

RETURNS WORKING GROUP- IRAQ

- **Meeting Date:** 6 May 2026
- **Meeting Time:** 11:00 am - 12:30 pm
- **Location:** Online via Teams

Attendance: Mercy Hands, IOM, Netherlands Embassy, Sunrise NGO, Samaritan's Purse, Action Against Hunger (ACF), UNDP, SEDO, WRO, DRC, Norwegian People's Aid (NPA), UNICEF, SSDF, TDH Swiss, Resident Coordinator's Office (RC Office), Peace Winds Japan, MSF Switzerland, Geneva Call, Dorcas International, Bonn International Centre for Conflict Studies (BICC), GIZ, DG ECHO.

Agenda:

1. **Introduction and adoption of minutes:** Review of Meeting Minutes
2. **Context Update:** RWG Field Update
3. **Mercy Hands:** Integrated and inclusive solutions for the socio-economic empowerment of vulnerable women, girls and boys in the Governorates of Anbar
4. **IOM FVM:** FVM programme Update
5. **M&A Subgroup:** Introduction to the ActivityInfo dashboard
6. **DS and JCFs updates**
7. **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.

2. **RWG Field Update**

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

Centre South Field Update

Technical Workshop on protracted displacement from Tuz-Khurmatu and Amirli

Key challenges: Houses destruction and compensations delay, Infrastructure, Debris removal, Livelihood, Schools rehabilitation, HLP and Social cohesion

Situation Update: Bzeibiz Informal Site (Anbar Governorate)

- Population Overview: Total Families: 1,350 - Total Individuals: 7,337 (3,920 Children (largest group), 1,760 Females, 1,657 Males)
- Current Status & Challenges
 - Return to Camp: All families have moved back from schools to the camp.
 - Overcrowding: Families are currently sharing tents, leading to rapid deterioration of existing shelter.
 - Weather Impact: Recent heavy rains flooded stored food supplies, creating an immediate food security crisis, many tents were damaged and others totally destroyed.
- Immediate Requirements
 - Shelter: 300 New Tents + 450 Tent Repairs.
 - Food Security: 1,350 Food Packages (Full coverage).
 - WASH: Hygiene and cleaning supplies for all 1,350 families.

Discussion

- **Question 1(Geneva Call):** Regarding the findings for Amali and Tuz Khurmatu, were any security concerns raised during the workshops, and is the nature of HLP obstacles limited to physical destruction or are there external actors actively blocking returns?
 - **RWG:** While security concerns remain in both Amali and Tuz Khurmatu, the presentation focused on challenges where NGOs can directly intervene; however, government efforts to address security are ongoing. Regarding HLP, obstacles include both individual disputes and external groups exercising control over properties. Due to the sensitivity and political complexity of these issues, they will be escalated to senior-level meetings in Baghdad, as central government intervention is required beyond the capacity of local authorities.
 - **Question 2(Mercy Hands):** What is the process for selecting participants and nominating people for the Durable Solutions capacity-building workshops?
 - **RWG:** These trainings are primarily coordinated through the co-chairs of the JCF (Joint Coordination Forum), who circulate invitations and nomination requests to members via email or WhatsApp groups. While there is currently limited financial capacity for new training sessions, future government-led activities may include space for local NGOs. Partners interested in participating in future sessions should email the RWG mailbox with their specific governorate details so they can be connected with the relevant focal points.
 - **Question 3(Netherlands Embassy):** Which groups identified HLP as a primary challenge in Tuz Khurmatu and Amali, and are there any active government or non-governmental actors currently working on this issue in those areas? Additionally, is there an actor mapping available for these locations?
 - **RWG:** These specific concerns have been referred to the IOM legal team for follow-up and discussion with relevant government institutions. The RWG will facilitate a connection between Netherlands Embassy and the specialized legal team and Field colleagues to provide a more detailed response regarding active HLP actors and existing mappings.
 - **Question 4(DG ECHO):** Has an update been produced on the deterioration of the situation in Bzebiz, and can this information be circulated to donors to support advocacy efforts?
 - **RWG:** the IOM produced “Preliminary Rapid Assessment Report – Bzebiz Informal Camp (Post-Heavy Rainfall)”. Furthermore, specific updates and photographs have been disseminated by the DSTWG co-chairs, reflecting the latest information received from JCMC Anbar and JCF. RWG to share these for further circulation and donor advocacy purposes.
3. **Mercy Hands:** Integrated and inclusive solutions for the socio-economic empowerment of vulnerable women, girls and boys in the Governorates of Anbar

