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Coordination Mechanism for the Actors working on the WPS Agenda in Iraq

Summary Report

Women Empowerment Organization

2024

Project background

Women Empowerment Organization (WEO) have implemented the project “Coordination Mechanism for the Women, Peace, and Security Agenda (WPSA) in Iraq” between 2021 to 2024, with the aim of establishing a coordination mechanism among the WPS actors on different levels to enhance the efforts and better follow up with the implementation of the Women, Peace, and Security Agenda in Iraq. The project was supported by the programme “Strengthening the Participation of Women in the Rehabilitation and Peace Process in Iraq” (SPW) of Deutsche Gesellschaft für International Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH on behalf of the German government.

The Women Peace and Security Agenda (WPSA) was launched with the adoption of The United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 in 2000. Its content focuses on the fact that people are differently affected by conflict and have the right to influence decisions that affect their lives. WPSA acknowledges that involving the most affected people in the decision-making process produces better results in general.

Women continue to be significantly underrepresented in the decision-making processes on peace and security and this has further marginalized women. WPSA seeks to ensure women’s active and meaningful participation in all mechanisms and institutions of conflict prevention and to mainstream equality perspective in all activities and strategies of peace and security. After 24 years we need Women, Peace, and Security Agenda that is suitable for the purpose of addressing crises such as COVID 19, climate change and Violence against Women and Girls (VAWG) in addition to other peace and security challenges.

Objectives

Project Goal: Establish a coordination mechanism among the WPS actors on different levels to enhance the efforts and to better follow up of the implementation of Women Peace and Security Agenda in Iraq.

Main purpose of the project:

- Strengthen the coordination mechanism between actors to advance the Women Peace and Security Agenda in Iraq, unite efforts, fill the gaps and access to opportunities.
- Present the coordination mechanism which will serve as a platform for action on the Women Peace and Security Agenda.
- Follow-up on available information, projects and data related to the implementation of the Women Peace and Security Agenda.

- Advocate for more programs as well as setting and amendment of policies on the protection and participation of women in peacemaking processes.

Main purpose of the meetings:

- Maintain the coordination mechanism between the actors working on Women, Peace and Security agenda in Iraq.
- Develop and coordinate sustainable practices for the Women, Peace and Security agenda.
- Highlight women's political participation and peace building.
- Present a plan to support women's participation in the provincial elections.
- A presentation of the programs supporting women political participation and elections.
- Come up with recommendations on enhancing women's political participation and peace building.
- Presentation of lessons learned and recommendations and discussion groups to share best practices.
- Share best practices and lessons learned on issues related to the impact of climate change on women's rights in Iraq.

Executive summary

At the beginning of the project, Women Empowerment Organization (WEO) conducted an assessment to identify all the actors working on the Women, Security and Peace agenda (WPS) and the National Action Plan for Resolution 1325 in Iraq. Through the assessment, WEO targeted related bodies to the WPS agenda all over Iraq, the initial number of actors identified at the beginning of the project was (68), but after ten coordination meetings, the total actors became (160) as follows: 55 local non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and networks, 56 national institutions, and 49 international agencies and organizations as shown in Figure (1).

Women Empowerment Organization formed an advisory committee consisting initially of 9 members and toward the end it became 7 members, the advisory members representing international agencies and organizations, local organizations and networks. The advisory committee was responsible for providing consultations and advice, defining the topics and agenda of national meetings, in addition to strengthening relations with the federal government.

As part of the project activities, WEO held ten national coordination meetings (four physical, six virtual) over a period of fifteen months (October 2022 to February 2024) aimed mainly at follow-up the progress of the implementation of the Women, Peace, and Security agenda in Iraq, present the coordination mechanism that will serve as a platform for action on the WPSA, and advocate for the amendment of

policies related to protection and participation of women in peace-making process. The total number of unique and repetitive representatives that attended in all meetings was approximately 500 with (47% from local NGOs and networks, 33% from national institutions, and 20% from international agencies and organizations) as shown in Figure (2).

