

Annex 8
Gender Assessment and Project Level
Action Plan

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CCGAP	Climate Change Gender Action Plan
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CFSVA	Comprehensive Food Security and Vulnerability Analysis
CSO	Central Statistical Organization, Ministry of Planning, Government of Iraq
CWW	Climate Wise Women
DoA	Directorate of Agriculture
DoWR	Directorate of Water Resources
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
GCF	Green Climate Fund
GDI	Gender Development Index
GEF	Green Environment Facility
GII	Gender Inequality Index
HDI	Human Development Index
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
IOM	International Organization for Migration
JICA	Japan International Cooperation Agency
KEI	Key expert interviews
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
MICS	Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey
MOE	Ministry of Environment
MoA	Ministry of Agriculture
MoWR.	Ministry of Water Resources
NAP	National Adaptation Plan
NESAP	National Environmental Strategy and Action Plan for Iraq
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organizations
ODI	Overseas Development Institute
OFWM	On-farm water management
PHM	Post-harvest management
PIDP	Participatory Irrigation Development Plan
SRVALI	Strengthening Climate Resilience of Vulnerable Agriculture Livelihoods in Iraq's rural communities
UN Women	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework

UNDG	United Nations Development Group
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNSCR	United Nations Security Council Resolution
WFP	United Nations World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organization
WMT	Water Users Management Team
YDI	Youth Development Index

Gender Assessment

Introduction

1. The objective of the gender assessment is to facilitate and inform gender mainstreaming in the Full Funding Proposal to the Green Climate Fund (GCF) for the project titled “**Strengthening Climate Resilience of Vulnerable Agriculture Livelihoods in Iraq's rural communities (SRVALI)**”. The assessment aims to provide an overview of the gender situation and dynamics in Iraq, with a particular focus on the role of women in agriculture, the impact of climate change on women and their role in adapting to it. It seeks to identify key gender issues in climate change adaptation and strategies for increasing women’s agency in development interventions for climate resilience through a review of relevant national policies, plans, research studies, donor initiatives, and stakeholder consultations. The scope of the assessment has been limited by the paucity of data and studies on women in agriculture and the impact of climate change on women in Iraq. The findings of the assessment have been used to make the project gender sensitive as well as identify specific opportunities to enhance women’s agency to deal with climate risks. Part I of the report provides an overview of the gender situation in Iraq and Part II provides the Gender Action Plan for the project.

Key Expert Interviews & Consultations

2. A number of key interviews were conducted with experts (KEIs) to understand the gender dimensions of the impact of climate change on agriculture, initiatives to address gender issues and lessons learnt. The meetings were conducted with experts from the following agencies: World Food Programme (WFP), United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), UN Women, International Organization for Migration (IOM), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), non-governmental organizations (NGOs) working with women in the target governorates. Men and women from ministries at the federal level, namely Ministry of Planning, Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Water Resources, Ministry of Agriculture (MoA), Ministry of Environment and Directorate of Water Resources and Directorate of Agriculture from Muthanna, Najaf and Kerbala were also consulted. The findings from these interviews have informed the Gender Assessment and the Gender Action Plan (GAP).
3. Further detailed consultations were also carried out from August 2022 to March 2023 with the co-financiers of the project, the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) and Global Affairs Canada (GAC). SRVALI is in line with the Gender strategy¹ of the two donors and the consultation led to the financing and the start-up of the initiatives “Enhance climate resilience of vulnerable agricultural households in Southern Iraq through the promotion of climate smart water management and good agriculture practices” (SIDA initiative - USD 10.2 mln total budget) and “Adapting rural households in Southern Iraq to water scarcity induced by climate change by empowering women as agents for transformation and addressing the food-energy-water nexus” (GAC initiative - USD 7.3 mln total budget). The two projects are co-financing the SRVALI with USD 4.4 mln and USD 1.7 mln respectively (see Annex 13).

¹ Strong synergies and complementarities exist in particular with both GAC’s “Gender Equality Policy” and the “Canada Feminist International Policy” and with SIDA’s policy “Promoting Gender Equality”

Community Consultations

4. Community consultations² were held in the governorates of Kerbala, Najaf, and Muthanna, to ensure that the project design was responsive and relevant to the needs of women and men farmers in the target areas. The purpose of the consultations was to gain insights into the needs, challenges and priorities of women and men farmers in adapting to climate change. The consultations explored women and men's roles in agriculture, perceptions of climate change and its impact on agriculture and livelihoods, access to resources and extension services, and participation in decision-making. Feedback on the concept of Climate Wise Women (CWW) and key areas where women and men farmers require training or support was also obtained.

The methods of engagement included focus group discussions (FGDs), in-depth interviews (IDIs), and key informant interviews (KIIs), disaggregated by gender. In total, nine FGDs were held with women farmers (three in each governorate), three FGDs with men farmers (one in each governorate), nine IDIs with women-headed households (three in each governorate), nine KIIs with women, and three KIIs with men (see Table 1: Community Consultations Distribution of FGDs, KII and IDIs). A total of 72 women and 25 men were reached through these consultations. The final report, which documents detailed findings from the consultations, is attached as Annex 8A.

Table 1: Community Consultations Distribution of FGDs, KIIs, and IDIs

Governorate	Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with Women Farmers	Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with men Farmers	In-depth Interviews (IDI) Women-Headed Households	Key Informant Interviews (KII) Women	Key Informant Interviews (KII) men
Kerbala					
	1	1	1	1	1
	1		1	1	
	1		1	1	
Najaf					
	1	1	1	1	1
	1		1	1	
	1		1	1	
Muthanna					
	1	1	1	1	1
	1		1	1	
	1		1	1	
Total	9	3	9	9	3

Demographic Profile

5. Iraq's population is estimated to be around 39,127,889 million, of which 50.5 percent is male and 49.5 percent is female.³ Women comprise nearly half of the total population and head one in ten Iraqi households; 80 percent of these are widows.⁴ Some 70

² A consulting firm, Stars Orbit Consultations and Management, was contracted to conduct the community consultations.

³ Directorate of Population and Labour Statistics, Government of Iraq, 2019.

⁴ UNDP Iraq, *Gender in Focus*; www.iq.undp.org/content/dam/iraq/docs/Gender_final.pdf.

percent of Iraqis live in urban areas.⁵ Iraq is one of the most youthful countries in the world; 38 percent of the population is under the age of 15 years; 58 percent is between 15 and 64 years old, and 3 percent is above 65.⁶ The average household size in Iraq is 6.0.⁷

Table 2: Population of Iraq Disaggregated by Sex and Age

	Total Population	Total Women	Total Men	Share of Female (%)	Avg. HH Size ⁸
National	39,127,889	19,359,565	19,768,324	49.5	6.0

Source: Directorate of Population and Labour Statistics, Government of Iraq, 2019 / Data on Average HH Size is taken from Comprehensive Food Security and Vulnerability Analysis (CFSVA) 2016.

6. Iraq's population is composed of several ethnic and religious minorities, including Christians, Kurds, Turkmens, Assyrians and Yazidis. According to Minority Groups International, there are various demographic groups in Iraq of which the largest three are Shi'a Arabs, Sunni Arabs and Kurds, who are mainly following Sunni Islam. It is estimated that 99 percent of Iraqis are Muslim, divided among Shi'a and Sunni, and the remaining 1 percent is composed of various other religious groups including Christians, Yezidis, Kaka'i and Sbean-Mandaeans. Around 12.3 percent households are polygamous where women are living with a co-wife of their husbands.⁹ An estimated 0.6 million are people with disabilities.¹⁰
7. In 2020, Iraq was labeled as "very high risk" of a humanitarian crisis by INFORM's Global Risk Index. The most vulnerable people in Iraq and those in acute need of humanitarian assistance are those directly affected by the 2014-2017 conflict against Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), which displaced nearly six million people. Humanitarian partners estimate that 4.1 million (27 percent women, 46 percent children, and 15 percent people with disabilities) people require some form of humanitarian assistance in Iraq, such as shelter, healthcare, potable water, improved sanitation, education, and livelihoods opportunities. Of the people in acute need (1.77 million), 50 percent are concentrated in only two governorates – Ninewa and Al-Anbar, and of these, more than 816,000 are children. Approximately 1.5 million people remain internally displaced, 70 percent of whom have been displaced for more than three years. Approximately 370,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) in formal camps, 537,000 IDPs in out-of-camp locations and 1,750,000 returnees face critical problems related to resilience and recovery. About 27 percent of IDPs are unemployed, and within that group, the most vulnerable are women and children, 49 percent of whom are less than 18 years old.¹¹

Poverty

8. Overall, 20 percent of Iraqis were living under the poverty line before the onset of COVID-19 in 2020. While, the historically poorer South still had the highest poverty

⁵ Directorate of Population and Labour Statistics, Government of Iraq, 2019.

⁶ World Bank modeled estimated data; <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.0014.TO.ZS?locations=IQ>.

⁷ World Food Programme (WFP), FAO, Central Statistical Organization (CSO), Government of Iraq, *Comprehensive Food Security and Vulnerability Analysis* (CFSVA), 2016.

⁸ WFP, FAO, CSO, Government of Iraq, CFSVA, 2016.

⁹ Finnish Immigration Service, *Overview of the Status of Women Living Without a Safety Net in Iraq*, 2018; https://migri.fi/documents/5202425/5914056/Report_Women_Iraq_Migri_CIS.pdf/ab7712ba-bad7-4a1f-8c1f-f3f4013428a7/Report_Women_Iraq_Migri_CIS.pdf.

¹⁰ United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), *Humanitarian Needs Overview Iraq, 2020*; https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/iraq_hno_2020.pdf

¹¹ Ibid.

rate (31.1 percent), the 2014 twin crises resulted in a poverty rate in North (30.2 percent) that is as high as of the South. Additionally, Iraqi children under 15 years old (22.8 percent) faced significantly greater incidences of poverty compared to non-elderly and elderly adults (15.0 percent and 12.5 percent respectively). The poverty rate for children under 18 years is 22.1 percent.¹²

9. As a result of COVID-19 pandemic and associated socio-economic impacts, 4.5 million (11.7 percent) Iraqis have been pushed below the poverty line. Significant job losses and rising prices have driven the national poverty rate to climb to 31.7 percent from 20 percent in 2018. With an additional 15.8 percent falling into poverty, children are the most impacted age group by the crisis. While 1 out of 5 children were poor before the crisis, the ratio has almost doubled to 2 out of 5 children (37.9 percent) as the crisis unfolds. About 42 percent of the population is vulnerable, facing a higher risk as they are deprived in more than one dimension: education, health, living conditions, and financial security. Disruption to public services and the adoption of negative coping strategies by poor households are set to increase deprivation in wellbeing and inequality, especially among children.¹³

Human Development Index and Gender Inequality Index

10. Iraq ranked 123¹⁴ out of 189 countries on the UN Human Development Index in 2020, 154¹⁵ out of 156 on the Global Gender Gap Index, and 146¹⁶ (out of 189) on the Global Inequality Index (GII), which measures gender inequalities in three important aspects of human development—*reproductive health* (maternal mortality ratio and adolescent birth rates); *empowerment* (parliamentary seats occupied by women and proportion of adult women and men aged 25 years and older with at least some secondary education); and *economic status* (labor market participation and measured by labor force participation rate of female and male populations). Iraq holds the lowest GII ranking (146) in comparison to other countries in the region, such as Saudi Arabia (56), Oman (68), Lebanon (96), Algeria (103) and Iran (113). However, it is still better positioned than Syria (122), Afghanistan (157) and Yemen (162).

