

# RESILIENCE POLICY AND INTERNALLY DISPLACED WOMEN IN IRAQ: AN UNINTENTIONALLY FLAWED APPROACH

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Internal displacement is a major humanitarian and security issue. Today there are far more internally displaced persons<sup>1</sup> (IDPs) than refugees in the world. By the end of 2016, 40.3 million people were internally displaced by conflict and violence across the world, and an unknown number of IDPs remain displaced.<sup>2</sup> This unprecedented scale of internal displacement in recent decades has led to the creation of international frameworks for the protection of IDPs and for the regulation of responses to internal displacement crises.<sup>3</sup> More recently, resilience, an increasingly popular policy framing for humanitarian interventions, has become an important component of humanitarian interventions and it has made its way into responses to internal displacement in countries like Iraq. Iraq has the world's sixth highest rate of forced displacements in the world today and third highest number of IDPs.<sup>4</sup> Internal displacement in Iraq is primarily conflict-related and has a long and layered history as a result of Iran-Iraq War in the 1980s, sectarianised militarisation, violence and counter-insurgency operations since the intervention in 2003,<sup>5</sup> and the rise of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (also known as Daesh). As of June 2017, more than three million Iraqis live in a state of displacement.<sup>6</sup> This policy brief offers an assessment of the concept of resilience as an international policy frame. While appreciating the potential of resilience as influential and potentially radical in many areas, I argue that it offers a simplistic understanding of the causes of gendered vulnerabilities in conflict-related displacement, at least, in the context of Iraq.

Relief and recovery is one of the four pillars – but usually a neglected one – of the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda. The WPS agenda, formed by the founding UN Security Council Resolution 1325 and the seven resolutions that followed it, addresses the impact of armed conflict on women, and it emphasises women's protection in conflict and their participation in the prevention and resolution of conflicts. Displaced women and girls, who are present in the conflict

zones, are directly and indirectly affected by conflict in multiple ways, including violence, displacement, the loss of loved ones, livelihood and homes and issues with access to public services such as health and education. The relief and recovery pillar of the WPS agenda enables examination of conflict and its impact, and potentially improves civilian and humanitarian response, for instance in the design of displacement camps and settlements.

The WPS agenda was adopted as government policy in Iraq in the form of a National Action Plan in 2014, leading to the formation of the 1325 Parliamentary Task Force in 2015. These are huge steps towards ensuring women's protection, addressing their specific needs in conflict and increasing their participation in the processes of conflict resolution and peace-building in Iraq. However, despite displacement being one of the most challenging outcomes as

- 1 Persons uprooted from their habitual residence due to conflict, human rights violations, natural disasters, development projects and those who remain and/or contained within the national boundaries of their home country. See Erin Mooney, "The Concept of International Displacement and the Case for Internally Displaced Persons as a Category of Concern", *Refugee Survey Quarterly* 24 (3) (2005): 9-26.
- 2 Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre and Norwegian Refugee Council, *Grid 2017: Global Report on Internal Displacement* (IDMC: May 2017), <http://www.internal-displacement.org/assets/publications/2017/20170522-GRID.pdf>
- 3 Francis M. Deng, "Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement", *International Migration Review* 33 (2) (1999): 484-493; Roberta Cohen, "Developing an International System for Internally Displaced Persons", *International Studies Perspectives* 7 (2006): 87-101.
- 4 World Bank, *Forcibly Displaced: Towards a Development Approach to Supporting Refugees, the Internally Displaced and Their Hosts* (Washington D.C.: World Bank, 2017), <http://hdl.handle.net/10986/25016>
- 5 Dina Abou Samra, "Military-Induced Displacement", *Forced Migration Review* 37 (2007): 37-39.
- 6 IOM Displacement Tracking Matrix", *International Organization for Migration (IOM)*, <http://iraqdtm.iom.int/>
- 7 Aiko Holvikivi and Audrey Reeves, "The WPS Agenda and the 'Refugee crisis': Missing Connections and Missed Opportunities in Europe", *LSE Women, Peace and Security Working Paper Series* 6 (2017): 1-6, <http://www.lse.ac.uk/women-peace-security/assets/documents/2017/wps6HolvikiviReeves.pdf>
- 8 Dianne Otto, "Women, Peace and Security: A Critical Analysis of the Security Council's Vision", *LSE Women, Peace and Security Working Paper Series* 1 (2016): 1-10, <http://www.lse.ac.uk/women-peace-security/assets/documents/2016/wps1Otto.pdf>
- 9 Eric Neumayer and Thomas Plümper, "The Gendered Nature of Natural Disasters: The Impact of Catastrophic Events on the Gender Gap in Life Expectancy, 1981-2002", *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 97 (3) (2007): 552-566.