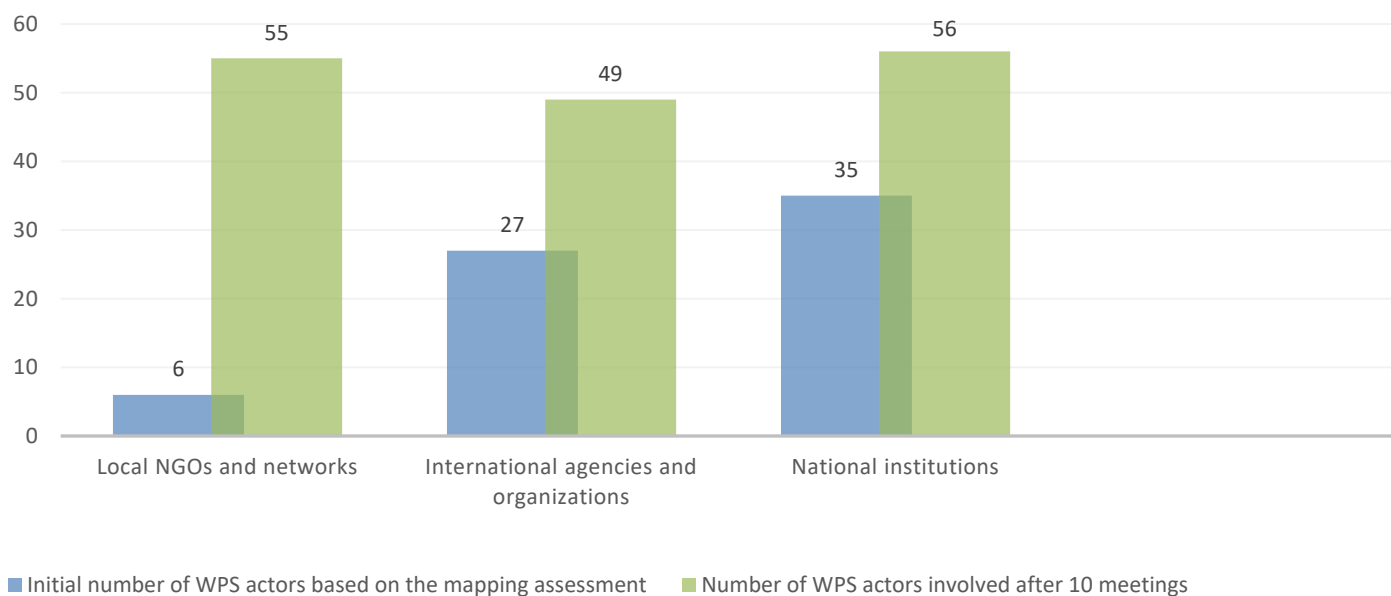


Figure (1)¹

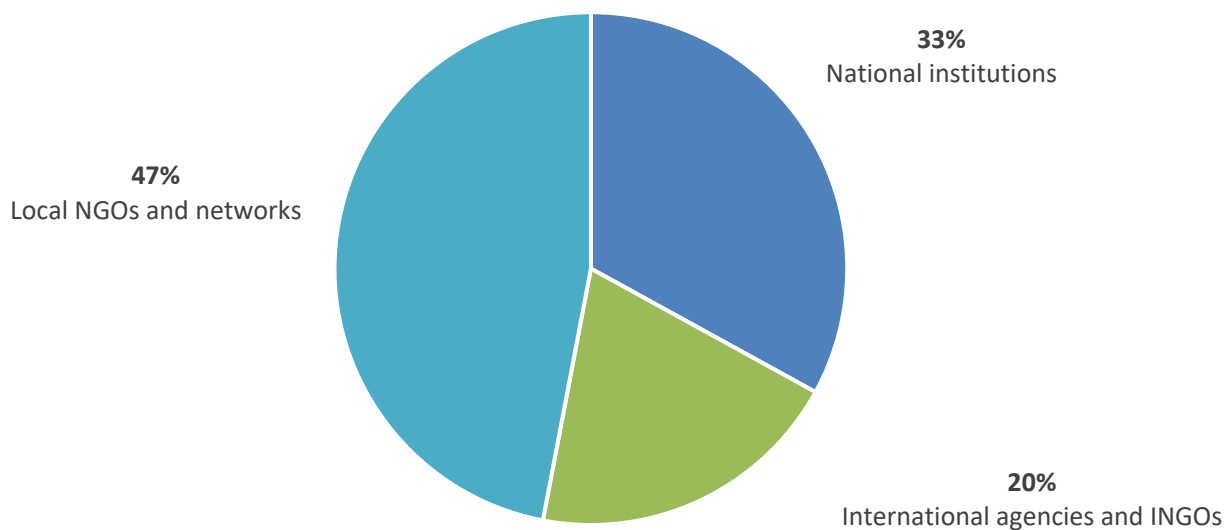


Figure (2)²

¹ Number of WPS Actors involved before and after conducting the ten coordination meetings

² Percentage of unique and repetitive participants in the coordination meetings

During the coordination meetings, actors from (the government, decision-makers, international community, and civil society) shared the main achievements and progress made in implementing the Women Peace and Security Agenda in Iraq. In addition, they highlighted the main challenges encountered during the implementation and the existing gaps that stand behind the weak coordination among the actors.

The coordination meetings not only highlighted key achievements in implementing the Women, Peace, and Security agenda but also provided a platform to address crises that affect women and girls such as the violence against women and girls (VAWG), climate change, as well as discussing the latest political developments (the provincial councils' elections) and develop recommendations to enhance women's political participation.

WEO also developed two major reports during the project period that included a summary of coordination meetings held during the first eight months of the project, and the second is this report that covers all the ten coordination meetings held over fifteen months. Both reports summarize the achievements and progress of the WPS agenda at three levels (the government, local NGOs and networks, international agencies and organizations) and key challenges and recommendations to better implement the WPS agenda in Iraq.

