

Displacement and Women's Economic Empowerment: Voices of Displaced Women in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq

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About the organisations



Gender Action for Peace and Security (GAPS) is the UK's Women, Peace and Security civil society network. We are a membership organisation of 17 NGOs and experts in the fields of development, human rights, humanitarian assistance and peacebuilding. We were founded to promote the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security. Our role is to promote and hold the UK Government to account on its international commitments to women in conflict areas worldwide.

www.gaps-uk.org



The **LSE Centre for Women, Peace and Security (LSE WPS)** is an academic space for scholars, practitioners, activists, policy-makers and students to develop strategies to promote justice, human rights and participation of women in conflict-affected situations around the world. Through innovative research, teaching, and multi-sectoral engagement, the Centre for Women, Peace and Security aims to promote gender equality and enhance women's economic, social and political participation and security.

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Since 1993, **Women for Women International (WfWI)** has worked with more than 479,000 marginalised women survivors of war in Afghanistan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Kosovo, Iraq, Nigeria, Rwanda and South Sudan. Our core work is centred on a holistic, rights-based year-long programme to address the needs of marginalised women in conflict-affected countries.

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Abbreviations

CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
Gol	Government of Iraq
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organisation
ISIS	Islamic State of Iraq and Syria
KIIs	Key Informant Interviews
KRG	Kurdistan Regional Government
KRI	Kurdistan Region of Iraq
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
VAWG	Violence Against Women and Girls
WEE	Women's Economic Empowerment
WfWI	Women for Women International
WRC	Women's Refugee Council

Executive summary

Conflict-related displacement has increased the number of women among displaced communities who engage in livelihood activities in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI). Women's increased role as income providers has led to some change in men's and women's perceptions of women's economic roles. However, this change appears to be temporary and instrumental, meaning that when people return home or life goes back to normal, perceptions of women's economic position will return to what it was before. Nonetheless, the positive changes described by the participants of this study of women's roles in income generation and their impact on attitudes can be built upon to generate transformative change both for women's economic empowerment and their empowerment in general.

There are significant structural and cultural obstacles hindering women's ability to engage in livelihood activities and to increase their economic empowerment. The wider institutional and legal system that discriminates against women and perpetuates patriarchal gender norms, the economic crisis, and the Kurdistan Regional Government's (KRG) and the Government of Iraq's (GoI) political

priorities that overlook women's rights and their economic empowerment create structural obstacles hindering displaced women's short-term opportunities to engage in livelihood activities and their long-term economic empowerment.

The main barriers to women's engagement in livelihood activities are: restrictions to their mobility due to long travel time and costs of commute; perceived risks to their safety and security; societal and family pressures that confine women and girls to the domestic private sphere; a lack of educational and skills background to take up work; a lack of or limited job opportunities; heavy responsibilities and childcare at home that put pressure on women's time; and health problems. On the other hand, due to the inability of male members of their families to earn (enough) income, women are forced to work. In this respect, the harsh conditions of conflict and displacement have forced families and communities to make space for women's engagement in livelihoods and this is an opportunity that can be built upon with careful national and international planning.



Photo: Emily Kinskey

There is huge variation in women's experiences of displacement, their livelihood needs and their access to economic opportunities in the KRI. The variation depends on the place of settlement and origin, whether they are a refugee or an IDP,¹ whether they have a rural or urban background, their level of education, literacy, occupational skills, age, and specific family circumstances and needs. Therefore, one particular model of a livelihood programme might cater for only one section of displaced women but may exclude other displaced women. As such, the variation in needs and circumstances needs to be reflected in the design of livelihood programmes, as well as in their implementation. National and international actors should avoid gendered stereotyping and strictly categorising women based on cultural and communal identities when seeking to understand barriers and opportunities to livelihoods for displaced women.

Most of the displaced women engaged in current livelihood opportunities and training programmes offered by local and international organisations find them beneficial and appreciate the safe spaces these provide. However, these activities are not seen as having the

potential to turn into sustainable income generation activities for three reasons. First, the current economic crisis and the wider conflict context lead to a lack of jobs and market opportunities, rendering it difficult to maintain a business or find a job. Second, the economic empowerment of women is not a government priority in Iraq or the KRI. Third, most livelihood programmes follow a one size-fits-all model that is short-term and does not always address the specific livelihood needs of different women living in a context of displacement.

Local and international organisations working on displaced women's livelihood security do so with limited resources and do not receive sufficient national and international support for their work. Therefore, it is hard for them to develop long-lasting and effective programmes that cater to different needs and circumstances. Although existing livelihood programmes are unlikely to be transformative in the long term, they have led to small-scale transformations in displaced women's lives and changed perceptions of their role in the household.

1. Introduction

a. Displacement in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq

This report is about the impact of displacement on the economic empowerment of displaced women in the KRI, with a focus on women's livelihood needs and opportunities. As of June 2017, 65.5 million people were displaced worldwide, of which 40.8 million were displaced within their own countries (UNHCR 2017). Iraq has the world's sixth highest amount of forcibly displaced persons and the third highest number of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) (World Bank 2017, 10). More than 1 million of the 3.2 million Iraqi IDPs in total and an estimated 250,000 refugees, predominantly from Syria, are located in the KRI.

What is more, Iraq and the KRI have experienced layers of displacements brought on by past and present conflicts such as the Iran-Iraq War in 1980-88, the Gulf War in 1990-91, the Iraqi Ba'ath regime's attacks on the Kurds and Shia, unending sectarian violence and insecurity since 2003, the ongoing Syrian war, and the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria's (ISIS) attacks since 2014² and the following counter-insurgency carried out by Iraqi and Kurdish armed forces in collaboration with international coalition partners.

More recently, the 2016-17 liberation of Mosul and the Iraqi army's takeover of Kirkuk in October 2017 further forced large numbers of people to flee.³

Displacement (including return) in Iraq is ranked as one of the fastest evolving processes in recent displacement crises (Strang and O'Brien 2017) and it is a long-term and highly complex process resulting from the accumulation of different displacement crises over decades. The long-term nature of the displacement crisis in Iraq⁴ emphasises the need to introduce durable solutions in livelihood, education and housing. Considering that most displaced persons will continue to spend a big proportion of their lives in displacement, livelihood is a key issue for them and their communities. Livelihood is also an important factor that influences displaced peoples' decisions on return, and the willingness to return to their place of origin impacts their interest in livelihood interventions (IOM, 2017).



Photo: Emily Kinskey

b. Displacement, livelihood and gender

Access to livelihood opportunities is among the greatest concerns of IDPs and refugees in the KRI. Most of them have fled their homes abruptly, taking few possessions with them. Most of the displaced households are under large amounts of debt due to loans they borrowed from family and friends to start a business, to rent accommodation, to build a home or a shop, or to provide for living and healthcare expenses. Several displaced households initially rented accommodation but ran out of savings and ended up in camps.

Displaced women and girls are more likely to experience livelihood deprivation, pushing them into poverty and difficult living circumstances, early or child marriage, and increasing their likelihood of being victims of trafficking and forced prostitution (US Department of State 2009; UNICEF 2011). The general lack of security and frequent violent attacks have had a negative impact on women's economic participation as both displaced and host communities restrict women's and girls' mobility even more than before, "making it hard for them to access markets, earn a living, or even meet with other women socially" (Sider and Sissons 2016, 430; Dietrich and Carter 2017, 5).⁵ The fear of sexual harassment or violence and its negative impact on girls' and their families' social standing sustain and intensify the restrictions on women's movement. In a patriarchal

society such as in Iraq and the KRI, 'honour'-related motivations are also undoubtedly relevant factors in the restrictions over women's mobility.

In relation to livelihood responsibilities, a clear gendered division prevails in Iraq and the KRI. In most cases, men adopt the role of providers and protectors as the head of household, and women are providers of unpaid domestic care work, which is considered "*a fundamental responsibility of a wife and mother, and an innate part of her identity.*" (Dietrich and Carter 2017, 18)⁶ This perception and the responsibilities at home limit women's ability to undertake paid work outside the house.

c. Purpose of research

The research conducted for this study aimed to understand the effects of conflict-related displacement on women's economic wellbeing and empowerment, focusing on livelihood needs and opportunities. It sought to understand the short and long-term economic needs of women displaced by conflict, the specific challenges they face in accessing livelihoods and the perspectives of displaced women on the provision of livelihood support. The report builds on discussions of 'what works' in implementing Women, Peace and Security (WPS) commitments and the Sustainable Development Goals, and offers insights into how the international community could provide effective, long-term support for the economic empowerment of women affected by conflict.

The key contribution of this report is that it reflects the voices of displaced women in the KRI. The research relies on extensive, in-depth interviews conducted with displaced women to understand their perspectives and perceptions regarding the opportunities and obstacles to their engagement in livelihood activities and how they define economic empowerment and empowerment in general. The report does not seek to assess existing livelihood programmes provided by national and international actors in the KRI. Instead, it seeks to provide insights into how displacement has affected the position of women in the economic life of the family and community and to capture specific and contextualised aspects of women's opportunities and challenges for empowerment from their perspective. The report also aims to offer recommendations to national and international actors on how displaced women can be better supported in enhancing their economic empowerment.

d. Methodology

The research collated primary data through in-depth semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs) to develop a deep understanding of displaced women's experiences and perceptions. **In total, 135 displaced persons, 6 host community members and 22 practitioners, experts and officials were interviewed** (see Appendix 3). Research locations and participants were selected to include a variety of factors, from places of departure

and current settlement, to having IDP or refugee status, residence in camp and non-camp settings, ethnic and religious background, previous urban and rural residence, level of educational and vocational attainment, age and marital status. The study mainly focused on women who are either working, have worked or were planning to work (for instance, those who are attending training courses provided by non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to better reflect perceptions of livelihood opportunities. Several women who have not worked and are not intending to or cannot work were also interviewed to incorporate their views.

