

RETURNS WORKING GROUP- IRAQ

- **Meeting Date:** 28 January 2025
- **Meeting Time:** 11:00 am-13:00 pm
- **Location:** IOM Conference Room, Erbil & Remote connection via Teams

Attendance: UNHCR, IOM, U.S. Consulate General in Erbil, Samaritan's Purse (SP), Mercy Hands, UNAMI DSO, CRS, Aid Gate Organization (AGO), UNICEF, Iraqi Institution for Development (IID), US Embassy-PRM, Peace Winds Japan (PWJ), UN-Habitat, INSO, Mercy Hands, IRC, IVY-Japan, AHC, DS Coordination, ACTED,

Agenda:

1. **Introduction and adoption of minutes:** Review of Meeting Minutes and Action Points
2. **Context Update:** DTM – Progress Toward Durable Solutions in Iraq, and RWG Field Update
3. **IOM FVM presentation:** Debaga and Baharka camps FGDs
4. **RWG presentation:** RWG 2024 Review Survey Findings
5. **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 –Progress Toward Durable Solutions in Iraq – Ninewa, Salah al-Din, Anbar and Diyala Governorates**

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

Why?

- To examine key obstacles and characteristics impeding progress towards durable solutions through comparison of IDPs, returnees and stayees
- To define the proportion of the IDP and returnee population who have made high progress towards durable solutions

Discussion

- **Question:** In the presentation, it was noted that the values for returnees were generally higher than those for IDPs and more comparable to those of stayees. Could you elaborate on the key factors contributing to this disparity?
- **DTM:** Yes, several factors contribute to this difference. A significant factor is the housing situation, as many IDPs continue to reside in substandard conditions or critical shelters, whereas a considerable number of returnees have been able to return to their own homes, providing them with greater housing security. IDPs often rely on rental arrangements without formal agreements, increasing their vulnerability to eviction and instability. Additionally, a larger proportion of IDPs have experienced property losses or damage due to conflict, with compensation processes still unresolved. This has hindered their ability to make progress in improving their living conditions, further widening the gap between them and returnees.
- **Question:** Anbar has the highest return rate according to DTM data; however, the findings indicate that return does not necessarily equate to achieving durable solutions. Despite the high number of returnees, many IDPs in Anbar remain in precarious conditions. Additionally, there is significant vulnerability among returnees from NES. Could you provide further insights into these trends?
- **DTM:** Some individuals returning from Syria do not necessarily go back to their original areas but settle in other locations within the country. Those who return to their previous homes generally face fewer housing challenges, likely because their properties were not severely damaged. However, despite this, many still experience significant vulnerabilities, particularly in terms of livelihoods and overall living standards, which need to be addressed.
- **Question:** Can DTM confirm if returnees are primarily able to return to their original homes, while IDPs are often required to rely on informal rental agreements, frequently resulting in poor living conditions or residence in critical shelters? This information could help us consider if IDPs can be potential beneficiaries to social housing units being constructed by UN Habitat in Mosul.
- **DTM:** Yes, this has been observed. Returnees, in most cases, are able to go back to their original homes. However, IDPs often have to rent accommodation, typically without formal agreements, and are more likely to live in poor conditions or critical shelters.
- **DSTWG:** Access to compensation for damaged property is a key barrier for IDPs, as many remain displaced in camps or informal sites around Mosul due to destroyed homes and lack of compensation. The last REACH CCNA showed that housing and livelihood concerns drive remaining in displacement. IDPs from Mosul, whether in camps or informal settlements, could also be potential beneficiaries of UN-Habitat's social housing program, alongside returnees. This dual approach would address both groups' needs.
- **Question:** Is the level of IDP integration and their return intentions assessed, and is this information available in the report or dashboard?
- **DTM:** The level of IDP integration and their return intentions were assessed, and this information is available on the report and dashboard. Households were asked about their preferred solutions for the next year, including whether they prefer to stay in their current location, return,

relocate within the country, or move abroad. It was observed that households meeting more criteria for durable solutions, such as having jobs, better accommodation, and improved living conditions, more often expressed a preference to stay and integrate locally. Conversely, households meeting fewer criteria were more likely to consider returning, relocating, or moving abroad, as their living conditions remained uncertain. The level of integration is measured based on the criteria met, with those in the high-progress group considered closer to integration or reintegration, while those in the low-progress group remain undecided about their future