Finally, Women Empowerment Organization issued three quarterly newsletters during the project implementation period on updates and activities conducted by actors in implementing the Women, Peace, and Security Agenda in Iraq. The newsletters (Arabic and English versions) are available in the Annex.

Main Updates

The main outcomes described here are the overall progress made within the WPS agenda in Iraq highlighted by representatives from the national institutions, international non-governmental organizations (INGOs), NGOs and other actors during the coordination meetings. All the updates, challenges and recommendations were mentioned by participants of the coordination meetings, they do not reflect the opinions and input from a singular actor including WEO and GIZ. The overall progress was divided into eight sectors according to the series of topics discussed during the coordination meetings.

1. Protection: Taking effective reporting and intervention measures and putting an end to impunity such as setting up mechanisms to ensure the protection of women and girls particularly inside refugee camps, displacement sites, and areas of returnees in Iraq. In the protection sector, some progress

observed made by the WPS actors in taking effective measures to ensure women and girls' protection. The following are the main progress made within the WPS agenda in Iraq highlighted by participants from the national institutions, INGOs, NGOs and other actors during the coordination meetings:

- Iraqi women's political participation has revolutionized societal norms and is likely to lead to changes in the legal protection system.
- The General Directorate for Survivors Affairs in coordination with the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs launched an application process through their online portal for the Yazidi female survivors' Law No. 8 (Survivors Law) that was passed in March 2021. It provides reparations to survivors of abduction from the Yazidi, Shabak, Christian, and Turkmen components in recognition of the genocide committed by ISIS.
- Coordination is ongoing between the General Directorate of Survivors Affairs and the Ministry of Interior to solve issues related to survivors' IDs and other documents, with the Ministry of Health for referring cases and providing medical services, and the Ministry of Education for opening special schools for survivors.
- The Ministry of Planning is studying the impact of early marriage on dropping out of schools, the research will be conducted in 13 governorates, to analyze the cause of early marriage and the main practices to address this issue.
- The Supreme Judicial Council established special courts to address cases of violence against women and facilitated the reporting procedure to help violated women to report by phone. The Supreme Judicial Council also directed all investigation courts to refer women survivors of violence or women protection shelters in (Diwaniya, Anbar and Dhi Qar) governorates.
- The positive role of the Community Police and the Directorate of Family and Child Protection from Domestic Violence formed by the Ministry of Interior.
- The Women Empowerment Department in Baghdad governorate established sixteen women forums that is working on the economic and social empowerment of women in Baghdad.
- The Women Empowerment Department in Baghdad governorate has established communication and coordination channels with the community police to protect women from cyberbullying and domestic violence.
- Local NGOs in coordination with INGOs are providing case management, legal services, referrals and psychosocial support and mental health services all over Iraq.
- Local women organizations and INGOs are the main actors that regularly implement protection programs all over Iraq particularly programs related to ending violence against women and girls.

- Women-led networks developed protection policy papers, and a road map that represents the CSOs future vision towards women's issues such as women protection, education, health, and financial security and shared with relevant stakeholders.
- Local NGOs and networks are involved in observing the violations and shortcomings in implementing the CEDAW recommendations, and regularly contribute to developing the shadow reports of CEDAW.
- There are regional efforts managed by INGOs to include Iraq within the Regional Civil Society Observatory Index on violence against women and Women, Peace and Security agenda, the index adopt scoring methodology as a tool meant to provide global documentation that allows carrying out comparative studies on laws, public policies, and services related to violence against women and WPS agenda.
- One of the INGOs formed "Parole" network of 60 women activists from Baghdad, Anbar, Kirkuk, Ninawa, Diyala, and Salahaddin governorates, where they reached out to citizens and decision-makers to identify common concerns and potential solutions, as well as developing policy recommendations with a particular emphasis on addressing the needs of women and girls.

2. Participation: Enhancing women's participation at all levels of decision-making, including in national, regional, and international institutions; in mechanisms for the prevention, management, and resolution of conflict; in peace negotiations; in peace operations, in a way that enhances peacebuilding in Iraq. In the participation sector, the following are some key points highlighted by participants from the national institutions, INGOs, NGOs and other actors during the coordination meetings:

- In a study conducted by UNFPA in collaboration with the Ministry of Planning of the Federal Government and Central Statistical Organization (CSO), regarding the second Iraq Women Integrated Social and Health (IWISH) survey, the results showed that:
 1. Women participation in the parliament is 29%.
 2. The political participation of women does not exceed 2.8%.
 3. The percentage of women participation in civil society and political parties is 5.5%.
- The percentage of women participating in the political process began to rise after the 2005 elections, as shown by the Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC) latest statistics below:
 1. 12% of women are agents of political entities,
 2. 18.5% female observers in the electoral process,
 3. 5.5% of female journalists broadcast the electoral event.