Like all research, there are some limitations to the methodology used here: 1) Research locations did not include disputed territories⁷ due to ongoing security risks in these areas after the September 2017 independence referendum in the KRI; 2) Most interviews were held with women residing in camps, while due to time constraints only FGDs were held with displaced women living among the community; 3) Large scale surveys were not conducted therefore findings may not be generalisable, although the size of the interview and FGD sample is large for an in-depth qualitative method; 4) The research did not specifically address the impact of violence against women and girls (VAWG) on livelihoods due to the sensitivity of this issue and the unsuitability of interview settings for asking questions about VAWG.



Shireen's Story

Shireen fled the war in Syria in 2014 and has lived in the KRI ever since, now living in a host community. She is 39 years old, married with 4 children.

Back in Syria, we were middle class. There were women who worked, but many educated women still stayed at home, because of the cultural norms. Now, everyone who fled Syria has to work – even 6-year-old children. It's not something we have chosen, but I think this situation has created a chance for women to work here in the KRI. Many more jobs are open for women who have skills and who want to work – jobs like sewing, hairdressing, handcrafts and restaurant work.

When I started working, I understood what it meant for a woman to be financially independent. She can get space to do what she likes, she can take decisions on her own. The negative side of working was that I was away from my children so much, but what kept me going was knowing that I was working for them.

My friend told me about the women's centre. Back in Syria, I had a hairdressing certificate. I thought, I can gain more experience and knowledge, and meet new people. It was nice to get to know other Syrian women in Sulaymaniah. There are many Syrian women here, but I had only met a few of them before going to the centre.

After the course, I tried opening a hairdressing salon with one of my friends from Sulaymaniah, but unfortunately the location was far from my house and with the travel expenses I couldn't make a profit, so I had to quit.

Many big businesses in the region are closing because of the current economic situation, even the people from Sulaymaniah are struggling. If I was able to open another hairdressing place, I would create job opportunities for other women.

When you see that your children and husband need help, every woman naturally goes into action. There is no room for fear. And work teaches a woman a lot of things – it teaches her to be strong, it gives her confidence. She can meet people, and it helps her psychologically. I encourage every woman to find work.

2. Displaced women's economic empowerment in the KRI

a. Meaning of empowerment for displaced women

Women's economic empowerment (WEE) derives from the concept of empowerment, a complex concept to define and measure. In its essence, empowerment is about an increased ability to make choices. For women's empowerment to be achieved, "institutions supporting patriarchal structures and norms" need to be transformed (Ruiz Abril 2009, 6) because the idea that increasing women's skills leads to increased income and then to the expansion of women's choices does not always hold true due to structural, institutional and normative obstacles (Golla et al. 2011). Therefore, analysing WEE in any context requires a holistic approach connecting women's access to and control over economic resources, and their ability to earn income and compete in the job market⁸ (World Bank 2006) to social, political and institutional factors that influence women's empowerment.

For many women interviewed, economic wellbeing refers to their husband's or other male family members' income generating activities. A study by the Women's Refugee Council (WRC) and Oxfam also found similar results (2015, 13). Most of them do not consider their economic empowerment to be a priority as they interpret their

economic empowerment in the context of the household's economic status. Most women indicated that they would be happy to engage in livelihood activities, while a minority said they were not interested. Some of the working women said they work only because they have to provide for their families as their husbands do not have a job or are not with them. Women from rural areas emphasised that, normally, women do not engage in livelihood activities in their communities. Others said their husbands or fathers do not give permission for them to work outside the house.

For almost all participants, women's empowerment meant the ability to be mobile without needing permission to leave the house or tent. Several Syrian refugee women defined empowerment also in terms of being able to choose their clothing and not giving in to the community pressures that limit their mobility and participation in livelihood activities. They referred to community-wide perceptions on women's public visibility as an obstacle.

An overwhelming majority of displaced women defined their economic empowerment as the power to make financial decisions at home and about a third of women said they make the financial decisions at home, either alone or with their husbands. Some women said they feel like their



Photo: Emily Kinskey

opinion is respected when it comes to financial decision-making. Several women considered the roles played by women in the household as important. For instance, Yazidi women during a focus group in the Sharya camp said raising children, identifying the household needs and deciding how the money will be spent are more important than many roles men fulfil. They said women play important roles in their community in gatherings such as funerals and proposals for marriage. However, they stated their wish to be involved in decision-making regarding community level issues, which they believed would increase the value and respect their community gives to women.

b. Opportunities for women's economic empowerment

The conflict/post-conflict context in Iraq in general and displacement in the KRI have created unique situations for displaced women to engage in livelihood activities. First, the scale of conflict and displacement raised the attention of international actors and enabled the allocation of funding and resources to help displaced communities. Women's human rights organisations were able to tap into these funds to design and implement programmes targeting these communities.

However, key informant interviews (KIIs) with local and international non-governmental organisations (NGOs) revealed that budgets for livelihood programmes for displaced and host communities in the KRI were not sufficient and they have started to decrease further due to the increased focus on return processes in 2018. The limited funding available encourages competition rather than cooperation and coordination between organisations without necessarily resulting in more effective or relevant livelihood programmes. Similarly, a representative of the KRG's Ministry of Urban Planning expressed his concern about international agencies' tendency to derive their prestige from "being in the lead", discouraging information sharing with national and local governmental agencies.

Second, the context of conflict and displacement opened up space for women to engage in livelihood activities, but this was mostly out of necessity due to the decrease in men's capacity to provide for the family or earn enough income (as a result of loss of livelihood, a lack of job opportunities or low-paid jobs, sickness and injuries and sometimes death). The severe circumstances of displacement and conflict led to male family members having to accept this change in their wives' or daughters' roles.

For example, a refugee woman in Domiz camp stated that displacement had reversed the roles at home. Previously, her husband used to work and make the financial decisions. Since displacement, her husband works only occasionally when a job is available. She opened a hairdressing business (she had previous training), became the main income earner for the household and now she makes the financial decisions. Another refugee woman, a farmer from Daraa in Syria, in the same camp, now owns a shop selling fabrics because her husband is no longer able to work due to health problems. She reported that this reinforced her role in the family as the primary breadwinner and changed her relationship with her husband.

Third, the need for livelihood increased women's attendance at skills training in women's centres led by local and international NGOs in and outside camps, and through such activities NGOs were able to engage in awareness-raising activities. For instance, FGDs with host-community and displaced women attending the Women for Women International (WfWI) women's centre in Daratoo, near Erbil, revealed that women attending these training programmes experienced shifts in their mindset, including not giving into society's pressure to stay at home and not work.

c. Obstacles to transformative change in women's economic empowerment

The opportunities created by the circumstances of conflict and displacement for WEE do not always lead to transformative changes in women's social status and their empowerment. Participating in

income-generating activities also does not necessarily lead to a shift in gender relations in general (Esplen and Brody 2007) that empowers women in the private and public spheres. In many post-conflict settings, women return to their traditional roles after the crisis. For instance, in Iraq, women's participation in the labour market increased in the 1980s as a result of the Iran-Iraq war and the lack of labour to supply the economy, but after the war, women's participation decreased (Dietrich and Carter 2017, 27).

For real transformation in economic empowerment to happen, livelihood programmes should be accompanied by long-term and sustained improvements in non-economic aspects of women's lives (Ruiz Abril 2009, 9), such as increasing women's literacy and education rates (including legal and political literacy) and women's decision-making power in the household and community. Enhancement in these areas should be supported by wider transformations in the institutions and rules that perpetuate patriarchal societies and violate women's rights, and should include improving the implementation of laws and policies on VAWG.

i. Structural obstacles

Generating transformative change for displaced women's empowerment faces several obstacles in the KRI. The key factor is the lack of a governmental level push for such initiatives. This is partly because the expectation is that displaced people will return and also because these initiatives are not high on the political agenda, which prioritises issues such as the fight against ISIS, leading gender equality to be considered as a secondary and separate issue from the more "significant" ones. This overlooks the positive impact of increasing women's

public participation in preventing and decreasing violence against women, and preventing conflict or enabling lasting peace in general (UN Women 2015). A lack of or limited society-level conception of gender equality and social justice is another factor (Kiwan et al 2016, 38). Policy level strategies (mostly stopped after 2013) and NGOs' activities have mainly focused on protection and changing discriminative laws (Kaya 2017), which are very important but neglect women's economic empowerment.

The government and state institutions should take steps to ensure equal access to economic and social rights and decrease women's vulnerabilities in line with the principles of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) (Rees and Chinkin 2016, 1223). States have a particularly important role and ability to lower the obstacles women and girls face in engaging in livelihood activities and taking public roles. State sanctioned social and economic activities for women are less likely to invoke adverse societal reactions. These developments might, first, require a transformation at the institutional level, given that interviewed government officials pointed out the lack of expertise and experience in gender-mainstreaming in policy- and decision-making.

The wider institutional, legal and socio-cultural context exacerbates the gendered impacts of displacement and creates everyday difficulties for displaced women, limiting their ability to engage in livelihood activities. Inequality and discrimination against women and girls across Iraq, and conservative and patriarchal norms in society that condone women's

confinement in the private sphere, hinder their social, economic and political empowerment (WRC & Oxfam 2015, 3). There is no gender parity in literacy or in primary and secondary school education (UN Iraq 2013). Weak governance and insecurity combined with gender inequality result in different forms of violence against women and girls (Sider and Sissons 2016, 430). These factors lead to women's restricted mobility, low level of education and skills attainment among women, and heavy domestic burdens (exacerbated by the poor infrastructure in camp and non-camp settings) for women, hindering their engagement in livelihood activities and economic empowerment.

ii. Long-term needs of transformation vs. short-term needs and pressures

Developing programmes that strike a balance between responding to short-term emergencies and long-term developmental goals is a challenge in humanitarian crises such as conflict-induced displacement. Displacement has long-term implications for societies and requires holistic and forward-looking planning. WEE also requires a holistic approach with long-term strategies. However, these long-term processes often compete with urgent humanitarian and livelihood needs. Many of the participants said WEE and earning livelihood are not their priorities due to other more pressing needs such as healthcare, shelter and food. For them, their struggle with poverty was the key issue. Their families are under huge debt, have depleted their savings, and sold most of their assets (livestock, house, furniture, jewellery, etc.) either before or after their displacement (WRC & Oxfam 2015, 7). They cope with a chronic or temporary lack

of income by accepting charitable donations from family or relatives and cutting expenses such as doctor's visits, medicine and school materials.

