

RETURNS WORKING GROUP- IRAQ

- **Meeting Date:** 25 March 2025
- **Meeting Time:** 11:00 am-13:00 pm
- **Location:** IOM Conference Room, Erbil & Remote connection via Teams

Attendance: IOM, IRC, PWJ, DS Coordination, MSF Swiss, Mercy Hands, USAID Iraq, WRO, UNHCR, ECHO, PRM Office - US Consulate General Erbil, Iraqi Institute for Development (IID), UNAMI, UNDP, Danish Refugee Council, INTERSOS, and German Consulate Erbil.

Agenda:

1. **Introduction and adoption of minutes:** Review of Meeting Minutes and Action Points
2. **Context Update:** DTM Update – Climate-Induced Displacement Tracking and RWG Field Updates
3. **INTEROSOS Presentation:** MHPSS contribution to return and reintegration in Qayyarah
4. **IOM Presentation:** FVM Updates and Access to Information Gaps - Khazir M1 Camp Findings
5. **DS Update**
6. **AOB**

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

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

2. **DTM Update Climate-Induced Displacement Tracking and RWG Field Updates**

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

Climate-Induced Displacement Tracking – Trends and Updates

Flow analysis

- Around half of families displaced in just two years: 2022 and 2023
- 40% of flows took place within Thi-Qar, including within Nassriya, Al-Chibayish and Al-Shatra.
- A further fifth took place within Missan Governorate, especially between Qal'at Saleh and Amara districts
- Over half of families displaced to urban locations (61%), while the remaining share went to rural or peri-urban locations.
- Many of those moving to rural areas go to Najaf, Al-Chibayish and Nassriya.
- Key districts for urban displacement include Al-Shatra, Amara and Nassriya.

RWG Field Updates

Sinjar Compensation Committee Update

- Last Compensation Distribution: October 2024
- Next Expected Distribution: May – June 2025

Compensation Status

Sinjar:

- 23,000 files completed
- 8,000 files in registration process

Qahtaniyah:

- 7,000 files completed
- 2,000 files in registration process

Discussion

- **Question:** Have the returnees been able to receive the MoMD return grants, and what are the reasons behind any delays or non-disbursement?
- **RWG:** The MoMD return grants have not been disbursed due to a lack of available funds. The Ministry of Finance has not allocated the necessary budget, and the overall financial constraints are linked to the delayed release of funds to the Iraqi government. Currently, priority is given to salary payments, leaving no available cash for other allocations, including the return grants.

- **FVM:** There is specific information regarding households in Duhok who, despite registering before July and receiving their checks, have been unable to cash them due to a lack of available funds. This highlights the ongoing financial constraints impacting MoMD return grants and raises concerns about when these payments will be disbursed.
- **Question:** For IDPs departing the camps and returning, do they receive the return grant receipts but are unable to cash them, or do they not receive the receipts at all?
- **FVM:** It depends on the time period. Based on the available information, IDPs who departed between January and March of this year did not receive their checks at all, meaning they neither had receipts nor the ability to cash out funds.
- **Question:** Is the recent tension in Sinjar affecting the return process, and has it led to secondary displacement?
- **RWG:** While tensions have had some impact on returns, the primary concern for families remains the lack of services in Sinjar. There was a recent military clash between ISF and YBS, leading to injuries on both sides and demonstrations calling for ISF withdrawal. A curfew was imposed, restricting movement in and out of Sinjar Center. However, mediation by religious leaders, activists, and political parties led to an agreement that de-escalated the situation. As of now, there are no ongoing tensions, NGOs are operating freely, and schools are open

3. INTERSOS Presentation: MHPSS contribution to return and reintegration in Qayyarah

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

Key Outcomes - Overall Goal

Increased Acceptance of Cohabitation:

- A 24-percentage point increase in cohabitation acceptance (baseline: 65%, endline: 89%), with 99% of participants expressing openness to coexistence by the project's end.
- The most significant improvement was seen among VFs (from 53% to 89%), with FPAs showing the highest acceptance levels (90%).
- Project participants recognized INTERSOS as one of the first organizations to create an inclusive platform for interaction among community groups, fostering an inclusive atmosphere and practical opportunities to interact.
- 97% reporting improved inter-group interactions and frequent positive interactions rising to 80%.