Education

11. In Iraq, the national literacy rate is nearly 82 percent and the illiteracy rate (six years and older) is nearly 18 percent.¹⁷ Nearly 70 percent women (15-49 years old) are literate, of which 74.3 percent reside in urban areas and 56.4 percent in rural areas, and 78 percent youth (15-24 years old) are literate (83 percent urban, 68 percent rural).¹⁸
12. The MICS 2018 findings show disparities in enrollment and completion rates by gender, area, and wealth. According to the latest Iraq Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) 2018, the enrollment rate of boys exceeds the enrollment rate of girls in the primary stage and in the later stages, except in secondary education, where the enrollment rate for girls (35 percent) is higher than the enrollment rate for boys (31

¹² UNICEF and World Bank, *Assessment of COVID-19 Impact on Poverty and Vulnerability in Iraq*, July 2020

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ UNDP, *Human Development Report, 2020*; <http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/hdr2020.pdf>.

¹⁵ World Economic Forum, *Global Gender Gap Report, 2021*;

http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2021.pdf.

¹⁶ Global Inequality Index (2020); http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/2020_statistical_annex_table_5.xlsx.

¹⁷ World Food Programme (WFP), FAO, Central Statistical Organization (CSO), Government of Iraq, *Comprehensive Food Security and Vulnerability Analysis (CFSVA)*, 2016.

¹⁸ CSO, Government of Iraq and UNICEF, *Iraq Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS)*, 2018.

percent) in secondary education.¹⁹ Similarly, considering completion by area, 79 percent of urban children (of appropriate age) complete primary school and 69 percent complete it in rural areas. With respect to wealth, while 94 percent of youth (15-24 years old) in the richest wealth quintile completed primary school, nearly half, 53 percent, of youth in the poorest wealth quintile attained the same.

13. There are two million out of school children in the country, half of which should be attending primary education. Moreover, results indicate that 68 percent girls and boys whose age is one year younger than primary education age are not attending early childhood or primary education programmes. This percentage drastically decreases with children of lower secondary school age who are not attending primary or secondary programmes; boys (28 percent) and girls (15 percent).

Health

14. The maternal mortality ratio in Iraq is 79 deaths per 100,000 live births.²⁰ The MICS findings indicate that the coverage of pregnant women is relatively high in Iraq, where 87.5 percent aged 15-49 years have at least one ante-natal (ANC) visit and 67.9 percent of pregnant women received health care through at least four visits to any health facility. There has been a marked improvement in trends in under-five mortality rates. While in 1995, the rate was 45.8 deaths per 1,000 live births, in 2018, the ratio was 26 deaths per 1,000 live births. A mother's education has a significant impact on reducing the mortality rate of children under the age of five with as 24 deaths per thousand live births of children were of mothers with secondary education and above, compared to 27 deaths thousand live births of mothers with primary education or none.²¹

Women's Economic Participation

15. Women make essential contributions to the local economy in general and rural economy in particular, yet their access to productive resources and employment opportunities remains limited, holding back their capacity to improve their lives and to better contribute to the economic growth, food security and sustainable development of their communities and countries.²² Women in Iraq are not accessing the labour market on an equal basis with men. The public sector is the predominant employer in Iraq, and unemployment remains high, especially among women and youth. According to the 2018 data, only 18.1 percent of women over 15 years are economically active compared to 74.1 percent of men.²³ Moreover, women are excluded from the industry sector represented only by 3.9 percent (mostly related to the oil sector) compared to men (23.4 percent), whereas they are fairly more active in the agriculture sector (mostly informally and with poor social protection), accounting 43.9 percent of labour compared to 12.3 percent men.²⁴ In 2011, the percentage of women in agricultural employment was 49 percent, while men represented 17.1 percent. In 2017, 43.7

¹⁹ CSO and Kurdistan Statistical Office, Government of Iraq & UNICEF, Iraq Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS), 2018. The number of households surveyed in Iraq was 20,521.

²⁰ UN Women data, <https://data.unwomen.org/country/iraq>.

²¹ MICS, 2018

²² Ibid.

²³ UNDP, Gender Inequality Index, 2018; <http://hdr.undp.org/en/composite/GII>

²⁴ World Bank, Gender Data Portal, 2017

percent of women and 16.1 percent of men were working in the agricultural sector (see Figure 1).

16. The unemployment rate for young women is double than that of men. In 2017, about 56 percent of young women were unemployed compared to 29 percent for young men.²⁵ Women’s participation in the formal labour sector is very low, in particular in the private sector, where only two percent of the total number of employees are women, most of whom are employed in low-paid and low-skilled jobs. There is a lack of information about women working in the informal labour sector, as well as in agricultural and domestic work.

Figure 1: Labor force participation in Iraq (percentage of female and male employment per sector)

	Female (Percentage of Total Female Employment)		Male (Percentage of Total Male Employment)	
	2011	2017	2011	2017
Employment in Agriculture	49	43.7	17.2	16.1
Employment in Industry	3.5	3.9	21.3	24.2
Employment in Services	47.5	52.3	61.5	59.7

Source: World Bank (2018). Data Bank based on ILO Modeled Estimates.

17. Women in Iraq carry much of the burden of unpaid household work. Most care work, such as cleaning, cooking, and caring for children or elderly, is performed by women and girls and is usually not remunerated. Although this work is critical to the proper functioning of communities, unpaid care work has been largely ignored by economic and social public policy initiatives. The Iraq Household Socio-Economy Survey (2012) reported that women spend on average more than six hours a day performing unpaid activities, such as cooking and childcare. According to the Overseas Development Institute (ODI), women in Iraq give up roughly 10.5 weeks more than men, per year, in unpaid and unrecognized work.²⁶ A 2017 study by Oxfam and UN Women reported that unpaid care work has increased in contexts of displacement (respondents estimated an increase from one to three hours to “most of the day”), with women continuing to consistently invest most of the time and energy (men spent only 25 percent of the total time allocated for unpaid care). The research reflected that women in conflict-affected areas regard care work as their fundamental responsibility and part of their identity.²⁷ Mothers, older (unmarried) daughters, and elderly women are the ones that mostly engage in unpaid care work.²⁸
18. Among reasons cited by women for not seeking employment are domestic responsibilities, insufficient education, competing demands on time, cultural expectations, a perceived lack of qualifications, lack of access to safe transportation, opposition from family members, and health issues.²⁹ In addition, if through

²⁵ World Bank Group, *Iraq Economic Monitor from War to Reconstruction and Economic Recovery*, Spring 2018.

²⁶ Overseas Development Institute (ODI), *Women’s Work: Mothers, Children and the Global Childcare Crisis*, March 2016; <https://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/odi-assets/publications-opinion-files/10333.pdf>.

²⁷ Luisa Dietrich & Simone E. Carter, *Gender and Conflict Analysis in Isis Affected Communities of Iraq*, 2017. Study produced by Oxfam with the support of UN Women in Iraq and the financial contribution of the Japanese Cooperation.

²⁸ UN Women & Oxfam, *Gender Profile – Iraq: A Situation Analysis on Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment in Iraq*, 13 December 2018.

²⁹ Reach, *Iraq Final Report Assessment on Employment and Working Conditions of Conflict-Affected Women Across Key Sectors*, 2019.

employment, a woman can keep and use her income as she sees fit, this may also be perceived as undermining the man's traditional authority in the home.³⁰

Socio-Economic Profile of Rural Women in Iraq

19. Rural women constitute about a third of Iraq's women population. More than half of the women aged 12 years and above are married (56.5 percent), 35.2 percent are single, 0.5 percent are divorced, 0.3 percent are separated, and 7.4 percent are widows. The percentage of women-headed households at the national level is 9.9 percent, 10.3 percent in urban and 8.6 percent in rural areas.³¹ According to MICS 2018, 55.2 percent women (15-49 years old) in rural areas own a mobile phone (72.4 percent in urban). The rise in female-headed households, from 7.7 percent in 2010³² to nearly one in ten households now, is a result of the increasing death rates among men due to deteriorating security situation and the escalation of violence in the country, immigration, and the change in the pattern of social and economic relations with the loss of the family's breadwinner.
20. Women in rural areas are likely to be more economically active than women in urban areas but they also face greater food insecurity, barriers to education, and participate more in the informal—and therefore unprotected by Iraq's equal opportunity laws—economic sphere. Uneducated women in rural areas have a much higher incidence of poverty and are less likely to be involved in skilled labor than women in urban areas. Logistical and security issues contribute to rural women's inability to access education and, in turn, non-agricultural related jobs, as well as other critical services.³³ Discriminatory social norms often prevent women from inheriting or acquiring land and limit their access to services (be it health, social, financial or agricultural support services). Stereotypes about women's role, coupled with security issues and mobility constraints also undermine their participation in decision-making processes and their involvement in development programmes and social services, and participating in decision-making processes at the community level.³⁴
21. Rural women shoulder a disproportionate number of roles and responsibilities, which include family and economic activities (household chores, agricultural labor, and livestock rearing) and suffer from gender-based discrimination in accessing social services, making them more vulnerable to the effects of poverty. They have limited access or control over resources, education, formal employment opportunities, and are gravely underpaid. Illiteracy and child marriage are prevalent among rural women. In nearly all indicators, rural women are worse off or disadvantaged, whether it is access to education, fertility, drinking water, and sanitation (see Table 3: Social Status of Iraqi Women Disaggregated by Urban and Rural)³⁵. National efforts to target and include rural women in development programs have been weak. Funding for women-led small-scale businesses or projects, which could generate both income or employment in the

³⁰ ODI, *Women's Work: Mothers, Children and the Global Childcare Crisis*, March 2016.

³¹ Poverty Monitoring and Evaluation Survey in Iraq for the year 2017/2018

³² CSO, Iraq the results of Buildings, Dwellings and Establishment Census and Households Listing within the Project of Population and Housing Census (PHC), 2010.

³³ UNDP, *Integrating Women into the Iraqi Economy*, 2012; <http://www.iq.undp.org/content/dam/iraq/IQpercent20Womenpercent20EEpercent20-percent20Final.pdf>

³⁴ United Nations Country Team (Iraq), *Report to the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women Committee (Confidential)*, 2019.

³⁵ CSO, Ministry of Planning, Government of Iraq, *The Reality of Rural Women in Iraq*, 2019.

area, is scarce. Moreover, those working in the private sector do not have the same social security as men do.³⁶

22. The prevailing culture, customs, traditions, and national laws do not advance women's empowerment, agency, mobility, and equal rights. For example, while women have the right to inherit property and can bequeath their personal property to their children under Iraq's Personal Status Law, actual inheritance is regulated by a strict quota system that is in accordance with the Shari'a due to Resolution Number 137. The resolution gives conservative clerics total power over matters of marriage, divorce, inheritance, and child custody, eroding the rights previously guaranteed to women under the national law that applied equally to all citizens.³⁷

Table 3: Social Status of Iraqi Women Disaggregated by Urban and Rural

	Urban	Rural	Total
Women aged 15-49 who got married before 15 years (%)	5.4	6.3	5.7
Women aged 15-49 who got married before 18 years (%)	24.0	26.8	24.8
Fertility (women aged 15-19 years)	68 / 1,000 women	75 / 1,000 women	70 / 1,000 women
Total Fertility (women aged 15-49)	3.6	3.8	3.6
Women (15-49 years) currently married and use any means of family planning (%)	54.1	49.7	52.8
Women (15-49 years) who gave live birth and received assistance during childbirth by a skilled attendant (%)	96.8	92.9	95.6
Women (15-49 years) who underwent any form of female circumcision (%)	7.0	8.3	7.4
Illiterate women aged 10 years and above (%)	14.7	27.3	-
Literate women (aged 10 years and above) (%)	19.4	29.8	-
Net enrollment rate in primary education (%)	92.2	86.7	91.6
Net enrollment rate in secondary education (%)	65.2	42.4	57.5
Net enrollment rate in preparatory education (%)	41.2	26.2	34
Households that use improved sources of drinking water (through pipes) (%)	55.9	41.9	-
Households served by public network for sanitation (%)	38.9	2.8	
Households who use cesspit (%)	56.2	70.2	

Source: MICS, 2018 / Poverty Monitoring and Evaluation Survey (2017/2018) for data on illiteracy and literacy rates.