- The Iraqi Council of Ministers launched the Iraqi Women's Strategy (2023-2030) that guarantee the political participation of women in decision-making.
- The National Department of Iraqi Women of the General Secretariat for the Council of Ministers has ministerial and monitoring teams in all related ministries in the Federal Government and are planning, implementing, and monitoring activities related to the Women, Peace, and Security Agenda.
- According to the Diwan order 33 of 2023 and under the supervision of the Director General of the National Department of Iraqi Women of the General Secretariat for the Council of Ministers, a Supreme Committee was formed to supervise support for women's political participation and ensure the protection of female candidates in the provincial councils' elections, and is regularly providing capacity building trainings to the relevant authorities in the field of supporting the role of women participation in elections as well as to female candidates about personal security, media appearance, and electoral campaign management.
- The National Department of Iraqi Women of the General Secretariat for the Council of Ministers contributed to amending the Election Law No. 9 of 2020 to enhance the political participation of women in the Iraqi Parliament, as well as amending the High Commission of Elections Law to enhance women's participation in the Board of Commissioners.
- The Iraqi Ministry of Defense plans to establish a military training center for women to increase women's participation in the security and defense sector and reduce societal stigma towards women's role in security.
- The National Security Advisory established the Women's Political Forum to enhance women's political participation and provide capacity building trainings for female candidates in eleven governorates.
- UNAMI created two women advisory groups, one based in Baghdad and one in Erbil. These two advisory groups are very active in providing technical advice and assistance to UNAMI leadership on different thematic issues.
- One INGO contributed to building the capacities of parties' members on media appearance and campaign management through the political party's program and worked to enhance women's participation in the provincial councils' and parliamentary elections.
- The local networks work regularly through several projects to ensure a high percentage of women's political participation at the qualitative and quantitative levels. Their projects focus mainly on research studies, capacity building, and monitoring and evaluation of women's participation in decision-making positions.

- A local coalition of election monitoring was formed to monitor any violations during the elections in general and the impact of the electoral environment on women in particular. The coalition issues a report that includes the main challenges observed and key recommendations to share with the IHEC.

3. Prevention: Improving intervention strategies in the prevention of violence against women, including by prosecuting those responsible for violations of international law; strengthening women's rights under national law; and supporting local women's peace initiatives and conflict resolution processes in Iraq. In reference to the prevention sector, below are some key progresses highlighted by the national institutions, INGOs, NGOs, and other actors during the coordination meetings:

- The Supreme Judicial Council is completing the trials and judgement of many perpetrators who had committed violence against women.
- The Iraqi Ministry of Defense is providing a series of workshops for women about early equality-sensitive warning system in local communities.
- The National Security Advisory provided sixty-two training workshops to protect women during conflicts and thirty-two meetings with women and girls in camps in collaboration with the Ministry of Migration and Displacement. Additionally, eighty-five training workshops were conducted in eight governorates for academic staff in schools on UN Security Council Resolution 1325 and protection from cyberbullying.
- The Women Empowerment Department in Baghdad governorate is working on rehabilitating orphanages and repairing girls' schools to ensure suitable infrastructure.
- Proposing advocacy campaigns by women's groups by taking measures and interventions with decision-makers to prevent the escalation of conflicts.
- Local NGOs created early warning system composed of women groups operating in three governorates (Ninawa, Kirkuk and Thi Qar) focusing on detecting threats of conflicts on women.
- The national women networks and NGOs has supported the efforts of the Ministry of Interior to include the equal rights concept within their policies and develop a code of conduct for members of Internal Security Forces and included an article on the criminal justice path for women and girls.
- A series of research and surveys conducted by local women networks about the violence against women, the role of political parties in supporting women participation, conflicts violence and masculinity in Iraq.
- One of the INGOs are integrating pillars of Women, Peace, and Security Agenda in the local reconciliation process through integrating women mediators within their program.

- The INGOs are working with women rights organizations in policy making starting from development till reporting, and they contributed to establishing task forces.

4. Recovery: Advancement of relief and recovery measures to address national crises through equality lens, including by respecting the civilian and humanitarian nature of refugee and displaced camps, and considering the needs of women and girls in the design of refugee camps and settlements in Iraq. In reference to the recovery sector, below are some of the key points highlighted by the national institutions, INGOs, NGOs and other actors during the coordination meetings:

- The Iraqi Ministry of Migration and Displacement implemented four hundred and sixty projects in 2021, with five thousand legal documents issued.
- The Iraqi Ministry of Migration and Displacement works to provide basic services for women (psychological, social, legal, and economic support), develop a comprehensive plan to close displacement camps and provide financial grants to returning families (four million Iraqi dinars for each family).
- The Iraqi Ministry of Migration and Displacement also adopted economic rehabilitation programs, where 332 projects have been launched aimed at psychological rehabilitation and reintegration to ensure safe return.
- A budget of Twenty-Five Billion IQD has been assigned for The General Directorate of Yazidi Survivors, to pay salaries for survivors (800,000 IQD per month).
- The Women Empowerment Department in Baghdad governorate contributes to the economic and social empowerment of women, as well as the rehabilitation of orphanages and girl's schools to ensure appropriate infrastructure.
- The relief and recovery process are slow due to political, economic, and security obstacles and setbacks.
- INGOs are implementing equal rights programs to support vulnerable women, survivors of violence, women from minorities, female civil society leaders, journalists, activists, female prisoners, service providers, and shelters workers.
- Local NGOs are conducting livelihood projects in the liberated areas of ISIS to enhance women economic empowerment.
- One of the local NGOs has listening centers and is supporting women survivors living in the liberated areas through funding small businesses.
- One of the INGOs are implementing livelihood projects to support vulnerable women and survivors of violence in Baghdad, Kirkuk, Ninewa, Sinjar.

