

RETURNS WORKING GROUP- IRAQ

- ❖ **Meeting Date:** 28 April 2020
- ❖ **Meeting Time:** 10:00-11:30 hrs
- ❖ **Location:** Bluejeans connection

In Attendance: GIZ, INTERSOS, Mercy Hands, Shelter/ NFI Cluster, COOPI, Netherlands Embassy, US Consulate/ PRM, USAID, Australian Embassy, UNDP, UNHCR, ICRC, CRS, NCCI, World Vision, Mercy Corps, Social Inquiry, PAO, REACH, Nonviolent Peaceforce, IQCM, Mine Action Sub-cluster, Child Protection Sub-Cluster, Protection Cluster, Durable Solutions Advisor, Peace Paradigms, TGH, World Bank, ACTED, SWEDO, Nahri, UIMS, IOM

Agenda Items:

- 1) **Introduction and adoption of minutes:** Review of previous minutes; Follow up on action points from previous meeting
- 2) **Returns Update:** Update on return figures from RWG/DTM dashboard and return index; Presentation on the return index governorate profile for Ninewa and the new COVID-19 Dashboard
- 3) **Durable Solutions:** Presentation by Senior Advisor on Durable Solutions on the latest activities related to durable solutions
- 4) **Social Cohesion programs:** Presentation by UNDP and IOM on programming to support the return and reintegration of individuals with former or perceived association with ISIS

Action Points to follow up by next meeting:

Action	By who
Engage with development actors to discuss developments in the housing sector, as damaged/destroyed property is a major obstacle to return	RWG
General GRC updates for recent meetings (SAD, Anbar, Diyala)	OCHA
Share IOM/UNDP contact details for social cohesion projects (shared in notes below)	RWG

Key Discussion Points/ Action:

1) Introduction and adoption of minutes: Review of previous minutes; Follow up on action points from previous meeting

- The Co-Chair gave an overview of the previous meeting after the introductions, as well as a review of the agenda items.

2) Returns Update: Update on return figures; Ninewa return index profile; new COVID-19 dashboard

(Presentation attached for more details)

Main points:

i) Return Update

- Total no. of returnees (as of February 2020): 4,660,404 individuals. Total no. of IDPs: 1,399,170 individuals
- 68% of IDPs live in private settings, 24% in camps, and 8% in critical shelter.
- 95% of returnees live in their habitual residence, while 3% of returnees live in critical shelter.
- Ninewa has received an additional 19,404 new returns since Dec 2019; 26,016 new returns in Anbar; and 5,754 new returns in Salah al-Din.

ii) Return Index round 8

- Data collected during January and February 2020.
- During Round 8, an additional 98 locations of return were assessed.
- Out of the 1,850 return locations assessed, 327 present severe conditions hosting 11 per cent of the returnee population, or 516,552 individuals.
- A comparison of locations assessed in Rounds 7 and 8 reveals an increase of 1,926 returnees living in severe conditions since the previous round collected in November - December 2019.
- Salah al-Din and Diyala host the highest proportions of returnees living in severe conditions (30% and 19% respectively).

iii) Return Index Governorate profile: Ninewa

- The Return Index Governorate Profile provides singular analysis and insights on returns at the governorate level, with a comparison of figures and severity of living conditions over the course of 2019.
- Ninewa Governorate hosts 1.77 million returnees out of the 4.60 million returnees in Iraq (38% of the total), making it the governorate with the highest number of returnees. Ten per cent of these

returnees are currently living in locations ranked as having high severity conditions, while 32 per cent are living in medium severity locations and 58 per cent in low severity conditions.

- In terms of the shelter situation upon return, 51,792 returnees living in critical shelters are spread across 255 locations. 60% of those in critical shelter are in Mosul district.
- Drivers of severity on the hotspots of Markaz Ba'aj, Qaeyrrawan, Markaz Telafar and Zummar were summarized.

iv) COVID-19 Key Informant Assessment

- Data collection took place from 9-13 April 2020
- Data is presented in dashboards at the national and governorate levels, subdistrict-level data available in the dataset.
- Impact is quite severe, with 68% of KIs reporting majority in their area have lost jobs and face financial problems. Anbar, Basrah, Dahuk and Erbil are the governorates where this is most reported.
- Nearly all (95%) of non-essential businesses have been closed due to government restrictions. 90% of KIs reported that businesses that are currently closed would be able to re-open once the curfew has been lifted.
- KIs in 69% of subdistricts reported that there had been price increases and/or shortages of essential goods.
- In 73% of subdistricts, KIs reported that provisions are being made to assist the most impacted groups; most assistance comes from the host community, followed by the national government and then the local government.
- Babylon and Sulaymaniyah have witnessed the least impact in terms of access while Muthanna and Qadissiya witnessed the highest level of impact.
- Baghdad, Missan, Najaf and SAD are some of the governorates where the curfew is least respected.

