



**National Protection Cluster**

**Minutes of Meeting (14 March 2019)**

**Locations:** UNHCR Baghdad, NCCI Erbil, plus Webex

**Chaired by:** Claudia Nicoletti (NPC Co-Coordinator) and Mohammed Khan (NPC Coordinator)

1. Review of Action Points from 14 February meeting
2. Strategic & Thematic Updates:
  - a. Strategic Update from KR-I PWG (15 mins)
  - b. Strategic Update from C/S PWG (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. Strategic Update from CwC Task Force (10 mins)
  - h. Update from NPC – Update on Iraqi returnees from Al Hol/NE Syria, Update on NPC interactive dashboard, Perceived Affiliation Workshops across Iraq, Update on Cluster GBV Action Plans and focal points (15 mins)
  - i. Update from RPA mechanism (10 mins)
3. AOB (15 mins)

**1. Review of Action Points from 14 February meeting**

Action Points	Update/Follow-up
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NPC to share the google drive link of CWC material with the partners.</li> </ul>	Completed.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NPC to follow up with Anbar/BGD PWG coordinators requesting more information re: search operations actor.</li> </ul>	Completed.

Minutes adopted without amendments.

**2a. Strategic Update from KRI & Ninewa PWG**

**Ninewa Updates:**

- **Security deterioration:** On 6 Mar, three buses transporting around 80 PMF members were ambushed by extremist group ISIS in Makhmur district, resulting in at least 6 PMF dead and 45 injured. Immediately after the incident, Iraqi Army sent re-enforcement and searched the area looking for the perpetrators. Iraqi Army took over responsibility of Makhmour from the Federal Police very recently. On the same day, two IEDs detonated against PMF in Mosul district. Four attacks were reported in Ninawa by ISIL, including RPG, mortar attacks Small Arm Fire (SAF) against IHF in Baaj and Hadra, as well as PMF in Qayyara and Mosul. This highlights recent escalation of extremist activities in the Governorate. Other security incidents, such as the VBIED detonations in the past weeks, also raise questions about safety and security in Ninewa and Mosul. According to DTM data, Ninewa currently hosts over 1.6 million returnees and some 550,000 IDPs (or 38 per cent of returnees and IDPs). Protection partners have not reported to the NPWG any displacement trend associated with such attacks or security situation, but security in certain areas continues to be listed as a concern for IDPs returning to camps. The NPWG will continue monitoring the situation and partners are invited to bring to the attention of the NPWG any associated protection concern identified.
- **Continued rights violations:** Humanitarian partners continue to highlight cases of rights violations across the Governorate. According to recent reports, pregnant women requested to present their IDs before entering the delivery room in Qayarra. Humanitarian partners are currently advocating with the local DoH to understand the practice. In Tel Afar, organizations have received complaints from the local population on biased provision of humanitarian assistance/services as well as unfair hiring practices by NGOs which does not look at local capacity. Discrimination on the provision of humanitarian assistance/services was attributed to, mainly, two layers:

- Lack of understanding of applicable humanitarian principles to programmes implemented on the ground, including vis-à-vis specific groups in the community (such as people with perceived affiliation to extremist groups).
- Negative perception of the local population due to lack of local staff working to NGOs operating locally.
- NPWG remains at the disposal of humanitarian and governmental organizations to provide protection trainings should that contribute to the reduction of such violations.
- **Denial of returns:** Protection partners continue to identify cases of denial of returns. Between 1 January and 15 February 2019, protection partners identified a total of 34 families (over 180 individuals) in eight IDP camps in the governorate who were denied return to their areas of origin, predominantly based on perceived affiliation of family members to extremists groups. Ninewa continues to be the primary governorate of origin where IDPs are being denied the right to return (with 17 families or 86 individuals denied return), but other locations include Kirkuk (7 families or 41 individuals), Diyala (5 families or 24 individuals) and Salah Al Din (5 families or 23 individuals). Military and pro-government armed groups continue to be the main actor preventing returns, reportedly denying the return of over 50 per cent of individuals. Mukthars and local civilian authorities (such as the District Commissioner) follow, responsible for denying return to over 30 per cent of the individuals interviewed.

#### **KRI Updates:**

- **Rights of former IDP detainees:** In KRI, former IDP detainees released into camps continue to highlight the impact of the arrest/detention on their ability to exercise their rights after release. From 2018 to date, protection partners reported a total of 214 former detainees – including over 30 per cent of children – released in camps. In addition, over 75 per cent of all former detainees reported lacking Civil IDs. Their lack of documentation is likely to heighten their risk of re-arrest in areas of origin or relocation.
- Many former detainees indicated receiving a release letter from a court certifying their innocence or lack of sufficient evidence to convict them. However, former detainees stressed their fear of re-arrest by central government security actors due to non-recognition of KRG-issued release letters, lack of information sharing and coordination between central and KRG security actors, and the absence of a centralized security clearance database. In addition, several former detainees remaining in the concerned camps have limited their movement to reduce risks of re-arrest.
- **Reduction in humanitarian programmes:** Withdrawal of humanitarian programmes coupled with limitations in local service provision continue to lead to protection concerns across KRI. According to KRI authorities, the number of humanitarian organizations across the region reduced from over 240 in previous years to 116 this year. While appreciating the contribution of humanitarian actors, authorities highlighted that the estimated the cost implications to cover basic standard services for displaced communities (IDPs and refugees) in the region is of \$ 1.9 billion annually. It is estimated that 25% of the costs are funded by partners, and the remaining by the government through the various means of public services which provided to all people on a free-of-charge basis.
- In Erbil IDP camps, protection partners have identified increased cases of harassment (verbal and physical) among the IDP population. IDPs are increasingly reporting cases of sexual abuse against children within households, as well as harassment of girls and women in the streets of the camp. In the last case, a pre-adolescent child was assaulted by an adolescent perpetrator. Protection partners highlight that structured activities with children and youth could help minimize the phenomenon.
- In Sulaymaniah, authorities continue to emphasize gaps in service and the phase out of humanitarian actor. The Government, together with humanitarian organizations, are assessing possible camp closure and consolidation to optimize existing services. Clusters were invited to provide comments on the process. It is important that any camp closure and consolidation plan is also strongly based on protection considerations, including the views of affected groups and potential social dynamics among different IDP groups.