well as components of conflict in Iraq, and despite the particularly gendered impact of conflict and conflict-related displacement on women in general, Iraq's 1325 policy generally overlooks this issue. Actually, Iraq is no exception in this: displaced women are usually not at the centre of WPS policies in other contexts either.<sup>7</sup>

Existing resilience policies in response to displacement in Iraq, despite their effort in including women and a gender perspective in their programmes, remain limited in their potential to address key issues that displaced women face. These policies follow the guidelines on gender equality, human rights, protection from violence, relief and recovery support and participation in decision-making, in general but do not directly integrate the WPS agenda and gender into their justifications and design. This failing is related to the international resilience policy framing itself, but is also the result of the heavy focus in these policies on cultural norms as the source of gendered vulnerabilities, which means that institutional practices and regulations that generate vulnerabilities are often overlooked. A policy response that is thoroughly informed by the WPS agenda and that adopts a proper gender lens is essential and this lens should not focus on gendered vulnerabilities in a way that further victimises women, or men.<sup>8</sup> Instead, such an approach should help understand the underlying economic, political and societal factors that come into play in conflict rendering women and men vulnerable to the impact of displacement. This is a valuable approach in understanding

the differential impact of conflict on women and girls and the societal and institutional context that leads to that impact, and in identifying appropriate responses to addressing displaced women's and girls' relief and recovery needs.

It is often overlooked that internal displacement has gender-specific outcomes and affects women and girls differently and disproportionately. Gendered vulnerabilities differ between men and women because socially constructed gender norms and roles form the backdrop of the economy and the regulation of everyday life.<sup>9</sup> Indeed, the gendered nature of IDP vulnerabilities is clearly evident in Iraq. Internally displaced women face different challenges and restrictions to their lives, safety, security, employment and to access to services and goods, which render them vulnerable in different ways.<sup>10</sup> Internally displaced women in Iraq are more likely to experience livelihood deprivation than men, they are exposed to violence, rape and early marriage, and a notable proportion end up resorting to begging or prostitution.<sup>11</sup> It is precisely this crisis context that has led to new international policy frameworks, such as the resilience policy frame, that aspire to respond to crises as well as tackle the underlying drivers of vulnerabilities, albeit in a flawed way, as explained in the rest of the paper.

## RESILIENCE AS POLICY RESPONSE TO INTERNALLY DISPLACED WOMEN

Resilience is a widely discussed concept in both the academic and non-academic literature and it has multiple definitions with various implications in practice. The concept of resilience has its origins in the natural sciences, psychology and ecology and it generally refers to the ability of individuals, communities and societies to withstand and recover from shocks and disasters.<sup>12</sup> In this sense, resilience is "the capacity to positively or successfully adapt to external problems or threats"<sup>13</sup> and the



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resilient subject is understood as an active agent capable of self-transformation.