Local and international women's NGOs struggle to cope with competing priorities of carrying out their work on women's rights and empowerment and supporting women's livelihood needs through limited available funds. This leads to short-term, one-size-fits-all and low production livelihood programmes. Such programmes are limited in their capacity to empower women economically, or to help them develop sustainable livelihoods, compete in the job market or be able to make economic decisions. Most livelihood programmes are not linked to the job market and so do not necessarily allow women to engage in income-generating activities after completing training. It is important to tap into the policy-level strategic development goals to ensure sustainable and long-term impact. Finally, it is essential to include implementing partners in the programme development stage. Not including such partners, according to one government official, is like *"eating a readymade dish rather than cooking together."*

iii. Changing mindset: Temporary or transformative?

Many women during the study expressed their observations on how perceptions of women's and girls' positions in society and family have changed. Participants of an FGD in the Sharya camp said, after moving to Dohuk, men's perspectives had changed and they started to give women more freedom. According to a participant in the same FGD (and other participants agreed), this was the result of what ISIS did to Yezidi women and girls:

"That is the main reason why men feel they should give our girls more space, so that they can see the world and understand life better."

Another participant said: *"now, they wouldn't object and would be willing to let women and girls to work to provide income."* A Yezidi IDP woman from a village in Sinjar declared that *"many parents now would accept their daughters to go outside the camp to work. Life is changing, it is another chapter, and people need to move on."*

A male IDP from Mosul in the Baharka camp said:

"Before we came here our wives had limited freedom ... Before we were not fair with our women, with their freedom. Now we realise they have a right to leave home, to do fun things in their life, to enjoy."

Female host community members during an FGD in Daratoo also made similar observations about the changing mindset among at least some men in their community. They noted that now there are more women working as staff in bazaars or mini shops and people do not think this is unusual. Fathers and husbands have started to be less restrictive regarding their daughters' and wives' mobility: *"They are now more likely to let their daughters visit relatives on their own or go to the market with their friends."*

There are also signs of forward-looking aspirations for empowerment where mothers and sometimes fathers envisage a different future for their children, including their daughters. Displaced mothers from rural areas expressed their desire for their daughters to go to school and earn their own income in the future. A female Yezidi IDP from a village in Sinjar noted that:

“Life is changing, education is important. Some mothers are sacrificing themselves to take care of everything at home so that their daughters can go to school [in their community, girls are expected to help mothers with house chores]. They think maybe one day their daughters will get a job and earn money for themselves.”

One participant said *“if my daughter marries a man who is uneducated, she will be educated and can earn money for her family.”* A Yezidi woman from Sinjar said: *“Before what happened in Sinjar, everyone was scared that the girls who would go to school would run away with a man and marry at a young age, like thirteen or fourteen. Because of that many parents didn’t let their children to go to school, not because it was shameful to send a girl to school. They thought maybe she’ll talk to boys and these kinds of things and her mind will change.”*

To conclude, according to several displaced women, the crisis of forced displacement has led to positive outcomes for women’s engagement in livelihood activities outside the house and there are signs of change in men’s thinking about women’s roles. However, participants were also precautionary and said this change could be temporary and, once they return home, everything may return to as it was before. For instance, a male IDP from Salahaddin in the Baharka camp said:

“I disapprove of my wife working in a mixed environment with men... We need to be more flexible now because of displacement. Women may need to provide for their family if [a] husband is unable to work.”

This shows that women’s engagement in livelihood activities might be seen as instrumental and temporary, being an outcome of urgent needs under exceptional circumstances. The structural obstacles, such as the wider institutional and legal system that discriminates against women and perpetuates patriarchal gender norms in society, along with the economic crisis and the lack of emphasis within government on the economic empowerment of women, are key impediments for transformational change.



Alia's Story

Alia is a Syrian refugee living in a host community after fleeing Syria in 2013. She is 41 years old, married with 5 children.

Before the war, we lived in Aleppo. Our life was good and we were happy. My children were at school, and my husband worked as a restaurant manager.

When the conflict started, our children were scared. We moved in with relatives, but when things escalated, we fled to Sulaymaniyah in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq.

Words can't explain how difficult it was. We lived with 4 other families and my husband couldn't find a job. My sons can't go to school anymore. They are 13 and 17 and they are both working. I don't want to stay here, because there is no future for my kids. They need to go to school - if they don't learn now, how will they cope in the future? But their father has been out of work for a year – how else can we pay the rent?

Before, they were never scared – now, my son is afraid of opening the door because he is traumatised. He won't go out after 6pm. He is 13 and he can't go to the market on his own.

I never thought that one day I'd work – there were very few working women back in Syria, apart from some seamstresses and hairdressers. But now it is different – in the KRI, Syrian women are working more than men. It is no longer considered shameful for a woman to support the family. If I had the chance, I would work for sure. But only the educated women can get a job. I only finished 8th grade, so I can't work as an accountant or using computers.

It's been 6 months since I started going to the women's centre. I've been attending the hairdressing and makeup courses. There are more than 20 women in the class and we are like sisters now.

Since my childhood I've always wanted to work in a hairdressing salon – that was my real dream. As I hold the hairdryer, I'm motivated to learn. I feel like I have a future ahead.

3. Perceptions of livelihood opportunities

Livelihood opportunities are essential to support displaced women's economic wellbeing and empowerment, but the programmes should be developed carefully, taking into account the specific circumstances, opportunities and needs; safety and gender-related risks; and perceived obstacles regarding their engagement in livelihood activities. Here the aim is not to assess livelihood programmes, but rather it is to provide the perspective of displaced women and practitioners working to support displaced communities.

a. What kind of livelihood support is available?⁹

Livelihood programmes targeting displaced women in the KRI seek to empower them by providing them with income generation opportunities and resources, for instance by training in specific skills, lending money to start a business and/or providing start-up kits. Most of the livelihood opportunities for displaced women are in areas such as sewing, hairdressing or working in beauty salons, working at local NGOs, cleaning, and more rarely in administrative work, nursing and teaching. Programmes offering cash-assistance, which renders livelihood programmes a means of livelihood in itself, are heavily criticised by smaller NGOs as they are not able to "hand out" cash.

During interviews, practitioners described most available livelihood projects targeting displaced women as one-size-fits-all and short-term (usually 1-3 or 6-month) programmes. A representative from REACH (Rehabilitation, Education and Community Health), a local NGO, said that donors often do not fund programmes that are longer than a few months. She said, *"sometimes you just think, this [programme] is so important, let's do it and see what we can do in six months, but it's very challenging to do a project [with long-lasting impact] in six months. You need at least one year."*

The experiences of displaced women with regards to livelihood programmes are mixed. Most women said start-up kits for opening a shop to sell goods or a beauty/hairdressing salon have been useful. Participants who engage in such livelihood activities reported that their business had been relatively successful until the economic crisis began. Such livelihood activities, especially opening shops and beauty salons, enabled women to provide for their families' needs and earn their own income, making them feel empowered.

A refugee woman from Damascus who owns a shop in the Domiz camp said:

"I am happy that I am the one responsible for earning money for myself. I feel it gives me independence and it gives me income, I don't need to ask my husband or anyone for money ... It is all me running the household, my husband doesn't interfere a bit in this ... Previously, he would go and earn money and give it to me to take care of. I love that because it shows equality. It doesn't empower women over men but gets them to a point where they are equal to each other."

Participants also identified limitations with the livelihood programmes they attended, such as providing the training but not the support to transform this skill into livelihoods. Without the necessary start-up kit, such as sewing machines, or continuing provision of materials, it is hard for women to carry on running a shop or a beauty salon after the initial stage. Some of the participants also pointed out that the need for skills such as sewing and knitting is very limited and the income generated from sewing is very small. A refugee woman at the Barika Camp said income through sewing is just enough to *"buy bread and survive ... For example, it would take a whole day for a woman to make a daily wear dress and she would make a maximum of 10,000 Iraqi dinar [about £6]."*

Study participants considered working in childcare centres or women's centres inside and outside the camps, taking courses at NGOs, English and computer skills training (especially for women and girls who already have a secondary or higher education degree) and literacy courses as useful activities. Proposing non-traditional livelihood

interventions such as training female taxi drivers and plumbers was suggested during the KILs. However, overall, a pessimistic view is common about the ability to generate income after learning skills due to most skills being unproductive and the wider economic situation. A female refugee at the Barika camp said *"in general, any skills or workshops you provide, eventually people will learn the skill but it won't generate much income for people... income is limited and opportunities are few."*

b. The impact of the economic crisis

The creation of sustainable livelihood opportunities depends on local economies and identifying market demands or opportunities (UNHCR 2014, 11) and on the changes in the economic situation. The economic crisis – the result of federal budget cuts, a fall in oil prices, long-term bad management of the economy and corruption – that started in the KRI in 2014-15 has affected the sustainability of the livelihood activities displaced women engage in and has further increased their basic needs. Income deprivation, a lack of job opportunities, increasing prices and the deterioration of health, social and educational services have affected both displaced and host communities.¹⁰ Sections of the host community have been more severely affected by the crisis than the IDPs, as the latter group continued to receive salaries or subsidies from the GoI while the KRG was unable to pay the salaries of several host community members. Furthermore, large influxes of displaced peoples put pressure on the provision of basic services and increased competition for the already limited jobs available in the KRI (UNDP 2015, 8).



