RWG Position regarding Durable Solutions in Iraq
28 August 2019

The international community must increase its support to both the government in working towards the achievement of its policy objective of ending displacement, in line with international norms and standards, as well as increase support to IDPs themselves to leave displacement and find a durable solution. At the same time, there are a number of **tools and systems that exist already** that the international community **can use immediately** to increase its support to durable solutions. These include:

- Largely sufficient data on displacement and conditions in areas of returns to develop general operational strategies to support solutions;
- An operational framework, recently approved by the HCT, to underpin international efforts to support durable solutions;
- Operational tools, stemming from recent and ongoing pilot projects aiming to facilitate return, and that can be consolidated and used for scale-up in other locations;
- Technical capacity to scale-up support to returns and durable solutions; and
- Sufficient coordination mechanisms to direct the above.

These tools are explained in more detail at the end of the document.

Furthermore, the situation is ripe for the international community to dramatically increase its support to durable solutions:

- Large parts of the displaced population are ready and willing to leave displacement should assistance be provided, and **many of them face challenges that can be overcome with existing tools**;
- Even in situations where the challenges faced by IDPs are more difficult and require, to at least some extent, political solutions, the international community should increase its engagement, in concrete and visible ways;
- Despite the issues mentioned above, the **government remains fully open to collaboration** with international partners, so long as the activities of the international community concretely support durable solutions;

For the reasons briefly outlined above, the international community must immediately increase its engagement in support of durable solutions.

<u>**Recommendations**</u>

- **Immediately convene either GRCs or other forums at governorate level. Objectives of the meetings include:**
  - Organisation of working sessions to develop governorate-level operational strategies to support durable solutions based on data identifying low-hanging fruit caseloads and obstacles to return;
  - Inventory available resources of humanitarian, stabilisation, development and government partners, and identify gaps; and
  - Agree on next steps, including, notably the scale-up of activities supporting voluntary return and durable solutions.
- **Use governorate-level coordination mechanisms (GCMs and governorate ICCGs) as the platforms to convene international partners and identify agencies able / willing to implement projects related to return and durable solutions.** This includes:

- Coordination of partners, humanitarian and beyond, for implementation of activities supporting DS in the governorates. Once the operational strategies described above are complete, GCMs / governorate ICCGs will coordinate the implementation of the strategies at governorate level on the international side;
- Consolidation of available operational tools into a series of lessons learned and best practices that can be used by international partners in the implementation of projects to support durable solutions.

- **Reinforce the role of GRCs or other government-designated coordination forum related to durable solutions**
  - Provide key support to both the GRCs to improve information flow, support the creation of governorate strategies and follow-up with partners
  - Similarly, second staff to key governorate level authorities to assist in a more involved manner in the creation and implementation of strategies, including, where required. facilitation of negotiations and related activities
  - Expand the role of the GRCs to include stabilisation and development actors, placing emphasis on linking humanitarian and development actors in tandem with government efforts at the governorate level to ensure sustainable and durable returns
- **Increase support to the government at national level related to durable solutions**
  - Provide support to key central government entities in order to increase political acceptance of operational plans developed by the governorates and resolve issues when necessary. Key points include improved information flow, strategic decision-making, breaking bottlenecks, keeping track of the overall situation and ensuring good intra-government liaison;
  - Hold a national level event, to take place sometime in September or October, to present up-to-date information, frameworks, tools, standards and planning from the governorates;
  - Facilitate the participation of relevant national-level bodies, such as the Communal Peace and Coexistence Committee, NOC, National Reconciliation Commission and many others in GRCs, where they have an important role to play in unlocking governorate-level issues.

Existing Tools and Next Steps

The text below outlines the tools currently available and maps out clear next steps in order to increase concrete, operational solutions to support solutions for IDPs.

Data

REACH, DTM, Assessments Working Group partners and many others have collected significant quantities of data sufficient to both underpin strategy development at governorate level as well as determine opportunities for agency-support voluntary returns. Data exists for IDPs, both in camp and out of camp. This includes locations of IDPs, intentions to return and various other types of information. At the same time, significant data exists regarding conditions in areas of origin. This includes information on material needs such as housing, livelihoods and access to basic services, as well as information on social cohesion and security conditions.

Data for IDPs existing to varying degrees at household level (primarily through agency-led camp sweeps and registration databases) as well as data gathered through sampling methodologies. In the case of areas of return, data exists down to the level of village / neighbourhood (admin level 5), for all areas of return.

However, it should be noted that one key gap in data relates to the areas of origin of IDPs. While some data exists for most or all IDPs in camps, it is generally only at district level (admin 3) and therefore not sufficiently detailed to match IDPs with villages or neighbourhoods of origin.

Existing tools: camp intention surveys, Returns Index, camp registration databases, etc.

