RC's office.
- **UNHCR:** The primary challenge seems to be budgetary, likely accounting for most delays, but procedural barriers also significantly impact access to grants. Newly established families remain unregistered in the MoMD database, leaving them ineligible, while female-headed households face difficulties with the "tabri'a" process, deterring many from completing it. These procedural issues, alongside deferred payments, must be resolved to ensure fair access when disbursements resume.
- **FVM:** The tabri'a is typically requested for families with a perceived affiliation, in the case of Sinjar families, this requirement does not apply. In addition to the tabri'a process, families in East Mosul camps are now facing a new challenge, where they are required to provide divorce documentation from their husbands. This request, which was introduced in July, has created significant difficulties for these families, especially for female-headed households.

5. DSTWG Update: DS updates

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

DSTWG meeting – 13 November 2024

- During the last DSTWG meeting, a emphasis was put on the need to reignite advocacy efforts for DS for IDPs, especially those in camps (winter/challenges). The advocacy efforts should target specifically the Government and the High Committee
- The need to prioritize the needs of the IDPs, in a context of reduced funding, was also addressed.
- A brainstorming session should be organized in December to refine the process of identifying and prioritizing needs for the 1 million remaining IDPs (in and out of camps)

AOB

- As per custom, the December RWG meeting will be scheduled earlier than the usual last Tuesday of the month due to the end of year holiday breaks, the meeting will be on **17 December 2024**.