Photo: Emily Kinskey

Shiwan (above) fled her home with her husband and three daughters to escape ISIS. They have been living in a host community since 2015. She makes popcorn for her husband to sell, but this only earns them about £3 a day.

The impact of the economic crisis is severely felt in camps because a lack of jobs outside the camp both for men and women reduced household incomes and peoples' purchasing ability. All the female participants who are/were running shops or beauty salons said their income has declined significantly since the start of the economic crisis. Some of them could not cover rent and electricity costs, and had to close their place of business.¹¹

c. Barriers to women's ability to engage in livelihood activities

Displaced women who want to work are often faced with challenges preventing them from working or

attending training programmes. One of the most important reasons that was mentioned by women is social and cultural expectations and norms. Several women who do not work, especially IDPs, said their culture and/or community would not accept women working outside the house. An IDP from a village in Salahaddin said:

"My husband doesn't allow me to work at NGOs. In addition to having childcare responsibilities, it is our tradition that I can't work. On our land, because it's ours, I could go to the farm and come back but here it is unknown so we don't like it."

In general, the chances for educated, younger and unmarried displaced women to find a job and work are higher both inside and outside camps, but the number of such cases is not high.

Another more important set of factors that hinder women's ability to engage in livelihood activities is more practical than cultural. Several female non-working participants said they cannot work or do not want to work due to practical reasons such as having young children and not having childcare support. For many camp-resident women, attending skills training and working outside camps prove difficult because of the long and expensive commute, lack of transport, or travelling being considered as unsafe and risky for women. Many women said working hours are unsuitable and that societal expectations prescribe women not to return home too late. In some cases, camp regulations exist about what time residents are able to leave or should be back at the camp. Moreover, working to earn a living, combined with their household responsibilities, puts women in a difficult position by further increasing their burden. This is particularly challenging for divorced women or widows.

Another barrier to women's engagement in livelihood activities is the chronic lack of information among displaced women. Most women are not aware of how to apply for jobs, information about the opportunities is not disseminated and women with no connections do not have the chance to hear about the opportunities through word-of-mouth (Sider and Sissons 2016, 435).

Finally, *wasta* (a term referring to connections, favoritism, nepotism) is a common issue that was raised during interviews and FGDs. About one fifth of interviewees perceive *wasta* as a key hindrance to obtaining livelihood opportunities, especially in the camps. They claimed that NGOs in camps have dubious hiring methods. A camp-resident refugee woman said *"NGOs have a hiring office, everyone goes there and puts their name down. No one follows up. He [her husband] has a college degree, but would accept work as a gardener or security guard. Those who get jobs have wasta so people with only primary school qualifications are given office jobs over people with degrees like him."*

Another Syrian woman, who is a shop owner, stated that *"There are job opportunities here at the NGO offices, but they are given out through wasta before we even find out that a job is available."*

Overall, livelihood support and opportunities provided by national and international actors have benefited some women, especially until the economic crisis started. However, several participants raised concerns about the lack of prospects of livelihood activities generating a sustainable income. Models that do not respond to the specific livelihood needs of women and do not take into account their circumstances remain particularly limited. However, organisations work with limited resources and it is difficult to cater for all types of need.



Raja's Story

Raja has been intermittently displaced by conflict in Iraq since 2008. She is 30 years old and now lives in an IDP camp with her five children.

We are IDPs, we have been living here at the camp for a year and a half. We can't go back home because ISIS is still there and there is no water or food. At least here, we can live.

Back home, we were poor, but it was better. My husband was with us, he worked as a day labourer. But after ISIS came, there was nothing left, so we fled. ISIS were chasing us – we ran until we arrived in Erbil and reached safety.

We don't have anything here. We used to receive some aid, but now it is less. My husband is away. Other families in the camp have someone who can work, but I can't leave the house – I am responsible for everything, I am both the mother and the father now.

Before, women only did housework. There weren't any jobs or training courses for them, only the men worked. Here in the camp, women are working and men are staying at home – there is no work for men.

I heard an announcement in the camp about the training centre for women. I go there for an hour every week for the knitting and sewing courses. Women can earn money from sewing and knitting. Sometimes I borrow my friend's sewing machine during the night and sew clothes for my children. Now I am teaching another friend how to sew too. I hope I can get a sewing machine so I can earn some more. I want to work and provide for my children.

Now I am learning and have distractions. Before, I was depressed and didn't have anything to do. I met other women at the centre - I didn't know any of them before. Now we are all friends and we visit each other's homes. We have a life here now. I'm focused on trying to give my children a better future.

4. Factors that influence women's livelihood needs

There are significant differences in women's experiences of displacement, their access to livelihood activities and their perceptions of livelihood needs and opportunities. It is important that this variation is reflected in the design and implementation of programmes. One model that caters for a section of displaced women might exclude others. In general, women's livelihood needs and opportunities are different from men's. The types of jobs available for displaced communities, mainly manual jobs, are seen as more suitable for men. However, interviews showed that it is harder for educated displaced men to find a job that fits their skills, as most jobs available for men are manual, whereas it is easier for educated displaced women to find jobs as teachers, nurses and NGO workers.

a. IDPs and refugees

Generally speaking, levels of educational attainment, work experience and literacy are higher among Syrian women compared to IDP women. Therefore, Syrian refugee women are more likely to pursue livelihood opportunities than IDP women. Rules for work permits vary between refugees and IDPs, which impacts women's livelihood opportunities. Initially refugees were not allowed to work formally in the KRI until 2012, but thanks to the

permit, refugees (especially Kurdish Syrians) are more integrated into the job market in the formal economy (Sadek 2013, 3-4; UNDP 2016). IDPs on the other hand need to apply for permission to work in the KRI, which are issued only for eight weeks at a time (Danish Refugee Council 2016).

Syrian refugee women find the societal gender norms in the KRI more restraining than those in Syria. They experience difficulties in moving freely in public and consider the treatment of women in this region as regressive. A refugee woman who owns a shop in the Darashakran camp said:

"In Syria, it matters that you have a college degree... Cultural norms are different for Iraqi people, women are shamed for going out here, but in Syria, they are not."

Her sister, who pursued higher education and speaks English was offered a job opportunity outside the camp but decided to work in the camp instead. According to her brother, cultural norms were a major part of this decision where it is seen as *"shameful for women to work outside the house in Iraq. If she comes from work late in the evening, the community will say things."*



Photo: Emily Kinsley

b. Urban-rural background

Most IDP and refugee women who used to live in rural areas have limited or no education and many of them are illiterate. Although a small number of them have opened shops or beauty salons inside camps, they are less likely to work during their displacement than women from urban areas. Prior to displacement most of the women from rural backgrounds used to work on the land and take care of livestock with their husbands or other (male and female) family members, whereas those from urban areas with no employment used to be housewives. Displaced women from rural backgrounds and their families are more likely to choose camps as their place of settlement rather than living with the host community in cities and towns. This is mainly because they cannot afford the living expenses in the city due to their relatively higher levels of poverty, lack of connections in the city, and their limited work experience and education.

Conservative and patriarchal norms are more prominently observed among displaced people from rural areas, especially among IDPs. For instance, on the question of whether women should engage in income generating activities, a male IDP from a rural area in Mosul at the Baharka camp said: *“women are housekeepers, men are responsible to make money and work outside.”* A female IDP from a rural area in Jazeera at the Sharya Camp said *“in my community, women don’t*

work” and a female IDP from a village in Salahaddin at the Ashti camp said *“women don’t work, especially if their father or husband doesn’t like them to go out.”*

c. Ethnic and linguistic background

The livelihood needs and opportunities for displaced women and their communities are also affected by their different ethnic and linguistic backgrounds. For instance, Syrian Kurdish refugees, both men and women, feel more welcome in the KRI, find it easier to find a job and work than Arabic speaking IDPs and refugees. A male Arab refugee from Syria at the Darasahkran camp said:

“I am living in alienation here, I am away from home. Culturally it is different and when working with Kurdish people we do not have a common language.”

Some interviewees said their ethno-religious background affects their chances in the job market. For instance, Amena (see her story opposite) believes her Syrian-Arab background negatively affects her ability to find a job in the health sector, and some of the Sunni Arab women said male members of their families are being discriminated against in the job market.

Amena's Story

Five years ago, Amena fled Syria with her husband and two children in 2013. In Syria, she was working as a surgical assistant (for 15 years) and her colleagues were like her extended family: *"I had a really good life, I was among my people, it was my homeland."* When she arrived in the KRI with her family, they rented a house in a small village near the Iranian border. She worked in the local hospital on a contract basis for a year. But after three years, they could not afford the rent anymore. Her husband found a job as a carpenter, after which they moved to a refugee camp.

Amena misses working as a surgical assistant. She explains how it has become more difficult for her to find a job after the economic crisis in the KRI and, in part, because of her Syrian-Arab background. Amena now runs a store in the camp and sells beauty products and other goods. She's the only woman selling beauty products and considers this an advantage because most women prefer her store to others run by men. Amena explains how women in Iraq, especially women from rural areas, are restricted to all-women spaces because of their different cultural norms:

"People who come from villages really don't like it and don't allow their women to work, but if they are from a city they are usually more open and allow it."

Amena disapproves of the socio-economic status of women in the KRI and critically reflects on their situation. She explained how women can only pursue "Middle Eastern opportunities," such as hairdressing and sewing, but they barely generate enough money to buy food items for a small household. Although she finds the livelihood projects and training programmes offered by NGOs not useful from a financial point of view, she describes how education and skills training could change women's social status:

"Our society looks at women and rates them, respects them depending on their skills, on their career. If they are a housewife, they are less respected. There is a social class depending on what work they do, people in the society look at it this way."