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

Phase One Activities

- MCPA Cash Distribution
- Basic training courses on entrepreneurship
- Start-up grants for micro-enterprises
- Training courses on women’s self-entrepreneurship
- Consultancy for formal registration of businesses
- Counselling entrepreneurs on access to financial services

4. IOM FVM: Facilitated Voluntary Movements Programme Updates

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

IOM facilitated movements in Q1 2026

- 9 rounds of departures were facilitated from Duhok to Sinjar and Baaj (6) and from Erbil and East Mosul (3).
- 112 households have returned, relocated or locally integrated through the FVM.
- Additional rounds of departure are currently being organized from EMCs and Dohuk camps:
- +800 households are expected to depart between late May and early June.

Discussion

- **Question 1 (Geneva Call):** Are there any departures planned specifically to Khanasor, Sinjar?
- **IOM FVM:** While departures to Ba'aj and Sinjar are planned for specific communities such as Duguri, Gerzarek, Rambusi, and Sekinia. Khanasor is not currently included in the upcoming rounds.
- **Question 2 (DG ECHO):** What is the current status and residency situation of households that previously departed camps but have since returned? Specifically, are they officially registered as residents, and are they considered IDPs or returnees?
- **IOM FVM:** Following discussions with BCF and EJCC, households that returned to camps after an initial departure are not officially registered and do not receive official departure letters. While these families physically reside in the camps, they are not reflected in official registration figures, which accounts for the discrepancy between actual and official camp populations. Regarding their categorization, it was noted that while MoMD may register them as "returnees," IOM and UNHCR typically still categorize them as IDPs. Furthermore, the significant difference between MoMD and IOM DTM figures (approximately 1.7 million vs. 1 million) was attributed to MoMD's inclusion of individuals displaced as far back as 2006.

5. M&A Subgroup: ActivityInfo Dashboard Introduction

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

Activity Info platform

- Standardizes data collection and reporting for durable solutions in Iraq.
- Enables consistent activity analysis through a single, unified platform.
- Improves monitoring and resource allocation using a shared data dashboard.
- Supports evidence-based decisions for the sustainable return and integration of IDPs.

6. DS Updates

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

JCFs and ABC Update

Salah Al-Din:

- Meeting coordination with the Deputy Governor is ongoing, though delayed by regional security developments and administrative changes. Confirmation is expected this month.

Ninewa:

- Security & Recovery: Stability is improving as recovery and reconstruction efforts continue.
- Discussion Priorities: Focus remains on NGO capacity building and climate-related impacts on water and agriculture.
- Protection Concerns: Urgent coordination is required for 170 families facing eviction risks in Hammam Al-Alil.
- Service Gaps: School overcrowding and infrastructure deficiencies are reported in Al-Obour and Al-Harmmat.

Diyala:

- Climate Crisis (Al-Adhaim): Severe water scarcity and reliance on wells have caused a 90% drop in agricultural productivity. High risk of family displacement during the upcoming summer.
- Infrastructure (Islamic Relief): Renovated 25 schools across Baaquba, Muqdadiya, and Khalis (approx. 18M IQD per school).
- Returnee Support: Coordinating the return of 130 families to AlKhilaniya, with ICRC supporting via school renovations and irrigation canal clearing.

Anbar:

- No JCF meetings since early February due to governorate restructuring and regional security tensions.
- Key Activity: Anbar Governorate, with the support of IOM, conducted a visit to Al Amal Centre.
- Emergency Request: Local Government is requesting urgent NGOs' support for displaced populations in Bzebiz following heavy rainfall.

Sinjar ABC:

- The last meeting was conducted in December 2025. The upcoming meeting date is yet to be confirmed.

Discussion

- **Note (Salah al-Din JCF):** A JCF meeting is being scheduled for the upcoming week. Concerns were raised regarding low NGO participation, and it was emphasized that consistent attendance is necessary for the government to address access and implementation issues. Furthermore, an update was requested regarding the return status of families to Tel Al-Thaheeb, and partners were invited to submit field challenges for inclusion in the next agenda.
- **Note (Anbar JCF):** Partners were reminded of a formal directive from the JCMC mandating that all international organizations in Anbar coordinate their programming and activities through the Governor's office and the JCMC.

AOB

- A poll was conducted to determine the preferred frequency for future RWG meetings (monthly, bimonthly, or quarterly) to better align with the RWG team's capacity & finalize the annual coordination calendar. Partners will be notified of the results and the upcoming meeting date in due course.