Resilience interventions consider vulnerabilities mainly as embedded in societal practices and aim to reduce vulnerabilities through empowering individuals and communities.<sup>14</sup> Their emphasis on human capacities, the ability of individuals and communities to cope with challenges and even come out of it stronger, sound intuitively appropriate. This kind of bottom up approach, combined with the idea of responding to a long-term need for resilience,<sup>15</sup> also fits with the aim to generate sustainable and peaceful societies. As such, few would fault its underlying aspirations.

The assumptions implicit in the resilience policy framing, however, mean that this approach is not well-suited to respond to all types of

challenges, including gendered vulnerabilities in conflict-related internal displacement. This is due to a number of reasons.

Firstly, resilience makes communities the site of solution for problems that are not necessarily created at community level, such as the conflict in Iraq. For instance, the Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan (3RP) 2016-2017 for Iraq states that “The Resilience component of the 3RP, led by UNDP, is aimed at addressing the longer-term self-reliance of individuals and communities, and the stronger role of Government in delivering equitable services to refugees and host communities in the various response plans, in a sustainable and efficient manner.”<sup>16</sup> As stated here, the aim is the pursuit of resilience for individuals and communities, and the role of government in this is reduced to effective delivery of support to those in need through practical

- 10 International Organization for Migration, *Gendered Perspective: Safety, Dignity and Privacy in Camp and Camp-like Settings in Iraq* (Baghdad: IOM, 2016), [https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/IOM\\_Iraq\\_-\\_A\\_Gendered\\_Perspective\\_report\\_0.pdf](https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/IOM_Iraq_-_A_Gendered_Perspective_report_0.pdf)
- 11 Displaced men are also affected by displacement in gender-specific ways. They are more likely to be targeted by militant groups as potential recruits and by governments as potential militants, and they also experience violence. The majority of displaced men are responsible for the livelihood of their families and this exposes them to different kinds of threats. See IOM, *Gendered Perspective*, 32. But the focus here is the gendered vulnerabilities pertaining to internally displaced women and girls in Iraq.
- 12 Christian Fjäder, “The Nation-State, National Security and Resilience in the Age of Globalisation”, *Resilience: International Policies, Practices and Discourses* 2 (2) (2014): 114-129, 119-120.
- 13 David Chandler, “Resilience and Human Security: The Post-Interventionist Paradigm”, *Security Dialogue* 43 (3) (2012): 213-229, 217.



Iraq's Al Alam Camp for internally displaced people



Most resilience policies in international humanitarian frameworks assume that vulnerabilities are rooted in communities and societies. This impedes the ability to maintain the pressure on government and international authorities to be responsible and improve their actions to provide better services while also working at the community level. For instance, most humanitarian policies consider gendered vulnerabilities as primarily rooted in cultural norms. In this thinking, solutions should emerge from the societies because mainly societies are seen as the source of such vulnerabilities. Such a view overlooks the specific institutional and legal practices implemented by national and international actors that render internally displaced women and girls vulnerable.

and communities sources of solution is not necessarily a negative development but its potential to lead to change can only be achieved if governments, institutions and international policies are also foregrounded as sites where problems should be identified and resolved. Existing resilience policies in Iraq consider government institutions as implementers of policies and responses, rather than also as sites of transformation. Moreover, most resilience policies in international humanitarian frameworks assume that vulnerabilities are rooted in communities and societies. This impedes the ability to maintain the pressure on government and international authorities to be responsible and improve their actions to provide better services while also working at the community level. For instance, most humanitarian policies consider gendered vulnerabilities as primarily rooted in cultural norms. In this thinking, solutions should emerge from the societies because mainly societies are seen as the source of such vulnerabilities.<sup>20</sup> Such a view overlooks the specific institutional and legal practices implemented by national and international actors that render internally displaced women and girls vulnerable.

response mechanisms. Therefore, there is no emphasis on the need for government and state institutions as a site of transformation.