Discussion

- **Question:** The presentation highlighted civil documentation and property disputes as significant challenges for reintegration. What specific strategies are in place to address these structural barriers, and what partnerships have been forged with relevant government agencies or legal aid organizations?
- **INTEROS:** The project has ended, but during its implementation, INTERSOS was involved in local coordination groups like the Local Return Group in Qayyarah and worked with other organizations, referring cases to IOM for civil documentation and housing, land, and property (HLP) issues. The needs in the area, especially for female-headed households, remain high. Many struggle to navigate legal processes and lack the resources to address civil documentation and HLP needs. This could lead to risks like statelessness for children and community tensions over HLP rights. Addressing these issues is crucial.

4. IOM Presentation: FVM Updates and Access to Information Gaps - Khazir M1 Camp Findings

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

Facilitated Voluntary Movements Updates

- 5 rounds of departures were facilitated from Duhok to Sinjar and Baaj.
- 126 households have returned or relocated through FVM.

Additional rounds of departure are currently being organized from 2 camps in Dohuk:

- 446 households from Chamishko.
- 369 households from Khanke

Access to Information Gaps - Khazir M1 Camp Findings

Current Access to Information and Gaps: Female FGD Participants

- Key information topics received: Housing, rent, markets, security, basic services, MOMD grant, jobs, and education.
- Information gaps: Female participants expressed interest in receiving information about housing conditions (rent and location of cheaper rents), job opportunities, schools (registration), and availability of salaries.

Discussion

- **Question:** It was mentioned that agricultural work caused delays for some IDPs in Duhok. Could the situation be clarified in terms of how it impacts the return timeline and whether agricultural activities can be continued after the return to Sinjar?
- **FVM:** It seems that for some IDPs, the timing of their return may not align with the best time for them to finish their agricultural work. In these cases, they prefer to delay their departure until the work is completed. As for continuing agricultural activities after returning, it depends on the individual circumstances of each person. Those who rent land to farm may complete their work and then return to Sinjar, and in some cases, they have even transferred their agricultural tools back to Sinjar to restart their work there. However, this situation varies from case to case.
- **Question:** Regarding the facilitated voluntary movements, is the high caseload in the pipeline from late April to early May, specifically the East Mosul camps, driven by increased engagement from participants due to push factors, such as concerns over potential camp consolidation in the near future?
- **FVM:** In the last two weeks of April, multiple rounds of departures are planned over two full weeks, lasting at least 10 days. These households are IDPs from Duhok camps. This movement is not related to evictions or camp consolidations, though there has been some minor consolidation previously. The IDPs registered with the program last year due to the high caseload, with departures being planned camp by camp. Importantly, these registrations are not recent, but the households have confirmed their intention to participate in voluntary movements. Specific caseloads include 35 families in Baherk, while the remaining families are from East Mosul camps. They aim to return to 13 villages around East Mosul but are awaiting security clearance. These households have decided not to relocate to Mosul and prefer to wait for approval to return directly to their villages.
- **Question:** Will the FVM take place only in Hasan Sham and Khazir, or are there plans to expand to U3 or other camps? Additionally, what is the timeline for departures, particularly for Baherka?
- **FVM:** The FVM will take place in Hasan Sham and Hazer as part of the existing caseload. For now, there is no capacity to expand to U3. Future expansions may depend on available resources and capacity. As for Baherka, departures are planned for May, with 35 households registered in the program. These departures will follow the finalization of movements from Duhok camps.

5. DS Update

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

DSTWG Update

- Collection of information on impact of USG work stop order: The DSTWF co-Chairs have been collecting information on the impact of the USG work stop order. The information collected so far:
 - Housing, Land and Property---Housing Rehabilitation, rental assistance
 - Health services (in camps), MHPSS, WASH (in camps and in informal sites)
 - Livelihoods
 - Access to documentation and rights (Legal assistance, protection monitoring)
- Ad hoc Meeting on Defining caseload and solutions pathways: The last meeting was held in December 2024 and minutes shared with agenda. The next meeting (initially scheduled for Feb 2025) was postponed to April.
- DSTF revamping: The DSTF ToR is under revision to integrate the DSTF with HCT. Discussions underway to resume DSTF meetings in parallel with the ToR revision – need to maintain collective advocacy, especially in response to the USG funding pause.

AOB

- As of now, Save the Children has resumed activities under the BHA project in Kirkuk, Salah al-Din, Duhok, and Sinjar. These efforts focus on critical life-saving services, including water trucking and case management, which are expected to conclude by the end of April. Despite challenges such as limited budgets and a shortage of service providers, CP centers in these locations remain operational, prioritizing case management. Additionally, water trucking continues in Tal Bahlul and Beer Shirin villages in Sinjar to address urgent drinking water gaps.
- The upcoming RWG meeting is scheduled for 29 April.