23. According to MICS 2018, around 46.5 percent women aged 15-49 years in the countryside believe that a husband is justified to beat his wife if she reveals the secrets of the house, 38.9 percent believe beating justified if a wife argues with her husband, and 39.6 percent rural women believe a husband has a right to hit her wife if she leaves the house without telling him. In comparison, the percentages for the same

³⁶ CSO, Ministry of Planning, Government of Iraq, *The Reality of Rural Women in Iraq*, 2019.

³⁷ Freedom House, *Women's Rights in the Middle East and North Africa - Iraq*, 14 October 2005, available at: <https://www.refworld.org/docid/47387b6b16.html> [accessed 15 October 2021]

scenarios are much lower in urban areas, 28.4 percent, 22.9 percent, and 23.9 percent respectively.³⁸ Women's contribution to economic activity and the labor force is low compared to men due to many intertwined economic, educational, social, religious, and cultural reasons. The data of the Poverty Monitoring and Evaluation Survey in Iraq (2017/2018) reports that the rate of economic activity at the national level reached 42.8 percent and women's participation was quite small compared to men. The rate of unemployment among rural women (24.5 percent) is higher than the national rate (13.8 percent), it is lower than the rate for urban women (32.3 percent).³⁹

24. Agriculture is an important sector for women's employment in rural areas; 23 percent of women working in Iraq are employed in the sector. Women participate in all stages of farming, including cultivation, planting, weeding, harvesting and marketing with some variations, depending on the crop and the region. However, women in agriculture are rarely in control of the resources and the financial transactions in agriculture— setting the price, going to the market to buy and sell, managing the financial aspects of the business, access to, and ownership of, land, agricultural technology, information, training, financial services and all related productive resources. Findings from the community consultations⁴⁰ in target governorates are consistent with these findings from secondary sources. Community consultations in the target Governorates show that the majority of women farmers do not own or rent land, have a limited role in decision-making related to crops, and limited access to markets. Some of the major challenges faced by women farmers, particularly women-headed households, are water scarcity, traditional farming methods, and lack of modern agricultural tools. Water shortage and primitive irrigation methods, like collecting water from a nearby lake, and lack of modern equipment (plowing by hand), takes a great physical toll on women farmers. Women-headed households face a double burden as they must also manage all the domestic responsibilities along with farming activities.⁴¹ This gender gap makes agriculture less productive than it could be and undermines the country's ability to reduce hunger and poverty, and to support economic development.⁴²
25. According to the Ministry of Planning, Government of Iraq, the following national efforts have been made to empower rural women so far: formation of a higher committee to advance the situation of rural women; provision of loans to rural women through the Agricultural Initiative Fund; Iraq's adoption of the project to advance the status of rural women in 2012; focus on rural women within the Poverty Alleviation Strategy. In addition, from 2005 onwards, the Ministry of Agriculture, Department of Agricultural Guidance and Training, Department of Rural Women and Girl Development, has implemented a number of extension activities and seminars in the governorates of Iraq aimed at developing the knowledge and skills of rural women and encouraging them to adopt scientific methods in agricultural work, which contributes to increasing production and improving its quality. Extension activities included orientation seminars, developmental qualification programs, small productive projects, field days, guidance pamphlets, and agricultural training courses.⁴³

Political Participation

³⁸ CSO, Ministry of Planning, Government of Iraq, *The Reality of Rural Women in Iraq*, 2019.

³⁹ CSO, Ministry of Planning, Government of Iraq, *The Reality of Rural Women in Iraq*, 2019.

⁴⁰ See Annex 8A – Report on Community Consultations

⁴¹ See Annex 8A – Report on Community Consultations

⁴² UN Women & Oxfam. *Gender Profile – Iraq: A Situation Analysis on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in Iraq*, 13 December 2018.

⁴³ CSO, Ministry of Planning, Government of Iraq, *The Reality of Rural Women in Iraq*, 2019.

26. Women are under-represented in political decision-making at national and local levels, and within independent and reconciliations committees. The 2005 Constitution provides for a quota of 25 percent representation of women in the national Parliament. Despite the adoption of the Political Parties Law No 36 of 2015, which stipulates women's representation in the national assembly, their participation and/or representation in political parties is still inadequate, as the law does not include provisions guaranteeing women's participation in leadership structures of political parties. However, the May 2018 parliamentary elections saw an unprecedented number of women running for elections, nearly 2,600. As of February 2021, 26.4 percent of seats in parliament were held by women. The elections resulted in 84 over a total of 329 seats allocated to women. This indicates society's increasing confidence to elect women despite a number of challenges during the electoral campaign including defamation, intimidation, and harassment, which led to the withdrawal of some of the candidates from the electoral race.⁴⁴

Legal Status of Iraqi Women

27. Iraq's Constitution (adopted in 2005) states that all Iraqis are equal before the law and prohibits discrimination based on sex (Article 14). The Iraqi Constitution guarantees basic human rights to all Iraqi women. Article 20 provides universal suffrage for both male and female Iraqi citizens and further states that they shall have the right to participate in public affairs and to enjoy political rights, including the right to vote, elect, and run for office. Article 30 establishes that the state "*shall guarantee to the individual and the family—especially children and women—social and health security, the basic requirements for living a free and decent life, and shall secure for them suitable income and appropriate housing.*"⁴⁵

In addition, the following Articles of the Constitution are relevant to protection from gender-based violence (GBV): Iraqis are equal before the law without discrimination based on gender, race, ethnicity, origin, colour, religion, creed, belief or opinion, or economic and social status (Article 14). Every individual has the right to enjoy life, security and liberty. Deprivation or restriction of these rights is prohibited except in accordance with the law and based on a decision issued by a competent judicial authority (Article 15). The family is the foundation of society; the State preserves its entity and its religious, moral, and patriotic values. The State guarantees the protection of motherhood, childhood and old age and shall care for children and youth and provides them with the appropriate conditions to further their talents and abilities. All forms of violence and abuse in the Republic of Iraq, the family, school, and society shall be prohibited (Article 29). Forced labour, slavery, slave trade, trafficking in women or children, and sex trafficking are prohibited (Article 37). The Constitution, however, does not mention the most important rights for women: family-related rights, such as marriage, the right to choose a partner and those rights surrounding custody, and inheritance.

28. However, the Constitution also cites Islam as the basic source of legislation and forbids the passing of laws contradictory to its "established rulings", and Article 41 allows each religious group in Iraq to govern its own personal status matters. As a

⁴⁴ United Nations Country Team (Iraq), *Report to the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women Committee (Confidential)*, 2019.

⁴⁵ Iraq's Constitution of 2005: https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Iraq_2005.pdf?lang=en

result, the situation of women in Iraq very much depends on the implementation of Islamic law and on the priorities and interpretations of male-led religious authorities.⁴⁶

National Policies and Strategies for Gender Equality⁴⁷

29. There are several government **policies and strategies aimed at promoting and protecting women's employment and economic empowerment** such as the National Action Plan for the Implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 (NAP 1325), **the 2014-2018 National Strategy for the Advancement of the Status of Iraqi Women**, and the **Iraq Labour Law of 2015**. These laws provide paid maternity leave, prohibit discrimination against women during recruitment and in the workplace, and increase female participation in the public sphere. However, findings from the present assessment indicate that the implementation and enforcement of these policies is inconsistent, particularly in the private sector. There are no specific policies on the empowerment of rural women and neither is there a gender strategy in place for the agricultural sector.
30. The **National Development Plan** highlights the low participation of women in economic, social, and political activities and their limited role in the legislative and political institutions as one of the key challenges to development. The empowerment of women in terms of health, economics, science and security and increasing their participation in the private sector is clearly stated as an objective. The **National Strategy on Violence against Women and Girls 2018-2030**, provides an overall framework on which policy and decision makers will draw to take concrete actions aimed at preventing violence against women and girls and protecting survivors of violence.
31. Iraq ratified the most important international treaty related to gender equality: the **Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women** (CEDAW) in 1986, but has yet to ratify the Optional Protocol on violence against women. The convention espouses values and legal obligations for women's human rights that have become universal, and is often described as an international bill of rights for women. Consisting of a preamble and 30 articles, it defines what constitutes discrimination against women and sets up an agenda for national action to end such discrimination. Although Iraq is party to numerous international human rights conventions, substantial and long-standing impediments to domestic compliance with Iraq's treaty obligations remain. Iraq's current discriminatory legislative provisions illustrate that constitutional provisions alone do not guarantee women the fulfillment of their rights. Legislative change, coupled with active enforcement mechanisms, remains necessary to bring Iraq into full compliance with antidiscrimination instruments and ensure women's equal rights.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Sanja Kelly and Julia Breslin, eds., *Women's Rights in the Middle East and North Africa: Progress Amid Resistance (Freedom in the World)*, 2010.

⁴⁷ Summary of laws available at:
<https://www2.unwomen.org/media/field%20office%20arab%20states/attachments/publications/2019/12/gender%20justice%20report%20update%202019/summaries/english/iraqsummary19eng.pdf?la=en&vs=2024>

⁴⁸ Iraq Legal Development Project, *The Status of Women in Iraq: An Assessment of Iraq's De Jure and De Facto Compliance with International Legal Standards*, 2005;
http://www.peacewomen.org/sites/default/files/hr_statusofwomeniniraq_aba_july2005_0.pdf

32. The Constitution of the Republic of Iraq declares that Islam is the official religion of the State, is a fundamental source of legislation, and that no law can contradict the established provisions of Islam. This provision is used to justify reservations to CEDAW.⁴⁹ Despite ratifying CEDAW in 1986, Iraq maintains reservations to Article 2(f) and (g), which call on states to modify or abolish existing laws and penal codes that discriminate against women; Article 9, which requires equal rights regarding changes and transfers of nationality; Article 16, which concerns the elimination of discrimination in marriage and family relations; and Article 29, paragraph 1, with regard to the principle of international arbitration on the interpretation or application of the convention. Article 41 of the Constitution states that Iraqis are free in their commitment to their personal status according to their religions, sects, beliefs, or choices, and this shall be regulated by law. Article 41 is controversial because of concerns that it permits new personal status laws to be proposed for different religious groups or sects (e.g., the draft Ja'fari Personal Status Law) that detract from the rights stated in the Personal Status Law No. 188 of 1959. CEDAW's concluding observations issued in 2014 recommended that Iraq repeal Article 41 because it contradicts CEDAW and the guarantee of equality before the law in the Constitution (Article 14). The CEDAW Committee also called on Iraq to withdraw the draft Ja'fari Personal Status Law, amend discriminatory provisions in the Penal Code, and expedite the issuance of a domestic violence law. Moreover, Iraq has yet to ratify the Optional Protocol to CEDAW. By ratifying the Optional Protocol, a state recognizes the competence of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women—the body that monitors states' parties' compliance with the convention—to receive and consider complaints from individuals or groups within its jurisdiction. The Government of Iraq has not been reporting to the CEDAW Committee⁵⁰, but consultations with UN Women indicate that the Government is in process of drafting a report for CEDAW.

National Machinery for Gender

33. The Government of Iraq shut down the Ministry of Women's Affairs in 2015. In 2017, the Directorate of Women's Empowerment was officially created by the General Secretariat of the Council of Ministers by Resolution Number 4, which defines its composition and its role. In addition, the Higher Committee for the Advancement of the Status of Iraqi women and the Higher Committee for the Advancement of Rural Women Status have been restructured along with the establishment of the National group. However, the Directorate of Women's Empowerment and the two Higher Committees have no portfolio and no decision-making power, as well as no coordinating mechanism, and their recommendations are not binding. This situation has resulted in duplication, loss of synergies, and inefficiency in the implementation of women strategies and policies.⁵¹ Gender units/sections have been established in every Ministry and an independent Women Empowerment Directorate exist at the governorate level as well.⁵²

Gender-Based Violence

⁴⁹ UNDP, Iraq, *Gender Justice and the Law*, 2018.

⁵⁰ Valeria Vilardo, Sara Bittar, *Country Gender Profile - Iraq: A Situation Analysis on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in Iraq*, 2018.

⁵¹ United Nations Country Team (Iraq), *Report to the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women Committee (Confidential)*, 2019.

