

COMMUNITY DIALOGUE SESSION QARYAT AR RAWASHID

BALAD DISTRICT

February 2024

PARTICIPANTS

- Dr. Abbas Mahmood: University Professor
- Sattar Kamil Abd: Imam of a Mosque
- Adnan Qahtan: Student at Tikrit University
- Talib Ahmed Hussein: Village Mukhtar
- Sattar Rasheed: Community representative
- Jaryan Mohammed: Community representative



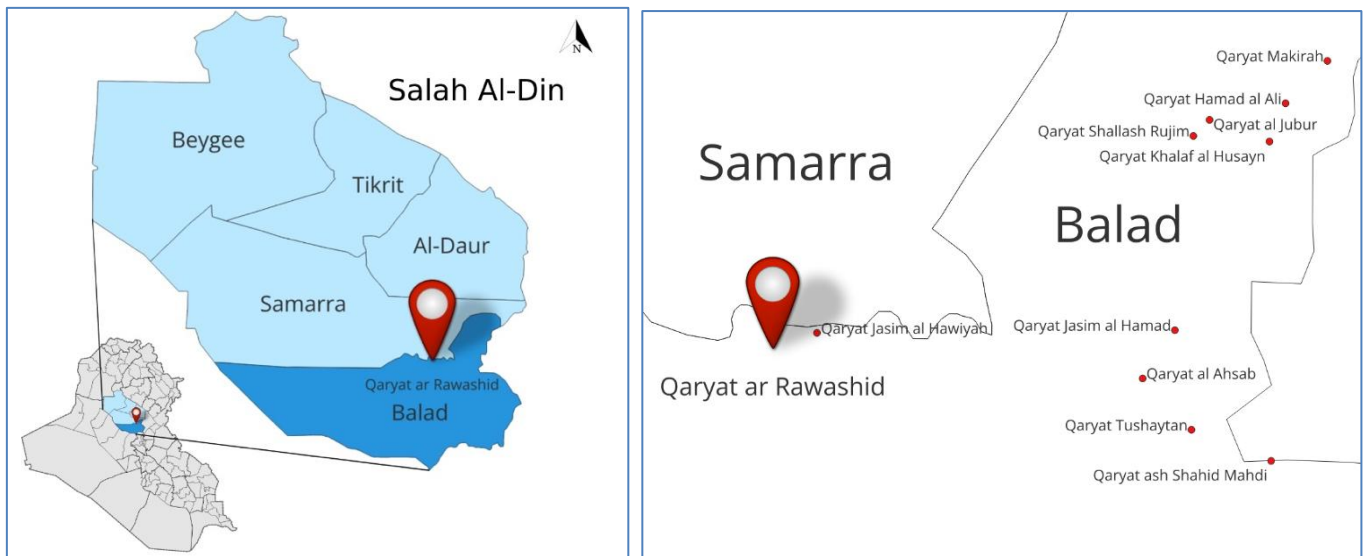
Qaryat ar Rawashid community Dialogue Sessions

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Qaryat ar Rawashid is a scattered agricultural area located in Balad district, south of Salah Al-Din. The area consists of several villages such as Al-Hawi and Al-Sayer, Al-Sharqiyah, Al-Dhahi, Al-Suwa'id, Al-Awaz, Al-Batouz, and Albu-Hassan. Before the displacement in 2014, around 800 families lived in this village. The area has been significantly affected during the invasion of ISIS and the liberation battles that led to the displacement of all citizens from these villages. Furthermore, the battles led to severe destruction in the infrastructure and housing. The area is now under control of the Iraqi Police and the majority of families have returned to the village however some challenges remain which might affect the sustainability of the return.

DISPLACEMENT HISTORY

The Qaryat ar Rawashid displacement started in July 2014 due to the severe battles. It has been reported by the mukhtar who attended the session and by local authorities including MoMD that 400 HHs were displaced to areas in SAD, 150 HHs to Baghdad, 100 HHs to Diyala, and almost 500 HHs to Kirkuk and Suli ¹. The return to this village



started December of 2019. Almost all families have returned, except around 15 HHs families with perceived ISIS affiliation who have not yet returned and are in Al-Hol and Jeddah camps.

METHODOLOGY

Based on FGDs reports conducted by IOM in January 2023, and Rapid Assessment Report on SAD returns and durable solutions conducted by REACH in February 2023, the RWG coordination team conducted a session with six community representatives from the Qaryat ar Rawashid to better understand current situation and needs as well as recent developments, including assistance by government and NGOs with the aim of taking future steps of advocacy to achieve durable solutions to IDPs and returnees and to prevent secondary displacement.

KEY CHALLENGES:

Housing: It has been reported by the participants that there are almost 700 houses in the area, 90% of them were destroyed or partially damaged. In the early stages of return most families lived either with relatives or tents. The families who had returned did not receive any assistance from the local authorities or organizations to reconstruct or rehabilitated their destroyed or damaged houses, however, some families have reconstructed or rehabilitated their houses by themselves. A community Mukhtar said that the majority of the families have not been able to secure financial resources to reconstruct or rehabilitate their houses due to the lack of jobs and livelihood resources.