#### **2b. Strategic Update from C/S PWG**

- **Anbar: Displacement trends:** Secondary displacement continued in Anbar during the reporting period. It is reported that 12 families, originally from Al-Qaim, moved from Al-Qaim, Baghdad and KRI to HTC and AAF camps. Inability to pay for rent; lack of livelihood opportunities; Lack of basic services; and security situation were the main reasons behind this movement. **Returns:** 107 IDP families returned voluntarily from AAF and HTC camps to Al-Qaim, Jazerat Al-Ramadi, Saqlawiyah, Jazerat Heet and Heet districts. MoMD and the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) facilitated most of the return movements, while only few families used private means of transportation. According to the mayor of Al-Qaim, the rehabilitation of the electrical network is in progress and they believe may encourage many IDPs to return.

- *Protection concerns: Security Situation:* Security incidents and military operations took place during the reporting period in Anbar governorate. In view of the security situation in Syria, and as reported by the Head of Security Committee of Al-Qaim Mayor's Office during a meeting on 12 February, the ISF increased static and mobile military patrols in different locations of Al-Qaim district given concerns of potential extremists' attacks and infiltration. As a result of these security measures and concerns, IDPs originally from Al-Qaim were unwilling to return to AoO. In addition, Anbar Operations Command stated that military search operations were conducted against extremist groups' elements and sleeper cells in different areas in Anbar (Al-Karmah and Saqlawiyah, Fallujah, Rawa, Ramadi, Heet and Haditha).
- *Abduction and Execution of Civilians:* 27 men were abducted by extremists' affiliates while collecting truffles in the desert areas of Al-Nukhayb, Haditha, Rutba and Rawa. Collecting truffles has been main source income for some returnees due to lack of other livelihood opportunities. As a consequence of the abduction and killing of the civilians, the ISF disseminated leaflets in Rutba district stating that Anbar desert area will be considered as a military zone against ISIL sleeper cells. The leaflets also urged shepherds to leave the area.
- *NES/ex-combatants* - According to the head of the security committee of Al-Qaim, approximately 330 ex-combatants, the majority Iraqis, were returned by the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) to the military's 8<sup>th</sup> Brigade of Al-Jazeera and Badiyah Operations Command. No women or children were among that group. The ex-combatants were transferred to an Iraqi army base in the city of Al- Qaim.
- It was reported that a committee formed of various tribal leaders from Saqlawya, along with representatives of AOC had met yesterday to discuss the return of approx. 80 families currently living in AAF. The head of the committee said that everyone has to return, since none has any valid concerns and they all have security badges from the area of origin. Those who will refuse to return will have their security badges confiscated and they won't be allowed to return to Saqlawya in the future. Approx. 16 families decided to return today. OCHA and partners are following up on the ground to stop the forced return and confiscation of security clearance badges.
- He's on his way to the camp now accompanied by AOC to notify the families, the movement is expected either this evening or tomorrow
- **Baghdad:** Baghdad Operations Command closed Al-Amal IDP Camp in Abu Ghreib district on 28 February 2019, and provided busses to relocate 29 families to Al-Ahal Camp, 4 km away within the same district. MoMD tried to postpone the closure till the end of the academic year (i.e. July 2019); however the Baghdad Operations Command (BOC) not agree; prior to the official closure, 50 families left the camp to join relatives and/or rent houses in the same area (despite the BOC's denial to do so later on).
- *Premature Return* - According to the Mayor of Al-Khayrat sub-district, Al-Karmah district, 74 families from AAF (50 families) and HTC (24 families) are expected to be returned to their areas of origin in Al Khayrat after completing the security screening process. The Mayor anticipated that shelter damage in the area might hamper the return. As per partners operating in the camp, the indication is that the return movement will be voluntary; however some families are concerned about PMF presence in Al-Khayrat and might not willing to return. The Shelter/NFI cluster is investigating if some partners could intervene with shelter repairs. On 4 March 2019, the camp management of AFF reported that Anbar Operations Command confiscated the IDs of 11 IDP families living around Al-Abyadh formal site of Bzebiz in order to relocate the families to AAF camps. The families are originally from Saqlawiyah and Al-Qaim, and prefer to remain in Bzebiz, as they are concerned that they might be forcibly returned to their areas of origin or be placed under movement restrictions in AAF. CCCM actors are following up with authorities on the ground.
- **Karbala, Najaf, Babil, and Wassit:** *Draught and desertification:* Karbala Provincial council and MOMD are planned to hold a meeting on draught and desertification in southern Governorates. The meeting shall touch upon the issue of registration of displaced individuals in Karbala due to draught and desertification. Reportedly, 150 families have been displaced from the Southern Governorates of Missan, Muthana, Thi-Qar and Basra, and the registration of the concerned families in Karbala is pending with MoMD subject to submission of relevant documentation from the areas of origin.
- *Forced return of IDPs to areas of origin where security and dignity of persons are at risk:* in Al Askandaria district which belongs to Babil governorate, the IDP families received verbal request from the town council to return to their places of origin, but the families said that they already paid a visits to their places of origin (especially Talafar and Ninawa Plain) and found their houses destroyed; they also complaint about the lack of public services (electricity), and school, as well as the lack of basic services. Hence, they do not intend to return.
- In Najaf Many cases of Scabies and leishmaniosis have been recorded among the host community and IDP in different areas. This is the second outbreak in Najaf (after the one of 2017). Health actors are following up.