⁵² Meeting with UN WOMEN, July 2021.

34. According to the Humanitarian Needs Overview Iraq 2020 (HNO), 1.29 million people are at risk of gender-based violence (GBV) in Iraq. Of these in need, 84 percent are women, 39 percent are children, five percent are older persons and five percent are people with disabilities. Furthermore, it is also noted that 98 percent of the GBV survivors who reported GBV are women or girls and the main incidents reported are of domestic violence followed by forced/child marriages.⁵³ However, reporting is quite limited and most GBV survivors refuse referral to specialized services due to fear of stigma and mistrust in available services and avenues for legal redress, as well as the potential for further violence.⁵⁴
35. Domestic violence continued to remain endemic in 2020, including the killings of women and girls by their families and husbands. While Iraq's Criminal Code criminalizes physical assault, article 41(1) gives a husband a legal right to "punish" his wife and parents to discipline their children "within limits prescribed by law or custom." The Penal Code also provides for mitigated sentences for violent acts, including murder, for "honorable motives" or for catching one's wife or female relative in the act of adultery or sex outside of marriage. Iraqi parliamentary efforts to pass a draft law against violence stalled throughout 2019 and 2020. The 2019 version of the draft anti-domestic violence law seen by Human Rights Watch includes provisions for services for domestic violence survivors, protection (restraining) orders, penalties for their breach, and the establishment of a cross-ministerial committee to combat domestic violence. However, the bill has several gaps and provisions that would undermine its effectiveness, including that it prioritizes reconciliation over protection and justice for victims.⁵⁵

Impact of COVID-19

36. Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in late February 2020 in Iraq, it has brought about a surge in unemployment and critical food security concerns for women and men. The pandemic has resulted in a significant drop in both in-kind and cash transfers. Moreover, Iraqis faced significant challenges accessing both market and healthcare services. School-going children have also been negatively impacted as only a small share of children received any catch-up or learning activities during school closures due to the pandemic. Although labor force participation in Iraq remained comparable to the pre-lockdown period (above 61 percent throughout), the unemployment rate increased significantly during the pandemic. Compared to 12.7 percent in the pre-lockdown period, the unemployment rate climbed to 29 percent in August and then fell to 23.7 percent in September, and 22 percent in October. After the initial increment, the unemployment rate among men decreased gradually but remained high and stable among women. Pre-pandemic public sector workers were most successful in holding onto their jobs. Compared to more than 30 percent of private sector workers (34.3 percent) and self-employed (32.6), only 12.6 percent in the public sector had lost their jobs permanently or temporarily or gotten out of the labor force in August. Among those unemployed prior to lockdown, 13 percent were out of the labor force in August. An estimated 6.0, 5.2, and 5.1 percent of Iraqis consumed inadequate diets in August, September, and October, respectively. The

⁵³ OCHA, *Humanitarian Needs Overview Iraq, 2020*; https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/iraq_hno_2020.pdf

⁵⁴ Ibid

⁵⁵ Human Rights Watch, *World Report, 2021*.

prevalence of an insufficiently diverse diet was more pronounced among households with no working member(s) and in rural areas.⁵⁶

37. According to the GBV Sub-Cluster Rapid Assessment on the Impact of COVID-19 Outbreak on GBV in Iraq, COVID-19 has increased the risk of GBV in Iraq through various ways.⁵⁷ Firstly, due to the restrictions on movement and confinement measures, the GBV survivors might face challenges in accessing the lifesaving GBV services including safe shelters. This is also even more striking, as there is no possibility of sheltering all the women that face abuse due to lack of a law that protects the survivors. Furthermore, it has been noted that resources might be directed to health interventions and this can lead to gaps in GBV service provision. Secondly, loss of livelihoods due to economic consequences of COVID-19 pandemic can have dire impact on women as it might increase the risk of exploitation and sexual violence. Loss of breadwinner position in household from men's side can potentially trigger intrahousehold conflict. Lastly, the crisis can increase the burden of women and girls, who are mostly the caregivers to the children, the sick and the elderly, and hence lead to an increased risk of infection. This is also valid for girls, whose schools are closed and who might be undertaking additional caregiving roles.⁵⁸
38. The remote protection monitoring led by 12 organizations in 110 assessed sub-districts by conducting 1,442 key information interviews on June 2020 has also showed that main protection risks affecting women and girls are psychological trauma (68 percent), stress and anxiety; lack of specialized services for women (45 percent); lack of safe space and privacy (36 percent) and violence or abuse within families/households (23 percent). More than 50 percent of the interviewees also reported a significant increase in the severity of these issues. Furthermore, there has been increased reports of GBV, such as domestic violence, self-immolation, self-inflicted injuries due to spousal abuse, sexual harassment of minors and suicide, and transactional sex.⁵⁹

Gender Norms

39. There is a persistence of deep-rooted patriarchal attitudes and stereotypes regarding women's roles and responsibilities, which discriminate against women, and is exacerbated by the sectarian and religious divisions. Indeed, the root causes of gender discrimination are due to the persistent cultural and social tribal norms often worsened by misconceptions of religious texts' interpretation that subordinate women to men, as well as the institutional, policy and legal barriers that undermine the full enjoyment of women's and girls' rights. Furthermore, women face several legal and cultural restrictions that limit their mobility and decision making, generating difficulty to move around freely, access education, jobs, land, and micro-credit finance. Such restrictions may stem from women's role in traditional societies, which was often limited by a father's, brother or husband's guardianship. The concept of men as breadwinners and

⁵⁶ World Bank, *Iraq High Frequency Phone Survey (IHFPS) To Monitor Impacts of COVID-19 – Results from August, September and October Rounds*;

<https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/683691618384426597/pdf/Iraq-High-Frequency-Phone-Survey-IHFPS-to-Monitor-Impacts-of-COVID-19-Results-from-August-September-and-October-2020-Rounds.pdf>

⁵⁷ GBV Sub-Cluster Iraq, *The GBV Sub-Cluster Rapid Assessment on the Impact of COVID-19 Outbreak on GBV in Iraq*, May 2020;

https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/sites/www.humanitarianresponse.info/files/assessments/gbv_sc-iraq-covid-19_assessment_report-april-may_2020.pdf

⁵⁸ Cansu Aydin, *Rapid Gender Analysis - COVID 19*, June 2020.

⁵⁹ Global Protection Cluster, *Iraq: COVID-19 Protection Situation Report*, 06 May 2020;

<https://www.globalprotectioncluster.org/2020/05/06/iraq-covid-19-situation-report-as-of-06-may-2020/>

leaders of the household leads men to generally make the decisions for the household, and on behalf of the women. The male head of household may make unilateral decisions that impact a woman's entire life, including her participation in the job market. Studies show that the controlling behavior women are most likely to face include a husband insisting on always knowing where the woman is (63.3 percent), and insisting on the woman asking his permission to seek healthcare (66.9 percent). In addition, men are also likely to try to control women's participation in the economy. Women's economic participation can be a highly contested issue because it contradicts the traditional men-as-breadwinners concept. Unpaid care work remains a barrier to reaching gender equality as it reinforces discriminatory gender stereotypes that force women to stay in the home, limits their participation in the public sphere and prevents them from having access to the labor market. The unequal burden of unpaid care work on women, especially women in poverty, is a barrier to women's full enjoyment of their human rights, and this institutionalized inequality needs to be addressed by national policies and strategies.⁶⁰

40. Community decisions are made by various groups, including mukhtars, community leaders, and religious and/or tribal leaders. Most of these community level decision-makers are men, and the decision-making bodies are mainly comprising of men. While some representation of women is not uncommon, the decision-making bodies and/or groups remain patriarchal.⁶¹

Climate Change and Gender

41. Iraq's Central Statistics Administration's data reveal that women are dealing with the shrinking of agricultural space due to drought and desertification. In fact, three million out of the 14 million acres currently available to agriculture face the threat of desertification. The combined effects have reduced prospects for viable irrigated agricultural production and diminished sustainable income-generating opportunities for rural communities. It has also negatively impacted the quality of life, especially for women and girls. For example, in a drought situation, women and girls bear the increased burden of fetching water and facilitating other basic household needs from longer distances as water resources dry up.⁶² The increasing incidence of drought and water scarcity places an increased burden on women both for food production and in fetching water for basic household needs.⁶³
42. There is a paucity of secondary data or studies on the impact of climate change on women in Iraq, their coping strategies and their potential role as agents to mitigate effects of climate change. The only document which provides some information on this topic is FAO's 'Regional Gender Equality Strategy for the Near East and North Africa 2017-2020, 2017'. It outlines the challenges women face in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, including Iraq, with respect to climate change in these countries. A key challenge for policy and decision-makers and development partners is to understand the strategies adopted by rural women and men to address climate change

⁶⁰ Valeria Vilardo, Sara Bittar, *Country Gender Profile - Iraq: A Situation Analysis on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in Iraq*, 2018

⁶¹ CARE International, *Presentation on Rapid Gender Analysis – COVID 19*, May 2020.

⁶² UN Women & Oxfam. *Gender Profile – Iraq: A Situation Analysis on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in Iraq*, 2018.

⁶³ Government of Netherlands, *Climate Change Profile – Iraq*, 2018;
https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Iraq_3.pdf

impacts on agriculture and rural communities. In the Near East and North Africa region, including Iraq, both women and men work in agriculture with different levels of responsibilities and workloads, which are likely to increase with climate change.

Women's productive and reproductive roles are not sufficiently recognized or accounted for in climate change mitigation and adaptation efforts, or in the context of natural disasters influenced or exacerbated by climate change both at the national and regional levels. Women generally face higher risks and more problems due to the impacts of climate change on existing poverty as a result of the numerous gender-based constraints illustrated so far. In a water-scarce country, especially in rural areas, access to safe and reliable supplies of water for productive and domestic use is limited. Women are significantly affected by water scarcity due to their role in managing both domestic and productive water use. Their unequal participation in decision-making processes and labour markets compound inequalities and often prevent women from contributing fully to climate-related planning, policy-making and implementation.

43. The strategy highlights the pressing need to identify women's roles and constraints in irrigation and agricultural development and management in the context of climate change, to analyse their priority needs, and raise awareness of the major challenges facing women and men as regards water resource management and climate change adaptation and mitigation for stakeholders, especially the government. This would provide the basis for generating realistic recommendations for reducing or eliminating barriers to women's engagement in sustainable water resource management, environmental protection and climate change resilience. In addressing water scarcity, practitioners must on the one hand, succeed in empowering women and mainstreaming gender within water management, agriculture and climate change adaptation, and on the other, succeed in improving water productivity. The lack of suitable capacity, skills and experience, and limited opportunities and time for working on these sectors remain among the most important challenges for women's participation in water and agriculture development, and climate change adaptation.
44. It emphasizes the need for legal and regulatory frameworks as well as institutional arrangements that enable the integration of gender-sensitive approaches to water resource management and decision making at different levels: national, local and regional governments. Basin, river, marine and aquifer organizations all need to enable participatory decision-making and water resources management processes across sectors using gender analysis. An intersectoral analysis of transboundary water governance that includes gender mainstreaming and adaptation strategies has the potential to be truly transformative. It further highlights the need for awareness raising and advocacy to ensure that gender equality is considered as a key issue in the water governance debate. The study maintains that the most critical points to consider for the Near East and North Africa are: 1) women's challenges in water, agriculture and climate change adaptation; 2) water governance, irrigation system expansion and extension services; 3) gender mainstreaming in water governance and adaptation; and 4) women's participation and empowerment in water governance and climate change adaptation.⁶⁴

⁶⁴ FAO, *Regional Gender Equality Strategy for the Near East and North Africa 2017-2020*, 2017; <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i7116e.pdf>

45. The findings from community consultations are consistent with secondary data on climate change and gender, that farmers, both women and men, are generally aware of the effects of climate change and recognize its negative impact on agricultural yield, livestock and income. Most of the women and men consulted in the three governorates, recognized the effects of climate change, namely, *changes in rainfall patterns, water scarcity, soil salinity, higher temperatures, and frequent occurrence of dust storms*.⁶⁵
46. With respect to impact of climate change, community consultations indicate that farmers are experiencing difficulties in agricultural activities and livestock farming on account of changes in weather patterns. For women particularly, fetching water for irrigation and domestic use is a major challenge due to water shortage (dried up lakes and rivers). A woman from Muthanna also highlighted that climate change has severely affected the cultivation of okra and other fruits, like watermelon, during summer (particularly July and August) because of frequent dust storms and high temperatures. Women and men, across all three governorates, also highlighted the loss of livestock animals due to dry and hot weather. Overall, small-scale farmers' yield and income has taken a major hit due to effects of climate change, to the extent that many do not depend on agriculture as their primary source of food and livelihood anymore; they buy imported vegetables and canned food (powder milk) from the local market, which is comparatively cheaper than subsistence farming.⁶⁶
47. Another important finding from the consultations is that small-scale farmers are not fully equipped to cope with the effects of climate change to maintain a certain level of agricultural output and generate a decent income, which has led to a significant proportion of farmers leaving the sector. Farmers are using traditional techniques and methods to address effects of climate change, but overall, they are ill-equipped to deal with the rising challenges. For example, to protect livestock from extreme temperatures, a prevalent practice is to build a roof over their sheds. Other common coping methods include drilling wells for water, plastic covers for crops, or covering warehouses to safeguard harvest from storms. Thus, the challenges stemming from climate change accompanied by rising costs of inputs has rendered agriculture an insufficient and unreliable source of livelihood for rural households in the target governorates. Women and men farmers in Muthanna reported that a sharp decline in agricultural income has forced many farmers to leave farming; men are seeking government jobs, while women have switched to other sources of income like sewing and handicrafts.

