

## **Mission Note: Joint Cluster Visit – Debaga, Erbil**

**Date of Visit:** 26<sup>th</sup> August 2015

**Areas Visited:** Debaga is a small village situated approximately 44 km South West of Erbil. IDP populations are displaced in several informal camps/collection centres scattered around the village. Sites visited include: Stadium camp (appx . 239 families); Bear Khadr Shaho Mosque Camp (appx. 127 families), Chicken Farm (appx. 47 families) and the new camp constructed by UAE Red Crescent in coordination with ERC (1,000 housing units). See attached Map.

**Cluster Participants:** Kavita Shukla (Protection Cluster); Carlee Schwarz (Protection Cluster Partner – DRC); Zhyar Kaka (Livelihoods and Social Cohesion); Marie-Josée Laflamme-Marsan (OCHA); Jacqueline Julca (CCM Cluster); Sahar Alzaraqchi (Food Security Cluster); Noel Calhoun (Protection WG KRI Coordinator); Gemma Woods (Protection Officer – UNHCR); Mohammed Al-Sheikh (Protection Officer UNHCR); Annmarie Swai (WASH Cluster) and Crystal Whitaker (WASH Cluster Partner - DRC).

**Key People/Institutions met:** Mayor of Debaga (Mr Tola Mahdi), Erbil Refugee Council (ERC) Team (Eng. Fazil Kareem Aziz, WASH Advisor; Avan Yousif Abdulqadir, Protection Focal Point; Dnyia Yawar Muhammad, Shelter Focal Point and Helin Ramzy, Distribution Focal Point) ; Oday Salah (DRC WASH Officer); Key Informant Interviews/FGDs held with representatives from the IDP communities including individual household members, IDP representatives and Mukhtars and the building contractor at the new UAE Red Crescent Camp.

**Objective:** The visit was undertaken to review the ongoing humanitarian response in Debaga and the status of completion/plans for relocation to the new camp, which is , including any inter cluster issues that may need to be addressed. The following observations/recommendations have been made for further consideration as plan progress to move to the new camp:

### **Outcomes and Recommendations:**

#### **1) Ongoing Humanitarian Response to Displaced Populations within Debaga:**

Since March 2015 various actors (including MSF, RISE Foundation, ACTED, IOM, BCF, Emirates Red Crescent, NRC, WFP, UNHCR, Qandil, Malteser International and DRC) have been providing humanitarian support to IDPs in Debaga town. This has included RRM kits, food distributions, mobile health services, shelter (tents, shelter boxes, cooking stoves, mattresses, blankets), NFIs (hygiene kits, buckets, jerry cans, torches, summerization kits) and WASH services (shower/latrine facilities, water tanks and water trucking, repair of water systems, provision of latrine digging/cleaning items, desludging, expansion of existing septic tank, distribution of garbage bins, hygiene promotion and water quality testing).

Support has been provided to populations living in approximately 7 settlement sites (tents/collective centres). The number of households receiving/ requiring assistance has fluctuated – reportedly based on food distributions and movement in and out to live with relative or seek work in surrounding farms/Kirkuk, with an estimated maximum of 850 families.

DRC is still maintaining critical WASH support and has the resourcing and capacity to continue this response until 30<sup>th</sup> September 2015, which gives a month of interim WASH support to affected populations living in the settlement scattered around Debaga until the relocation to the new camp is completed.

The approach used by DRC to provide WASH humanitarian support in a non-formal context is a model that is deemed effective and should be documented/shared for other WASH partners to consider in other similar settlement contexts.

#### **2) Relocation Exercise**

During the visit key informant interviews and focus group discussions were conducted with IDP men and women at the various sites visited in Debaga. In general, it was noted that people are looking

forward to being relocated to the new camp, as they see that their living conditions there will be a significant improvement. However, IDPs and cluster members have highlighted the following issues that may require address regarding the relocation exercise. These are presented below:

#### PROTECTION

- IDPs would like more information about whether there will be restrictions on their movements in and out of the camp. Many work in Debaga and surrounding farms, and go to town for shopping and services. International actors are also quite interested in how movement in/out of the camp will be handled, as international actors engage in delivery of services in open camps.
- IDPs remain eager to return to their homes as soon as the security conditions permit. They would like assurances that they will be allowed to return to their homes, which is their fundamental right.
- Within the new camp, IDPs would like to live together with members of their own tribe/community, as they currently do in their temporary locations, not to be mixed together. These living arrangements are reflective of long standing relationships from place of origin. They believe that this will lead to more peaceful relations in the camp and will be safer, particularly for their girls.
- As many IDPs have been involved in the construction of the camp, they are well aware of the lay-out of the houses. They would like to be assured that they are allowed to make modest modifications to the houses to meet their families' needs, such as repairing mortar and closing off the kitchen.
- The IDPs asked many questions about the criteria for allocation of houses: who will be prioritized, how large families will be treated (e.g., more than one house for large families?), and how unaccompanied elderly persons and single men will be handled. They would like clarity on the rules about how houses will be allocated based on family size.
- It appears that the IDPs have little information at present about how the relocation will be organized. They do know that the camp construction will be completed as of 1 September, and that the new camp has 1,000 housing units and they have high expectations that they will be allowed to occupy it soon thereafter. In finalizing the plans for relocation, it will be important to address the above questions, and then to disseminate the information widely to IDP women and men.