- *Returns: Karbala* - 20 IDPs families returned to their AoO in Ninawa governorate; Babil - 16 IDPs families returned to their AoOs in Ninawa and Baghdad; Najaf - 22 IDPs families returned to their AoOs in Ninawa; Wassit - 39 families returned to Ninawa.
- **Salah al-Din: Displacement** - 8 families have been displaced to Al Karama camp; 6 families are among the evicted families from Dream city complex, and 2 families have been re-displaced from Baiji – Tal Al Za’atar, because of the lack of services.
- *Evictions*: During the reporting period, the ISF have forcibly evicted and emptied Dream city complex in Tikrit, resulting in evicting more than 600 families to different locations in the city. Some families have returned to their AoO in Baiji and Senya, while others have moved to the informal sites in Tikrit City.
- *Forced Returns* - About 100 families forcibly returned to their AoO in Hay Al Bu Obaid in Baiji and other locations in the city. As for Senya, and according to the local government, 50 families have returned to the sub district. All the families are among the evicted families from Dream city.
- *Returns*: Baiji: 30 families to different locations in the city; Senya: 41 families to different locations in the city, total number of returnee families to the sub district is about 270 families; Balad areas: 99 families have returned to different location surrounding balad area (Refeat, Aziz balad, Yathrib, Farhatya).

## 2c. Thematic Update from GBV Sub-Cluster

- GBV partners continued to respond to IDPs through mobile teams and static centers in camps and out-of camp locations in a coordinated way by conducting safety audits as part of risk mitigation and by providing psychological first aid, PSS and GBV case management. Recreational activities were also organized as entry points to these services.
- **Achievements/ Response** - Service mapping and referral pathways are updated for CS, Diyala, Dohuk, Erbil, Kirkuk and Hawiga, Telafar district and Mosul city. A partner in Baghdad established cooperation with the courts and Health Department to provide specialized services for women and girls in need. Some others also coordinated with other actors in the field to provide livelihood programmes. IMC organized training on GBV case management for Ministry of Interior and Women Empowerment Department. IRC organized one-week training for its staff in Erbil on “Girl Shine” –programme for adolescent girls, which will be rolled out in Iraq. In Diyala, WEO in Khanaqin, extended their GBV program with new donor (Europe Union (EFI fund), for a year (2019) in Al-Wand 2 Camp –Khanaqin, and Khanaqin city center. In Dohuk, UNFPA supported WSCs in IDPs camps and non-camps commemorate the International Day of Zero Tolerance for Female Genital Mutilation through awareness sessions, tent to tent visits, and recreational activities. GBV actors organized different activities on the occasion of IWD 8 March in Kirkuk and Sulaymaniyah and Ninewa. UPP with the support of UNFPA will start two additional WCCs in West Mosul.
- **Needs/ Gaps** - In West Anbar, local government, including security forces, told protection actors, including GBV actors, not to provide service to women and girls with perceived affiliation with ISIL. High-level advocacy is needed. Limited livelihood support and legal support for GBV survivors. For instance, legal assistance to access the civil documentation is a high need among IDPs in Dohuk. Decreased GBV funding that affected implementation of activities. Continuous capacity building for GBV service providers. Lack of GBV services in the retaken areas in Diyala (Al-Adheem, Jalalabad, and Saadiya Sub-districts) and in Muqdadia District. Need of dignity kits for women and girls in Kirkuk

## 2d. Thematic Update from Child Protection Sub-Cluster

- *The GBV/CP mainstreaming training*: 19 participants from CPSC partners attended a GBV/CP training specifically tailored for CP actors. After the training, the trainees developed a six months’ plan of action on how to rollout the training with the support of two CP GBV mainstreaming focal points.
- *Parenting training for all CP partners by the IRC*- In the effort to harmonize the parenting programs, on behalf of the CPSC, the IRC is a hosting a parenting training program (from 10<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> March) for all the CP partners that are implementing parenting programs.
- *The initial CPIMS+ Admin Training* is taking place from 10-14 March while the user training is planned to be conducted in the 4<sup>th</sup> week March for 3 rounds that will target 86 participants from 6 agencies; ACTED, DoLSA, SCI, SOSD, VOP and WarChild UK.
- In a bid to *streamline CP in education and creating stronger linkages with the MoE Social workforce*, the MOE department of Social affairs was invited to the monthly CPSC national meeting where they briefed the CPSC partners on the functions of the MoE Social workforce. A high level meeting to bring together MoE and MoLSA is planned to discuss modes of collaboration and building synergies from where to set up a plan to build the capacity of the social work force.

