

RETURNS WORKING GROUP- IRAQ

- ❖ **Meeting Date:** 12th December 2018
- ❖ **Meeting Time:** 13:00-14:30 hrs
- ❖ **Location:** Erbil (IOM Conference Room, Gulan Rd.) via bluejeans to Baghdad, UNHCR Meeting room

In Attendance: IOM, COOPI, HI, World Vision, Qandil, Mercy Hands, GIZ, IRCS, French Red Cross, PRM/ US Consulate, REACH, USAID/ OFDA, DFID, PUI, Samaritan's Purse, CRS, HLP SC, Mercy Corps, Food Security Cluster, Shelter Cluster, NRC, EURLO, ICRC, UNHCR, MOMD

Agenda Items:

- 1) **Introduction and adoption of minutes:** Review of previous minutes; Follow up on action points from previous meeting
- 2) **Returns Update:** Update from RWG/DTM dashboard and geographical analysis of the Return Index per indicator
- 3) **REACH Intentions Survey:** Presentation by REACH on how IDP households living in formal camps and informal settlements perceive the current situation in their areas of origin
- 4) **Government update on returns:** Presentation by MOMD on 2019 plans
- 5) **Geographical presentation on areas of no return:** Presentation by RWG and Social Inquiry on areas of no return: Focus on Ninewa and Babylon
- 6) **AOB**

Key Discussion Points/ Action:

- 1) **Introduction and adoption of minutes:** Review of previous minutes; Follow up on action points from previous meeting
 - The Chair gave an overview of the previous meeting after the introductions, as well as a review of the agenda items.
 - The Chair mentioned that work on the second phase of the protracted displacement study is underway and will focus on the key categories preventing IDPs from returning and how many people are affected. The first report, focusing on reasons that may lead to protracted displacement, was published last month.

2) Returns Update: Update from RWG/DTM dashboard and geographical analysis of the Return Index per indicator

(Presentation attached for more details)

Main points:

- As of 1 November, DTM reports and databases will be published every two months, as opposed to the previous monthly basis to provide more detailed data, including new products such as the return index. The reduced rate of returns and displacement and the need for additional data are additional reasons for this change. The next information products for Round 107 will therefore be published at the end of December 2018.
- As of 30 October 2018, the total number of returnees had reached 4,113,660, an increase of 38,310 individuals since the last round in September 2018.
- 130,350 are living in critical shelters (3% of the total returnee population), including 117,414 who are living in houses that are severely damaged or destroyed habitual residences.
- The Return Index is based on two scales: 1) Livelihoods and basic services 2) Social cohesion and safety perceptions. The report on the second round will be launched soon.

3) REACH Intentions Survey: Presentation by REACH on how IDP households living in formal camps and informal settlements perceive the current situation in their areas of origin

(Presentation attached for more details)

Key points:

- Between 2 July and 16 August 2018, REACH and Iraq CCCM Cluster conducted a full intentions survey for the in-camp and informal site IDP households, across 10 governorates (Anbar, Baghdad, Dahuk, Diyala, Erbil, Kerbala, Kirkuk, Ninewa, Salah al-Din, and Sulaymaniyah).
- Only 6% of IDP households reported intending to return to their AoO within the 3 months following interview.
- Over the 12 months following interview, the proportion intending to return increased to 9% with 63% stating an explicit intention to remain in their location of displacement.
- The most frequently cited reason to return was emotional desire to do so (52%). The top three reasons all related to security concerns or conflict related damage, closely followed by a need for livelihood opportunities and financial resources.
- The high frequency of IDP households reporting safety concerns as reasons not to return, and as improved safety and security as a need to enable return, indicates that security remains a persistent barrier to return.

➤ Discussion:

- An inquiry was made as to how the phrase “an emotional desire to return” was translated from Arabic/Kurdish, as it’s a broad statement and could have a different meaning in other languages.
 - REACH explained that this was indeed a broad issue, but it was a response option that was used often in previous surveys. The RWG co-chair added that the questionnaire was first developed for the CCCM cluster and piloted in Qayyarah (Ninewa), from which the lessons learned led to the inclusion of this phrase as an option. This could imply an obligation to return, familial attachment etc. and was phrased such due to protection concerns.
- An inquiry was made regarding the safety and security in areas of origin (AoO), and whether this was related to hostility in AoO or personal safety and security risk.
 - REACH mentioned that this could imply both cases, in addition to housing situation and other threats. The Chair added that blocked return was another safety and security factor affecting return, and is evident mostly in areas in Babylon, Diyala and Salah al-Din.
- The Chair mentioned that there are several people from Anbar who were not able to return due to several reasons as highlighted in the REACH presentation, and this posed a concern given that Bzebib and Kilo 18 camps in Anbar are being closed. Some of the IDPs will be consolidated in other camps, while others will return to their areas of origin. However, lack of services in the areas of origin as well as housing are the main reasons preventing people to return based on the REACH survey.