Gender in Climate Change Policies and Strategies

48. The **Climate Change Profile Iraq (2008)** acknowledges daunting climate-related challenges faced by small farmers and livestock producers, including decreased rainfall and run-off and increased temperatures, which are contributing to widespread desertification, but does not specify how women are specifically affected by climate change. **The National Environmental Strategy of Iraq** has as one of its goals to "Improve quality of life and livelihood from an environment and health perspective, protect natural environment, and use and support sustainable practices", and briefly indicates that there is a need to reach out to NGOs and farmers so they can play a role

⁶⁵ See Annex 8A – Report on Community Consultations

⁶⁶ Ibid.

in its implementation. However, there is no specific acknowledgment of the role of women in responding to climate change related challenges. The **United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) 2015-2019**⁶⁷, in partnership with the Government of Iraq, sets out the collective response by the UN system to national development priorities, which in turn are explicitly based on the programming principles of the UN Development Group (UNDG). The UNDAF prioritizes environmental sustainability to combat desertification and climate change, gender equality and the building of resilience of women, youth and capacity development.

Key Initiatives in Climate Change & Agriculture with a Gender Focus

49. A GCF readiness support project for ***Building capacity to Advance the National Adaptation Plan (NAP) Process in Iraq, 2020-2022, UNEP***. The [NAP process](#) aims to reduce vulnerability to the negative impacts of climate change, especially in developing countries, through strategic planning based on projections of future climate change. NAPs are seen as one of the most important mechanisms for adapting to climate change. The three-year project, funded by the GCF with over USD \$2.5m, will support Iraq to formulate and implement its NAP, with a particular focus on strengthening institutional, technical and financial capacities to ensure that medium- to long-term adaptation needs are integrated into national development planning. A key aspect of Iraq's NAP process is to identify, assess and bridge existing gaps in climate knowledge, as these gaps constitute barriers to long-term climate planning across local, regional and national planning processes. Climate risk assessments will be carried out to identify the livelihoods and sectors most threatened by climate impacts, as well as the most urgent adaptation priorities.
50. The project launched in September, 2020, and aims to mainstream gender in all its activities. It is aiming for 50 percent representation of women in consultations and campaigns. However, in the project document, few specific strategies for mainstreaming women are mentioned. The document specifies that vulnerability assessments will focus and report separately on vulnerable groups such as women, youth, elderly people and people with disabilities, and adaptation options will have a special focus on vulnerable groups. The National Adaptation Plan technical team will have gender as one of the cross-cutting working groups. On these groups, representation of civil society organizations representing women, youth and indigenous people and women parliamentarians will be ensured. A stock taking exercise included climate vulnerabilities of communities and their livelihoods is still in draft form and the report of the Climate Risk Assessment is still in process.
51. ***Smallholder Agriculture Revitalization Project and the Building Resilience of the Agricultural Sector to Climate Change, 2017-2025, IFAD***, (Muthanna, Qadisiya, Missan and Thi-Qar). This project is still in the initial stages of implementation. Under this project women and men are to be provided training in climate resilient approaches and technologies that would enhance crop and livestock production. The project's gender strategy includes the following measures: Gender targets of at least 40 percent for the total of project beneficiaries; working with NGOs at governorate level that either specialise in or have a proven track record of working with women; a tentative pre-selection of activities that is heavily skewed in favour of women's direct participation (beekeeping, vegetable farming, small livestock rearing, off-farm activities such as sewing, etc.); gender sensitive selection of interventions to maximise returns to

⁶⁷ United Nations Country Team Iraq, United Nations Development Assistance Framework 2015-2019, 2014; https://planipolis.iiep.unesco.org/sites/default/files/ressources/iraq_undaf-15-mar-2015.pdf

women's labour and support their social and economic empowerment; the selection of productive infrastructure will need to be endorsed – separately – by women; a gender inclusive programme management and implementation team; and adherence to best practices in gender sensitive monitoring and evaluation of programme impact. The project has only been able to hire core staff and has yet to begin field activities

52. ***Promoting Sustainable Land Management for Improved Livelihoods in Degraded Areas of Iraq, 2019–2023, Global Environmental Facility (GEF) and FAO*** (Muthanna & Thi-Qar). The GEF-funded project being implemented by FAO aims to reverse land degradation, conserve land and water resources, and improve sustainable management of the marshland ecosystems in southern Iraq to increase access to resilient ecosystem services and recover livelihoods. The project will target national and local actors to promote sustainable land and water management practices, environmental conservation approaches and effective monitoring techniques. It recognizes the critical role women play in agriculture and climate resilient eco-systems. Thereby, all project related and relevant government policies, programmes and schemes will formally recognize and embed objectives related to improving the quality of life for rural women. This includes all activities related to each of the outputs. Similarly, all strategies and other policy improvements under will formally recognize gender-based objectives. A set of training and extension programs will be tailored specifically for women's needs as defined and supported by women. This will likely include enhanced income of women; participation in higher links of value chains; and, identification of gender specific activity improvements. This will be augmented by funding and support for women exclusive initiatives. This project is in initial stages of implementation. Project staff highlighted the challenge of reaching women for the baseline survey and including questions on gender issues in the survey questionnaire. The lesson learnt is that when surveys are being implemented through government staff, gender awareness sessions need to be incorporated into the training for the survey to facilitate the inclusion of women in the survey sample and the quality of the data to be collected on gender issues.
53. ***Restoration and Strengthening the Resilience of Agri-food Systems in Southern Iraq, 2021-2023, FAO***. The objective of this project is to enable poor smallholder farmers and landless rural households in Basrah, Missan and Thi-Qar Governorates to improve agricultural productivity and income generation while enhancing land and water resources and bio-diversity. The project will therefore consider and support: (i) the needs, priorities and constraints of women, as applicable to horticultural and livestock production and agri-food processing; (ii) women's equitable access to and control over productive resources and agri-food micro-enterprises; and (iii) women's greater participation in and benefit from the project. A minimum of 30 percent of the farmers that directly benefit from on-farm water management (OFWM) training, horticultural and livestock equipment and input packages will be women. Similarly, 75 percent of the individuals establishing homestead/group-based agri-food micro-enterprises and benefitting from post-harvest management (PHM) equipment, utensils, containers and materials will also be women. During its Inception Phase, the project will undertake gender-sensitive, socio-economic baseline survey, awareness campaigns and market analysis of selected commodities within shortlisted rural communities. These analyses will disaggregate data by gender and age to assess smallholder income needs, determine their livelihood skills base, capture their economic ambitions and identify opportunities skills for development, job creation and agri-business formation. The surveys will further reveal women's challenges and

opportunities within rural communities, and any existing agri-food micro-enterprises in the project's target areas that have the potential to employ more women. In this regard, the project's targeting criteria will be determined and adjusted in order to meet the demands of women and youth. This project is also in the initial stages of implementation and finalizing its rapid needs assessment.

54. ***Support to Agricultural Livelihoods of Rural and Peri-urban returnees and communities in Ninevah Governorate, Iraq, 2019-2022, FAO.*** The project uses an integrated approach that will support smallholder farm families to diversify incomes, increase resilience and provide nutritious and healthy diets through a comprehensive set of packages, including cash, short-term employment through cash for work (CfW), agricultural inputs, training and strengthening of market linkages – under a scenario of climate change and variability and conflict sensitivity. The main interventions support 1) vulnerable smallholder crop and livestock farmers with i) vegetable production and marketing systems rehabilitated and strengthened; ii) small-scale agri-food processing, marketing and micro-enterprise systems developed; and iii) improved small-scale dairy processing and marketing systems developed; and 2) smallholder crop and livestock farmers with iv) efficient irrigation water use and management measures and technology introduced; v) increased availability of quality cereal and legume seeds; and vi) improved small-scale animal fodder production, conservation and marketing systems developed. While equal opportunities will be given to women in affected rural and peri-urban areas to participate in and benefit from all sub-programme interventions, they will be specifically targeted for homestead-based vegetable, poultry and dairy production and processing ventures. Similarly, the affected rural and peri-urban youth (especially unemployed agricultural graduates) will be encouraged to benefit from training to gain employment as agri-food processors, farmer field school and farmer business school facilitators, community animal health workers, market information system operators and food security and nutrition data collectors and analysts. The project reports success in reaching out to women dairy processors who have appreciated both the training and the equipment they were given. The electric scythes which have been given to women to cut fodder have also been appreciated as they reduce women's labour.
55. ***The Project for Sustainable Irrigation Water Management through Water Users Associations (WUA) in the Republic of Iraq, 2017-2021, JICA.*** The overarching goal of the project was that sustainable water management areas operated by WUAs are expanded to the whole country. The project purpose, sustainable water management model, consisted of three factors, namely: 1) Participatory irrigation development plan 2) Improvement of water management by WUA, following the above-mentioned plan, 3) Monitoring and improvement of WUA activities by Water Users Associations Management Teams (WMT). The project aimed to develop the model for improving water management by WUA through formulation and implementation of action plans by WUA in the model sites selected. The action plans were named the Participatory Irrigation Development Plan (PIDP), and necessary manuals were developed in addition to capacity development of trainers for nationwide expansion of the model. In order to promote gender mainstreaming in the project, gender training was delivered to the majority of all the task teams (TT) formed to monitor WUAs onsite and 18 WMT members and project implementers cooperated actively in subsequent gender activities. In addition, in February 2019, TT and WMT held a briefing session for WUA board members on both model sites to gain the understanding of WUA male members about the gender activities of the Project. This resulted in the consent of WUA board

members to support gender activities under the condition that men and women are separated. In response to prevailing traditional social norm of gender segregation in rural areas, female WMT members were appointed in all WMTs. Lastly, to further extend women's participation to other WUAs, the WUA Management Manual for WMT recommended activities such as the establishment of a women's subcommittee as a mechanism to constantly carry out gender activities. As of January 2021, 15 out of 18 WUAs have listed gender activities in PIDP. Of these, seven WUAs actually held women's meetings or established women's subcommittees. The other 8 WMTs were unable to engage in gender activities due to ongoing restrictions due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The lesson learnt from this project is (i) gender training can help to create space for women's inclusion and (ii) indirect representation of women through nominating a small committee from among women relatives of the WUA members does not constitute meaningful participation of women and completely excludes women-headed households. Discussions with project staff showed that it is possible for women farmers to have direct representation and for women-headed households to be included in the decision-making body in a culturally sensitive manner with appropriate planning

