

## Iraq Durable Solutions Update | December 10th 2020

The Durable Solutions Task Force (DSTF) was established in April 2020 – under the leadership of the Resident Coordinator – as a dedicated platform for working towards solutions to displacement in Iraq. The platform brings together humanitarian, development, stabilization and peacebuilding actors, building and drawing upon existing mechanisms already in place. The DSTF has been engaging extensively with the Government of Iraq (GoI) to support the finalization of a National Plan for Protracted Displacement. This brief outlines current and planned efforts to work with the government to operationalize this plan.

### GoI National Plan for Solving Protracted Displacement

In August 2020, the Resident Coordinator (RC) met with the Ministry of Migration and Displacement (MoMD) and Ministry of Planning (MoP) to discuss solutions to protracted displacement in Iraq. To initiate discussions proactively, the RC put forward a proposal which was developed in July by the DSTF as a ‘chapeau’ for solving displacement. The Ministers confirmed that a plan was under development, to be completed by MoP, following significant and initial contributions from MoMD. Inputs from international partners were welcomed, resulting in a series of technical meetings, between representatives of DSTF and Directors General of both ministries, from September to November 2020.

The final draft of the plan was recently shared by MoP for feedback. It has been positively received for its comprehensive overview of challenges faced by IDPs, as well as outline of needs in areas of return. The plan notes the importance of including IDPs in decision-making, in engaging civil-society and addressing the trauma and psychosocial impact of displacement. The plan also acknowledges significant challenges to reconciliation and social cohesion, while referencing key international frameworks such as the IASC Durable Solutions Framework. Furthermore, the plan demonstrates a high degree of national ownership, despite an acknowledgement of resource constraints as well as significant security and political challenges in Iraq.

The main feedback shared with MoP is the importance of reflecting alternative solutions to returns, as well as highlighting needs of IDPs out-of-camps. MoP counterparts have also noted their challenges in finding a balance between keeping a national focus while also including more area-specific needs. It was also noted that it would be useful if international partners could share more information on the specific vulnerabilities of IDPs out of camps to inform government approaches to solving displacement. Technical discussions, to support incorporation of feedback, continue.

Once finalized, the plan will be shared by MoP with COMSEC for endorsement. Once endorsed, DSTF representatives will continue engagement with relevant GoI counterparts to agree on mechanisms for tracking progress and implementation. This will include an agreement on how to ensure a feedback loop between national and local level discussions and planning.

As a next step, building on the finalization of the plan, the DSTF has offered to support localized planning, through the newly established Durable Solutions Technical Working Group (DSTWG). While the national plan provides a strong over-arching framework and strategy, there is a collective recognition that detailed discussions are required at the area-level for operationalization. These area-level discussions will build on previous efforts to create governorate level plans of action which will be brought under the new DS mechanism. This includes engagement at governorate and local level, through roundtable discussions – focused on DS - conducted with authorities in Ninewa in September, as well as in KRI in November, with similar approaches expected to be adapted in additional locations.

## Durable Solutions Coordination & Planning

### Durable Solutions Architecture

The combined support of humanitarian, development, stabilization and peace building actors is necessary to achieve durable solutions. Much of this work is underway. A dedicated architecture for DS, starting with the Task Force, aims to bring these different actors together to achieve a coordinated, and integrated approach to solving displacement - building on existing work rather than starting from scratch.

As working hand-in-hand with government is essential to achieving durable solutions, the new architecture aims to facilitate coherence among international actors, striving for cohesiveness in the proposals put forward, and support offered, to the government in their efforts to resolve displacement. Rather than expecting government counterparts to necessarily sit within the structures created, engagement will occur through the most appropriate means necessary, adapted to context, and responsive to the preferences of local authorities. Identifying the key relevant authority counterparts, in each area, will be a critical first step to area-based planning and implementation.