4) **Government update on returns:** Presentation by MOMP on 2019 plans

(MOMP registration data as of 26 Nov 2018 attached)

Presentation by Head of Returns Section

Key points:

- For the closure of camps in Anbar, 50% of families who had stayed in camps have returned voluntarily, while the rest of the families moved to AAF and HTC camps or stayed within host communities.
- The national budget for 2019 has not yet been decided, while the Minister of MOMP position remains vacant.
- MOMP has already requested for additional funds to be allocated, as this would enable MOMP to pay the 1.5 million IQD grant to returnees and fund livelihood projects and rehabilitation of houses. REACH surveys helped MOMP identify the priority needs, which were discovered to be reconstruction of destroyed areas and livelihood opportunities. MOMP also asks other organizations to cooperate and coordinate with MOMP in implementing projects including

rehabilitation, cash for work, provision of materials and livelihood programs. MOMB also requested a mapping of organizations that work in house rehabilitation and livelihoods, to avoid duplication of work.

➤ Discussion:

- Queries were made by Shelter cluster on what 1) MOMB's plans were regarding kerosene distribution in areas of return and 2) Whether MOMB has an idea on which areas they plan to rehabilitate. Shelter cluster also mentioned that it would be a good step forward if MOMB and Shelter could cooperate by exchanging data. Shelter cluster is already in contact with MOMB branch in Erbil and asked if MOMB could provide a focal point contact for rehabilitation.
 - Regarding the first question, MOMB explained that all beneficiaries registered in MOMB's database will be included in MOMB's assistance plans for 2019-2020. As for the second question, MOMB will target locations based on two major factors: the number of returnees and the number of affected locations in the area.
- It was mentioned that UNDP, UN-Habitat and IOM have had discussions with the IDP Committee (which is led by Ministry of Planning and MOMB), which is coordinating the reconstruction of houses. Coordination between MoP and MOMB on this issue would be helpful.
- A question was asked as to why there is such a discrepancy between MoP and MOMB returnee data.
 - MOMB explained that the two ministries use different criteria in registering returnees. MOMB either register returnees who visit their branches or returnees in areas that MOMB has specifically visited via mobile teams. MoP registers any IDP passing through the main checkpoints, without considering factors such as secondary displacement. Hence MoP figures are generally less accurate. There are also IDPs who have returned but have not registered with MOMB.
- An inquiry was on whether the return grants will be paid in parallel with the compensation law for destroyed property and deceased family members.
 - MOMB explained that the return grant is a separate matter from compensation. MOMB also considers the return grant to be of a higher priority at the current time. Furthermore, the role of MOMB is to coordinate between the beneficiary and the Compensation Committee.
- The co-coordinator mentioned that MoP had conducted a damage assessment with the support of World Bank, which can be found online. This can give an idea as to the budget required for reconstruction.

5) Geographical presentation on areas of no return: Presentation by RWG and Social Inquiry on areas of no return: Focus on Ninewa and Babylon

(Presentations attached for more details)

i) Ninewa

Key points:

- Topline figures for Ninewa:
 - 8 districts, 20 subdistricts, 222 empty locations
 - 61,177 families lived in assessed villages before conflict. 64% of these families are Qahtaniya (Baaj district)
- This data contributes to the evidence-base for understanding return and protracted displacement dynamics at the location level.
- It requires regular follow-up and verification, given the fluid context and the fact that how each of these categories for no return manifest themselves differently in each location, depending on who was living there pre-conflict and what happened during and after conflict.
- Using a similar methodology may not be feasible in other governorates, depending on the level of public records available and key informants willing to discuss them.

ii) Babylon

Key points:

- Babylon is the only governorate that has not witnessed returns, despite being retaken as early as October 2014.
- Approximately 39,000 individuals displaced from Jurf al-Sakhar between June and July 2014, when ISIL gained control over the area.
- The perception among the Sunni community from the area is that blocked returns are related to a will to change the demographics of the district, to suit the provincial Shia majority.
- This report takes stock of existing data on Jurf al-Sakhar collected by RWG, IOM, OCHA as well as additional sources. This was complemented by an additional field visit to al Musayab district during a joint RWG, IOM and OCHA that took place in September 2018.
- Over 30,000 Sunni Arabs have been unable to return to Jurf al-Sakhar and Iskandaria in Musayab district. According to what has been reported, clearance has been denied multiple times due to what is considered "political reasons".
- In addition to security reasons, the houses in Jurf al- Sakhar are also believed to be contaminated. Damaged houses, inadequate basic services and household assets being stolen or damaged are also reported to be obstacles preventing IDPs to return.

- Almost half of IDPs from Jurf al-Sakhar and surrounding areas are displaced within Musayab district in Babylon.
- Incidences of displaced people being blocked from returning for ethno- religious based reasons are on the rise in many parts of the country. This raises significant concerns in the immediate term, with negative implications for durable solutions and longer-term post-conflict stabilization and reconciliation.

➤ Discussion:

- HLP sub-cluster asked if it was possible to obtain access to the questions pertaining to community tensions that were asked, as tensions could be related to several different factors (HLP, threats etc.).
 - Social Inquiry explained that the data will be shared once they are cleaned up.
- The Chair clarified that there are different types of durable solutions, which include return, integration and relocation. In the case of Babylon IDPs, there have been many cases of successful integration with host communities which includes intermarriage, business establishment etc.
- The Chair also mentioned that the RWG is conducting similar assessments for areas of no return in Diyala and Salah al Din, and the findings will be presented in the coming meetings.