56. The WFP is in the process of developing a proposal for the GCF on **Promoting Climate Resilient Livelihoods for Food Insecure People in Southern Iraq**. This project aims to introduce practices that build the resilience of vulnerable households whose livelihoods are at risk from climate change. This will be achieved through: increased irrigation efficiency and water availability; enhanced agricultural productivity through the promotion of stress tolerant seed varieties; fostering multi-level efforts for mentoring and capacity strengthening; improved climate decision- support tools and services; as well as livelihood diversification through provision of climate-resilient economic assets. The following measures for mainstreaming women are proposed: Gender targets of at least 40 percent for the total of project beneficiaries; working with NGOs at Governorate level that either specialize in or have a proven track record of working with women; criteria for selection of adaptation and economic diversification activities that is heavily skewed in favor of women's direct participation (vegetable farming in tunnels, agri-processing, etc.); gender sensitive selection of interventions to maximize returns to women's adaptive capacities and support their social and economic empowerment; a gender inclusive programme management and implementation team; and adherence to best practice in gender sensitive monitoring and evaluation of programme impact.
57. WFP staff highlighted the lack of gender disaggregated data and studies on women's livelihoods and the impact of climate change on women, constituted a challenge in designing the proposal. However, they were able to hold consultations with women and elicit feedback on key gender issues through hiring a consulting company to conduct the survey. The activities for women included livelihood diversification and creating market linkages for women's home businesses. Women-headed households were to be targeted through giving them training in farming practices as in the project area they were mostly found to be involved in agriculture.
58. The IOM has been involved with livelihood training, including training for farmers. Women have been included in livelihood activities with typically a 30 percent quota. IOM had trained women farmers through the Directorate of Agriculture for periods ranging from two weeks to two months but climate change aspects had not been incorporated into the training. The grants given to farmers ranged from USD 1,500 to

USD 1,700 which included some equipment and the cost of training. Value Chain studies have been conducted in Muthanna, Najaf and Kerbala. The key lessons learnt shared by IOM were that the most significant challenges for women appear to be normative ones – cultural barriers to participation and that a market-oriented approach should be followed when developing livelihood strategies for vulnerable households.

Socio-Economic Profile of Target Governorates – Kerbala, Muthanna, and Najaf

59. **Population:** The latest population modeled estimate puts total population of the three governorates around 3.6 million. Women constitute around 49.5 percent of the total population in the country with target governorates recording slightly higher percentages than the national average (49.6 to 49.9 percent). Overall, the three governorates are among the less populated governorates in Iraq. Among the three governorates, Najaf is the most populated (1.5 million) and Muthanna has the least number of people (0.8 million).⁶⁸

Table 4: Population of Target Governorates: Kerbala, Najaf, Muthanna

	Total Population	Women	Men	Share of Female (%)	Avg. HH Size ⁶⁹	Population Share (%)	Total Number of Villages ⁷⁰
Kerbala	1,250,806	619,831	630,975	49.6	6.3	3.2	288
Muthanna	835,797	415,805	419,992	49.7	7.6	2.1	538
Najaf	1,510,338	753,091	757,247	49.9	6.3	3.9	489
National	39,127,889	19,359,565	19,768,324	49.5	6.0	--	--

Source: Directorate of Population and Labour Statistics, Government of Iraq, 2019 / Data on Average HH Size is taken from Comprehensive Food Security and Vulnerability Analysis (CFSVA) 2016 / Data on number of villages taken from Governorate Rural Development Surveys (2017)

According to a World Bank poverty mapping study (2015), Muthanna is the poorest governorate in Iraq, and proportion of poor Iraqis in Muthanna is nearly triple that of Iraq's national average (6.4 percent versus 2.1 percent).⁷¹ In addition, an overwhelming majority of households in the three governorates receive Public Distribution System Ration Cards.⁷² After the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, overall poverty has increased by 11.7 percent, making the poverty rate 31.7 percent compared to 20.0 percent in 2017-2018.⁷³ This translates to 4.5 million additional poor as a result of the crisis, adding to the already 6.9 million living in poverty before the pandemic.⁷⁴

⁶⁸ Directorate of Population and Labour Statistics, Government of Iraq, 2019.

⁶⁹ WFP, FAO, CSO, Government of Iraq, *Comprehensive Food Security and Vulnerability Analysis (CFSVA)*, 2016.

⁷⁰ CSO, Ministry of Planning, Government of Iraq, Respective Governorate Rural Development Survey, 2017.

⁷¹ World Bank, *Where are Iraq's Poor: Mapping Poverty in Iraq*, 2015; <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/889801468189231974/pdf/97644-WP-P148989-Box391477B-PUBLIC-Iraq-Poverty-Map-6-23-15-web.pdf>

⁷² WFP, FAO, CSO, Government of Iraq, *CFSVA*, 2016.

⁷³ World Bank, UNICEF, Government of Iraq, *Assessment of COVID-19 Impact on Poverty and Vulnerability in Iraq*, July, 2020; <https://www.unicef.org/iraq/media/1181/file/Assessment%20of%20COVID-19%20Impact%20on%20Poverty%20and%20Vulnerability%20in%20Iraq.pdf>

⁷⁴ *ibid*

Table 5: Poverty and Vulnerability

	Multi-dimensional Vulnerability Index ⁷⁵ (MVI)	Share of Poor (%) based on MVI	HHs Receiving Public Distribution System Ration Cards (%)
Kerbala	0.143	2.9	98.1
Muthanna	0.258	3.1	98.8
Najaf	0.145	3.6	99.3
National	0.173	--	94.7

Source: COVID-19 Impact on Poverty and Vulnerability (2020) / Data on Public Distribution System Ration Cards is taken from CFSVA, 2016.

60. **Education:** Illiteracy is widespread in the target governorates, especially among women, and the prevalence rate is highest in Muthanna (30 percent).⁷⁶ In Kerbala, 22 percent women are illiterate as compared to 14 percent men. Although the completion rates vary in the target governorates, the trend of decreasing completion rates as the level of education increases is common to all, i.e., primary level completion rates are nearly twice that of upper secondary level. In Kerbala, 72 percent of students completed primary level education, 43 percent graduated from lower secondary, and 39 percent completed upper secondary.⁷⁷ The education completion rates are even lower in the other two governorates, where merely 24 percent completed upper secondary in Muthanna and 37.5 percent completed it in Najaf.⁷⁸
61. As for gender disparities, percentage of total completion rates of primary and upper secondary education is higher for boys than for girls, whereas, it is slightly higher for girls at the lower secondary level than boys. Moreover, completion rates for all three levels of education are higher in urban areas and households in high wealth quintiles.

Table 6: Illiteracy and Completion Rates (Primary to Upper Secondary)

	Illiterate (%) (>= 6 years of age)	Illiterate – male (%)	Illiterate – female (%)	Completion Rates – Primary	Completion Rates – Lower Secondary	Completion Rates – Upper Secondary
Kerbala	17.8	14.2	21.6	71.7	43.4	39.0
Muthanna	30.3	22.7	37.8	68.7	29.9	23.9
Najaf	20.5	15.4	25.8	64.7	39.9	37.5
National	17.8	12.9	22.8	75.7	46.4	44.3

Source: Data on illiteracy taken from CFSVA, 2016 / Data on completion rates taken from Iraq MICS 2018.

62. **Children's Health and Nutrition:** Within the three governorates, Kerbala has the highest mortality rate, in the range of 30 – 40 percent, strikingly higher than the national average of 26 percent, whereas, the mortality rates in Muthanna and Najaf are relatively lower, falling in the range of 10 – 20 percent. Compared to national level rates, the incidence of stunting is noticeably greater in Muthanna, almost 14 percent versus 10 percent. Conversely, prevalence of wasting among children under the age of five years in Kerbala and Najaf is quite high in comparison to Muthanna and the

⁷⁵ A multidimensional index tailored to measure social deprivation in dimensions affected by the crisis. The index includes four dimensions measured at household level, namely education and health dimensions capturing access to services, and living conditions and financial security dimensions capturing household living standards and resilience to cope with shocks.

⁷⁶ WFP, FAO, CSO, Government of Iraq, CFSVA, 2016.

⁷⁷ CSO, Government of Iraq and UNICEF, *Iraq Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS)*, 2018.

⁷⁸ *ibid*

national rate. The incidence of overweight children is significantly lower in Kerbala, compared to Muthanna and Najaf, where the prevalence rates are closer to the national rate.⁷⁹ A significantly greater proportion of children in Najaf (69.2 percent) receive minimum dietary diversity compared to Kerbala (52.4 percent) and Muthanna (38.8 percent). As for under-5 mortality rate, the occurrence is relatively lower in Muthanna and Najaf compared to the national rate of 26 percent and Kerbala, where the incidence is alarming high (30 to 40 percent).

Table 7: Children's Health/Nutrition Indicators

	Stunted (moderate and severe) (%)	Wasting (moderate and severe) (%)	Overweight (%)	Children received Minimum Dietary Diversity (%)	Under 5 Mortality Rate ⁸⁰
Kerbala	8.1	3.3	3.2	52.4	30.1 - 40
Muthanna	13.9	1.9	6.7	38.8	10.1 - 20
Najaf	9.1	5.0	6.4	69.2	10.1 - 20
National	9.9	2.5	6.6	44.6	26

Source: Iraq MICS 2018, / Data on Under-5 mortality rate is taken from Iraq Socio-Economic Atlas, 2019.

63. **Women's Health and Nutrition:** Regional data on maternal mortality ratio is unavailable, but the national ratio is around 79 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births.⁸¹ Overall the percentage of women experiencing acute malnutrition in the target governorates is low. Less than one percent of women are severely malnourished in the three governorates, while about 3 to 7 percent of women in Kerbala and Muthanna are moderately malnourished. However, from a nutrition point of view, about 11 percent of women in Muthanna are overweight, which is significantly higher than the national rate of two percent.⁸²
64. The highest percentage of pregnant women who received care (at least 1 visit by skilled provider) among the three governorates was in Najaf governorate, closely followed by Muthanna. It is worth noting that the Kerbala has one of the highest percentage of women who have undergone at least four ANC visits, 78.4 percent, not only among the three target governorates, but in the country. In addition, the prevalence of skilled attendance at birth is notably high in all three governorates (around 95 percent or higher), particularly in Najaf (98.5 percent).⁸³

Table 8: Women's Health/Nutrition Indicators

	Maternal Mortality Rate	Moderately Malnutrition (%)	Women's Nutrition – Overweight (%)	ANC: At least 1 visit (skilled provider)	Skilled Attendance at Birth
Kerbala	--	3.1 – 7	10.1 – 20	89.9	94.6
Muthanna	--	3.1 – 7	10.1 – 20	92.6	96.7
Najaf	--	0 – 1	0 – 10	92.9	98.5
National	79	--	--	87.6	95.6

Source: Data on Malnutrition taken from Iraq Socio-Economic Atlas, 2019 / Data on ANC and Skilled Attendance at Birth taken from Iraq MICS 2018 / Data on Maternal Mortality Rate taken from World Bank Group modeled estimates – September 2019.

⁷⁹ CSO, Government of Iraq and UNICEF, *Iraq Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS)*, 2018.

⁸⁰ World Food Programme, *Iraq Socio-Economic Atlas*, 2019.

⁸¹ WHO, UNICEF, UNFPA, World Bank Group and United Nations Population Division - September 2019; <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SH.STA.MMRT?locations=IQ>

⁸² World Food Programme, *Iraq Socio-Economic Atlas*, 2019.

⁸³ CSO, Government of Iraq and UNICEF, *Iraq Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS)*, 2018.