**Names have been changed to protect the identity of women who participated in the research.*

The research also revealed differences between Yezidi and Arab female IDPs in terms of their willingness to engage in livelihood activities and training programmes. Even though both Yezidi and Arab IDP women mostly have rural backgrounds, interviews and FGDs with Yezidi women and the KIs with NGOs working with displaced women indicated that Yezidi women are more likely to be open to attending awareness-raising and training sessions than Arab IDP women, and they are more interested in pursuing livelihood

opportunities. Yezidi women said their men do not oppress women as much as they used to and give women more freedom to attend training programmes and to work. Despite living in a highly patriarchal community, this slightly different attitude among Yezidi women is interesting, but identifying reasons for this is beyond the scope of this research.

d. Place of settlement

Both camp and non-camp residents may prioritise livelihood security, but they are confronted with different challenges and have different opportunities. It is easier for non-camp residents to find a job and work because of proximity. Camps are outside cities and towns and transport is not always available and is expensive. Experiences of camp-residents differ based on which camp they live in. Camps have different infrastructures, managements and livelihood opportunities and restrictions. Some camps are relatively new whereas others are older and host populations that have been displaced for longer periods. The duration of displacement and conditions in the area of settlement affect the perceptions of displaced women and men differently regarding their livelihood circumstances.

For instance, refugees in the Domiz camp have been displaced for much longer than refugees in other camps and their accommodations are being transformed into concrete houses. During the interviews, they made positive observations about their living conditions and the livelihood opportunities for women, especially in teaching, nursing and working for NGOs. On the other hand, the perceptions of the newly displaced populations, such as Kurdish IDPs in Kifri who fled Tuz Khurmatu in October 2017,¹² are very different. They currently live in tents and urgently need shelter, food items, access to basic services such as toilets and water. During the FGDs, they said that they fled abruptly from violent attacks by militias in their city, and some escaped with nothing but the clothes they were wearing. So far, they have received very limited humanitarian aid.

Finally, the location of residents can affect the amount of income displaced men and women can earn. Unlike non-camp residents, displaced people living in camps receive support for basic needs (although goods are not always fairly and proportionately distributed according to some participants resident in camps¹³) and this increases their resilience to the changes in the wider economy and the lack of livelihood opportunities. Camp residents are usually paid less for the work they do and participants said this is mainly because employees think that camp residents do not have to pay rent or pay for electricity/water/food and they are able to work for lower wages. Host community members blame displaced communities for driving down wages and reducing the already limited number of job opportunities, which has increasingly become a problem for host community members confronted with the consequences of the economic crisis. In reality, most households in IDP camps have to accrue debts to buy a plot of land that they can build on.

e. Female-led households

Women in female-led households in Iraq face serious challenges in ensuring their family's survival and wellbeing (Sider and Sissons 2016, 430). It is particularly hard for women in female-led households to have access to job opportunities due to their responsibilities at home and because of the stigma around working as a divorcee or widow.

A Syrian widow who lives among the host community in Daratoo said during an FGD:

"I'm not feeling safe in the community, because I'm a widow. They have a very bad perception of me for going out, even to the grocery shop."

She said her son did not allow her to work for a tailor because of the local customs and traditions of widows. As a widow, *"I'm the mother and the father at the same time."* Yet, societal pressure prevents her from accepting a job: *"the neighbours and people of the community don't feel good about it, because I'm a widow and I go outside a lot."* A refugee woman who runs a beauty salon in Darashakran camp said: *"for the first six months I came here alone. I couldn't work in Erbil city because of my reputation because my husband was not with me."*

f. Age and education

Age and education are other important factors that affect women's livelihood experiences. Higher education attainment, or the desire for it, is more common among younger displaced women (under 20s), especially, among those living in non-camp settings. A woman's level of education, marital status and childcare responsibilities generally differ based

on age groups. Most middle aged and young women are likely to make their choices about pursuing secondary or higher education and attending training in non-traditional activities based on the availability of childcare support, types of skills provided, transportation means and costs. Older women are unlikely to engage with, or be interested in, livelihood activities.

Most displaced women, especially IDPs, have no education beyond primary school and several of them are illiterate. Levels of education also differ between refugees and IDPs and women from rural and urban backgrounds. For instance, more Syrian refugee women have a diploma in secondary school or higher education or have obtained skills through previous training and work experience.

Not all women fit into these generalisations. There were notable exceptions among the women interviewed (see Noor's story). For instance, a 70-year-old IDP woman from Tikrit in the Baharka camp makes enough money by selling goods, which she buys from Erbil and brings back to the camp. She's been a trader ever since her husband died from cancer 19 years into the marriage and she raised her eight children on her own with her income and her husband's retirement salary. She thinks other camp residents are not being smart with their money: *"you have to spend money to earn money and all they do is sit at home."*

Noor's Story

Noor is a Yazidi woman in her sixties now living in an IDP camp in KRI. In 2014, she was displaced from a village near the Iraq-Syria border with her husband and seven children. Four of her children now live in Europe. Noor participates in a livelihood programme provided by an NGO in the camp, and says she is one of the oldest participants.

Noor did not receive any formal education and used to spend her days taking care of her children. After her arrival at the camp, she decided to visit the women's centre because she wanted to learn English. Her family members told her that she is too old to learn anything new:

"My sister in law's husband told me 'after 60 years what will you learn?' I told him maybe I am 60 but I still have 40 or 20 years to live and I will spend it educated."

She mentioned her sister-in-law, who is not even allowed to visit the centre because of her age. According to Noor, men fear that women visiting the centre will commit adultery. This leads men to think that a woman is *"something you must hold very tight. If you lose it, you will lose everything."*

Noor explains her husband's support, who told her *"the time when you pass away will come but don't say you are old, don't wait until you pass away, live your life."* She describes her marriage as a friendship and suggests that the level of restrictions imposed on women depends on the attitude of the men in their family. Noor explains that, before being displaced:

"Life was very difficult, it was a routine life, every day the same. When we came here everything changed, we came to school, before we just went walking, made bread and took care of children. I have lived 58 years, I didn't see any change in my life, even a small change, but now things have changed for me."

Noor stresses the importance of raising awareness amongst men and women that *"women go to [the] centre to be educated."* Noor explains how learning something new has made her feel *"more open and confident."* She describes how women at the centre are like a family and how she likes to learn from younger women. She describes how she is proud to call some of them her teachers, while cultural norms usually force older women to refrain from interacting with the younger ones in that way.

**Names have been changed to protect the identity of women who participated in the research.*

To conclude, national and international actors should take into account the differences in women's experiences of displacement and their access to economic opportunities and livelihood needs in the design and implementation of livelihood

programmes. While doing this, they should avoid gendered stereotyping and strictly categorising women based on cultural and communal identities, age, or level of education, as well as avoiding seeing livelihood barriers simply based on these identifiers.

5. How do women's livelihood needs intersect with other needs?

a. Representation

Representation and inclusion in decision-making processes are important factors that affect women's ability to engage in livelihood activities. This is important for being able to communicate their needs, and being informed about livelihood opportunities and how to apply for a job or start a business. Several study participants pointed to representation as a key need for displaced women. In most cases, camp management appoints a section leader, usually male, who represents a certain section of the camp. Most female participants said their representatives are ineffective in communicating with their section and conveying their needs to the camp management. Participants of an FGD with Syrian refugees at the Barika camp said that, initially, there was a woman that was representing their community but she had to work until late afternoon and she was not paid, and therefore she quit. They said they feel unrepresented but lack of incentives makes them unwilling to take on the role as section leader. Other obstacles mentioned include not being "trained" for taking on a leadership role, childcare and household responsibilities.

Participants of another FGD in the Khanke camp similarly noted that their camp representative did not care about their problems, although they did not specify whether they referred to specific gendered needs, or general household and livelihood needs. During an interview at the

Arbat camp, a female IDP said, *"There is a woman, even though she works in an organisation inside the camp, she listens to us and tells the camp managers about our issues, she represents us."* But this is an example of informal rather than formal (appointed by the camp) representation where a NGO employee has herself taken the initiative to play that role.

b. Legal support

Most livelihood programmes designed for displaced women rest on the assumption that women are vulnerable because of the existing socio-cultural norms, and that WEE will result through norm change. This is partly true, however, there is a need to assess the institutional and legal protection available to all women, or lack of it, in order to better understand the wider context that shapes women's livelihood opportunities and their economic empowerment. A lack of legal and institutional protection against such acts and implementation of laws and rules in a way that protects men rather than women (for instance, if a man rapes a woman and marries her, he does not receive punishment for the crime he committed) perpetuates the patriarchal gender roles and leads to widely accepted and normalised gendered inequalities in society.

Institutionalising women's rights in line with the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Violence Against Women (1979) and the Human Rights Covenants, and an



Photo: Emily Kinskey

active push for implementation are necessary steps to deconstruct the taboos and stigmas and to weaken the patriarchal norms. Legal inequalities between women and men and the discriminatory rules and policies that violate Iraq's commitments to CEDAW as a signatory facilitate, or do not discourage, women's harassment in public spaces, which significantly hinders their mobility and ability to work. Harassment and sexual abuse of women and girls travelling to work or at the workplace reflects badly on the rest of the family and damages their reputation in the eyes of the community; as a result, staying at home is seen as a social protection mechanism. In this way, sexual violence is not only a "crime" to be prevented, but also a force influencing women's position in society.

The institutional procedures that affect displaced persons require additional attention. A key issue is the loss of official documentation amongst displaced women and girls, which prevents them from receiving public services, pursuing higher education, and applying for jobs. They are confronted with lengthy and costly official procedures in order to obtain new documentation. The money needed to pay for the fees, transportation and legal counselling seriously limits their access to the legal framework.