## 2e. Thematic Update from Mine Action Sub-Cluster

- The HLP and MA guidance note will be reviewed by the MASC Members for their input, specifically related to technical and operational content. After that the MASCS will share the guidance note with the HLP colleagues for their kind input and review and we will share, the final product through the PC network. The MASC is also supporting UNMAS in the development of an internal prioritisation tool for mine action. This is of course dependent on the task approval process by the national mine action authority, but what we are advocating for is to make use of the HNO prioritisation and focus on the areas of highest humanitarian needs, as per the prioritisation we have done for the HNO. The weighting and severity should be revisited, based on the latest data on contamination, but we do not foresee any major changes.
- **Access** - The issue of access through checkpoints seems to be worsened at the moment. What we notice is that obstacles regarding check-points come in waves – there are periods when all is fine and then the situation suddenly deteriorates. The contact person for Check point issues who was provided by the Access working group did not really resolve the issue, as it depends who is on the check-point. MA partners are being turned around and not allowed access, regardless of all access letters being in order, and held up for hours, which halts the life-saving operations and comes at a great cost, as well.
- We also have issues on access related to JCC/JCMC letters not being aligned, which takes away the capacities and resources from the mine action partners to chase access letters every two weeks. The MASC is advocating for the JCC/JCMC letter alignment to every 4 weeks, which would be more sustainable and efficient. Additionally, there is an issue of signing the letters, as if the Head is away there is no Deputy to sign the access letter and the operators cannot go through check-points which then results in stand down of operations and a complete waste of resources. We would like to call for attentions and support in improvement of this easily avoidable glitch through the Access working group, but also ask Protection Cluster in reaching out to the OCHA access focal point in taking this matter further.
- **Accreditation** - We had an improvement with two more international humanitarian mine action NGOs being accredited, however we still continue to advocate for a more clear, consistent and transparent accreditation process. Related to this as well, the MASC will also continue to advocate for a clear and consistent task approval and reporting processes as partners are facing different and changing scenarios, which in turn inevitably negatively impacts operational efficiency and delivery of life saving mine action activities.
- **Explosives, ISF and response** - We still continue the advocacy for use of explosives for humanitarian mine action operations. The situation, unfortunately still remains the same where in Federal Iraq, only ISF is authorised to use explosives to render items safe, which impacts the safety of operations, but also the security in the area, as items are left uncovered, rendered safe, but undestroyed. Also a kind reminder to all to please use and inform through your networks that all should use DMA or Civil Defence hotlines for reporting suspected explosive hazards. The numbers are **182** and **115** and are accessible through all of Iraq without any specific dial code, as it was misunderstood before. Additionally, all are also encouraged to contact the MASC at [iraqmineactionaor@unops.org](mailto:iraqmineactionaor@unops.org) and we can also liaise with our members for rapid response capacities. MASC encourages all to inform about and utilise the IDP Call Centre, from which we obtain referral cases. Finally, there is the UNMAS online reporting tool for humanitarian partners and UN agencies, as well as the cluster system, which you may find embedded into the NCCI website, as well.
- **Reporting of Explosive Hazards by UN Cluster and Sub-Cluster Members and UN Agencies** - The UNMAS online EH reporting form is now embedded in the NCCI website front page, for ease of finding: <https://www.ncciraq.org/en/> . The link below is to be used for reporting the sighting of explosive hazards or suspected explosive hazards in liberated areas, this includes explosive remnants of war (ERW), landmines, and improvised explosive devices (IEDs). The form is self-explanatory and is available in English and Arabic. <http://bit.ly/TaskRequestForm> . Once submitted, the form comes directly to UNMAS and contact will be made with the originator (if details are available) after which actions and processes will be explained. This is done in coordination with the Directorate of Mine Action and completion reports are shared to the national database. **Non-UN/non-cluster please phone the national mine action hotline '182' or the Civil Defense Force '115'.**
- **MA Programming and reporting** - The MASC is seeking to increase cooperation with the CCCM Cluster and RWG for more targeted programming of MA operations in areas of origin and return where explosive hazard contamination is an issue, for survey and clearance operations in areas of return, but also Risk Education in camps and informal settlements as well as in the areas of origin/return. Some partners have been using the MCNA and IOM DTM data already to understand suspected EH contamination in the areas of origin, but the MASC wants to encourage a more systematic approach by all partners to do so and provide the MASC membership with the relevant tools and data to inform their programming. In terms of reporting to the national authorities, partners are flagging issues in terms of reporting forms, particularly pertaining to victim assistance, which require beneficiaries' personal details, such as names, address, time and place of accident, etc. to be

provided in the forms. The MASC considers this information to be extremely sensitive, unnecessary for the provision of physical rehabilitation and psychosocial support to victims/survivors and of high protection concern, especially given the issues related to persons with perceived affiliation to extremist groups, as well as ethno/religious cleavages and conflict-sensitive prioritisation. Taking the sensitivity of the issue and the relationship with the national mine action authority, the MASC is looking at raising the issue through the Protection Cluster advocacy capacities and note on Persons with Perceived Affiliations to Extremist Groups.

## **2f. Thematic Update from HLP Sub-Cluster**

- HLP SC has recently released an Advocacy Paper on Property Compensation. The advocacy paper mainly contains the findings that has been surveyed by HLP SC and its partners. The advocacy note emphasizes the main crucial issues and challenges related to compensation scheme as well as recommendation for stakeholders and Compensation Committee.
- HLP SC had participated in a workshop in Baghdad to support stakeholders to develop a legal framework for establishing proof of ownership in Iraq. In the workshop was discussed also possible revision of Law 20/2009-Law 57/2915 on Compensation and submit proposal and recommendations to Shoura Council/Ministry of Justice. Additionally, this workshop intends to assist the High Commission of Human Rights and the Council of Representatives (CoR) in drafting a law to address HLP ownership. After the final conclusions, an outreach and public education will be prepared about their legal rights and how to access them.
- HLP SC is currently working on Mine Action and HLP guidelines and it is planned to be completed soon.
- Another guideline is planned to be drafted on HLP-GBV related issues, with special focus on female headed-households HLP rights.
- Global HLP AOR Coordinator visited Iraq to collaborate and prepare strategy and adopt it according to Global HLP AOR strategy, in particular on Security of Tenure.