#### CCCM

- Any relocation process of displaced people must, at all times, take place under similar conditions of voluntariness, safety, security and dignity.
- There is particular need to take in to account the identification of groups with specific needs in the relocation exercise e.g unaccompanied and separated children, orphans, out-of-school and unemployed youth, women heads of households, including widows, women without male support, women survivors of gender-based violence (GBV), older persons without family or community support, grandparent-headed households, sick persons without family or community support, persons with physical disabilities, persons with mental disabilities, religious minorities. This will allow for properly identifying the needs and impact of the disadvantages faced by groups with specific needs and those at heightened risk
- Participation of community in the relocation stage is important. Reorganizing will make management easier, more efficient, more participatory and safer if national authorities map and consider the main representative persons among displaced population. In that sense, Community participation is crucial in this stage, the communication with the community is important as well. The camp residents need to be informed about this new process. Community participation helps to improve the appropriateness of assistance and protection

which are the main responsibilities of the national authorities. Making use of local knowledge and community skills will contribute to sustainability of services delivered.

#### WASH

- IDP families in the temporary sites have already raised concerns about the upcoming winter – the flat, open topography means that winter will be extremely challenging in this area; if families have not been moved absolutely at latest by mid-October, contingency funds/measures need to be put in place for kerosene & winterization CRIs for distribution end of October.
- Provisions will also need to be made to safely decommission exiting facilities in the camps/collective centres and either dispose of them safely (tents) or recondition, store and/or reuse on other areas.
- Having a clear prioritization plan for relocation process will also reduce and undue external pressure that may be made on parties involved in the relocation exercise and ensure that the housing units are assigned to the most needy and vulnerable IDP populations.

#### LIVELIHOODS AND SOCIAL COHESION

- It is important to take consideration on host community, the government plays an intermediary role between the displaced population and local communities and should be proactive in identifying factors which may give rise to increased tension and work with both communities to find solutions.
- IDP's requested that relatives and extended families be allocated houses next to one another and that existing community structures should not be spilt up when they move. Informal camps scattered by different communities each from different villages and a lack of communication in between IDP's communities was observed.
- No significant risk was reported by the IDPs since the settlement of the IDPs (Jan /2015 up to current).

Relevant cluster members remain available to provide technical guidance for relocation if required and requested.

### **3) New Camp**

A visit was conducted to the new camp, and consultations held with the contractor. The new camp is being built by UAE Red Crescent in coordination with ERC. It is set to open on 1<sup>st</sup> September and has 1,000 housing units. The following cluster specific issues were noted by the mission participants:

#### PROTECTION

- The new camp has a well-developed and partially equipped School and Health Centre. There does not however appear to be a plan for how, and by whom these facilities will be administered and managed. Education was highlighted as a priority as children have already missed a significant number of months of schooling since displacement.

#### WASH and SHELTER

- There is need to identify mechanisms for the long term administration and management of WASH services and what external support may be required to sustainably operate and manage the facilities.
- There is reportedly no warranty period for the construction, a serious concern given the experience in other camps (notably Qushtapa) where the quality of work of the same contractor has been assessed as low, necessitating implementing partners to “patch up” broken blackwater pipes on an almost daily basis for 2+ years. This needs to be reviewed as possible as it will have long term implications of the cost of service management