The legal protection of displaced persons is also an important matter that needs attention. During an FGD in Daratoo, refugee participants living

among the host community considered the legal protection of displaced communities in the KRI as partial. One female participant said: *"Many accidents happen and the law is always on the side of the Iraqi nationals, not the Syrians,"* referring to the exploitation of daily manual labourers and the lack of legal protection because of their refugee status.¹⁴

Sectarian politics also play a role in the legal protection available for the displaced and it affects their families' livelihood situation. For example, Sunni Arabs, who fled from Mosul and its surrounding villages, are subjected to discrimination on the job market and restrictions of freedom of movement. Across Iraq, men and boys are likely to be detained or arrested, under Article 4 of Iraq's Anti-Terrorism Law, sometimes randomly in IDP sites and crowded places like food distribution spots. They experience restrictions depending on their tribal affiliation, location of origin or destination, and religion or sect (Higel 2016, 12). Such practices affect women as well; when a male family member is arrested under Article 4, women in their family may not be able to access cash or basic needs support (King and Ardis 2015).

c. Protection

The link between economic opportunities and the risk of violence against women is well known. Livelihood programmes can unintentionally increase risks, if they are not planned well and/or if they overlook the links between gender,

livelihoods and protection (WRC & Oxfam 2015, 2). Therefore, the programmes should be designed and implemented with protection in mind to mitigate risks¹⁵ and to understand the concerns of women and girls over their safety.

Violence against women and girls is a significant problem in Iraq and the KRI in general. Women and girls face early marriage, domestic violence, and prostitution and trafficking and officials fail to assist victims of forced sex work (Freedom House 2017). Awareness of women's legal rights is low among society (Iraqi Central Statistical Organisation 2012), and local NGO representatives and legal experts said that displaced persons are even less aware of the frameworks in place that provide legal protection for women, such as the Law against Domestic Violence adopted by the KRG in 2011. An INGO representative pointed to cases of women being forced to have sex in return for food baskets or aid and to cases of sexual abuse of minors in camps, but the taboo around these makes the scope of the violations hard to estimate. It is essential to engage in awareness-raising activities among displaced women regarding their rights and legal protections.

Some of the study participants mentioned the risk of sexual violence and harassment during work and travel. They said they do not feel safe and they believe that women's security is not guaranteed in the KRI. Participants of an FGD in Daratoo described verbal harassment and being followed by strangers as common incidents they experience in public. They said most women experience these in the KRI but being Syrian makes them more susceptible to being exposed to such incidents. One of the participants said: *"We are not taking taxis ourselves because we don't feel safe. They [men in the host community] have this idea*

that all Syrian women are bad and in need, and whatever they ask, they [men] can get it."

During an FGD in Erbil, a refugee woman talked about her daughter's safety:

"My daughter would like to continue her education but the school is very far away from our home and she is scared of violence."

Another woman in the same FGD said *"I go with my two [adult] daughters everywhere, as I should be with them in the taxi."*

Some of the camp-resident IDPs and refugees also alluded to sexual harassment and violence. They referred to sexual violence in subtle terms such as *"something bad happening"* to women and girls and *"not being able to trust strangers."* For example, a woman from a village in Salahaddin residing in the Ashti camp said *"A lot of people don't allow their daughters to go out as the community and most young men here are not good. They always harass the girls if they go out. I am always worried when my daughter goes to school that someone would harass her or do something to her."* Domestic violence was also raised but by a small number of women who described being beaten by husbands as part of normal life.

d. Health support

Health issues affect displaced women and their livelihood situation in multiple ways. The study showed that psychological and physical health is a significant issue that affects women's livelihood situation in numerous ways and several female participants in the study stressed that health support

should be prioritised over livelihood training for women.

In some cases, women's own health problems or care responsibilities for sick or disabled family members hinder them from engaging in livelihood activities; and in other cases, women are forced to work because their husband is not able to work due to illness or injury. Combined with the responsibilities at home, working displaced women carry a heavy burden. A Syrian woman displaced from Al Hassakah since 2013, explained how she already struggled with health issues before being displaced. After her husband lost his job as a cleaner at a health clinic, she participated in a sewing course and started making pillows for camp residents at night to provide for her two disabled children, while also doing household chores, such as carrying water buckets. The workload worsened her back problems and she had to stop working.

Several female working participants complained about health problems caused by working and living conditions. Most of the available health support provided by local and international NGOs seeks to address the psychological trauma caused by conflict and displacement. The leading example is the trauma experienced by Yezidi communities of the Sinjar Mountains, fleeing the brutal attacks of ISIS. Yet, support should also attempt to alleviate the chronic stress of living in displacement and the impact of harsh working and living conditions. The uncertainty caused by being displaced, such as constant concerns about the potential closure of campsites or the next food distribution, takes its toll both on people's mental and physical health (WRC & Oxfam 2015, 7). Syrian women living in the Barika camp pointed to the quality of water, which is affecting the health of residents.

At the Domiz camp, a Syrian woman's husband, who worked throughout their six-years of displacement in a factory in Dohuk, became sick at work and is now paralysed; they are not able to afford the cost of his treatment. Another non-camp resident Syrian woman's husband is diagnosed with a kidney problem and is no longer able to work in construction because of the poor working conditions. Displaced people (and host communities) are confronted with long waiting lists at public hospitals and clinics and high costs of visiting or receiving treatment at private hospitals. A Syrian woman said:

"My husband is working day and night, but it is almost like he is not working as we spend it all on the doctors."

Difficulties in accessing medical specialists is especially worrying, at times resulting in serious health conditions. A woman in the Darashakran camp explained how her husband is losing his sight because private clinics are too expensive and, inside the camp, only primary health care is offered. Most alarming is the situation of adults and children with disabilities, particularly those staying inside the camps. Several participants pointed out the total absence of support for disabled children and their families. For instance, a Syrian woman at the Darashakran camp said: *"There was a family with four or five disabled kids. No one is helping them."*

e. Safe spaces

The study revealed the importance of having a safe space for displaced women, such as women's centres, not only as a place to attain livelihood

skills but also as a place to build new relations and a social support network, and focus on their own needs. This has a significant impact on their empowerment especially in a male-dominated society such as the KRI. A lack of self-confidence and the feeling of helplessness negatively affect women's social empowerment as well as their economic empowerment.

An activity outside the home, being part of a group and time for self, encourages women's self-esteem and self-confidence, which in turn is important for women's economic empowerment (Mosedale 2005, 249).

A Yezidi woman who regularly attends the Free Yezidi Foundation noted:

"The first time we came here, we felt alive again because we had been suffering a lot from the camp conditions and what happened in Sinjar. Now, we're here with other people... Inside the camp, you feel alone. But here, you make friends."

Similarly, a Syrian woman pointed out the importance of a space for women to gather and heal from past trauma: *"Sometimes we sit on the sidewalk and other women come and talk for a few hours. We used to have meetings for women, there used to be a psychiatrist [...]. We would forget the pressure that is on us, we would forget our worries. The psychiatrist used to also tell us to talk to each other about whatever we wanted to, it was a space for us to express."*

Going to women's centres and having a safe space helps women to get away from the day-to-day routine

and difficulties at home. Being alone and not having any activities other than household responsibilities and childcare often causes them to feel sad, frustrated and depressed. The situation of displacement frequently affects family dynamics, constraining men's ability to take on the expected role of the main provider, leading to tensions and, at times, violence in the household (Dietrich and Carter 2017, 17). This further increases the stress displaced women experience. Still, the lack of men's livelihood opportunities combined with women's confinement inside their homes has exacerbated the risk of domestic violence.

Attending a daily or weekly activity at a women's centre gives women a 'socially acceptable' reason to leave the house, lowering societal pressure to an extent. Study participants mentioned that they are frowned upon by their neighbours when leaving the house – even with a designated destination. During an FGD in Daratoo at the WfWI Centre, non-camp resident Syrian women discussed how they are frequently criticised by women from the host community for leaving their houses. They said that the criticism does not influence their decision to visit the centre, which they describe as a "comfortable" and "safe" place. A participant in the same FGD emphasised the extra pressure she feels as a widow because of the host community's negative perception. She needs to do outdoor chores to take care of her children but feels constantly judged for it. Coming to the Centre helps her, because, in her own words:

"Someone is listening to me, someone is taking care of me, which does not happen a lot. I can talk and express what I feel and experience, which feels really good."

Therefore, it is essential such safe spaces exist in and outside camps and that new places are established in locations where they are lacking. Safe spaces help women cope with stress

and difficulties, support each other and increase their ability to empower themselves and build their confidence, which could transfer into other forms of empowerment.

Farrah and Ayad's Story

Sisters-in-law Farrah and Ayat, two Sunni-Arab women, were displaced from a small village outside of the KRI in 2014. Both used to work as farmers, growing potatoes, tomatoes, and other vegetables, after which the men of their families would sell the products at nearby markets. They now live in an IDP camp in the KRI.

Farah and Ayad are both in their 40s, married, and mothers to six and eight children (respectively). They spoke about their situation in the camp while making pillows from wool for their families. Ayad's family relies on the income of her three teenage sons, who are daily workers. In relation to her daughters, she light-heartedly says:

"It is God's will that the girls are always better at school. My sons left school, they didn't want it. When my husband asks me why, I say 'who will they use as an example to become a doctor or teacher, when their father and uncles sit around all day doing nothing.'"

Ayad described their life before fleeing their homes:

"We were very safe we didn't face any of the wars that Iraq went through not even the Iran or American war. [...] Our area was considered the countryside, they didn't care about us so we used to live in isolation, in peace. It was very safe."

Farah's husband was beaten by ISIS on the road and, at first, he couldn't work because of the trauma. Therefore, she started to get second-hand children's clothes from a store in the city to sell in the camp, after which she would divide the profit between the storeowner and herself. After her husband recovered, she stopped working. Ayad's husband used to clean the municipality buildings near the camp but he had to quit because of back pain.