## **2g. Strategic Update from CwC Task Force**

- Qandil the recruitment process of outreach volunteers has been done, and profiles of the volunteers are ready. Qandil accountability unit is in transmission level to Acted and currently they are providing training for the new staffs of acted accountability unit.
- IOM is providing exercises for some camps in Ninawa, Anbar, Bagdad, and Mosul urban areas for the purpose of understanding the information gaps.
- Acted facilitating focus group discussion to encourage females to candidate their self in camp community selection.
- **IDP call center:** receives 500 calls daily they refer urgent cases directly, complaints weekly, and cash requests monthly. Most calls are from the camps complaining about issues with camp management. And other complaints includes (food distribution cycle, cash for education, legal protection services, WASH, and livelihoods).
- **Plans:** CWC will outreach with the partners to update helpline numbers that are still available. CWC will encourage partners to reach with IDP call center to fill the current information gaps.

## **2h. Update from NPC**

- **Update on Iraqi returnees from Al Hol/NE Syria** - The Government of Iraq (GoI) has announced its intention to repatriate all of its citizens – estimated to be upwards of 26,000 individuals from Al Hol camp in Hassekeh governorate, NES. The overwhelming majority are women and children (only 12% of the recorded Iraqi population are males over 18 years of age). The GoI has announced that they have been assigned 20 buses by the Ministry of Transport, to transfer Iraqis from Al Hol. They intend to transfer them in batches, with each return convoy consisting of 500 individuals. There has been no official communication from the GoI on the timing of the transfers from Syria; however, MoDM has suggested that the timing is “imminent”.
- UNHCR was requested to provide 4,000 tents to MoDM to set up a new site – Amalla camp in Telafar district, in Ninewah governorate – for the Iraqi returnees, but declined the request. UNHCR – along with the Protection, CCCM and Shelter/NFI Clusters – instead recommended that Iraqi returnees who are unable or unwilling to return to their areas of origin, or reside outside camps in the host community, should be accommodated in existing IDP camps with capacity. It was also recommended that returnees should be provided information on their options at Hammam Al Alil Transit Site, and be able to choose from available options in Ninewa camps. Humanitarian partners stand ready to provide assistance and services in existing camps. The same recommendation was made by the HC at the High Advisory Team (HAT) meeting on 24 February and accepted by the GoI. However, MoDM has continued to search for a separate site – either Amalla or Hajj Ali – as there

may be pressure on MoDM within the GoI to accommodate these returnees in a single site, separate from other displaced Iraqis.

- On 21 and 24 February, 330 Iraqi individuals were reportedly transferred from Syria to a military base in Al Qaim, Anbar. UNHCR was informed that all were combatants, although other actors have indicated that there were women and children among the transfers.
- From 28 February – 10 March, 185 Iraqi women and children crossed the Rabe'a border crossing point, with the help of smugglers at a cost of USD 2,000 per family. They were detained when trying to cross a checkpoint into Anbar, and were thereafter hosted in mukhtars' homes in Rabe'a (Ninewa) pending security clearance from Fallujah (Anbar), their claimed area of origin. UNHCR advocated with the military leadership and MoDM for all returnees to be transferred to the Hamam Al Alil Transit Site where the required facilities are available to host the new arrivals until the security screening is completed. On 3 March, Major General Shimmari sent a formal intervention to the Prime Minister's Office to this effect. On 5 March, these families were transferred to a rented accommodation in Rabe'a City Centre, paid for and guarded by the police.
- On 1 March, approximately 21 Yazidi children crossed the Al Fao border point into Sinune. They have since been transferred to the Yazidi community in Dohuk. Moreover, in discussions with the Yazidi community in Dohuk, UNHCR Dohuk obtained information that 27 Yazidis returned from Syria between December 2018 and February 2019. Additionally, in discussions with the Yazidi community in Sinjar, UNHCR Ninewa obtained information that 25-30 Yazidis returned to Iraq from Syria from December 2018 to February 2019. Challenges remain with access to the population in Al Hol to identify Yazidis, and UNHCR Iraq is coordinating with its counterparts in Qamishly, Syria in this regard. Moreover, Yazidi community leaders have requested support with the re-opening of the Al Fao border crossing point to bring Yazidis across (the crossing point has been closed since the last days of February).
- The Child Protection Sub-Cluster in Iraq is engaging with counterparts in Syria to explore the possibility of registering child protection cases in the Child Protection Information Management System (CPIMS) in Syria – particularly Iraqi unaccompanied and separated children – in order to track these children in case of repatriation to Iraq. The Protection Cluster – including Child Protection and GBV Sub-Clusters – are assessing partners' capacity in Dohuk/Ninewa to meet additional needs. However, immediate indication by GoI authorities of agreed destination camps is critical to assess existing camp-based response capacity.
- On 7 March, OCHA wrote to the National Operations Command, recommending for repatriated Iraqi civilians to be accommodated in the following Ninewa camps with available plots, requisite infrastructure and services: Hajj Ali camp (3,000 plots); Hamam Al-Alil 1 & 2 (550 plots); Nimrud (320 plots); and Garmawa (1,100 plots). OCHA also requested information on likely timelines, movement plans and information on vulnerable persons (unaccompanied children).
- On 11 March, the Protection Cluster shared a position statement with OCHA and ICCG members highlighting – *inter alia* – critical protection considerations during security screening processes, namely: (i) It is the responsibility of the GoI to separate combatants from civilians. If not already done in NES, this can be done at border crossings and/or at Hammam Al Alil Transit Site, as was done in the past; (ii) The GoI should distinguish between the treatment of combatants and their accompanying family members. In this regard, UNSCR 2396 (OP4) "calls upon Member States to assess and investigate individuals whom they have reasonable grounds to believe are terrorists, including suspected foreign terrorist fighters, and distinguish them from other individuals, including their accompanying family members who may not have been engaged in foreign terrorist fighter-related offenses, including by employing evidence-based risk assessments, screening procedures, and the collection and analysis of travel data, in accordance with domestic and international law, including international human rights and humanitarian law, as applicable, without resorting to profiling based on any discriminatory ground prohibited by international law."; (iii) Screening must be conducted in gender and age sensitive manner (e.g. presence of female screeners, and children to be accompanied by a parent or caregiver); (iv) Family unity should be preserved as much as possible during screening processes and while returnees are in transit; (v) Individuals with special needs (e.g. unaccompanied children, or persons with disabilities) should be identified for expedited processing, and referred to appropriate services; (vi) Children who were recruited by armed groups – usually under extreme duress, coercion or manipulation – are highly vulnerable, and have often experienced significant harm and grievous violation of their rights. In any decision that affects children, the best interest of the child should always be a primary consideration. Children should only be detained as a last resort, for the most limited period of time, and in facilities that are age and gender appropriate; and (vii) Suspected combatants should be accommodated in a separate facility, in order to maintain the civilian character of camps (per the Prime Ministerial Directive of April 2017); (viii) At screening sites, humanitarian actors should disseminate messaging on Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA), in particular amongst vulnerable groups (women and children), including on reporting mechanisms through the IDP Call Centre.