Durable solutions is considered a bridge between humanitarian and development, a transitional approach to finding a resolution to displacement for priority groups. This typically involves a distinct set of activities required to address the underlying reasons behind protracted displacement, ranging from housing (rehabilitation and reconstruction), addressing HLP issues, short-term and sustainable livelihoods, improvement of access to basic services, social cohesion (including significant work related to families with a perceived affiliation to ISIS) and protection. Humanitarian, development and peacebuilding activities can contribute to durable solutions even if this is not their primary objective. For instance, cash for protection for recent returnees at immediate risk of eviction can provide a buffer while households are referred to longer-term livelihoods or shelter solutions. Economic recovery projects can support job creation for recent returnees, even if the objectives are much longer-term, and intended to benefit the wider community. As such, even when durable solutions are achieved, households can have persisting needs which are not displacement specific, such as when they return to areas that were already impoverished prior to displacement. The DS architecture has been designed to recognize this continuum, including the overlapping and converging objectives of these different activities, despite recognition of the very specific objective of DS, which is to resolve displacement.

Building on this nexus approach, to facilitate the varying levels of coordination required to achieve DS outcomes, the DSTF is supported by two additional national-level groups, namely the Returns Working Group (RWG), and the newly established Durable Solutions Technical Working Group (DSTWG). The pre-existing RWG, with open membership, has been brought under the DS architecture, offering a wider platform for information exchange and updates on DS interventions and plans. The DSTWG is a smaller operational & technical platform to design durable solutions programmes and approaches, acting as the main vehicle for steering the operationalization of DS plans. The group has 24 seats, occupied by representatives from stakeholders including UN, LNGOs, INGOs, working groups, clusters and other entities, as an outcome of a nomination and voting process. Members of both groups include stabilization, humanitarian, peacebuilding and development actors.

The DSTWG will support and guide durable solutions implementation through area-level groups, established in locations where there are actors who are ready and committed to support a localized DS response. Groups will be steered by focal points, assigned from operational actors in the area, with support from DSTWG, and will include any partner who can support DS interventions for a defined area. These groups will build-upon and create linkages with existing working groups and technical bodies, to draw on available expertise and ensure complementarity. Finally, groups will link closely with the government at governorate and local level, via new and existing committees, in recognition of the leading role of authorities.

## DSTWG Kick-Off

Following the membership selection process, below is a list of the final selected members of the DSTWG:

- Chairs: IOM, UNDP, NRC
- United Nations and representatives from UNSDCF Priority Working Groups: IOM, UNDP, UNHCR, UN Habitat, UNICEF, WFP, UNMAS, OCHA
- NGOs (selected through NGO vote): Oxfam, Mercy Corps, REACH Initiative Sahara Economic Development Organization, Al Tadamum Iraqi League for Youth, Secours Islamique France
- Clusters: Protection, Shelter, ICCG
- Other working groups: Technical Coordination Committee (related to families with a perceived affiliation to ISIS), Peace and Reconciliation, a third TBC
- Other entities and organisations: Cash Consortium of Iraq (CCI), ICRC (observer), GiZ
- RC's Advisor on Durable Solutions

Two meetings have taken place, first on the 25<sup>th</sup> November and second on the 9<sup>th</sup> December. The first meeting began with opening remarks from the Resident Coordinator, who emphasized the need to be quick and action-oriented. Members were informed of two immediate objectives a) finalizing an operational framework for achieving DS b) agreeing on priority areas to begin area-level response, with assigned focal points. Break-out sessions have since been convened to discuss core components of the draft operational framework document, including individual and area-based support in locations of return, integration and relocation, area-based planning and coordination, as well as linkages between humanitarian, DS and development objectives. During the second meeting, outcomes of break-out sessions were shared, along with a provisional list of priority locations, based on criteria identified during discussions. Next steps agreed are as follows a) updating the operational framework with inputs from discussions b) sharing the list of identified locations for feedback/identification of focal points c) development of area-planning guidelines, including mechanism to engage local authorities d) terms of reference for area-groups and e) review of existing technical guidelines and the ability to apply/reframe for DS objectives. In the meantime, DS focused area-based groups have been initiated for Sinjar - among the preliminary list of priority areas – as well as Anbar (Fallujah and Ramadi), linked to facilitated voluntary returns from AAF camp.

## DS Technical Guidance & Capacity Building

As outlined in the [Durable Solutions in Practice](#) handbook the first step of DS planning is ensuring a common understanding of what durable solutions are. This is particularly to steer approaches which are localized, bottom-up and area-based – engaging local authorities from the very start. While this understanding can be enhanced through technical meetings such as the continued discussions with MoP on national planning - structured capacity building is also recommended. Training has been delivered recently to international actors, local organisations as well as through workshops conducted with authorities in Ninewa and KRI specifically on DS. Building on this effort, elements of training will be incorporated into area-based planning and implementation, particularly during initial kick-off workshops. Dedicated training will also continue to be delivered in English, Arabic and Kurdish.