The fertility rate is significantly higher in Muthanna (5.1) compared to Kerbala (4) and Najaf (3.9), both of which are somewhat closer to the national fertility (3.6). Moreover, use of contraception among married women (any method) hovers in the range of 45 to 56 percent at both the national and regional levels.⁸⁴

Table 9: Women's Fertility and Contraception Use

	Total Fertility Rate (women age 15 - 49 years)	Use of any contraception method among married women
Kerbala	4	56.2
Muthanna	5.1	45
Najaf	3.9	48.1
National	3.6	52.8

Source: Iraq MICS 2018.

65. **Employment:** Muthanna has one of the highest unemployment rates, 14.5 percent, among the three governorates. The unemployment rate is roughly 9.5 percent in Najaf and 7.1 percent in Kerbala. Within the three governorates, women's unemployment is highest in Najaf, 31.4 percent, which is significantly greater than the national average of 22 percent. In comparison to 81 percent at the national level, nearly 90 percent of women, excluding internally displaced persons (IDPs), are out of the labor force in Muthanna, 79 percent in Najaf, and 76 percent in Kerbala; women's labor force participation is markedly low in the target governorates and unemployment is a significant national issue.⁸⁵

Table 10: Labor Force Participation and Employment Rates

	Unemployment Rate (%)			Labor Participation Rate (%) (residents / excluding IDPs)			Out of Labor Force (%) (residents / excluding IDPs)		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Kerbala	4.5	27.8	7.1	78	16	70	21	76	27
Muthanna	14.0	18.6	14.5	70	10	63	25	90	32
Najaf	6.5	31.4	9.5	80	19	74	18	79	25
National	8.5	22.2	10.8	81	16	74	17	81	24

Source: CFSVA, 2016.

66. **Food Security:** The majority of the area in Najaf and Muthanna is categorized as Drought Prone Desert Area, while Kerbala is considered Food Deficit Semi-Arid Rangelands.⁸⁶ Although the proportion of food insecure households in Kerbala and Najaf and comparatively is lower than Muthanna, the share of households vulnerable to food insecurity is alarmingly high in all three governorates—65 percent in Kerbala, 67 percent in Muthanna, and 87 percent in Najaf.⁸⁷

Table 11: Food Security

	Food Security Zone	Food Secure HHs (%)	Marginally Food Secure HHs / Vulnerable to Food Insecurity (%)	Food Insecure HHs (%)

⁸⁴ CSO, Government of Iraq and UNICEF, *Iraq Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS)*, 2018.

⁸⁵ WFP, FAO, CSO, Government of Iraq, *CFSVA*, 2016.

⁸⁶ World Food Programme, *Iraq Socio-Economic Atlas*, 2019.

⁸⁷ WFP, FAO, CSO, Government of Iraq, *CFSVA*, 2016.

Kerbala	Food Deficit Semi-Arid Rangelands	28.9	65.2	5.9
Muthanna	Drought Prone Desert Area	22	66.7	11.3
Najaf	Drought Prone Desert Area	10.3	87.3	2.5
National	--	44.3	53.2	2.5

Source: CFSVA, 2016 / Data on Food Security Zones taken from Iraq Socio-Economic Atlas, 2019.

67. **Access to Land:** The vast majority of agricultural households in Kerbala do not own the land but retain control, as in use of the land, (70.8 percent) through contracts with the government and 13 percent farm on government owned land. In the case of Muthanna, 44.5 percent agricultural households contract farmland, while 39.7 percent own it, the highest proportion of households who own land among the three governorates. Similar to Kerbala, nearly half of the agricultural households in Najaf do not own the land but control it (48.6 percent), while a significant proportion, 10.9 percent, rents it without a contract.⁸⁸

Table 12: Agricultural Households Access to Land

	Agricultural households (%) – Own land	Agricultural households (%) – Not owned but has control	Agricultural households (%) – Contracted	Agricultural households (%) – Government land	Agricultural households (%) – Rented without contract
Kerbala	16.1	70.8	0.1	13.0	0.0
Muthanna	39.7	4.4	44.5	4.7	6.7
Najaf	28.6	48.6	10.3	1.6	10.9
National	46.6	20.7	25.1	3.4	3.8

Source: CFSVA, 2016.

68. Community consultations suggest that the majority of women in target governorates do not own or rent land for agricultural purposes. Women who do own land were reported to have landholding sizes that were considerably smaller than those of men's; 5-10 acres for women versus 450-1,000 acres for men. Similarly, women generally do not rent land in Kerbala and Muthanna, but key informants from Najaf suggest that women, three to five women per village, do in fact rent land for farming in their Governorate.⁸⁹
69. **Agriculture:** In the target governorates, women are involved in the complete farming life cycle, from cultivation to selling produce, i.e., there are few stages or activities exclusive to men now. Particularly in Kerbala and Najaf, women play a lead role in the agriculture sector, sharing the responsibility of land preparation (women operate tractors in Kerbala), planting/sowing, irrigation, applying fertilizer, weeding, harvesting, and even marketing. In Najaf, the transplanting of rice seedlings is done exclusively by women. While women do not participate in land preparation and marketing produce in Muthanna, it is generally the women's responsibility to manage family's livestock and poultry in the target governorates. Women are particularly involved in harvesting, growing vegetables and alfalfa. Across all three governorates, women are highly

⁸⁸ WFP, FAO, CSO, Government of Iraq, CFSVA, 2016.

⁸⁹ See Annex 8A – Report on Community Consultations

involved in livestock rearing and are reported to have most control over income from selling livestock produce.⁹⁰

Table 13: Division of Agricultural Activities by Gender

	Land Preparation / Ploughing		Seed Sowing / Planting		Irrigation / Fertilizer / Weeding		Harvesting / Threshing / Storage		Marketing		Rearing Livestock	
	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M
Kerbala	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	NEI ⁹¹	NEI
Muthanna		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	NEI
Najaf	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	NEI	NEI

Source: Consultation with Iraqi NGOs operating in target Governorates.

70. The community consultations confirm that women farmers are actively involved in every stage of the farming process from ploughing, sowing/planting seeds, watering, till harvesting. Interviews with key informants and women-headed households suggest that the type of crops that women farmers cultivate vary by governorate, but nearly all women maintain a kitchen garden for domestic consumption. Most women in Kerbala cultivate palm trees and a variety of fruits and vegetables like okra, eggplant, pomegranates, apricots, and oranges. In Najaf, the two main crops women cultivate are wheat and rice, along with vegetables, such as okra and eggplant. Whereas, in Muthanna, women mainly maintain vegetable gardens, producing vegetables like okra, tomatoes, cucumbers, onions, and lettuce. The role of women in decision-making on agricultural activities is limited. Decisions are made primarily by men. A few of the women key informants in Najaf stated that women may share their opinions with male members of the family regarding what crop to plant, but ultimately, a male member of the family makes the final decision.⁹²
71. Alongside agriculture, livestock and poultry farming is the other major source of income for women in target governorates. Among the women interviewed from women-headed households, majority were involved in either livestock rearing or poultry farming as a secondary source of income. One woman from Muthanna reported raising livestock to sell dairy products like milk and cheese, while one raised chickens and geese (known as Al-Basha in the south) to sell in the birds' market. One woman from Kerbala also mentioned sewing as a source of income, while only one woman, across the three governorates, did not report any other income-generating activity. Data from interviews with key informants is consistent with that of women-headed households, as majority of the respondents' cited livestock and poultry farming as secondary sources of income for village women, apart from selling vegetables or agricultural products.
72. In community consultations, some women key informants from Najaf and Kerbala, and men key informants in the three governorates, did report men farmers taking loans for agriculture, but women farmers taking loans for agricultural activity or another source of livelihood does not appear to be a common practice across the three governorates. The only woman farmer who reported taking a loan from the bank had taken it to build a house, not to invest in an income-generating activity.

⁹⁰ Meetings held with Directorate of Water Resources in Najaf, Kerbala and Muthanna, Extension Units within the Ministry of Agriculture and NGOs working in the three Governorates.

⁹¹ NEI: Not enough information was provided in the discussions on this aspect.

⁹² See Annex 8A – Report on Community Consultations

73. Community consultations suggest that women’s role in marketing agricultural produce is limited due to social norms. Women are likely to stay close to their home, farm, or village to sell merchandise instead of going to local markets themselves and some reported selling their produce through their sons or husbands. However, there are exceptions with some women taking their produce to local markets. Generally, older women are more likely to access to local markets.
74. **Access to Extension Services:** With the Ministry of Agriculture (MOA) at the national level, every governorate has a Department/Directorate of Agriculture and Center of Training and Extension. Every Directorate of Agriculture houses an Extension Unit along with agriculture field units at the village level (cluster of 4-5 villages), which also have a sub-unit of extension. The main activities of the Directorate of Agriculture are to disseminate latest information on cropping, train and educate farmers, conduct field surveys, and develop yearly plans. In the case of Najaf, there are also three separate units geared towards supporting women in rural areas, Al Abbasiya in the north, Al Mishkab in the south, and one in the center in the Agriculture Directorate. The agriculture field units are tasked to deliver training and conduct direct consultations with farmers in the area. The themes or topics covered in training or workshops include, but not limited to, tailoring, sewing, raising domestic birds, the importance of preserving the environment, food industries, home vegetable gardens, encouraging girls to study and growing summer vegetables. Table 14 and 15 provide a breakdown of extension staff and agriculture field offices by governorate.

Table 14: Field Agriculture Offices/Units and Extension Staff by Governorate

	Agriculture Field Units at the Village Level	Ext. Officers in Directorate of Agriculture (Men)	Ext. Officers in Directorate of Agriculture (Women)	Ext. Officers in Directorate of Agriculture (Total)
Kerbala	9	15	10	25
Muthanna	7	10	5	15
Najaf	10	18	4	22

Source: Interviews with extension staff in each Governorate.

Table 15: Extension Officers in Center for Training and Extension by Governorate

	Ext. Officers in Center of Training and Extension (Men)	Ext. Officers in Center of Training and Extension (Women)	Ext. Officers in Center of Training and Extension (Total)
Kerbala	33	7	40
Muthanna	9	3	12
Najaf	13	4	17

Source: Interviews with extension staff in each Governorate.

75. Community consultations with men and women across the three governorates, suggest that women have little to no interaction with government appointed agricultural extension officers in villages, and it is predominantly men who engage with them upon their visits. As the majority of the agricultural extension officers are men, local social norms and traditions prevent women from interacting with them. In Kerbala, men and women farmers and key informants could not recall extension officers’ visiting their respective village in the last three years, while respondents from Najaf mentioned some field visits in the past year. In case of Muthanna, none of the women remembered any visits, but a male farmer clarified that visits were reduced to once a

year due to restrictions on social gatherings owing to the COVID pandemic. They highlighted the need to recruit more women agricultural extension officers.⁹³

76. Women and men farmers offered suggestions on how women could benefit from extension services. Women from Muthanna and Najaf proposed enlisting more women extension officers who would make frequent field visits to train women on modern agricultural methods and address their problems. These officers, it was proposed, should deliver training seminars designed exclusively for women farmers (existing structures like schools in villages can be utilized as training venue) and listen to women farmers' concerns, and provide support accordingly. Men farmers from Najaf and Muthanna also acknowledged the need to increase number of field visits per year and inclusion of female extension officers in field teams. In Muthanna, it was suggested field visits should be coordinated with the harvest schedule, while in Najaf it was noted that the provision of both technical and subsidized inputs (seeds, fertilizers) was important. Some of the women farmers from Kerbala indicate that a substantial number of women in the region believe that coordination between village farmers and extension officers is men's responsibility or domain. On the other hand, men farmers suggested that women farmers should receive training and awareness on irrigation, marketing, sustainable energy (solar power). The need for better and direct coordination between the local government and Department of Agriculture to reach more farmers was also highlighted.⁹⁴
77. **Women-headed households:** Twelve percent of households in Kerbala are women-headed, 11 percent in Muthanna, and 11 percent in Najaf. Moreover, women-headed households that own or have control over of farmland is comparatively higher in Muthanna and Najaf (5 to 8 percent) than Kerbala (1 to 4 percent). Similarly, a significantly greater percentage of women-headed households' own livestock in Muthanna (5 to 10 percent) than Kerbala and Najaf (0.1 to 5 percent).⁹⁵

Table 16: Female-headed Households

	Female-headed households (%)	Female headed households that owned or had control of farmland (%)	Female-headed households that owned livestock (%)
Kerbala	11.6	1 - 4	0.1 - 5
Muthanna	11.5	5 - 8	5.1 - 10
Najaf	10.6	5 - 8	0.1 - 5

Source: CFSVA, 2016.