Destroyed houses in Rawashid

Compensation: According to the participants, none of the returned families received any financial compensation because of the slowness in processing the compensation requests that come from routine procedures, especially no timeline is currently identified to process caseload, and the lack of dissemination of the allocations from another side.

Return grant from MOMD: A community representative attended the meeting highlighted that as far as he knows, none of the families have received the return grants from MOMD, despite that the majority had already applied by registering their return at MoMD branch. One of the participants said that “We do not know what the reason behind the delay is whether the process or the financial allocations, but anyway, MoMD need to do better and give the return grants to more HHs”.

Livelihood and employment: Agriculture is the main source of income in Qaryat ar Rawashid. Most of families lost their businesses during the displacement. The families need support to restore and improve their agricultural resources. All participants expressed their frustration with the lack of jobs and livelihoods opportunities. Most of the men work in farming, one of the participants said, “the orchards in the area were destroyed and bulldozed”. Furthermore, the water pumps were destroyed that farmers complained about the lack of water from the main irrigation channel. As a result, many of them rely on well for watering orchards, but those wells are costly. In order to support livelihoods, one of the key informants suggested the support to small projects for those who own shops

and skills such as carpentry smithery, barbers, tailoring, etc with small grants or loans to start up new project or restore old projects.



Dry Orchards in ar Rawashid

Access to Assistance: participants complained about the lack of services by the government and lack of assistance by NGOs as well. A participant said that “it is just IOM working in the village”. However, according to the information the RWG gathered, Mercy Hands implemented a CFW project in 2021, Oxfam implemented a livelihood project in 2022, and DRC Protect and Legal Programs in 2022. For IOM it has implement few projects assisting 100 families to develop their own projects, training about 50 women in clothes sewing courses. In addition, irrigation canal cleaning campaign under the CFW program has been implemented in which about 50 workers from the village were employed. However, the key informants complained that NGOs work in two villages Al-Hawi and Al-Sayer but left the other villages behind.

Schools: According to one of the participants, there are enough schools in the Qaryat ar Rawashid (two primary and two secondary), but there are two other schools that have been under reconstruction by the government since 2013, but the projects were suspended in 2014 due to ISIS events. Another participant stated, “in general the schools sector needs to be improved not only in Qaryat ar Rawashid, but further in all the district”. One of the key informants said that transportation from the various villages to the schools has always been a challenge for the students.

Health: One of the participants said that there is one health center made of caravan which is very small and barely provides simple medical treatments there for residents need to travel long distance in Markaz Balad to get medical services. Another participant said that the Governorate promised to build a medical center in the area, but nothing yet.

Electricity: Due to the scattered houses and agricultural nature of the area, establishing a formal public electricity network is a challenge. A key informant said that many houses have no regular electricity because of broken transformers, poles, and cables.

Drinking water: There is an acute shortage of drinking water. Most of the residents buy clean water from shops. The participants mentioned that the local government of Balad district had promised them to implement a water project but there is no action yet.

Safety: The area is now under the control of the Iraqi Police. No curfew or movement restrictions have been mentioned by the participants. Most of the participants affirmed that they feel safe and secure in the village. However, they mentioned that one of the main problems in the village is Pigs attacks on houses and farms, pointing

out that they have been asking for support from the government and NGOs to take action to reduce the risk of these animals, but no response yet.

INTENTIONS

In general, the returnees would like to reintegrate in the area of origin, but the many challenges facing their everyday life due to the lack of basic services and job opportunities are being seen as a obstacle to achieving stability. The respondents stated that the returning families are settled in the village, though the situation is very challenging due to the lack of basic services. A respondent said that to encourage families to stabilize in the village and not to leave it again, there should be more intervention by the authorities to provide basic services and address key needs such as housing and livelihood, stressing the importance of speeding up the compensation and return grants to the entitled families.

KEY FINDINGS:

- Lack of support from the government for Qaryat ar Rawashid villages.
- No international or local organizations provide aid at present.
- Housing, services, and livelihoods are the main challenges facing everyday life.
- Security is stable in the village, and people feel safe.
- Returned families have not yet received return grants.
- In conclusion, addressing the pressing issues highlighted in this report is crucial to facilitating the sustainable return, rehabilitation, and development of Qaryat ar Rawashid. Immediate intervention and collaboration between governmental bodies, NGOs, and international organizations are essential to uplift the community and restore normal dignified life to prevent second displacement.

NEXT STEPS/ACTION POINTS

- RWG Coordination team to reach out to the authority of Balad district to advocate for interventions in various sectors.
- RWG coordination team to reach out to local government to advocate for interventions in the various sectors.
- RWG coordination team to reach out to UN Agencies as well as international and national organizations to advocate for interventions on SMEs and livelihood projects in general.
- RWG coordination team to reach out to MoMD to advocate for distribution of return grant.
- RWG coordination team to reach out to MoLSA office in SAD/Balad to discuss opportunities to implement MoLSA projects to create livelihood opportunities.
- RWG coordination team to reach out to Balad services departments of Health, Education, and Water to advocate for interventions to improve service delivery.
- Note: RWG coordination team to discuss opportunities to conduct a thematic meeting with all parties above to discuss in one session challenges and opportunities.

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