5. Legislation: a lift-off the discriminatory provision against women is needed to ensure women's participation in public and political life, support them in taking over meaningful role in the decision-making processes and positions, promote their equal rights, and reinstate their socioeconomic role in Iraq. In reference to the legislation sector, below are some of the key progresses made highlighted by the national institutions, NGOs, INGOs and other actors during the coordination meetings:

- Legislation of laws for Iraqi women in recent years, including the Yazidi Women Survivors' Law, with efforts being made to amend the law to increase the targeted group and improve procedures in this regard.
- The electoral system has affected women's achievements in securing advanced positions in elections. However, the percentage decreased in the provincial council elections due to changes in the vote-counting through the adoption of the Sainte-Laguë method.
- The Iraqi parliament is discussing the Legal Assistance Law that aims to ensure equal access to justice through legal representation and raising awareness, specifically for those who cannot afford the costs of legal representation, such as survivors of domestic violence, IDPs, people who receive protection assistance and widows of martyrs. The law will provide the cover for establishing legal assistance centers to support the above-mentioned vulnerable groups.
- The Supreme Judicial Council directed all investigations courts to reactivate the law no. 101 for the year 1999, which prevent prisoning women in non-intentional cases during the investigations and trial phases, in addition to reactivating the law no. 47 for the year 1999, which exclude women from being prisoned based on the law no. 132.
- The Supreme Judicial Council formed a committee of judges to review the penal code and edit all the discriminative articles against women (such as article 41 that allow punishment of the wife by the husband).
- Local women networks, NGOs, and INGOs are advocating through their programs to amend discriminatory laws, in addition to their advocacy campaigns to legislate a law to end violence against women and girls.
- One of the women's networks is advocating for changing the educational curricula to be more equality-sensitive, in addition to their advocacy to amend the Law 37 for the year 2015 to protect women in workplaces, provide hotline to receive complaints in case of harassment, and enhance women's rights.
- Local women networks are pushing towards activating laws that limit the killing and the trafficking in women especially the issues of temporary marriage, early marriage, and clan marriage.

- One of the INGOs in cooperation with a civil society organization, launched the equality-responsive budgeting training manual, with the aim of providing clear and practical tools for those working in the fields of developing budgets to integrate the equal rights concept and issues into the institutions' general budget, and advocate for allocating funds for project that support equal opportunities for both men and women.

6. Awareness: promotion of women's rights in Iraq involves diverse actors and sectors and requires a transversal approach, channels of communication among the ministries and institutions, and a sustainable dialogue and partnership between them and the women's rights organizations, who dedicate themselves to put an end to the discrimination of women. It also includes raising awareness, empowering women, and enhancing their capacities through a rights-based approach. In reference to the awareness sector, below are some key points highlighted by the national institutions, NGOs, INGOs, and other actors during the coordination meetings:

- The significant impact of capacity-building programs in promoting and raise awareness of the importance of women's participation in elections and decision-making positions.
- A clear increase in awareness campaigns about protection from cyberbullying and cybersecurity.
- There has been partial work in some areas to raise awareness on early warning systems and monitoring conflicts and crises.
- The Iraqi Ministry of Defense is working to conduct workshops and training sessions with NATO and other organizations to enhance awareness of women's rights and promote equality and justice in the security sector.
- The Iraqi Ministry of Defense is engaging women to participate in the planning and awareness raising campaigns for countering violent extremism in local communities.
- Local NGOs and networks are conducting raising awareness campaigns in local communities about the importance of women role and leadership in society, the risks of violence against women, and local laws related to women's rights.
- One of the INGOs works directly with the Independent High Electoral Commission to raise awareness for men and women to vote in an informed and independent manner.
- One of the INGOs is providing social cohesion dialogue among Iraqi communities, a dialogue with women and tribal and religious leaders from across Iraq, on topics related to peaceful coexistence aiming at building trust and increase knowledge among both groups.

- Another INGO within their reconciliation programs succeeded to collect pledges from more than 300 tribal leaders, to stop negative practices such as demand for blood money compensations or using women for compensation marriages.
- A sports initiative implemented by one of the local civil society organizations (football tournament) for 150 women living in the West of Mosul, to raise the people's awareness of the importance of women's participation in sports.