Underlying this is a fatalistic assumption that conflicts and disasters cannot be prevented and therefore we need to learn to cope and be prepared, therefore, a key solution lies in transforming communities and individuals and making them more resilient. This idea that societies should be transformed for interventions to be successful justifies the focus on communities as the site of solution. This is because societies, not state structures and regulations, are seen as one of the barriers to achieving the goals of past interventions in the resilience framing in general.<sup>17</sup> Therefore it is seen as necessary to equip societies with resilience skills and transform them to be able to generate change.<sup>18</sup> However, national and international actors and their institutions have played significant roles in the creation of conflict and displacement in Iraq, and they are the ones with the authority to regulate and implement institutional and legal practices. From this perspective, making communities the site of solution appears problematic.<sup>19</sup> Secondly, the effort to make individuals

Thirdly, conceptions of resilience in practice may not always reflect what resilience means for displaced women. Existing resilience policies for women mainly focus on economic empowerment and livelihood generation. Although this is a crucial dimension, economically reductionist understandings of resilience may not capture displaced women's conceptions of resilience.<sup>21</sup> When facing risky conditions, people behave within their own rationality embedded in their own daily practices, not necessarily in the "optimal" behaviour expected by outsiders. International humanitarian and developmental policy frameworks are usually shaped by the security concerns and normative assumptions on progress and development. In expecting certain "optimal" and "resilient" behaviours, resilience policy framing bears the risk of not addressing the actual sources of vulnerabilities among targeted communities, and overlooks

- 14 David Chandler, "International Statebuilding and the Ideology of Resilience", *Politics* 33 (4) (2013): 276-286, 278; Chandler, "Resilience and Human Security", 221.
- 15 Rosalind Warner, "Resilience or Relief: Canada's Response to Global Disasters", *Canadian Foreign Policy Journal* 19 (2) (2013): 223-235, 226.
- 16 United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, *3RP Regional, Refugee & Resilience Plan 2016-2017 in Response to the Syria Crisis: Iraq Chapter Summary* (UNHCR, 2017), 4, <http://www.3rpsyriacrisis.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/3RP-Regional-Overview-2016-2017.pdf>
- 17 W. Neil Adger, "Social and Ecological Resilience: Are They Related?", *Progress in Human Geography* 24 (3) (2000): 347-364.
- 18 Jonathan Joseph, "Governing through Failure and Denial: The New Resilience Agenda", *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 44 (3) (2016): 370-390, 379; Chandler, "International Statebuilding and the Ideology of Resilience", 279, 281.
- 19 Fjäder, "The Nation-State, National Security and Resilience", 121; Jonathan Joseph, "Resilience as Embedded Neoliberalism: A Governmentality Approach", *Resilience* 1 (1) (2013), 38-52.
- 20 Chandler, "International Statebuilding and the Ideology of Resilience", 277-78.

the existence of other equally “optimal” behaviours and practices at community level.

## RESILIENCE POLICIES IN IRAQ AND VULNERABILITIES OF INTERNALLY DISPLACED WOMEN AND GIRLS

The resilience of displaced communities in countries like Iraq has recently become a significant focus for international humanitarian action. It is not explicitly embedded in all humanitarian responses in relation to displacement at the moment, but UNHCR’s 3RP directly associates response to refugees and IDPs in Syria and Iraq with the framework of resilience.<sup>22</sup> UNDP’s Iraq Crisis Response and Resilience Programme 2014-2017 and UN Women’s current LEAP Programme in Iraq also adopt a resilience approach.<sup>23</sup> These policies are indicators of increasing emphasis on resilience framing in policies and responses regarding refugees and IDPs in Iraq. This signifies a shift from the provision of emergency relief and livelihood support for displaced communities to initiating more transformative responses focusing on the displaced communities, as well as the host communities.