## Mapping DS Response

The DSTWG will set up an information management mechanism to facilitate response mapping, gap analysis and measurement of progress towards DS. Some DS interventions –including humanitarian, peacebuilding, development and stabilization –are captured through existing reporting mechanisms. A mapping is under way to assess the extent to which information can be extracted from current reporting and where additional information and reporting may be required. Response mapping will be combined with needs assessments to measure progress against developed indicators, enabling broader analysis of durable solutions activities and outcomes. This work will be finalised in Q1 2021 and will, eventually, facilitate referrals between agencies at area-level.

## Impact of Camp Closures on Durable Solutions Planning

UN country leadership continue to engage with relevant government counterparts to advocate for camp closures which take into account the need for voluntary, dignified and safe returns, as well as closures which can be planned for and anticipated. The priority is to ensure that IDPs affected by recent or potential closures can be identified and supported with both emergency assistance and DS approaches, based on need.

**For rapid closures, DS approaches could not be initiated prior to departure.** These approaches require sufficient time to identify obstacles to return, to address information needs, plan interventions in areas of origin, as well as to support alternative solutions as necessary. DTM, CCCM and the Iraq Information Centre continue to track households that have departed rapidly from camps. Coordination through existing mechanisms, such as clusters and sub-national ICCGs, has supported needs-based emergency response, where feasible, upon arrival.

**Nevertheless, linkages with programmes which meet DS objectives can begin to be made more immediately in areas of arrival.**, such as support to secure sustainable shelter solutions, or access to livelihoods. Agencies engaging in DS work are also working with humanitarian partners to be able to track returns to provide support in key areas. However, without prior planning, this comes with many challenges. Households need to be individually assessed, intentions need to be verified (IDPs may not consider themselves on a pathway to durable solution if secondarily displaced or if unwilling to remain in the locations they've rapidly arrived in), while referrals, as required, must be made based on the availability and presence of actors. If there are no on-going programmes that IDPs can be absorbed into, new programmes cannot target recent IDP returns alone, as this can create tensions within the community – particularly where host, returnee or existing IDPs have comparable needs. Linkages with actors supporting longer-term needs, which can be considered more durable solutions focused, are currently supported through existing coordination groups, and will eventually be led by area-based groups being established by DSTWG - inclusive of humanitarian partners.

**For camps that remain open, there is an opportunity to adopt DS approaches prior to departures, in addition to area-based interventions upon arrival.** With time, needs in areas of return/destination can be anticipated, coordination can take place with actors in areas of origin/destination, sensitization of host communities can occur and movements can be organized in a dignified manner. The level of support and facilitation will, nevertheless depend on the availability of actors, the timelines for closures and accessibility/safety in destination locations. Facilitated voluntary movements, including interventions in areas of return, are currently being supported, and could be supported, in select camps where closures are not expected to be imminent. These areas, including camps in Dohuk (where voluntary returns to Sinjar could be supported), AAF camp (and destination areas in Fallujah and Ramadi), as well as Salamiya camp (and destinations locations in Ba'aj and Qawrewan), which are all included in preliminary lists of priority areas to be supported with more comprehensive area-based planning and response as part of the DSTWG.

**These efforts should be understood against the backdrop of on-going, and pre-existing, area-based response in locations receiving IDPs.** Stabilization, development, peace-building and humanitarian actors continue to work in areas which are characterized by high levels of return, and high numbers of out-of-camps IDPs, recognizing that, even prior to recent camp closures, many gaps and needs persisted, affecting all population groups.

The remaining 230K camp-based populations, and the 31K IDPs affected by recent closures, include some of the most vulnerable IDPs and remain key priorities. Nevertheless, DS response must also take into account the most vulnerable among the 4.7M returnees, and 1.2M IDPs out-of-camps. Consistent with feedback to Gol, there is a need for a collective effort to broaden the lens through which durable solutions plans are conceived in Iraq—looking beyond camps.