- *Recommendations from humanitarian community:* (i) There is no need to set up a new or separate site for returning Iraqis, as there is existing space in Ninewa camps; (ii) Agreed destination camps should be immediately communicated by GoI to humanitarian actors to enable assessment of existing service capacity, and scaling up of services where warranted; (iii) Civilians should be separated from suspected combatants, with the latter accommodated in separate facilities, in order to preserve the civilian character of camps; (iv) Family members of suspected combatants should be treated as civilians, and benefit from needs-based humanitarian assistance, in accordance with humanitarian principles of humanity and impartiality; (v) All returnees should be transferred from border crossings directly to Hamam Al Alil Transit Site where the required facilities are available to host the new arrivals until the security screening is completed; (vi) Preventive measures should be put in place by military/security actors to mitigate protection risks during security screening processes.
- **Update on NPC interactive dashboard** – The NPC IMO has produced an online [dashboard](#) highlighting achievements of protection partners in Iraq in 2018, as well as some narrative highlights as follows.
- In 2018, the UNHCR/DRC-led Protection Cluster provided strategic guidance and technical leadership for the IDP/returnee protection response in Iraq, throughout the humanitarian programme cycle. This included: (i) needs assessment and analysis through development of the 2019 Humanitarian Needs Overview (HNO); (ii) strategic planning through the development of 2019 Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP); (iii) resource mobilization through two Standard Allocations of the Iraq Humanitarian Pooled Fund, and bilateral engagement of key donors; (iv) monitoring and evaluation through preparation of the mid-year Periodic Monitoring Report (PMR), and administration of a Partner Perception Survey.
- The Protection Cluster also led evidence-based advocacy on multiple fronts. This included: (i) HCT-level advocacy through production of Critical Protection Issues Notes for each HCT meeting (14 in total), and ad-hoc Advocacy Briefs (6 in total); (ii) UNHCR advocacy through preparation of Talking Points for the Representative’s meetings with high-level authorities; (iii) engagement of NGOs in joint/complementary advocacy efforts through NCCI’s Advocacy Working Group; (x) human rights advocacy through engagement with international human rights NGOs; (xi) contribution to the HC’s submission for the Security Council’s Informal Expert Group on Protection of Civilians; (xii) engagement with the MARA Working Group on Conflict-Related Sexual Violence in camps; and (xiii) engagement with OCHA’s Civil Military Coordination Unit (CM Coord) on issues such as access for protection partners, armed actor presence in camps, and protection of civilians.
- The Protection Cluster also strengthened strategic/operational engagement with a wide range of humanitarian and recovery stakeholders. This included: (i) engagement with other Clusters through delivery of Rapid Protection Assessment (RPA) presentations at each ICCG meeting, development of strategic/operational synergies with UNHCR-led Clusters, and protection mainstreaming across all Clusters; (ii) engagement with the IOM/NRC-led Community Resource Centres (CRC), including development of the ‘CwC/AAP in CRC Strategy’; and (iii) contribution to humanitarian-recovery-development nexus through engagement in the ‘Social Protection Forum’ and the ‘Social Cohesion & Reconciliation Working’.
- The Protection also provided operational guidance to partners on a wide range of issues. This included: (i) drafting of a ‘Guidance Note on Operational Issues during the 2018 Council of Representatives Elections in 2018’, and roll out of an Election Incidents Tracking Matrix, thereby ensuring election related violations affecting IDPs and returnees were channeled to UNAMI’s Electoral Assistance Office; (ii) drafting the Principled Returns Framework for Iraq, thereby ensuring that returns are voluntary, safe, informed, dignified and sustainable; (iii) support to humanitarian members of the Governorate Returns Committees (GRC) by ensuring that protection data and analysis informed decision-making of the GRCs; (iv) drafting of a position paper titled “Recommendations for the Way Forward: Protection Concerns and Proposed Solutions for Iraqi Citizens with Perceived Affiliations”, to ensure adherence to protection principles and human rights standards in engagement with this vulnerable population; (v) development – with RWG – of ‘Know Before You Go’ campaign materials targeted to IDPs contemplating return to their areas of origin, along with operational Guidance Note for protection partners on how to implement the campaign; and (vi) development of ActivityInfo Reporting Guide for partners, to ensure accurate reporting on partners’ achievements in 2019.
- The Protection Cluster also shared lessons learned from Iraq through: (i) delivery of presentations on ‘IHL Advocacy’, ‘GP20 Initiatives in Iraq’, and ‘Detentions in Humanitarian Emergencies’ at the annual Global Protection Cluster Conference held in Bangkok in May 2018; and (ii) engagement with Protection Clusters in Syria and Yemen to share best practices, operational guidance and tools.
- The Protection Cluster also convened monthly National Protection Cluster meetings, monthly NPC Strategic Advisory Group (SAG) meetings, and monthly NPC & Sub-Cluster Coordinators meetings. The monthly NPC meetings provided a forum for delivery of strategic updates to NPC members and donors. The SAG meetings enabled strategic decision-making and technical review of operational guidance materials produced by the Protection Cluster. The NPC & Sub-Cluster Coordinators meetings enabled coordination of operational issues,