3) Durable Solutions: Presentation by Senior Advisor on Durable Solutions (SADS) on the latest activities related to durable solutions

(Presentation attached for more details)

Key points:

- The Durable Solutions plan will target returnees because the IDPs in camp and out of camp are targeted by HRP, and they are remaining IDPs, whatever their conditions are.
- Plan of Action (2 parts):

1. Pilot tests: 14 locations identified with various combination of obstacles to sustainable return. Once the approach is endorsed by all stakeholders, refine the list, prioritize, assess, prepare an integrated plan for durable solutions with willing partners, including budget and timetable and find available resources.
2. Points of entry for sustainable returns and effective transition:
 - Finalize PoAs at Governorate level
 - Develop coordination between Governorates, including a calendar for returns
 - Streamline coordination intra Governorate
 - Expand and strengthen the DS Network
 - Expand the legal documentation/HLP programme;
 - Ensure that all grants and compensations mechanisms have budgets;
 - Prepare a strong Advocacy message about sustainable returns and Durable Solutions, and make sure all partners use it;
 - Create effective coordination mechanisms to support the implementation of Durable Solutions pilot projects and the transition from humanitarian to development activities, as well as the inclusion of stabilization partners;
 - Advocate for the GOI to create an adequate structure to support Durable Solutions (with decision and financial capacity) and disseminate a strong message in favor of returns.
- o Plan is finalized but is awaiting endorsement.

Discussion:

- The Netherlands Embassy inquired on where the coordination is coming together, i.e. what platform is used to coordinate regarding durable solutions.
 - o The SADS explained that coordination has been a major challenge and that the RWG has so far been the main platform for bridging this gap. Other platforms (e.g. HRP) work in different spaces and there have not been enough efforts to change that. However, there has been endorsement on the idea of having durable solutions markers in future development projects. The SADS believes that the RC/HC office should be the main space where OCHA and DCO can start working on implementing the steps described in the plan. On a governorate level, there might be a streamlining of the coordination, which is to be discussed.

4) Social Cohesion programs: Presentation by UNDP and IOM on programming to support the return and reintegration of individuals with former or perceived association with ISIS

(Presentation attached for more details)

Key points:

- From Oct-Dec 2019, IOM organized a series of workshops with governorate level authorities and IOM and UNDP organized scoping missions to look at ways to promote: 1) Community readiness and destigmatization, 2) Socio-economic reintegration and protection, including through ICRS, 3) Community resilience, including through PVE
- Community acceptance remains limited due to tribal dynamics, perceived lack of justice, and security concerns
- Informal/tribal mechanisms (e.g. sponsorship) used to facilitate return, but community engagement in reintegration and reconciliation remains limited
- **Compensation** universally identified as the most critical means of promoting community acceptance.
- Common view that solutions on this issue will require **community-based and governorate specific approaches**.
- Next steps:
 - Successful solutions will be local. **However, local solutions will require national level support/backing.** IOM and UNDP are therefore leading a national level consultation process to develop a national roadmap. Peace Paradigms Organization (PPO) are also playing a crucial role in this area.
 - **Legislative and policy review** will be carried out over the coming 3-4 months, to look at legislative framework and gaps as applies to this caseload.
- National Roadmap:
 - The roadmap will give space for local reconciliation and reintegration solutions (while respecting the human rights) under national leadership and guidance on a number of key legal, operational and policy issues.
 - The roadmap will guide follow up technical support, and a mechanism will be established through which good practices and lessons learned can be captured and shared.
 - IOM and UNDP have engaged with the CCPC, and are now looking to begin to populate a draft roadmap through bilateral consultations.
 - The draft will be discussed at a national workshop, and thematic working groups may be established to take forward specific areas of work.
- **UN Joint Framework:** this joint approach provides a “chapeau” to all United Nations Agencies, Funds and Programmes working in Iraq on reconciliation and reintegration of children, young people and adults formerly associated with ISIL/Da’esh. UNDP and IOM Co-chair the Steering Committee & the Technical Coordination Committee.