These strategies and programmes place a special focus on displaced women. UNDP Iraq leads on the implementation of the early recovery and resilience agenda with a focus on basic services, livelihood and social cohesion. It aims to provide livelihood opportunities to women in displaced and host communities by identifying emergency jobs and employment opportunities, and to prevent gender-based violence. UNDP’s strategy is commendable in its approach to the assessment of specific needs at household levels, including women and men, and in its efforts to identify factors in local and national environments that contribute to gender vulnerabilities. Moreover, rather than only focusing on communities and individuals as the sources of solution, it places emphasis on developing



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resilience at the state and government levels as well.

However, the UNDP’s strategy also considers internally displaced women as having pre-existing vulnerabilities explained with reference to cultural norms, ie, “the challenges for women to work outside the house [are] often linked to cultural barriers.”<sup>24</sup> Indeed, wider institutional, legal and social norms that condone women’s confinement in the private sphere of the home have significant gendered impacts. Such norms, feeding into crisis contexts, heighten women’s experiences of inequality and discrimination. Displacement increases communal and family-level protection and control measures over women to ensure security and to avoid stigma associated with certain incidents or behaviours. These limit displaced women’s visibility and presence in public spaces, their access to services, support and information (about health, schooling, cash support, food, livelihood opportunities) and confine them to tents, shelters or homes in their new location.<sup>25</sup> This is also a huge hindrance to their ability to develop an organic social support community in camp and non-camp locations.

However, the emphasis on cultural norms in resilience strategies in Iraq tends to overlook the specific rules, regulations, laws and practices within the societal, economic and political context that underlie, generate and exacerbate vulnerabilities. Although cultural norms have socio-economic implications such as a lack of skills, illiteracy, limitations to educational attainment and barriers to employment, these norms are too vague

- 21 My conversations with local civil society organisations supporting female IDPs in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq revealed that the tactics women use to be resilient and the processes they associate with resilience are quite different from international resilience frameworks. These interviews were conducted as part my research on humanitarian response to internal displacement in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, which will be completed in early 2019.
- 22 United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, *3RP Regional, Refugee & Resilience Plan 2017-2018 in Response to the Syria Crisis: Regional Strategic Overview* (UNHCR, 2017), <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/3RP-Regional-Strategic-Overview.pdf>
- 23 United Nations Development Programme, *Iraq Crisis Response and Resilience Programme, 2014-2017* (UNDP, 2014), [http://www.iq.undp.org/content/iraq/en/home/operations/projects/crisis\\_prevention\\_and\\_recovery/ICRRP.html](http://www.iq.undp.org/content/iraq/en/home/operations/projects/crisis_prevention_and_recovery/ICRRP.html). UN Women in Iraq, in collaboration with OXFAM and Akfar Society, launched a report on gender and conflict in 2017. See Luisa Dietrich and Simone E. Carter, “Gender and Conflict Analysis in ISIS Affected Communities of Iraq”, *Reliefweb*, 15 May 2017, <https://reliefweb.int/report/iraq/un-women-and-oxfam-share-results-iraq-gender-and-conflict-analysis-study-inform>
- 24 UNDP, *Iraq Crisis Response and Resilience Programme*, 23.
- 25 Inter-Agency Team, *Understanding the Information and Communication Needs Among IDPs in Northern Iraq* (UNOCHA, UNHCR, World Vision International, Internews, IOM and the Norwegian Refugee Council, 2014), <https://www.alnap.org/system/files/content/resource/files/main/understanding-the-information-and-communication-needs-of-idps-in-northern-iraq.pdf>

to capture specific gendered vulnerabilities of internally displaced women in Iraq. Particularly the idea that through economic empowerment these cultural impediments can be overcome is unrealistic because it overlooks the more crucial barriers that create gendered vulnerabilities for women in the first place. These barriers and challenges derive from institutional, procedural and legal practices and facilities on the ground developed and implemented by national and international authorities in Iraq.