Centre South Update

Re-opening of Al-Khilaniyah village in Muqadadiyah District:

- Announced re-opened in September 2024
- Until mid-January 2025, out of 470 families announced as registered for return –Khilaniyah, almost 135 families have returned.
- Local government implemented some projects (water and electricity)
- MoMD provided 'white' goods¹

Discussion

- **Question:** Are the local integration and return grants the same amount? Also, has MoMD resumed the disbursement of the Return Grant, or are we still waiting for the formed committee's decision/plan on the IDP file in Iraq?
- **RWG:** The 1.5 million return grant was suspended from January until July 30, 2024, with support set to resume after that date. However, due to financial constraints and budgetary issues, no funds have been disbursed for either the 1.5 million return grant or the 4 million grants for camp returnees. As of now, MoMD is still waiting for fund allocations.
- **Question:** Given the ongoing challenges with civil documentation hindering children's return to school in areas of return, and the continuation of case management issues from Al-Amal Centre, have families reported any specific child protection concerns such as access to education, family reunification, or psychosocial support needs that require targeted follow-up?
- **RWG:** It was highlighted that a key challenge in child protection is the stigma faced by the families of affected children in their neighborhoods and schools. The RWG was advised to Connect UNICEF with relevant colleagues to share more details on child protection concerns.
- **Question:** Concerning Hasham and Baharka Camps, it was noted that only one family remains in Hasham, with the camp expected to close. In Baharka, 177 families are either being supported for integration or assisted in relocating to Debaga. Can the RWG provide an update on the situation of the remaining families in these two camps?
- **RWG:** In our recent meeting with DMCR, it was discussed three families: two individuals and one family. One family left, and the other two are still there. NGOs are supporting them, and one will be referred to a nursery in Ankawa. Regarding Baharka camp, DMCR confirmed there will be no closure announcements until the families decide to leave.
- **FVM:** FVM conducted several FGDs in Baharka Camp to understand the barriers and families' intentions regarding the potential implementation of the FVM Programme. These discussions took place before the recent funding constraints. As of now, nothing has been confirmed regarding the implementation. However, FVM anticipate having a clearer picture of whether we can proceed in the coming months.

3. IOM FVM presentation: Debaga and Baharka camps

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

Movement Intention

- **Debaga camp:** The majority of households expressed a preference to remain in the camp due to the challenges in their AoOs and limited alternatives for relocation or integration.
- **Baharka Camp:** Participants reported that if MOMD could provide support with security, housing, and livelihoods, they would consider returning; otherwise, Erbil is viewed as a safer option where at least their children can attend school.

¹ Electronic household equipment, fridge, stove, etc.

Discussion

- **Question:** Can you clarify the situation regarding households that have relocated from the camp, particularly those earning 5000 IQD per day in Mosul and their ability to afford housing?
- **FVM:** Some households relocated from the camp to Markaz Mosul, earning 5000 IQD per day, which isn't enough to cover higher rent costs. Rent has increased from 200,000 IQD to 350,000–400,000 IQD, making it difficult for these families to afford housing even in less expensive areas.
- **Question:** Is there any plan to implement the FVM programme in Debaga or Baharka Camps, considering that the families' challenges seem more related to economic and legal issues rather than safety and security?
- **FVM:** Currently, there are no confirmed plans to implement the FVM programme in Debaga or Baharka. In Baharka, the main concerns for families are more related to economic factors and legal documentation, rather than safety or security. While the initial plan was to assess the situation internally and determine if FVM could run the programme there, the ongoing uncertainty with funding may delay decisions.

4. IRAQ RWG 2024 Review Survey Findings

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

Key Strengths

- Effective information sharing on returnees, IDPs, and return locations.
- Strong coordination among actors (government, NGOs, UN) and regular partner updates.
- High satisfaction with training, capacity building, and durable solutions support.
- Appreciated communication efforts (minutes, emails, updates) and joint products like the Areas of No Return report.
- Regular meetings are valued, with RWG seen as the primary coordination platform in the absence of others.

AOB

- The upcoming RWG meeting is scheduled for 25 February.