According to Farrah women and girls are prevented from leaving the house *"because most young men here are not good. They are bad people and they would harass the girls if they go out."*

Farrah and Ayad do not necessarily perceive the restrictions as an obstacle. Instead, they consider them a preventative measure to protect women and girls' reputation. They also perceive some of the clothes they see women wearing in the camp, wearing makeup and having their hair done as incompatible acts with their cultural and religious norms.

**Names have been changed to protect the identity of women who participated in the research.*

6. Conclusion

The displacement context in the KRI presents both challenges and opportunities for women's empowerment and their engagement in livelihood activities. Displacement has changed the economic and social circumstances of families and communities, often leading to a situation in which gender roles in the family and community need to be redefined. The economic burden displacement has created for households and the depletion of resources and savings created a space for women to earn an income. Women's increased role as income providers, and the conflict and displacement related circumstances, have led to some change in men's and women's attitudes and thinking about women's economic role. Several NGOs have been able to tap into this opportunity and provide skills-development training, and awareness-raising and empowerment activities for displaced women in the KRI.

However, this process is unlikely to generate long-term transformation in economic empowerment for displaced women because of considerable social, cultural, political, legal, and institutional obstacles. Many women and men said they believe when life goes back to normal

women's position will be as it was before. Nevertheless, the changes described by participants in attitudes and perceptions can be built upon to generate transformative change for women's economic empowerment. Moreover, practical and cultural restrictions to women's mobility, risk of violence and harassment, responsibilities at home, health problems, a lack of skills and job opportunities combined with the discriminative and insufficiently protective institutional and legal system, the economic crisis and lack of government support are key impediments that are hard to change.

It is not possible to draw generalisations about experiences of displaced communities on livelihood needs and access to economic opportunities or obstacles. The impact of displacement on communities and individuals is complex and varies among different groups of displaced communities and between household and individual preferences and circumstances and this variety needs to be reflected in the design of livelihood programmes, as well as in their implementation.



Photo: Emily Kinskey

It is crucial to focus on both men and women in awareness-raising. Women's ability to participate in decisions at home and in public can increase if men change their attitude towards women's engagement in economic activities and education outside the house. In most cases throughout the interviews and discussions, all married women who are active in livelihood activities or take part in NGO programmes have their husband's support. A local NGO representative suggested investing more time in building relations of trust with the target community from an early stage. He explained that:

"In particular, livelihood projects targeting women in communities holding more conservative beliefs, would require gaining the trust of male members of the community. A suggestion would be meeting the local community leaders to explain the design and objective of the programme. This would not only include a quick introduction, but also courtesy calls or visits to establish relations of trust. It's not that hard, they are very open and accepting, if you respect them."

7. Recommendations for international governments and donors

1. Ensure livelihood support for women is part of a longer-term approach to supporting women's economic empowerment:

The duration and effects of conflict and displacement are not short-term. Largely borne of necessity, work for displaced women can prompt positive changes in gender dynamics and allow women to access new opportunities. For these changes to effectively support the fundamental goal of women's rights, women's livelihood support should be leveraged as an entry point for long-term, transformational change needed for women's economic empowerment. Building on the positive small-scale changes from livelihood programmes is key.

Specifically:

- **Urgently increase funding for women's rights organisations** to support them to deliver vital, needs-based long-term and varied programming, including economic empowerment. Such support will allow them to continue to provide effective responses, promote long-term change and build their capacity and service provision.
- Donors should **prioritise holistic support for women** where livelihood programmes must go hand in hand with services and supporting women's rights.
- **Support women's livelihood programmes that include men in their programme design.** Such programmes should help raise men's awareness of women's rights, including violence against women and girls whilst continuing to prioritise women's rights. They should also support the proactive involvement of men in unpaid care work.
- **Work with national and regional partners to build political and institutional support** for both women's economic empowerment and fund local and international organisations that provide such support.



2. Support context specific responses to the wide variety of factors that influence women's livelihood needs:

The livelihood needs of women displaced by conflict in KRI are multiple and complex. Needs are affected as much by their current context as by their life prior to being displaced, as well as the nature of their displacement. These factors also intersect with women's specific vulnerabilities, meaning that women who were marginalised prior to displacement are less likely to access opportunities and effectively benefit from those they can access.

Specifically:

- **Prioritise the more marginalised women** – including those who have had the least access to opportunities, including education and work – to ensure that programmes effectively respond to their multiple and complex needs.
- **Ensure livelihood programming is complemented with support for women's decision-making.** It is vital that women's voices are heard – both to support women's empowerment in the long-term as well as to promote a more nuanced understanding of their needs, requirements and what works. Programmes should therefore increase women's participation in the structures that represent their communities, including women in the camps. Donors should support the development of toolkits to include women in camp management through working with the government offices, organisations responsible for each camp and women themselves.
- **Support holistic, adaptable programming** and avoid one-size-fits-all approaches. Programmes should be grounded in effective needs-assessments where women's voices are front and centre.
- When understanding barriers and opportunities to livelihoods for displaced women **avoid gender stereotyping and strictly categorising women based on cultural and communal identity.**

3. Provide livelihood support as part of a range of services for women displaced by conflict:

Women displaced by conflict face multiple barriers and challenges in accessing livelihood opportunities in KRI that are not directly economic. For example, the impact of health needs, including those directly associated with conflict as well as needs within their current context, affect women's abilities to work, increase their care burden and can incur financial costs. Women also have specific needs due to their gender, including protection from violence against women and girls.

Specifically:

- **Establish and maintain women-friendly, safe places.** Women's safe spaces are essential for women's wellbeing and social support mechanisms, developing their self-confidence in their capabilities, which is essential for their empowerment including economic empowerment.
- Support a range of **affordable, accessible and quality health services for women** displaced by conflict, with a focus on displacement-related psychological and physical health needs.
- **Ensure livelihood support is accompanied with legal and justice programming** that allows, for example, women access to official documentation and report safely to local decision-makers (e.g. camp managers, host communities, etc.). Such programming should be complemented by diplomatic efforts to build political and institutional capacity and support for women's access to justice.

4. Respond more effectively to the needs of women displaced by conflict:

Women and girls have specific needs related to their experiences of conflict, journeys from (and into) conflict, and in their 'new' environments. Their needs and experiences must form the foundation of all programming, including economic empowerment.

Specifically:

- **Diversify income generation opportunities based on regular, participatory needs assessments** which take into account different circumstances and needs among displaced women and changing environments. The economic crisis in KRI, for example, should prompt a re-assessment of women's needs and programmatic changes.
- **Diversify training packages to include non-traditional gendered and cultural skills** (IT, English, other local languages, legal rights, how to access information) different from traditional livelihood programme activities such as sewing, etc.
- International donors and governments should **engage with national and regional authorities to encourage them to increase support to displaced women and women in host communities** in the job market and increase their economic empowerment. This should include diplomatic support to change discriminative legislative and institutional rules and practices against women.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Methodology

This report aimed to examine the impact of displacement and livelihood programmes on women and girls from the perspective of displaced women. Therefore, the methodology heavily focused on collating primary data reflecting their experiences and perspectives. For primary data collection, we selected the case of displacement in the KRI because of its suitability for the research aims and the huge scale of the displacement crisis in the region. WfWI's country presence and ongoing work to support displaced women, and LSE WPS's existing research expertise on gender, women's empowerment and displacement in Iraq and its local networks facilitated carrying out research in the KRI. The study was undertaken in all three governorates of KRI, Erbil, Sulaimaniyah and Dohuk. The research did not include disputed territories due to ongoing political disputes and security risks.

The selection of study locations reflects considerations about incorporating a variety of factors including the place of departure and settlement, internal (IDPs) and external (refugees) displacement, residence in camp and non-camp settings, ethnic and linguistic identities, urban and rural previous residence, level of educational and vocational attainment, age and marital status. The study mainly focused on women who are either working, have worked or are planning to work (for instance, those who are attending training

courses provided by NGOs) to reflect in full the perceptions of livelihood opportunities. Participants also included several women who have not worked and are not intending or cannot work.

Primary data collection focused on five main areas:

- the livelihood needs of women displaced by conflict, including IDPs and refugees residing in camps and among host communities;
- the challenges and barriers associated with being displaced that affect women's livelihood needs and opportunities;
- women's perceptions of men's and women's access to livelihood opportunities;
- the type of support displaced women prefer from national and international actors;
- the meaning of economic empowerment for displaced women.

The research team visited 11 IDP and refugee camp sites and 3 non-camp sites. We interviewed 63 refugees and IDPs residing in camps, held 7 FGDs (with a total 66 participants) with refugees and IDPs residing inside and outside camps and host community members, and 22 KIs with local and international practitioners, legal experts, government officials and camp managers. FGDs were organised with the support of WfWI in Erbil, Warvin and HEKS.



Photo: Emily Kinsley

Primary data was collected through in-depth semi-structured interviews and FGDs. Participants were identified and approached to participate based on initial recommendations from key gatekeepers to this community, including NGO representatives and camp managers (however, no gatekeepers were present during the conduct of the interviews themselves). Subsequent participants were approached based on snowball sampling from those interviewed. Key informants were chosen based on the relevance of their expertise and experience, their organisations' or institutions' areas of focus and some of them were identified through snowball sampling. The IDP camps and refugee camps were identified through using online camp profiles and recommendations from our local partners.

Interviews with displaced women aimed to generate a narrative of women's individual experiences regarding livelihood in displacement and to understand the causal mechanisms that shape how women benefit (or do not benefit) from livelihood programmes. These were structured interviews and all participants were asked the same questions, only adjusted to their gender, being IDP or refugee, and place of settlement. FGDs aimed to do the same, but from a community perspective, and sought to collate a variety of experiences and opinions through the discussions among participants. KIs were held to gain insights about the operating environment and to contextualise

the qualitative data gathered through interviews and FGDs and to understand the livelihood experiences of women within the wider livelihood programmes, policy responses to displacement and the institutional setting. KIs were tailored based on the position and responsibilities of the interviewee.