Next steps:

- Use existing data to begin development of governorate strategies to support durable solutions, with the understanding that specificity may be limited due to the lack of admin-5 data for areas of origin of IDPs. See the point below related to data
- Systematically collect area of origin data of all IDPs in camps and informal settlements

Framework to operationalise returns

The HCT recently approved a basic framework seeking to categorise and outline solutions for protracted displacement, including strategies to support the voluntary return of IDPs through the provision of key assistance such as housing repair / reconstruction, livelihoods assistance, rehabilitation of basic services such water and electricity, among others.

While the framework itself is fairly basic, it does categorise IDPs by obstacle to return and, based on the obstacle, defines recommended interventions that can serve to alleviate the obstacle. Category 1 relates to "material issues", namely housing, livelihoods and access to basic services. IDPs facing only these issues can be supported to return so long as they wish to do so and support is provided to the IDPs to overcome these obstacles (namely through shelter, livelihoods and infrastructure rehabilitation interventions). Categories 2 and 3 represent issues that must be addressed, but likely require interventions from development or stabilisation partners, in addition to government, in order to overcome the obstacles. Category 2 includes ethno-religious tensions (requiring reconciliation interventions) and perceived affiliations (from the perspective of those who have or can access security clearance and are not suspected of actual affiliation by authorities, but fear reprisal if they return to their areas of origin). Category 3 relates to security issues including IDP with perceived affiliations to terrorist groups, those who come from areas that are blocked for return by militias or other groups and areas where there remain continuing security concerns as a result of continuing terrorist activity.

This framework can be used to categorise IDPs and areas of origin to better understand areas and IDPs that can be supported for voluntarily return in the short term.

Existing tools:

- HCT-approved framework
- Activities list outlining engagement of humanitarian and development actors, government and donors, including existing partner activities and activities designed to respond to return obstacles

Next steps:

- Continue development of the framework to include additional detail
- Continue advocacy on alternative solutions (integration and relocation)

Operational tools

Agencies are piloting approaches to support voluntary return in Anbar, using an approach that has been endorsed by Anbar officials, including both civilian and military. Since July 2019, over 100 households have been supported in completing "Go and See Visits" to their areas of origin, with return expected in September. Shelter, livelihood and related interventions in areas of origin are ongoing, and several hundred more families have come forward and expressed interest in participating in the programme. This operational approach is already being expanded to both Ninewa and Salah al-Din.

Tools:

- Methodology documents related to pre-departure activities, go-and-see visits, protection safeguards, methodologies for recovery / stabilisation activities in areas of origin

Next steps:

- Documentation of best practices, case studies, lessons learned that can be shared and adopted by other partners

Easily-identified caseloads – opportunities for immediate support

Based on existing data as well as through the pilot activities, it is clear that large numbers of IDPs wish to return home or leave displacement immediately and only require assistance related to housing reconstruction, access to livelihoods and rehabilitation of basic services such as water and electricity. Agencies can begin supporting these "low hanging" caseloads immediately.

Other IDPs can face more difficult challenges such as blocked returns, serious ethno-religious or sectarian tensions, or perceptions of affiliations with terrorist groups. Numerous activities are ongoing aiming to support these caseloads as well, although more time is likely required before operational solutions on a large scale can be implemented.

Tools: Intentions survey data and related information from AAF, Haj Ali and other locations showing additional caseloads that can be supported immediately.

Strategy development

As it stands today, the international community has the tools needed to support the government to develop **governorate-level operational strategies**. This includes data to underpin the strategies, an operational framework to guide activities, operational tools and methodologies to support actual return.

Next steps:

- Engage with governorate level authorities, making clear that international partners are willing and able to provide support to durable solutions, and at the same time ensuring compliance with the principled returns framework and other standards

Governorate Durable Solutions Plan

I.   Recitation of key principles related to voluntary returns and durable solutions

- Principled Returns Framework
- IASC Framework on Durable Solutions
- Key principles of Iraqi Law

II.   Profile of IDPs in the governorate/ displacement

- No of Camp / out of camp IDPs
- Obstacles to return
- Intentions
- Areas of origin
- Map
- Possible IDPs to return/ registered to return (camp management)

III.   Profile of areas of return and key challenges/ return

- No. of returnees- ready to return,
- Return Index (severity scores)
- Areas of no return / blocked return
- registered to return through facilitated returns

Identification of IDP populations who can be supported to return in the short term ("category 1")

Use of data and operational tools to identify "category 1" caseloads that can be supported to voluntarily return

IV.   Residual caseload
- No. of residual caseload per governorate
- Not willing
- Not authorized- sec. clearance, blocked by tribes, military etc

V.   Mapping of partners by sector and location

- Humanitarian activities in camp, especially camp management and protection
- Development / recovery / stabilisation activities in areas of origin, specifically linked to "category 1": shelter / housing (all categories), livelihoods, infrastructure / rehabilitation of basic services
- Interventions related to categories 2 and 3 (linked to advocacy, below)

VI.   Coordination mechanisms
- OCHA
- ICCG
- Steering committee
- RWG
- GRC
- GCM and sub- national ICCGs

VII.   Inventory of operational tools

- Protection monitoring, during pre-departure and return phases
- Tools useful for go-and-see visits
- Tools useful to post-return monitoring and case management