7. Empowerment: empowering stakeholders about the international and national laws and frameworks related to protecting women's rights particularly the Women, Peace, and Security agenda and UNSCR 1325 which affirms that peace and security efforts are more sustainable when women are equal partners in the prevention of violent conflict in Iraq. In reference to the empowerment sector, below are some key points highlighted by the national institutions, NGOs, INGOs, and other actors during the coordination meetings:

- The Iraqi Ministry of Defense is providing a series of trainings for women investigators and prosecutors to work on justice systems, in addition to conducting workshops about women's rights and women protection international laws for military staff.
- Capacity building programs are provided by INGOs for women-led organizations working on the INAP 1325 and the implementation of the WPS agenda.
- Local NGOs working on the INAP 1325 and the implementation of the WPS agenda are providing a series of workshops for governmental institutions about international and local frameworks related to WPS agenda and women's rights.
- INGOs are providing training workshops for ministries' staff aiming at increasing the performance of women in leading roles within the government institutions and enhancing their knowledge on UNSCR 1325.
- The INGOs enhanced women participation, and supported women candidates in the last parliamentary elections through building their capacities by providing a series of trainings on legislation and the importance of women leadership in governance.
- INGOs implemented leadership programs for women rights organizations that helped in exchanging experiences of advocacy among women and youth activists from different parts of Iraq.

- One of the INGOs launched a program namely (Women Leading the Way for Peace in Iraq) aims to contribute for achieving sustainable peace and security, through supporting 36 organization and build their capacities to implement WPSA programs independently.
- One of the INGOs launched a four-year program that aims to strengthen women and youth's meaningful, enduring participation in advancing inclusive peace and security in Iraq, the program will amplify the influence of youth and women peacebuilders at the grassroots level and catalyze broad inclusion of grassroots peacebuilders in municipal and national institutions.

8. Climate change: climate change is posing a huge challenge to humanitarian needs in Iraq, it has negatively impacted the quality of life, especially for women and girls where they are disproportionately affected by climate change due to social, economic, and political inequalities. There is a need for a comprehensive approach to address climate-related security risks in Iraq, in addition to enhance women participation in the planning of environmental national plans and strategies. In reference to the climate change sector, below are some of the key points highlighted by the national institutions, NGOs, INGOs, and other actors during the coordination meetings:

- The Iraqi Ministry of Migration and Displacement is planning to implement projects including a comprehensive plan to combat desertification, drought, and displacement from marsh areas.
- The absence of a response and recovery plan for forced displacement due to climate change, as well as the failure to take into account women's needs in food security and reproductive health.
- Approximately 80% of the displaced people due to climate change are women, with studies shown that women are affected 14% more than men in the negative consequences of climate change.
- The impact of climate change on women living conditions in the Marshes located in southern parts of Iraq, where there is lack of water and dryness of farms leading to serious economic losses and severe suffering.
- The Ministry of Environment formed a national team (reportedly mostly women) for reducing pollution and supporting energy resources, the team is composed of committees in all Iraqi governorates to address the climate change issues, support alternative sources of energy, and raising awareness about protection of the environment.
- One of the international agencies cooperated with national institutions and conducted a survey about the impact of climate change particularly (desertification and drought) on vulnerable groups including women in Marshes of the southern parts of Iraq.

Challenges of implementing the Women, Peace, and Security

Agenda

The following are the main challenges highlighted in all meetings:

- There is a coordination gap between the actors working on the implementation of WPS agenda in Iraq.
- The need of inclusive monitoring and evaluation mechanism for implementing the WPS agenda in Iraq.
- Insufficient budget allocated for implementing the WPS agenda-related programs.

Challenges related to the Protection sector:

- Weak institutional procedures related to legal protection and the necessary infrastructure to protect women from violence.
- Weak channels of protection, complaint, and reporting in public and private institutions to protect women from violence and harassment.
- The absence of monitoring indicators hinders the establishment of early warning systems to prevent conflicts and violations.
- Insufficient data related to women's protection measures and policies, particularly domestic violence.
- Significant increase in the number of women victims of domestic violence due to the absence of domestic violence legislation.
- Tribal conflicts have serious consequences for women's security and protection.
- Lack of security, reproductive health services, and lack of identity documents are among the challenges facing women returning to liberated areas.
- The incomplete activation of shelters in Iraqi governorates to provide guarantees of protection from murder or domestic violence.
- There are social obstacles facing the integration of men and women with disabilities in society, where all public and private institutions and services lack accessibility and appropriate infrastructure.

Challenges related to the Political Participation sector:

- Lack of political will to prioritize women's issues, support legislating new laws, and engage women in decision-making positions.

