National Protection Cluster
Minutes of Meeting (14 May 2020)

Locations: Webex
Chaired by: Claudia Nicoletti (NPC Coordinator) and Yannick Creoff (NPC Co-coordinator)

1. Review of Action Points from 16 April meeting – (5 mins)

2. Strategic & Thematic Updates:
   a. Strategic Update from Ninewa / KR-I PWGs (10 mins)
   b. Strategic Update from C/S PWGs (10 mins)
   c. Thematic Update from GBV Sub-Cluster (10 mins)
   d. Thematic Update from Child Protection Sub-Cluster (10 mins)
   e. Thematic Update from Mine Action Sub-Cluster (10 mins)
   f. Thematic Update from HLP Sub-Cluster (10 mins)
   g. Update from NPC – Discussion on the main findings of the first round of the Protection Monitoring tool, Update on 1st 2020 IHF Allocation (20 mins)

3. AOB

1. Review of Action Points from 16 April 2020

| n/a | n/a |

Minutes adopted without amendments.

2a. Strategic Update from KRI & Ninewa PWG
   • Access: While access seemed to have improved, overall challenges remain particularly for those organizations required to do cross-governorate movements (such as Erbil-Ninewa or Dohuk-Ninewa). However, some partners in some governorates, including Sulaymaniyah indicated they may reduce move
   • Movement to and from camps: Camp residents who were stranded in out of camp locations in KRI are reportedly allowed to return to the camps. IDPs returning from Ninewa to the East Mosul camps have been initially denied entry through the KRI checkpoint in line with Erbil Governorate policy; exceptions have been negotiated for them to pass through to return to the camps once a COVID-19 test was taken. In Duhok, IDPs returning from outside the governorate have undertaken government quarantine and then been allowed to return to the camps. Within Ninewa, three camps have requested individuals returning to the camps from areas out of the Governorate to undertake a 14-day quarantine on arrival.
   • For Ninewa, authorities have also reissued the decision prohibiting acceptance of IDPs newly arrived or those who had left before the COVID-19 situation. The decision was issued last year but reiterated by authorities in recent weeks.
   • Returns to areas of origin: Some spontaneous returns from Salamiyah and Debega camp. Despite concerns related to security in areas of destination, such as Bajaj and Shirqat, protection partners have followed up with families who have not reported particular security concerns but instead aspects related to basic needs. There are also potential discussions about other movements to areas of origin impacting Dohuk, Ninewa and Sulaymaniyah camps and the PWGs are closely monitoring to assess the nature of the movements. Protection and CCCM Clusters continue to monitor the situation of the returns with joint efforts with the IIC – dashboards available at the National Protection Cluster website.
   • COVID-19 protection concerns raised: Higher prevalence of physiological trauma, stress and anxiety, as well as increased GBV incidents reported to general protection actors. This has also seemed to be confirmed by Investigation Courts and Specialized Police. Overall there is a feeling that they cannot reach assistance or that response is limited. PWGs were advised to reach out to the GBV WGs at the governorate level to share concerns.
   • Resumption of services: In Ninewa, partners have reported a gradual resumption of services of relevance for Civil ID. Limitations on the capacity of public institutions and number of cases vary depending on the location. This seems to be the approach taken by public institutions in Dohuk in the coming weeks as well.
   • Security environment in Ninewa: Recent security incidents have led to increase anxiety among population groups, with increased reports raised in Dohuk and Ninewa (attempted suicide cases reported in both governorate). This has been reiterated by population groups in Sinjar and Sinune area – who have expressed fear
of resurgence of extremist activities in the area. In other areas – such as villages in Qayyarah district, we have initially received unconfirmed reports of threats of eviction of individuals who are perceived to be affiliated to extremist groups. However, community representatives have denied threats. There was also conflicting information on the possible impact of the security environment in camps, although overall reports tend to indicate there are no great concern in camps currently. We have seen a significant declined in the use of the Civilian Character of Camp matrix and invite partners to use it in order to establish a clear picture when such incidents happen.

2b. Strategic Update from Central-South PWG

Anbar:
- On 4 May, it was reported that Anbar Police and Anbar tribal fighters entered AAF camp cutting electricity and imposing a curfew until 8:00 am the next day, threatening to arrest any IDP attempting to their tent. These measures were reportedly taken as “preventive security measures” following attacks and continued presence of ISIL in the west of Anbar. Movement restrictions continue with a report of FHHs denied access to seek healthcare outside of camp on 13 May— their civil documentation was confiscated and it is unclear if it has been returned.
- On 28 April, 23 HHs were returned from HTC camp to their areas of origin in Anbar. 11 HHs reported they did not wish to return due to extensive shelter damage in their areas of origin and information from their community leaders that their physical safety could not be guaranteed. Consequently, their movements were considered to be coerced as defined by the NPC Movement Severity Scale. All 23 HHs had originally signed up for government-sponsored returns, but were only given notice on 26 April to prepare for movement the following day on 27 April. Families originate from areas within Fallujah and Khalidiya in Anbar, including Saqlawiah and Ablu Ubaid. Protection partners did not witness any social distancing or usage of masks re: COVID-19 measures.
- A number of FHHs from Al Hol camp in Syria have moved to West Anbar, including parts of Qaims. Movements are reportedly taking place following agreements between tribal leaders and various security forces. Community members have expressed concerns regarding returnees due to their perceived affiliation with extremist groups. One home was reportedly damaged by an attack from the host community
- From 13-19 April, Anbar authorities allowed 250 HHs originating from the governorate to return. These HHs had left the Governorate before the curfew and were stuck in KRI due to the public health measures related to travel. Anbar police assisted with their movement from the KRI to Anbar. Families underwent processes related to COVID-19 before entry into Anbar.