For instance, for the management of the movement of peoples and the processing of services in Iraq, IDPs need to register at the Ministry of Migration and Displacement with proof of identity in the form of nationality certificate, civil ID card, housing card or food ration card. This is necessary to receive help and support, and to access services such as health, education, food rations and welfare.<sup>26</sup> Local and international humanitarian organisations can only help those who are registered through the Ministry. However, most of these identifications bear the name of the male head of household. If women and girls have no male relative accompanying them, they may not be able to access these basic essential services.

Moreover, once relocated in a governorate, IDPs also require security clearance to be eligible to receive support and to be able to access services provided by the government and humanitarian organisations. However, this can be risky. For example Sunni IDPs are usually anxious about not getting security clearance in a Shi'a majority area. As a result, reportedly, Sunni men may remain in conflict areas rather than go to Shi'a majority areas in the South, and send their families to seek refuge instead. This leads to livelihood deprivation of internally displaced families and increases the number of female-led households.<sup>27</sup> The sponsorship system, basically the requirement of a sponsor for entry to some of the governorates in Iraq, leads to similar outcomes. This system limits the IDPs ability to move, creates huge blockages of IDPs and increases the risk of exploitation

as IDPs might seek unofficial paths in their effort to reach safety. Some civil servants exploit this system by imposing registration and documentation fees arbitrarily.<sup>28</sup>

Another institutional practice that creates gendered vulnerabilities for female Iraqi IDPs is counter-terrorism laws and policies. 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.<sup>29</sup> They can have their access blocked to some locations by government officials or armed groups depending on their tribal affiliation, location of origin or destination, and religion or sect.<sup>30</sup> As a result, men do not carry identification with them, they often stay behind when their family relocates or they do not go to public spaces to provide for their family's needs. These gendered impacts on male IDPs affect their female relatives. For instance, if a male family member is arrested under Article 4, women may not be given a housing card under their own name.<sup>31</sup>

Security measures for IDPs on the move and in camps or camp-like settings are often insufficient and they do not always address women's and girls' concerns over safety and security. Water sources, hygiene facilities, and food distribution spots are not designed in a way that enable women's easy access. Distribution sites and service centres, such as maternity services, can be far from the camp. Women may not want to take the risk of travelling far from the camp and so sometimes exchange or sell part of their rations for help in collecting basic goods such as food or fuel.<sup>32</sup> There are issues with the frequency of security patrols and the availability of lights in camps and informal settings. This increases the risks women encounter when they need to leave their location to provide for their needs.<sup>33</sup> Women lack privacy in shared inhabitation such as tents or shelters, latrines and showers do not always have lockers. Almost half of the groups studied in an International Organization for Migration report in 2016 lacked segregated latrine facilities, 64 per cent of the shared

- 26 Julia St. Thomas King and Dennis Ardis, "Identity Crisis? Documentation of the Displaced in Iraq", *Humanitarian Practice Network*, October 2015, <https://odihpn.org/magazine/identity-crisis-documentation-for-the-displaced-in-iraq/>
- 27 IOM, *Gendered Perspective*, 23.
- 28 Ahmed Hassin and Mays Al-Juboori, *Humanitarian Challenges in Iraq's Displacement Crisis* (Ceasefire Centre for Civilian Rights and Minority Rights Group International, 2016), 8, [http://minorityrights.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/MRG-report-A4\\_english-DECEMBER-2016\\_WEB-2.pdf](http://minorityrights.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/MRG-report-A4_english-DECEMBER-2016_WEB-2.pdf)
- 29 IOM, *Gendered Perspective*, 17.
- 30 Ibid., 17; Lahib Higel, *Iraq's Displacement Crisis: Security and Protection* (Ceasefire Centre for Civilian Rights and Minority Rights Group International, 2016), 12, [http://minorityrights.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/CEASEFIRE-report\\_ENGLISH\\_march-2016\\_210x297mm\\_WEB.pdf](http://minorityrights.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/CEASEFIRE-report_ENGLISH_march-2016_210x297mm_WEB.pdf)
- 31 King and Ardis, "Identity Crisis?".
- 32 IOM, *Gendered Perspective*, 20.
- 33 Ibid., 28.

latrines did not have locks and 54 per cent of the groups used unsegregated shower facilities with no locks.<sup>34</sup> These conditions not only create discomfort and anxiety, and limit women and girls' access to basic facilities, but they also increase women's exposure to risk and violence, leading to their isolation.