- There are some technical concerns about the quality of water/sanitation pipework. Despite the contractor saying the pipes were 1.2m deep, photos from previous visits by EDs seem to indicate that they were laid much less than this. Potable water pipes and blackwater pipes are lying side by side, increasing risk of contamination of drinking water sources especially if pipes break regularly (see above point). In addition, there are concerns that laying pipes on a bed of concrete rather than bedded on well compacted soil increases the chance of pipe breakage due to friction & compression.
- Schedule and nature of testing of water, sanitation and other infrastructure and services needs to be clarified: technical tests need to be done by respective government agencies, but they do not seem to have been involved in the design, approval or construction process and seem to have little idea of the set up. Chlorination procedure & equipment (including provision of chlorine) needs to be confirmed. A site visit by EDS and DESW would be recommended prior to hand over.
- Questions over the capacity of the borehole(s) were flagged – one borehole has been dug but the status of the second borehole is unconfirmed, and it is unclear when this be operational. Detailed calculations need to be done to estimate whether the boreholes have capacity for a camp this size (total population – at least 6000 individuals @ 50 L/c/d = 300,000 L/day required = 208 L/minute required = approx. 60 gallons/minute – not taking into account water needs of services and other buildings).
- Schedules of borehole operation, full testing of water quality before relocation & well as a regular part of operation of the camp (personnel, testing kits, training needed), and contingency measures (e.g. trucking schedules) would need to be clarified.
- No garbage collection infrastructure has been installed – there is need to confirm set up and collection rota by Municipal actors. There is also need to confirm local landfill has capacity for a camp this size. Not only trucks, but hired workers are needed to clean up around bins and public areas.
- There appears to be no surface drainage at all, and experience shows that as soon as they move in, families will lay a concrete slab and greywater will be emptied into the streets. The contractor said that the intention was that grey/storm water would drain through the stones into the soil and naturally flow towards the river at the edge of the camp. This will undoubtedly create pooling of water and contribute to the rapid degradation of the roads especially in winter. Experiences in all other camps has proven this true so far and if this is not resolved at this stage before people move in, the conditions will deteriorate quickly.
- Concrete blockwork is quite poor quality – blockwork courses (visible in the kitchen areas) are not straight in any place, which constitutes a structural risk (note that Iraq is considered a seismic zone as well). There is very little mortar between joints, and joints are irregularly spaced. This means that perpendicular / cross walls are likely to be poorly tied together leading to danger of deformation or collapse should the earth settle (which it is likely to do as ground compaction is minimal and untested, shelters are not raised above the level of the roads on thick sub-base, minimal compaction; only 10cm deep foundations)
- 1,000L water tanks are to be shared between two households: however they rest not on structural cross-walls, but on the unsupported sandwich panels. Even if resting on cross walls, the poor quality of the blockwork raises questions as to the structural integrity of the whole set up. If these tanks are full, their presence on the unsupported roof poses a real danger. Urgent action needs to be taken to 1) move these tanks so they are properly supported on a cross wall 2) correct blockwork and ensure all joints are well filled and firm/straight 3) patch up the holes in the roof where the tank has been moved from.
- No fire extinguishers or firefighting points are evident and clarity is required on all emergency service provision (including ambulance, urgent transfers to local hospitals in Erbil

- Clear rules need to be established before relocation with regard to whether / how / what families can build in the camp, including connections to mains network. This should be very clearly enforced and monitored from the outset by the camp administration, with no exceptions. It is in the government's interests to make sure that their own rules are abided and enforced from the start; as we know, retroactively introducing rules doesn't work – but the key player in this is the Camp Administration.
- There is likely need for plans for hygiene promotion, given the experience with the families in the informal settlements

#### CCCM

- The new camp has a well-developed administration block/office, however plans for the administration and management of the camp do not appear clear
- There is need to constitute a Camp Management Team whose composition and structure must be proportional to the population number (1,000 sites)
- One recommendation could be to assume the same responsibilities when reorganizing a self-settled camp and follow identical standards as used for other camps. This is still done with the aim of improving living conditions, services and protection.
- Camp management staff must understand the disorientation or stress a community may experience upon relocation to a new and unfamiliar area, as well as understand the stress a surrounding community may also face. So far we know, some people came from village and they have their own way to organize themselves.

#### LIVELIHOODS AND SOCIAL COHESION

- The new camp structure includes a plan for 14 shops, in addition to a bakery shop, however these are not yet operational and the means of allocation does not appear to have been defined.
- The town markets are functioning and including all kinds of basic goods and services such as bakery, food market, barbershop, etc. There is need to ensure continued access to these opportunities.
- Noted among those interviewed that the Host Community hospitality towards the IDPs has decreased as the number of IDP's increases. However there is very limited direct interaction between HC & IDP's.
- IDPs do not appear to have freedom of movement to access work in Erbil city, although they do have freedom of movement to Kirkuk city.
- IDP's have access to income through informal work as farming or daily worker inside Debaga town. Daily labor wages were reported at 10,000 to 15,000 IQD per day. Among those interviewed, it was noted that getting a job opportunity is dependent upon personal communications and networks.
- Only a small number of IDPs (around 20%) have been reported to have access to work / income generating activities.
- Displaced populations are perceived as negatively affected on Host Community wellbeing due to increased labor competition.
- The job opportunity for younger men is higher compare to older men and no significant opportunities for women were noted.
- 60 IDP HHs were reported to recently have moved from Debaga to Kirkuk due to lack of job opportunity, an estimated more than 80% of the IDPs that remain in Debaga totally rely on aid due to lack of job opportunity.

- Small number of IDP's are getting retirement salaries from government on monthly basis paid through the QI Card system which requires them to travel into Kirkuk city. Other IDP's that were previously or currently government employments are suffering from delay of the salary payments.
- None of the IDP's were reported to have accessed the MoDM 1,000,000 IQD program.

**Recommendations:**

- Ensure 'Do No Harm' guidelines are understood and implemented by agencies responding in Debaga with aid or other assistance packages, including the targeting of host communities.
- Agencies to support agricultural and market based livelihoods activities
- All IDP's need access to government compensation and other benefits.
- IDPs need to be allowed free access / movement in and out of Erbil governments (accessing income).
- Increase the interaction between different IDP's communities through livelihood & SC activities.