

# Women, Peace and Rehabilitation

## Strengthening the participation of women in the process of peace and rehabilitation in Iraq

### The challenge

In Iraq, gender-based discrimination against women is heavily impeding their opportunities for social and political participation as well as their access to education, health care and employment.

This discrimination is based on the patriarchal structure of society, gender stereotypes and unequal power relations. Violence against women and girls (VAWG) is the most extreme expression of gender inequality and at the same time reinforces it by posing a fundamental barrier to the equal participation of women. Female parliamentarians and women who take on an active socio-economic and/or political role are often subjected to sexual harassment and campaigns of hate and defamation.

The Iraqi Government adopted a range of national policies and plans to strengthen women’s participation that are still lacking an effective and systematic implementation.

### Our approach

Insufficient consideration is being given to the specific needs and potential of women in the peace and rehabilitation process. Women are still largely excluded from playing an active and equal role in these areas. The goal of the programme is therefore the following: strengthening the participation of women in the process of peace and rehabilitation in Iraq.

For women to participate in the peace and rehabilitation process, there is a need for a cross-sectoral approach involving the whole society. The latter requires skills development and capacity building at individual and institutional level, dialogue and awareness-raising measures and targeted cooperation between a wide range of actors and elected representatives at national, governorate and local level.

In 2020, a special focus was placed on activities around VAWG since the COVID-19 pandemic and associated movement restrictions, increased social isolation, economic stressors, and barriers to accessing services have heightened the already alarming numbers of VAWG across Iraq. Gender-based violence against women is a key factor restricting the participation of women at all levels. For this reason, targeted activities are used to address violence against women as a cross-cutting issue.

Project name	Strengthening the Participation of Women in the Rehabilitation and Peace Process in Iraq (SPW)
Commissioned by	Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)
Project region	Kurdistan Region Iraq (KRI), Central Iraq
National Partner	Council of Ministers with its subordinate “National Department of Iraqi Women”
Duration	01/2019 – 04/2024

### Areas of intervention

1. Supporting and enhancing the capacities of governmental and non-governmental actors to support the participation of women.
2. Improving the gender competencies of selected implementing partners in German development cooperation.
3. Implementing innovative approaches to strengthen the participation of women including in the prevention of SGBV.
4. Facilitating dialogue and promoting public relations campaigns for transforming patriarchal gender relations and stereotypes.



Left photo: Graduation ceremony of the Digital and Life Skills Training

Right photo: Action Day to promote gender equality in Sport

5. Improving the living conditions for an equal participation of Yezidi women in political, social and economic processes.

## Taking action

1. The program contributes to the development and implementation of the second Iraqi National Action Plan 1325 not only through the support of the government but also through strengthening the participation of key national stakeholders from different ethnic groups and faith communities as well as different regions of Iraq. A leadership program enabled 29 female participants to implement their own peace activities and initiatives and to take on leading roles.

To strengthen the government's capacity to respond appropriately to survivors and those at risk of VAWG, 90 frontline governmental service providers received long-term training and hands-on capacity building. In addition, 21 members of the Ministry of Defense, 24 members of the Ministry of Justice and 16 members of the Ministry of Interior improved their knowledge on the Iraqi National Action Plan (INAP) for UNSCR 1325 and conceptualized ideas to better implement the ministerial plans for INAP in their departments.

2. Together with the GIZ Sport for Development (SfD) program, three SfD instructors received a Training of Trainers enabling them to work with sports coaches, social workers, and teachers from partner organizations of the SfD project on the topics of gender equality and prevention of violence against women in their work with children and young people.

With innovative online Life & Digital Skills courses, 48 young women's leadership, voice and agency were strengthened and their chances of becoming economically independent actors were enhanced.

3. Through the promotion and support of women in sport, especially football, the media visibility and recognition of 21 non-professional women footballers in the region was enhanced. This facilitates the work of women and clubs in

terms of social acceptance and finding sponsors and contributes to changing gender roles in Iraq.

Together with the GIZ project "ICT – Perspectives for the Modern Youth in Iraq" a virtual woman's rights hackathon was organized, and the winning team was commissioned to develop an App that supports survivors of VAWG and/or support livelihood opportunities of conflict-affected women in the region.

4. In cooperation with four radio stations across Iraq, four women-led NGOs produced 106 radio programmes that addressed gender issues. The radio programmes ran in different parts of the country to break down gender stereotypes, considering the different local contexts. In addition, female leadership was supported through capacity building activities targeting 30 female-led civil society organisations and 30 female journalists.

A two-day digital conference on "20 years of UNSCR 1325" as well as a short film documentary and a video series on gender and peacebuilding in Iraq contributed to raising awareness and breaking down gender stereotypes in the public.

5. To address the specific situation of Yezidi women, 438 female-headed households and their families were supported in rebuilding their livelihoods through the provision of cows, material for agriculture and cash.

A women's health centre in Dohuk is supported to empower women and girls socially, psychologically and improve their integration into their communities and society. The centre provides various services for women, psychosocial support, income generation training, and medical care. In this context, more than 1.500 women and girls, many of the Yezidi, received income generating courses. The center is currently supporting around 865 additional women and girls in improving their skills.

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GIZ is responsible for the content of this publication.