



## **Recommendations of the Protection Cluster The situation of IDPs in Debaga**

### **Background in brief:**

- ✓ Approximately 700 Sunni Arab families displaced from villages along front lines of conflict between Erbil/Mosul are continue to live in poor conditions in Debaga, a small village situated 44 km SW of Erbil. The KR-I authorities do not allow this group access to Erbil city or IDP camps in Erbil governorate, citing security concerns regarding the population.
- ✓ The UAE Red Crescent has constructed a camp with 1000 plots. Each plot consists of a concrete block house with a room measuring 4mx6m, and a fenced compound with an outdoor kitchen, a bathroom and toilet. Every two plots share a water tank with capacity of 1,000 liter, but each house has access to its own tap and hot water heater. The camp has an administration building, school, health center, shops, bakery and mosque with community hall. The camp's construction is due to be completed on 1 September 2015.
- ✓ On 31 March 2015 the Protection Cluster expressed its concern about establishment of a camp at Debaga as this would legitimize the authorities' decision to limit the IDPs' freedom of movement for an indefinite period. At that time, the ICCG endorsed the Protection Cluster's recommendation that assistance be provided only for supporting the IDPs' temporary stay in Debaga under conditions of safety and dignity. Given the issues of discrimination, security and unsuitable site selection, it was deemed inappropriate for humanitarian actors to support the establishment of the camp at Debaga.

### **Purpose of this note**

Over the past months, members of the Protection Cluster have conducted extensive advocacy regarding their freedom of movement, but their movement is restricted mainly to the Debaga area. At the same time, protection partners and other humanitarian actors have been providing assistance to the population and have learned more about their preferences and their needs. An inter-cluster mission to Debaga was conducted on 26 August 2015. Based on new information, it was decided to review the earlier position regarding Debaga.

## **Updated assessment regarding the situation in Debaga**

- High level advocacy has not yielded significant results in terms of getting freedom of movement for these IDPs. In practice, however, some IDPs have been able to move due to changeable practices (e.g., movement of some IDPs to Kirkuk);
- In focus group discussions, men and women consistently state that they want to move to the new camp. Indeed many men from the community worked on the construction of the new camp;
- The quality of living for the IDPs will objectively be much higher in the camp: more privacy, more protection from the elements, better WASH, potential for higher level of health and education services, etc.
- IDPs have not yet received much information about the relocation. They would like assurances that they will be allowed to move freely in and out of the camp to continue to access employment and services in the local area. They would also like assurances that they will be allowed to return when the security conditions permit. Finally, they are concerned about various aspects of the relocation: criteria for allocation of plots, whether community and tribal groups will be kept intact as they prefer, how services will be organized. They expressly ask that NGOs provide services at the camp.
- The current planning for the relocation needs considerable work. The authorities have not yet fixed the list of beneficiaries, the criteria for prioritization of beneficiaries, or the allocation of space per family. If cluster members do not engage, there is a risk that the relocation will be chaotic, and many vulnerable persons may not benefit from the infrastructure. Furthermore, IDPs may be exposed to avoidable risks, such as those posed by ill-placed water tanks.

### **Recommendations regarding Debaga:**

Based on these factors, the humanitarian imperative to provide assistance based on need, and the express wishes of the population, the Protection Cluster recommends that clusters engage in provision of services at the new camp, pending availability of resources, upon the following two conditions: that the camp allows residents to move freely in and out of the camp to local areas where they access employment and services, and that they receive assurances that they will be allowed to return voluntarily when security conditions permit. The Protection Cluster will continue advocacy regarding more extensive freedom of movement for this group of IDPs.

In addition, as the IDP population in the area exceeds the number of the host population, humanitarian actors are urged to extend support to vulnerable persons in the host population to promote social cohesion.

Protection Cluster  
30 August 2015