- **Contact details**

- IOM: Siohban Simojoki, ssimojoki@iom.int
- UNDP: Nadia Alawamleh, nadia.alawamleh@undp.org

Discussion:

- The Protection cluster asked how these projects/ roadmap feed into durable solutions. Furthermore, it was stressed that the administrative and legislative framework of the analysis on perceived affiliated families requires national level engagement. The Protection cluster and its partners have looked at this issue in terms of its legal components and would be interested in discussing ways to integrate their findings with the study that will be conducted later.
 - UNDP and IOM will be happy to work with the Senior Advisor for Durable Solutions on ways to feed this discussion into the framework of durable solutions.
 - UNDP and IOM can also share the policy and legislative review (on perceived affiliated families) and organize presentations where partners can provide their inputs and identify synergies with the work they are doing. IOM added that they are currently in the process of setting up the team that will do this work and one of the considerations taken into account is ensuring that people who are working on this have good existing knowledge of the Council of Representatives and have good working relationships with relevant sections of parliament.
 - The RWG Co-chair stressed that the issue of perceived affiliated families is recognized in the Senior Advisor's plan which notes the specific need of certain groups and their obstacles to return, and that the SADS can later provide further detail in this matter.
 - IOM added that communities themselves are categorizing the level of affiliation families may have, and they have started accepting people with some level of perceived ISIL affiliation whom they consider safe. For instance, there has been some return of affiliated families from Karama camp to Shirqat (Salah al-Din) through the issuing of sponsorship letters. Those who remained in the camp were said to have been married to ISIL fighters or a member of its senior leadership or were perceived to have committed crimes against their communities. Therefore, the issue of perceived families is more nuanced, as the level of affiliation is important when considering community acceptance.
- Mercy Corps asked 1) If there will be an official or streamlined process regarding NGO consultation of the roadmap, considering there are many NGOs that have a considerable understanding of the relevant processes, and 2) If there is conversation around linking that specific process at the national level to the roll out at the governorate level, considering how advocacy messages are constantly calling for the development of a national roadmap to be rolled out at the governorate level.

- IOM explained that they can explore NGO consultation in more detail, as the process is still its infancy and that there have been delays due to the ongoing curfews. The roadmap will most likely identify the broad stroke issues that need to be addressed and will not necessarily be able to decide what the solutions are. Once there has been agreement on what the problems are, detailed discussions and consultations can then take place with relevant actors, including NGOs.
- UNDP added that the roadmap will be inclusive of all partners (both international and national).
- UNHCR mentioned that the Committee for Social (or Communal) and Peaceful Coexistence (CCPC) initiated a return process for IDPs in Salamiya camp who were concerned about contracting COVID-19 as well as the loss of livelihoods due to the imposed restrictions. The Committee member who had visited the camp obtained the support of the Ninewa governor and the security agencies and arranged with partners on the ground to implement the process. UNHCR then inquired whether the governor of Ninewa was consulted during the development of the national roadmap.
 - IOM mentioned that there have been personnel changes within the committee (CCPC) that have been cause for concern (among the organizations who are closely engaged with the CCPC), but it is good that they have helped facilitate returns. IOM explained that since return is simply one step and reintegration of perceived affiliated families is a long-term process, they and implementing partners are not ready to consult or engage with authorities unless implementing partners are guaranteed to stay and support the reintegration process for a minimum of 6-12 months. This is also due to many instances of unsustainable returns for perceived affiliated families, even within the context of signed peace agreements. IOM is also looking at utilizing existing forums or mechanisms for the development of the national roadmap, one of them being the Stabilization Taskforce, which is co-chaired by the German ambassador and the Secretary General of COMSEC. The governors of Ninewa, Anbar and Salah al-Din are also members of the Stabilization Taskforce, which would already put them in a position to engage with senior government officials and provide their inputs on the national roadmap.
 - UNDP added that work is ongoing on a national and governorate level regarding return, but the reintegration process is incomplete and needs more work. Discussions are always ongoing with governors regarding return, stabilization and local activities; governors/governorate authorities therefore do play a role in contributing to the roadmap.
 - UNHCR stressed that the context may change very quickly in the next few months, especially after the new Iraqi government has been formed. It is important that partners are prepared before more government initiatives take place.