

# 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 the 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 in the area of 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.

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	Mosul (Nineveh), Kirkuk (Kirkuk), Baghdad (Baghdad), Basra (Basra) and Sulaymaniyah (KRI)
National Partner	Council of Ministers with its subordinate Directorate of Women's Empowerment
Duration	01/2019 – 12/2022

### 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 development initiatives 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.



Photo left: Raising awareness against GBV through sport

Photo right: Women's Rights Hackathon

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Additionally, the project aims to improve the living situation and conditions for an equal participation of Yazidi women in political, social and economic processes.

## Taking action

1. Supporting the development and implementation of the second Iraqi National Action Plan 1325 is an important component of the first intervention area. The program contributes not only through the support of the government but also through strengthening the participation of key national stakeholders such as women's organizations, parliamentarians, government officials, journalists and lawyers from different ethnic groups and faith communities as well as different regions of Iraq. A leadership program enables 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, frontline governmental service providers will receive long-term training and hands-on capacity building. In addition, the undergraduate social work program of the Salahaddin University, a public university in Erbil, will be strengthened to ensure graduates are equipped to serve those at risk of GBV.

2. Together with the GIZ Sport for Development (SfD) program, three S4D 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 specific innovative online Life & Digital Skills courses, 55 young women's leadership, voice and agency are strengthened and their chances of becoming economically independent actors are enhanced.

3. Through the promotion and support of women in sport, especially football, the media visibility and recognition of non-professional women footballers in the region is 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. In the long run, more girls and women get the opportunity to play football and thus become more active members of society.

Together with the GIZ project "ICT – Perspectives for the Modern Youth in Iraq" a virtual woman's rights hackathon was organized with the aim to find innovative digital solutions to support survivors of VAWG and/or support livelihood opportunities of conflict-affected women in the region. After the hackathon event, one team will be commissioned for developing the solution and hand it over to a partner of SPW to use in their regular operational activities.

4. In cooperation with four radio stations across Iraq, four women-led NGOs are producing radio programmes that address gender issues. The radio programmes run in different parts of the country, including Anbar, Baghdad, Diwaniyah and Basra, to break down gender stereotypes, considering the different local contexts (religious, ethnic, linguistic and legal). In addition to this action, female leadership is being supported through capacity building activities targeting 30 female-led civil society organisation and 20 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.

- To address the specific situation of Yazidi women, projects were implemented to improve the living situation and conditions as a prerequisite for an equal participation. 438 female-headed households and their families were supported in rebuilding their livelihoods through the provision of cows, material for vegetable growing in greenhouses and/or irrigated fields and cash.
- A women's health center in Dohuk is supported to empower women and girls socially, psychologically and improve their integration into their communities and society. The center provides various services for women, psychosocial support, income generation training, and medical care to over 350 women per month.

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