and harmonization of approaches across the Protection Cluster and its Sub-Clusters. These meetings are consultative, involved consensus-based decision-making, and were results-oriented with action items that are consistently followed up on.

- The Protection Cluster also strengthened coordination capacity through delivery of Protection Coordination Retreats for governorate-level PWG Coordinators in C/S Iraq and KRI/Ninewa, and governorate-level Working Group Coordinators from all four Sub-Clusters, thereby ensuring common understanding of the core functions of Cluster Coordinators, and key response modalities and tools.
- The Protection Cluster also contributed to discussions on localization e.g., inclusion of national NGOs in Pooled Funding mechanisms as part of the Grand Bargain commitments of all humanitarian actors.
- *The HLP Sub-Cluster* published two guidance notes: (i) the “Due Diligence Guidelines for Shelter partners” and standard operating procedures for shelter actors with regard to HLP issues, both of which helped shelter actors understand underlying HLP issues when implementing shelter projects, and avoid potential problems in relation property ownership verification. The guidelines also aimed at ensuring that the “Do No Harm” principles are respected when implementing shelter activities; (ii) the “Property Compensation Guidelines” in Iraq; the guidance notes were drafted with the aim of simplifying the legal language in the law on compensation, and to provide partners with a guide and the expected outcome of the process across Iraq. Furthermore, the HLP Sub-Cluster provided trainings for HLP and non-HLP actors across different governorates on topics related to compensation and security of tenure, in coordination with other Clusters, including Shelter/NFI. The HLP Sub-Cluster’s participation in government workshops also led to the drafting of factsheets, advocacy notes, and info graphics on the compensation schemes, security of tenure, and other HLP issues.
- *The GBV Sub-Cluster* developed the GBV Standard Operating procedures (SOPs) for Central South and Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI). The SOPs were rolled out in KRI and, at the federal level, they were endorsed and launched by the Iraqi Government, represented by the Secretary-General for the Council of Ministers in September 2018 for the governorates covering Baghdad, Diyala, Anbar, Salah al-Din, Babylon, Najaf and Karbala. GBV WGs members are now rolling out the SOPs in their respective locations. The Government of Iraq is currently in the process of official endorsement of the SOPs by the Legal Committee of the General-Secretariat for the Council of Ministers. Together with the Child Protection Sub-Cluster, the Child and Adolescent Survivor Initiative was implemented in Anbar and Salah al-Din governorates. One training on Caring for Child Survivors was conducted, targeting 10 CP and 10 GBV actors from the two governorates. The GBV referral pathways were updated to include information on services for child survivors in 11 locations of Anbar and Salah al-Din governorates. A Guidance note on supporting child survivors was developed. This Initiative brought GBV and CP actors together and provided a forum for them to coordinate and work jointly.
- *The Child Protection Sub-Cluster* had 51 partners who contributed to the IDP response and reached 758,677 people (614,384 people with HRP funding only, 512,760 targeted by HRP) and 14 partners who contributed to the Refugee response to reach 35,593 people (41,500 targeted by 3RP). Please see the links to the Interactive Child Protection HRP dashboard and 3RP dashboard in 2018. In addition, the Case Management WG finalized the inter-agency CPIMS+ forms in English, Arabic and Kurdish, and prepared to pilot it in Dohuk governorate in 2019. Seven trainers rolled out the Case Management Coaching and Supervision training in Erbil, Dohuk and Ninewa for 62 case supervisors. The group updated the Alternative Care Guidelines and worked on the draft guide for Children Associated with Armed Groups/ Armed Forces. Iraq joined the Global Child Survivor Initiative and designed a joint guidance note for Child Survivor Case Management and integrated referral pathway template. During 2018, the PSS TF conducted a total of nine Trainings of Trainers (ToTs) for five structured PSS methodologies from Child Resilience/ Youth Resilience and DEALs endorsed by the CP Sub-Cluster for the national roll-out. The TOTs targeted a total of 154 participants (127 “unique” participants as some staff took ToT in more than one methodology) from a total of 42 agencies (25 INGO, 11 NNGO, 3 UN and 3 Government entities).
- *The Communication with Communities (CWC) Taskforce* facilitated seven TOTs on Accountability to Affected Population, Communication with Communities, and specific messages which was attended by a total of 56 humanitarian actors operating in accountability, community outreach, and protection.
- **Perceived Affiliation Workshops across Iraq** – the NPC is finalising the work plan for the governorate-level workshops on the issues highlighted in the HCT’s endorsed paper on ‘Recommendations for the Way Forward: Protection Concerns and Proposed Solutions for Iraqi Citizens with Perceived Affiliations’, as well as the accompanying Rights Incidents Tracking Matrix. The workshops will be addressed to protection and non-protection partners; dates of the workshops will be shared with NPC and other members in due course.
- **Update on Cluster GBV Action Plans and focal points** – a GBV consultant hired by UNFPA delivered two Training of Trainers (TOT) Workshops on GBV Guidelines Implementation Support, as step 3 of the overall training and capacity building package focusing on building the capacity of the humanitarian actors from a