Extensive research was conducted to gather information and inform the project through systematic review of the empirically grounded academic and grey literature¹⁶ on displacement and livelihood needs and opportunities in Iraq through a mixed search strategy (Hagen-Zanker and Mallet 2013). Primary documents, such as livelihood policies of international and local humanitarian organisations, foreign states and the GoI and KRG, and statistics produced by these institutions were also reviewed to triangulate the findings of the study.

Throughout the research data collection and analysis, intersectionality was adopted as a research approach to generate a nuanced understanding of women's experiences and needs. Such an approach not only enables taking into account a variety of determinants, and their interactions with each other that affect women, but it also helps illuminate societal and institutional structures that have different gendered impacts on different groups of women and men.

Like all research, there are some limitations to the methodology used here: 1) Research locations did not include disputed territories¹⁷ due to ongoing security risks in these areas after the September 2017 independence referendum in the KRI; 2) Most interviews were held with women residing in camps, while due to time constraints only FGDs were held with displaced women living

among the community; 3) Large scale surveys were not conducted therefore findings may not be generalisable, although the size of the interview and FGD sample is large for an in-depth qualitative method; 4) The research did not specifically address the impact of VAWG on livelihoods due to the sensitivity of this issue and the unsuitability of interview settings for asking questions about this issue.

Appendix 2: Quantitative Data drawn from Individual Interviews

Indicator	%	Notes
Currently engaged in livelihood activities*	42%	
Currently not engaged in livelihood activities, but were before displacement	22%	Mainly women from rural areas who have been working as animal farmers with their husbands or families
Currently engaged in livelihood activities, but weren't before displacement	11%	Mainly women in female-headed households, women whose husbands are not able to work and women who had received training or obtained a degree pre-displacement
Currently engaged in livelihood activities and were before displacement	31%	Mainly Syrian refugees and widows before displacement
Currently not engaged in livelihood activities and weren't before displacement	20%	Mainly women from conservative families
Currently own or run a business	31%	Mainly Syrian women who were working or owned a shop before displacement
Completed primary school	20%	
Completed secondary/high school	9%	
Women who have completed university	2%	Data on education not conclusive because not all participants felt comfortable sharing their level of education
Completed trainings/courses	36%	
Feel restrictions of movement are barriers to engaging in livelihood programmes or carrying out income generating activities	44%	
Have physical or mental health issues or have family members with such issues	44%	
Raised the issue of disability within their family and/or community	11%	
Mentioned <i>wasta</i>	18%	
Make financial decisions at home alone and with their husbands	33%	
Feel represented	9%	The majority of women do not feel represented. All women feeling represented refer to NGO (workers) addressing or inquiring about their needs

* Types of professions considered suitable for women (most common ones are in bold): **beautician; farming; cleaning; hairdressing; sewing/knitting; shop-keeping; teaching**; tailoring; tutoring; cotton processing; doctor assistant; government employee; factory worker; food industry.

Appendix 3: Breakdown of data collection by location

Governorate	Camp	No. of interviewees	FGDs
Dohuk	Sharya (IDP)	9	12 IDPs in Sharya 13 refugees in Khanke
	Domiz (Refugee)	11	
	Khanke (Refugee)	1	
Erbil	Baharka (IDP)	12	6 hosts in Daratoo 8 non-camp refugees in Daratoo 12 refugees in Baharka
	Darashakran (Refugee)	13	
Sulaimaniyah	Arbat (IDP)	6	6 refugees in Barika 9 non-camp IDPs in Kifri
	Barika (Ref)	4	
	Ashti (Ref)	7	
Subtotal		63	66
Total		129	

Appendix 4: List of KIIS

	Name of the organisation	Position of the person interviewed
International organisations	Civil Development Organization	General Director
	Heartland Alliance International	Country Director Iraq
	HEKS/EPER	Programme Manager
	International Organisation for Migration	Project Officer at Displacement Tracking Matrix
	International Organisation for Migration	Project Manager of Transition and Recovery Unit
	UN Women Iraq	Former Deputy Country Representative
	Women for Women International	Country Director Iraq
	Women for Women International	Programme Manager Iraq
Local organisations	Asuda	Acting Deputy Director
	EMMA	Director
	REACH	Acting Program Manager at Livelihood cluster
	REACH	Deputy Country Director and Programme Director
	Warvin Foundation	Director
	Warvin Foundation	Project Implementation Partner
	Women Empowerment Organisation	Director
	Workwell	Director
Government offices and camp management	Arbat IDP Camp	Camp Manager
	Baharka IDP Camp	Camp Manager
	Department of Foreign Relations, KRG	Director of International Organizations
	Ministry of Planning, KRG	Director General for Development Coordination and Cooperation
	Deputy Prime Minister Office, KRG	Head of Party Relations Desk
Other	Ministry of Justice	Judge
Total	22	

Endnotes

- 1 A refugee is defined as a person who, "owing to a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinions, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country" (Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, Art. 1A(2), 1951 as modified by the 1967 Protocol). *Internally Displaced Persons* are "persons or groups of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognised State border" (Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, UN Doc E/CN.4/1998/53/Add.2.).
- 2 The second largest group of IDPs was displaced in August 2014 (23%, 763,800 individuals), when hostilities affected the Sinjar district and other districts of the Nineveh governorate.
- 3 Numbers of displacement in October 2017 can be tracked through International Organization for Migration's Displacement Tracking Matrix for Iraq.
- 4 According to UNHCR, average duration of the 32 protracted refugee situations at the end of 2015 is about 26 years. UNHCR, "Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2015". UNDP found that the global average length of displacement is 17 years.
- 5 For instance, in areas affected by ISIS, the group's strict regulation and control of public and private life and violent conflict pushed women further into the domestic space.
- 6 Iraqi women have access to bank loans and other forms of financial credit and do not need the permission of their husband or male relative, but their participation in business activities and in the labour market is low. "The labour force participation rate (that is, the proportion of the working-age population that actively engages in the labour market either by working or looking for work) among young women aged 15-24 is 8 percent, while the corresponding percentage of young men is 48 per cent. For women aged 15 years and above, the labour force participation is only 14 per cent (compared to 69 per cent for men). Globally, the labour force participation rate of women is 52 per cent." (Dietrich and Carter 2017, 27)
- 7 Disputed territories are areas defined by Article 140 of the Iraqi constitution and claimed by both the GoI and the KRG.
- 8 Narrow definition of economic empowerment.
- 9 In Iraq, UNDP leads on the implementation of early recovery and resilience agenda through its Resilience Based Development approach for the Syria Crisis and the Regional Refugee Resilience Programme (3RP). This agenda has a strong focus on sustainable livelihood and economic growth programmes for women among displaced and host communities. UNHCR and UN Women in Iraq also have adopted livelihood and economic empowerment programmes. UN Women and sister agencies focus on female-led households through setting up income generation projects in central Iraq and the KRI. UNDP Iraq, "Fast Facts: Iraq Crisis Response and Resilience Programme", May 2016. In addition, several government departments and INGOs provide funding for livelihood interventions targeting women (UN Women 2018).
- 10 A significant factor that explains why the economic crisis has affected both the displaced and host community so deeply is that the economy in Iraq and the KRI is disproportionately driven by the public sector. Approximately 40% of Iraq's and 70% of KRI's labour force has public sector employment, which is noticeably higher than in more diversified economies in the region, such as Jordan (31%), and Turkey (12%). This can serve as a protection against economic uncertainty in conflict-affected contexts such as Iraq, but overreliance on public sector employment can be a source of vulnerability in times of crisis and can hinder the development of the private sector (Bartnick, 2017).
- 11 A hair salon owner in the Darashakran refugee camp points out that the rent for shops in Erbil is \$300 and \$200 rent in the camp plus electricity.
- 12 Tuz Khurmatu is a multi-ethnic city with a majority of Shia Turkmen and a minority of Sunni Arabs and Kurds. After the Iraqi armed forces' take over of Kirkuk from the KRG and ensuing fighting between the two forces, a number of Kurds and Sunnis left the areas and fled to Sulaimaniyah and Erbil.



Photo: Emily Kinsley

- 13** Participants in various camp settings highlighted unfair and disproportionate aid distribution. The extent to which these perceptions result from a lack of good governance or actual corruption is unknown. A refugee woman living in a camp setting said *"Food trucks arrive in the middle of the night. People can't see that the food truck has already arrived so they won't ask for food. People with wasta or good relationships with camp managers receive more food"* and another refugee woman said *"Sometimes we see items coming in and they put them in storage but they don't distribute them."* During an FGD a female IDP said: *"We don't know anyone apart from people in the camp. Others rely on wasta and on relations they already had before coming to the camp. A few days ago, someone came to give charity [in the form of money] but they took him to their relations and acquaintances rather than to these tents where really poor people live."* A male refugee living in a camp said *"There is no justice in terms of food distribution."*
- 14** A Syrian woman living in a camp said *"He worked with Turkish people. In Kurdistan people work for eight hours but Turks make people work for 12 hours."* A Syrian woman from a village near Qamishli, said *"My son was supposed to be paid for his work but they didn't give it to him. Two years ago, my husband worked with a Turkish man as a labour worker and he wasn't paid. That Turkish man came, took advantage of a lot of workers and ran away with the money."*
- 15** WRC 2014, 2012, 2011 and 2009 suggest approaches to mitigate risks economic programmes for displaced and returning populations effective and safe.
- 16** Working and issue papers, concept notes, donor reports, policy statements and briefings.
- 17** Disputed territories are areas defined by Article 140 of the Iraqi constitution and claimed by both the GoI and the KRG.

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