Baghdad:
- No further reports of threats of eviction have occurred at the At-Shams informal site following the imposition of COVID-19 curfew restrictions in Baghdad. As the current academic year has been postponed due to COVID-19, protection partners expect the eviction date to also be postponed by 30 May. The Baghdad ICCG will take place on 19 May, with clusters working to re-engage the Baghdad Governorate Returns Committee to find solutions.

Salah-al-Din:
- 5 IDP households who departed Al Karama camp to return to their areas of origin in Al Shirqat were turned back to camp by local police once they reached the eastern side of the city. All HHs underwent the sponsorship process and had received security clearances for movement. Partners reported that due to the recent increase in security incidents in southern Nineawa, Kirkuk and Salah al-Din, that returnees have faced additional stigma due to their perceived affiliation, with local police reporting to the Mayor of Shirqat that the physical safety of returnees was under potential threat if attacks increase.
- The majority of persons in Ashti and Arbat IDP camps (400+ HHs) in Sulaymaniyah originate from Salah al-Din, in particular south Salah al-Din, including Yathrib. The Governors of Sulaymaniyah and Salah al-Din have met to discuss the returns of these HHs following reports of some families approaching Sulaymaniyah authorities asking for voluntary return. Suly and SAD authorities have also contacted Kirkuk Operations Command to discuss returns as transport would need to be arranged through Kirkuk Governorate. However, partners report that most of Yathrib is not conducive for sustainable return due to extensive shelter damage and lack of access to livelihoods. The security environment, including presence of militias and attacks by extremist groups, are also a major concern. Protection and CCCM partners are in discussion to conduct an intentions survey for these HHs in Sulaymaniyah to find out more information.
- After liaising with SAD Ops Command, the Mayor of Shirqat and local tribal actors, there is no confirmation of evictions from Al Shirqat despite media reports noting 250 HHs would be evicted.
- Approximately 80 IDP families originally from Balad, Aziz Balad and Al Ishaqi districts living in different sites of displacement in Salah al Din remain unable to return to their areas of origin due to shelter damage, tribal disputes and/or the PMF blocking areas of origin. They continue to express concerns related to lack of civil documentation and have been referred to legal partners for assistance.
Kirkuk

- Following the increase in security incidents in Kirkuk by extremist groups, search operations are reportedly occurring across the governorate targeting IDPs who are i) in Kirkuk without official authorization and for ii) Governorate authorities trying to ascertain numbers of IDPs originating from outside of the governorate in order to prepare for their return. These searches are also being conducted at the same time as searches of IDPs with perceived affiliation to extremist groups.

Diyala:

- On 12 May, the camp manager of Sa’ad camp in Diyala reported that the authorities in Diyala have asked that the camp close within 10 days, with IDPs moved to Al Wand camp in Khanaquin. As of now, 118 HHs (559 individuals) are resident in Saad camp. The majority are from areas where they cannot return, including Jalawla and Nofal village in Muqdadiya. Most HHs have been repeatedly displaced since 2003, with further displacement occurring in 2014. An intentions survey conducted by CCCM partners in September 2019 noted that most would prefer to remain in-camp. Authorities in Khanaquin have also historically objected to the movement of these HHs to Al Wand camp. 280 (191 primary school students and 89 secondary school students) and an additional 13 university students are resident in Sa’ad camp. A letter to the Deputy Governor of Diyala was shared by OCHA on 14 May.

2c. Thematic Update from GBV Sub-Cluster

- **Rapid Assessment:** The GBV SC launched the rapid assessment on the impact of COVID 19 on 29th April. The objective of the assessment is to shed light on the impact of COVID-19 on GBV occurrence and GBV services provision during the time of the COVID-19 outbreak as well as the needs and the gaps in GBV services. The deadline was last Monday 11th. 109 service delivery points responded to the assessment i.e. static women centers and mobile teams. The preliminary findings provide evidence on the increase of domestic violence due to stress and economic strains related to the COVID-19.

- **Collaboration with WHO and the Health Cluster:** The GBV SC is collaborating with the Health Cluster on coordinating the referral process between Health & GBV partners as well as sharing information on the assessments conducted.

- **IHF First Standard Allocation:** The GBV SC identified and submitted the priorities and the estimated financial requirement for the IHF first standard allocation.