Criminal activities and corruption also create significant gendered vulnerabilities. Trafficking networks, including state officials at all levels of government, various individuals and armed groups, use female IDPs and refugees in camps in sex and human trafficking.<sup>35</sup> Thousands of female IDPs and refugees became sex workers in the first three years after the 2003 intervention.<sup>36</sup> In addition, children, boys and girls, are forced to leave school to help their family in household chores or earn money elsewhere. This exposes them to serious exploitation, bad working conditions, begging, emotional and physical abuse and distress, and potential recruitment of boys by armed groups. Child marriage for girls has significantly increased among IDPs mainly due to financial difficulties.<sup>37</sup>

Lastly, women have less access to information compared to men about security alerts, legal advice, dates and times of food distribution, available services, such as maternity services, and other information. This is mainly caused by their isolation in their settings. They also do not have the means to communicate. Unlike men in the household, women usually do not own mobile phones, which is a key source of information for IDPs.<sup>38</sup> Women also are more likely to face linguistic and literacy barriers. 91 per cent of IDP camp committees in Iraq lack female participation.<sup>39</sup> This results in women and girls' needs and concerns to be mostly overlooked in camp committees, which makes it likely for local and international humanitarian organisations to also overlook these needs.

An examination of the case of female Iraqi IDPs shows that resilience policy framing in humanitarian responses to the internal displacement crisis may not lead to expected outcomes as it places the solutions too

heavily on the communities and identifies cultural norms and economic factors as the source of vulnerabilities. However, wider institutional and practical regulations and rules developed and implemented by national and international authorities play a much bigger role in rendering IDP women in Iraq vulnerable. This is not to say that a resilience approach is without any merit but to emphasise the need to carefully consider limitations and assumptions inherent in the resilience policy framework when operationalising it on the ground.

These conclusions would have implications on other conflict-related internal displacement cases such as in Syria, Yemen, Libya, South Sudan and Somalia, where similar international policy framings around resilience influence responses. In these cases, people have been exposed to complex and localised conflict processes and protracted and layered displacements. Moreover, similar to the Iraqi case, national and international actors responding to these crises are mainly considered as the implementers of solutions on communities, rather than as sites of solutions and transformation themselves.

34 Ibid., 27.

35 United States Department of State, *Trafficking in Persons Report 2016*, (Washington D.C.: US Department of State Office of the Under Secretary for Civilian Security, Democracy, and Human Rights, 2016), 207, <https://www.state.gov/documents/organization/258876.pdf>

36 Cynthia Enloe, *Nimo's War, Emma's War: Making Feminist Sense of the Iraq War* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010).

37 IOM, *Gendered Perspective*, 32.

38 Inter-Agency Team, *Understanding the Information and Communication Needs Among IDPs*.

39 IOM, *Gendered Perspective*, 27.



## POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Carry out perception assessments among displaced communities and women, as done by the UNDP's strategy in Iraq, but accompany this with an analysis at the institutional level to identify practical, institutional and legal factors that create gender vulnerabilities.
- Redefine resilience and vulnerability for each context without essentialising gender, gendered vulnerabilities and gender norms. Women are vulnerable not only because cultural norms in society hinder them from participating in public economic and political life. It is crucial to understand female IDPs own conceptions of vulnerability and resilience in order to generate effective resilience policies.
- Ensure, maintain and further strengthen the emphasis on institutions, state capacity and responsibilities of national and international authorities in developing resilience; do not tilt the balance too heavily towards communities and their responsibilities.

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