- Insufficient equality-sensitive database of women's needs within the governmental institutions, as well as limited data and analysis of Iraqi women's participation in the political process after 2003.
- The Iraqi Ministry of Health lacks female directors or higher-ranking female officials, illustrating a clear gap in women's participation in decision-making positions.
- The total number of women in the Ministry of Defense is 3,683 of whom only 782 are female officers, which indicates a significant deficit in the participation of women in the security sector.
- There are only six parties led by women out of 305 registered parties within the Political Parties Department of the Independent High Electoral Commission.
- 4% of women have their male members of the family polling on their behalf during elections, according to a study conducted by the Women Studies Center at the University of Baghdad.
- Most women candidates for a party or ministerial positions are not made through competence and experience.
- Women's participation in the negotiation process is mostly symbolic, women do not contribute meaningfully and are not given the space to express their opinions in basic decisions and public policy making.
- Most women reflect the voice of their parties (they do not necessarily promote women's rights), sometimes women are positioned to please the voice of the international community.
- There is systematic political violence to exclude women from political participation, especially if they contravene the political trends of some extremist groups.
- The political, social, and economic environment is unsafe for the effective participation of women in general, and political analysis/programs in particular.
- Lack of solidarity among women candidates, female members of parliament, and women voters leads to.

Challenges related to the Prevention sector:

- The absence of plans related to the prevention and monitoring of conflicts and their impact on women.
- Difficulties to approve procedures and legislation for empowering women and promoting equality and justice between men and women.
- Security issues and risks are great barriers against the implementation of WPS related programs in specific regions of Iraq (southern governorates).

- High risk for women organizations and activists while working in (PVE) preventing violent extremism programs in Iraq.

Challenges related to the Recovery and Relief sector:

- The absence of statistics and data affects relief and recovery plans.
- The closure of camps and failure to observe the risks and challenges faced by women in areas of return.
- Insufficient planning to utilize lessons learned from displacement to prepare a plan to avoid disasters and crises and their impact on women.
- Families, especially women and children who are internally displaced as a result of climate change, are not included in any government relief response.
- Weak infrastructure that is sensitive to women's needs for recovery and relief, especially food security and reproductive health.
- The lack of a shock response program, where women and children are the most affected by armed conflicts and wars.

Challenges related to the Legislation sector:

- According to a study conducted by the Women Studies Center in the University of Baghdad, the electoral law lacks articles to prohibit violence against women during the elections, which resulted in reporting many violations and threats of women candidates and their supporters in the last elections.
- The Sainte-Laguë method (the proportional system) unfairly affects women's rights and their participation in legislative power.
- The Political Parties Law does not clearly state the percentage that women must represent, while the phrase "taking into account female representation" mentioned in the law does not obligate the political party to have women in decision-making positions.

Challenges related to the Awareness and Empowerment sectors:

- The stereotypic attitude of the community is still a barrier to implementing WPS related programs.
- There is a stereotype in society that civil society organizations implement programs and receive funds without having tangible impact on the status of women.
- Bureaucracy limits the role of civil society and international organizations in implementing WPS.

- The stakeholders have different priorities and capacities in different regions of Iraq, this variability presents a challenge for INGOs when they plan programs to support local organizations and other partners.

Challenges related to the Climate Change sector:

- No allocated emergency budget and limited funds to implement environmental protection and combating climate change programs.
- The absence of a response and recovery plan for forced displacement due to climate change, as well as the failure to take into account women's needs in food security and reproductive health.

Recommendations

During the coordination meetings, the speakers participated in the sessions from the (national institutions, civil society organizations, networks, international non-governmental organizations, and other actors) came up with key recommendations mentioned below, that later were divided into eight sectors according to the series of topics discussed during the coordination meetings:

1. Protection:

- Develop and establish systems and procedures for reporting cases of violence and harassment in all settings to reduce violations against women.
- Provide official government frameworks that encourage civil society organizations to combat digital violence, cyberbullying, and hate speech.
- Establish a support fund for women's protection programs.
- Monitor media channels and civil society to observe any violation of women's rights.
- Create multidisciplinary teams composed of lawyers, activists, and academics to study the root causes and consequences of women trafficking.
- Establish an early warning system and integrate women into those systems, especially in conflict prevention.
- Adopt an Equality-Sensitive Code of Conduct in public institutions and the private sector to prevent harassment and sexual violation, and in elections to enhance the protection of female candidates.
- Establish protection mechanisms to ensure the safe participation of women in elections.
- Advocate for a comprehensive development of infrastructure, accessibility, and services sensitive to the needs of persons with disabilities in buildings and public facilities within all state institutions, especially polling stations.

- Activate the compulsory education law by implementing strict measures to prevent girls from dropping out of school.

2. Participation

- Establish mechanisms and promote women's access to decision-making positions in the three authorities (Judicial, Legislative and Executive), and empower them politically and legally through sustainable programs.
- Establish guidelines in each ministry that define women's roles and responsibilities in senior leadership and administrative positions.
- Establish a national platform that provides an integrated database to monitor women's participation in political parties, parliamentary elections, and various sectors.
- Activate and implement the international agreements and resolutions ratified by Iraq and monitor their implementation in cooperation with the National Women's Committee and the Parliamentary Women's Committee.
- Effective coordination between networks working on UNSCR 1325 and 2250 to enhance women and youth participation in peacebuilding and security.
- Political Parties Law: set determinants for women's participation and granting them a wider space in the political process and practicing party work.
- Strengthen solidarity among women by targeting women in society when conducting the election campaigns of female candidates.
- Document good practices and lessons learned for women's participation in the political negotiations post 2003.
- Create spaces to exchange experiences between Iraqi women and women from the Arab region through the Arab Women Mediators Network which was established with the support of The League of Arab States in cooperation with UN Women.