2d. Thematic Update from Child Protection Sub-Cluster

- **Child Protection Case Management Guidance for Remote Phone Follow-up during COVID-19:** was finalized and shared. Orientation in Arabic language was attended by 130 participants. This guidance note been developed in Lebanon by Case Management Task Force and has been contextualized by the CPSC Iraq. This guidance note is intended to support child guidance for remote child protection case management, it focuses on:

  - How case workers should provide remote support to children within their existing case load assessed to be at medium or high risk;

- **Reporting Indicator Guidance for COVID-19 Situation:** was developed and shared with CP actors for their internal use and reference until further notice. This document provides Child Protection Sub-Cluster (CPSC) partners on how to report the results achieved from the CP activities that have been identified as lifesaving in response to child protection needs during the COVID-19 response in Iraq. The guidance proposes 9 indicators under 3 activities.

- **Release and roll-out of the CPMS:** CPSC was part of the revision on the first edition of the CPMS in 2018 and Iraq is one of the target context for the roll-out of the CPMS2019 version. The Arabic version is released and series of Webinars will follow. CPSC is speaker on 2 Arabic webinars related to contextualizing the CPMS and using the technical notes during COVID-19 Response. The recorded sessions should be available soon.

2e. Thematic Update from Mine Action Sub-Cluster

- Yet, the mine action operations have not resumed. The Directorate of Mine Action (DMA) in the process of identifying the critical sites for clearance. The partners then should demonstrate what mitigation measures will be in place to minimize the risk of spreading/contracting the pandemic. DMA will thereafter consult with the relevant government ministries/department for issuance of authorization for the operations to be conducted and in what conditions. The partners will be notified on the status of approval and any conditions for operations to resume by DMA/DNGO. In this regard, the DMA requested all mine action actors to send their plans, capacity and suggestion to resume operations to be reviewed, discussed and take necessary actions for implementation.

- In support of the development of national clearance capacity, UNMAS has launched the partnership grant for application around mid-April. This initiative would entail that international NGO partners with National NGO to build an independent national NGO capable of managing all clearance related operations. This partnership is planned to last for two years and the areas of focus will be in Ninewa and Salah Al-Din.

2f. Thematic Update from HLP Sub-Cluster

- In response to COVID-19 situation, the HLP Sub-cluster in close coordination with Protection Cluster has submitted the Critical Protection Issues (CPI) Note to the Humanitarian Coordinator (HC) and the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) to bring to the attention of the HC and the HCT the increased risk of evictions of IDPs due to the socio-economic impact of movement restrictions related to COVID-19 and the right of IDPs to safe, secure and adequate housing. In addition, the CPI note request from HC and HCT to: i) advocate with the authorities in both Federal Iraq and the KRI to issue an emergency moratorium to temporarily suspend all evictions, utility cut-offs for the duration of the COVID-19 outbreak; ii) Ensure that relevant humanitarian stakeholders monitor eviction and utility cut-offs during the COVID-19 outbreak and provide counseling to those at threat of evictions and utility cut-offs; iii) encourage donors to release emergency funds for humanitarian programming combating evictions and utility cut-offs for vulnerable households. The CPI note already started to show some positive effects, as some of the HLP partners already started to prepare and develop their advocacy activities to reach local authorities in governorate level to suspend evictions and provide support to vulnerable households for cash for rent/protection. HLP partners expressed their concerns that the threat of evictions related to COVID-19 is increased and due to movement restrictions, many people are not able to generate income, and subsequently cannot pay rent. Regarding the monitoring of evictions, the HLP partners are monitoring (limited) the evictions related to COVID-19, particularly related to the inability to pay rent for accommodation and utility cut-offs. HLP Sub-cluster has been encouraging partners to support vulnerable households and monitor all the evictions.

- Recently, HLP Sub-cluster has been informed by partners and key informants that there are some activities organized by specific religious and armed groups to buy houses, businesses, and the agriculture land of Yazidis in Sinjar. There have been allegations that the organized groups are mainly targeting families who live in poverty and the most vulnerable families to buy their house and lands below the real price. HLP Sub-cluster has asked partners to investigate these allegations and verify whether the allegations are true, if families who live under poverty are mostly targeted and if the purchase is done through coercion. In addition, we have asked partners to liaise with local authorities to understand if they are aware of this phenomenon and if they have taken any measures to address this issue.

- In order to understand the impact of COVID-19 on the HLP related issues, HLP partners have implemented several Rapid Needs Assessments in different governorate/districts. Based on the finding, the HLP partners are organizing their work to provide legal assistance as needed in a remote manner where possible and it is expected to increase once the courts and administrative offices are fully operational.

2h. Updates from NPC

- Update on 1st 2020 IHF Allocation
Discussion on the main findings of the first round of the Protection Monitoring tool: online dashboard was presented and key findings explained. The dashboard can be accessed here https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/operations/iraq/protection-cluster

3. AOB

• The next NPC meeting will be on 11 June 2020.