78. In community consultations, women heads of households in the three governorates highlighted lack of state and institutional safety nets, financial support for their income-generating activities and job opportunities for women in villages as three of the main challenges faced by women-headed households. As the primary breadwinners, these women exercise control and have much greater decision-making power than most women in male-headed households. In all three governorates, these women maintained that they were the primary decision-makers in agriculture/livestock, household expenses, decisions related to children's education, and other household

⁹³ See Annex 8A – Report on Community Consultations

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ WFP, FAO, CSO, Government of Iraq, CFSVA, 2016.

affairs. However, women headed households struggle with finding employment that ensures steady income outside of farming or harvest seasons. As farmers, they identified the following as key challenges: high costs of inputs, purchase of modern agricultural equipment attacks on crops by pests and insects, and soil salinity caused by inadequate. The women acknowledged that the Government of Iraq did offer social welfare salary/aid to widows and women heads of households, but coverage was reported to be variable and disbursement of the stipend irregular. A few women interviewed women in Najaf and Muthanna had applied for the stipend, but had still not received approval. One woman from Muthanna reported that she used to receive the welfare salary, but recently it had been discontinued.⁹⁶

79. **Women & Water:** In all three governorates, community consultations indicate that women use open earth canal water (or water from nearby river/lake) for multiple purposes, including but not limited to, domestic activities (drinking, laundry, washing), irrigation, and livestock (buffalo wallow, cleaning animals). Although, it is primarily women's responsibility to fetch and transport water from canals or rivers to their homes or farms, at present, women are not members of any local committee or association that makes decisions related to provision of water. In contrast, men farmers in Muthanna were all part of some water related committee as were some of the farmers in Najaf. However, in Kerbala none of the men farmers consulted had membership of any water management committee.⁹⁷
80. **Women's Political Participation:** With respect to women's political participation, 30 percent of parliamentary seats in Muthanna are held by women, highest among the three governorates. About 27.2 seats in Kerbala are held by women and 25.8 percent in Najaf.⁹⁸

Table 17: Women in Iraqi Parliament

	Women in Iraqi Parliament (%)
Kerbala	27.2
Muthanna	30
Najaf	25.8

Source: Iraq Socio-Economic Atlas, 2019.

Women's Access to Mobile Phones: A significant proportion of women in target governorates own mobile phones, about 56 to 60 percent in Muthanna and 63 to 69 percent in Kerbala and Najaf.⁹⁹

Table 18: Women's Ownership of Mobile Telephones

	Women who own a mobile telephone (%)
Kerbala	63 - 69
Muthanna	56 - 60
Najaf	63 - 69

Source: Iraq Socio-Economic Atlas, 2019.

81. **Youth:** The prevalence of youth illiteracy and unemployment is highest in Muthanna than Najaf and Kerbala. While the overall youth literacy rate in Kerbala and Najaf is between

⁹⁶ See Annex 8A – Report on Community Consultations

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ World Food Programme, *Iraq Socio-Economic Atlas*, 2019.

⁹⁹ Ibid

75 to 85 percent, it is less than 75 percent in Muthanna. Likewise, the literacy for young women is less than 65 percent in Muthanna, nearly 10 percent less than that of the other two governorates (75.1 to 80 percent).¹⁰⁰

The youth unemployment rate in Muthanna hovers in the range of 21 to 25 percent, whereas, the rate is somewhere between 11 to 15 percent in Kerbala and Najaf. Interestingly, young women's unemployment rate is significantly greater in Kerbala, 51 to 60 percent, than the other two governorates, 36 to 40 percent. Still, Young men's unemployment rate is considerably higher in Muthanna, 16 to 20 percent, while it is less than 10 percent in Kerbala.¹⁰¹

The Youth Development index (YDI) combines indicators from several socio-economic domains (political participation/security and freedom/communication, health, education, employment), and as per Iraq Socio-Economic Atlas's estimates, the YDI index for young men is considerably greater than YDI for young women in all three governorates (less than 0.5). Lastly, the proportion of youth who own a mobile phone is more or less the same, 40 to 43 percent, in all three target areas.¹⁰²

Table 19: Youth Literacy Rates

	Youth Literacy Rate (%)	Youth Literacy Rate – Female (%)	Youth Literacy Rate – Male (%)
Kerbala	75.1 - 85	75.1 - 85	85.1 - 95
Muthanna	< 75	< 65	< 85
Najaf	75.1 - 85	75.1 - 85	< 85

Source: Iraq Socio-Economic Atlas, 2019.

Table 20: Youth Unemployment Rates

	Youth Unemployment Rate (%)	Youth Unemployment Rate – Female (%)	Youth Unemployment Rate – Male (%)
Kerbala	11 - 15	51 - 60	< 10
Muthanna	21 - 25	36 - 40	16 - 20
Najaf	11 - 15	36 - 40	11 - 15

Source: Iraq Socio-Economic Atlas, 2019.

Table 21: Youth Development Index

	Youth Development Index¹⁰³ for Males (0 – 1)	Youth Development Index for Females (0 – 1)
Kerbala	0.61 – 0.70	0.41 – 0.50
Muthanna	0.61 – 0.70	< 0.40
Najaf	0.61 – 0.70	< 0.40
National	–	–

Source: Iraq Socio-Economic Atlas, 2019.

¹⁰⁰ ibid

¹⁰¹ World Food Programme, *Iraq Socio-Economic Atlas*, 2019.

¹⁰² World Food Programme, *Iraq Socio-Economic Atlas*, 2019.

¹⁰³ The Youth Development index (YDI) combines indicators from the following socio-economic domains: political participation/security and freedom/communication, health, education, employment.

Table 22: Youth's Ownership of Mobile Telephones

	Youth age 15 – 24 who own a mobile phone (%)
Kerbala	40.1 - 43
Muthanna	40.1 - 43
Najaf	40.1 - 43
National	–

Source: Iraq Socio-Economic Atlas, 2019.

Priorities and Needs of Women and Men Farmers

82. In community consultations, financial assistance from the Government of Iraq was identified as the top most need of both women and men farmers across the three governorates to help expand their income-generating activities. This could be in the form of provision of modern equipment, machinery, or tools, subsidized inputs, or even loans and grants. Followed by financial support, assistance with marketing was a priority area for a substantial segment of men, as well as women-headed households in Kerbala. Some men farmers in Najaf suggested cooperation or partnerships with the government, where the farmer and government each receives a pre-determined percentage of the sales, whereas, farmers in Muthanna asked for facilitation with marketing.¹⁰⁴
83. As for women farmers, a significant majority require assistance with livestock rearing and poultry farming, such as provision of high-quality feed/fodder for animals and high-quality breeds of animals. It is worth highlighting that a substantial number of women in Kerbala also asked for greenhouses, which would enable all year-round cultivation. Finally, women-headed households and key informants also recognized the importance of training and technical assistance in expanding their income-generating activity.¹⁰⁵
84. Men and women in all three governorates expressed the need for state or institutional support in increasing the availability of water for farming through modern irrigation methods, reducing costs of inputs (high quality seeds, fertilizers, pesticides/insecticides), financial support for modern agricultural machinery and tools, training, and access to loans/funding and markets. Moreover, a substantial majority of men and women farmers are interested in receiving training and support on crop production, irrigation, and kitchen gardening, and mostly prefer face-to-face training over other options. Areas of crop production, irrigation water management, irrigation technology and equipment, and kitchen garden are the priority areas for farmers, irrespective of gender, followed by processing of agri-produce and marketing. Interestingly, in all three governorates, a vast majority of men showed interested in receiving information or training on marketing, but the proportion of women was nearly half or less than 50 percent, which supports the notion that most women are not actively involved in marketing of produce. Furthermore, both women and men generally favor face-to-face training sessions, with a significant proportion of men in Kerbala and women in Najaf, also open to alternatives like mass media and mobile applications.
85. Finally, reliable and low-cost electricity could benefit farmers by reducing production costs, particularly through powering irrigation pumps rather than diesel. Regarding the

¹⁰⁴ See Annex 8A – Report on Community Consultations

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

potential benefits for village/household of reliable low-cost electricity, key informants from all three governorates recognized the value of electricity to power irrigation or water pumps instead of diesel, which would significantly reduce farmers' production costs. A woman key informant from Najaf also highlighted the usefulness of electricity to store and refrigerate produce, so that consumption can be spread between harvest seasons.

Community Feedback on Climate Wise Women and Women in Water Use Associations

Climate Wise Women

86. Despite minimal prior engagement with NGOs and social programmes, women farmers are interested in seeking advice and training from a Climate Wise Woman (CWW) in their village, and many would also be interested in taking up the role. All the women farmers, across the three governorates, favored the CWW sub-component and expressed willingness to seek advice from such an individual. Majority of the women farmers showed an interest in becoming a CWW, with the highest level of interest in Kerbala (88 percent), followed by Najaf (73 percent), and then Muthanna (62 percent). Women who were not interested in becoming a CWW cited local customs and traditions, which limit women's movement and social participation, along with other commitments at home as reasons. The interest in taking up the role of CWW was considerably low among women-headed households, primarily because of busy schedules and responsibilities. A woman key informant from Muthanna pointed out that holding training sessions during summer would be a more suitable period for women to participate and adding an incentive, like a wage, could persuade male family members to give permission.¹⁰⁶

With respect to suggestions for the selection criteria of a CWW, while respondents were not particular about the age (ranging from student to middle-age), there was a strong emphasize on *relevant qualifications*, including formal education and agricultural experience, as well as the *ability to interact with others*, across the three regions. The FGDs' respondents in Muthanna suggested title of "*Trainer*" for the CWW, in Najaf, consensus was on "*Agricultural Advisor*", and the most suggested title in Kerbala was "*Creative Person*", followed by "*Trainer*" or "*Expert*."

Women's participation in Water User's Associations

87. Community consultations suggest that at present, majority of the women in the target governorates are not involved with any NGOs, support organizations, or associations, mainly because of absence of such organizations or projects, as well as local traditions and customs. Based on interviews with women-headed households and key informants, respondents were not aware of any NGOs or support organizations operating in their respective villages, other than the Water Users Association (WUA) in Muthanna. The women respondents further clarified that only men participate in WUAs and the WUA does not provide support services. Key informants were not aware of any NGOs or support organizations that were engaging local farmers (women and men) in the surveyed areas. Two key informants (women) from Najaf did recall a livelihoods project delivered by IOM three years ago, but, at present, there were no on-going projects they were aware of.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁶ See Annex 8A – Report on Community Consultations

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

88. Most women in Kerbala and Najaf would like women to be part of a committee on water allocation, while an overwhelming majority of men and women in Muthanna believe women should not join such associations. Considering data from FGDs, all male and female respondents in Muthanna, and nearly half of female respondents in Kerbala, were in agreement that women should not join public committees, such as water association, to uphold local social traditions and customs. They believe that decisions regarding water distribution is men's responsibility. Conversely, other female respondents and male respondents in Kerbala recognized the value and benefit of giving women membership in groups and associations that decide water allocation. Respondents noted that women play a prominent role in on-farm and off-farm activities, rearing livestock, as well as domestic work, and water is an essential component in each one.¹⁰⁸

While about half of the men in Najaf also concurred with women's representation in WUA, nearly all female respondents recognized the value of women's participation in such groups. Women in Najaf highlighted that as women are knowledgeable about local problems and involved in household and agricultural activities, particularly irrigation and livestock farming, their insights on the matter of water distribution are crucial. Moreover, some women respondents also pointed out that as women account for 50 percent of society, by default women should have representation on public forums.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.