3. Prevention

- Adopt an evidence-based planning methodology and indicators resulting from research in the field of Women, Peace, and Security.
- Sustain coordination between the Federal Government and the Kurdistan Regional Government to effectively implement the Women's Peace and Security Agenda.

- Form a cluster of organizations working on WPSA to share information and exchange experience and unify efforts to establish and develop networking and coordination mechanisms at national and regional levels.
- Strengthen preventive measures and policies within government institutions by providing reporting and complaints mechanisms.
- Strengthen and support a national structure to be responsible for the implementation of all national strategies and plans related to women.
- Train women and girls on mechanisms to prepare for conflict and mitigate its impact on them.
- Build and strengthen women's capacities in early warning system and utilize the Ministry of Education's Early Warning Guide in other government institutions.
- Activate commitment to minimum standards for dealing with survivors of violence in partnership with community police, the Ministry of Interior, and violence response sectors.
- Sustain the support and investment in young women through implementing programs with local organizations.
- Provide incentives and financial grants to parties that support women's participation and ensure equality in support, media appearance, empowerment, and capacity building.

4. Recovery

- Develop future response plans sensitive to the needs of women by utilizing lessons learned from forced displacement.
- Establish comprehensive government measures with a budget sensitive to equality and justice between men and women to improve food security and reproductive health sector services.
- Psychological and legal support services provision by government institutions and maintaining psychological support programs by local and international organizations.
- Activating government strategies concerned with combating poverty and involving the private sector in providing job opportunities for the unemployed.
- Contextualize the objectives of sustainable development goals based on the priorities and needs of local communities in Iraq.
- Advocate to develop a comprehensive infrastructure and services to meet the needs of women with disabilities.
- Support female survivors' livelihood by providing income generation projects, micro funds and loans.

5. Legislation

- The need to legislate the Anti-Domestic Violence Law to protect women from domestic violence.
- Establish a comprehensive database to document the results of all programs implemented by the government and civil society organizations, and call for statistics issued by the judicial authorities to be sensitive to equality between men and women.
- Review the penal code and discriminatory legislation to achieve equality between men and women, and work to legislate laws to address electronic violations against women.
- Launch advocacy campaigns to adopt Equality-Responsive Budget.
- Promote women empowerment departments to become directorates with more authority and resources.
- Engage civil society organizations in the process of drafting the legal assistance law.
- The need for a plan specific to UN Resolution 2250 with allocated budget, and support coordination between the federal government and KRG in implementing UNSCR 2250.
- Call for amending the election law and the return of the single non-transferable vote system to guarantee women's rights and participation in the legislative authority.
- Call for the legislation of the Women's Protection Law and work to amend the Penal Code by increasing penalties for the systematic violence against women candidates, as well as activating the role of the judiciary in prosecuting violations against women in political participation and elections.
- Amend the first point of Article Eleven of the Political Parties Law, which states "taking into account female representation" and obligating the party to have at least a third of women in the general body and the administrative body of the party.
- Amend the law of the Independent High Electoral Commission and ensure that women have no less than one-third in decision-making positions.

6. Awareness

- More efforts to raise the society's awareness about the importance of women's participation, change the stereotyped view of the role of women in building security and peace.
- Enhance the role of Iraqi media networks to focus on women's issues and the necessity of women's political participation.
- Activate the oversight role of civil society organizations and the fourth authority represented by the media through targeted and effective programs in community awareness.

- Involve men in advocacy campaigns and programs to support the implementation of the Women, Peace, and Security agenda.
- Coordinate with the media to spread awareness and self-defense mechanisms and to take legal measures that protect the female candidate from bullying and defamation.

7. Empowerment

- Continue to support and build the capacities of local organizations, especially women's and emerging youth groups, and involve them in the decision-making process, follow-up and evaluation of programs related to the agenda, and work to identify common priorities and cooperate to defend them.
- Provide comprehensive training workshops for staff working in women shelters in Iraq.
- More programs and support are required for local organizations working in the center and south of Iraq.
- Provide intensive training courses for the female candidate and raise their awareness of the necessary political visions in coordination with the High Elections Commission.
- Develop appropriate plans and mechanisms for meaningful preparation of women's political participation.

8. Climate change

- Integrating women into climate change adaptation programs at the governmental level to ensure that women's requirements and needs are met in governmental plans.
- Engage women actively in all phases of planning, implementation and evaluation of all environmental and economic plans and projects.
- Increase women participation in decision making positions by 1% will reduce CO2 emission by 0.5%.
- Activate the civil society role in raising awareness about environment protection.
- Adopt equality-sensitive budgets assigned for climate change projects.
- Advocate for the use of environmental-friendly alternative sources of energy.
- Activate the strategies developed by the state to confront poverty and provide job opportunities by activating the private sector.