range of identified clusters/sectors to help integrate GBV risk mitigation in their day to day sectorial work, on the basis of **IASC Guidelines for Integrating GBV Interventions in Humanitarian Action**.

- The NPC identified Cluster's GBV focal points for both Centre-South and KRI/Ninewa (NRC and Intersos/Harikar, respectively). The focal points will deliver GBV trainings for protection partners in Baghdad and Erbil, and will become coach and mentor for GBV issues.

## 2i. Updates from RPA mechanism

- **Albu Bali town, Jazeerat al Khalidiya district, Anbar governorate**

Themes: risks to physical safety, barriers and denial to return, lack of access to services (including health concerns), HLP issues.

The main protection concerns for the returned Albu Bali families include the risk to physical safety due to contaminated areas, lack of access to services, potential for tribal tensions and social cohesion issues as more tribes return to this area, denial and barriers to return, as well as HLP concerns.

- **Wahdah and Tajneed neighborhoods, Jalawla town, Jalawla sub-district, Khanaqin district, Diyala governorate**

Themes: risks to physical safety, barriers and denial to return, lack of LLH and lack of access to services with health and education concerns repeatedly raised, HLP issues.

The main protection concerns for the returned families in the neighborhoods of Tajneed and Wahdah include the risk to personal and physical safety, lack of access to services including significant education and health concerns, barriers to return and freedom of movement limitations, as well as HLP issues.

- **Hay Hateen and Al Askary neighborhoods, Hawija sub-district, Hawija district, Kirkuk governorate**

The lack of economic and livelihood opportunities, and the negative coping mechanisms employed – such as debts to local businesses and children out of school – in Hawija was a common theme throughout community members' responses. The main reported protection concerns for the returnees in these two neighbourhoods of Hawija focused on risks to physical safety, shelter and housing, land and property (HLP) concerns, protection issues relating to children and education opportunities, as well as economic vulnerability and lack of livelihood opportunities.

- **Al-Seniya town, Al-Seniya sub-district, Baiji district, Salah al Din governorate**

The main protection concerns facing the returned population include the risk to personal safety posed by contamination and unsafe private houses and public buildings; legal protection concerns; restrictions on movement and barriers to return.

- **RPAs upcoming:** Western Anbar and Ninewa – Sinjar and Tel Afar areas

- **RPA 2018 survey – findings:** The survey was undertaken in January 2019 to understand how protection organizations across Iraq (5 governorates: Anbar, Diyala, Kirkuk, Ninewa, Salah al Din) have received and responded to the recommendations throughout 2018, through programming, advocacy or funding requests. There were 34 responses to the survey from National Protection Cluster (NPC) partners. Two thirds of respondents advised that they had received RPA reports in 2018, with the most common use of the RPA findings was supporting organizations to understand the situation and context on the ground in areas they are currently operating in. The RPA reports were also highly useful in providing information about the protection environment in areas of operation, as well as informing programming and response (see chart below for all responses). 14 people responded in the free text option for the question: *Please list geographic or thematic areas that you think require increased focus from the RPA team*. Over half of the respondents (8 responses) requested for more focus to be placed on Ninewa governorate, including camps and areas of return. This includes areas of return in Sinjar and southern Ninewa. Other geographical areas that were noted include: Hawija, Kirkuk (4 respondents), areas of return in Salah al Din (3 respondents), with areas in western Anbar noted by 2 respondents. Other requests for the RPA team included wider dissemination of the RPA reports, and better communication from NPC/PWGs about RPAs being undertaken in their area of operation. It was suggested that better communication and coordination (as well as wider sharing of the reports) would help foster quicker responses at a field level, as well as improve targeted programming based on the sharing of contextual and situational information provided by RPA reports.

- **RPA trainings** - Two RPA trainings are open to Protection partners in the coming weeks. The first training will be held in Tikrit, in the week of March 24, dates to be confirmed. The following week we will be hosting a training in Mosul, week beginning 31 March, again dates to be confirmed.

## 3. AOB

- Partners are kindly requested to approach the NPC if they wish to present research projects.
- The next NPC meeting will be on 11 April from 11am to 1pm.