



16 Days Campaign to End Violence Against Women

Violence against women and girls is a violation of human rights, causing physical, sexual and psychological suffering. Violence against women limits their ability to realise their legal, social, political and economic rights and participate in Iraq's development. Eradicating violence against women is a crucial part of Iraq's efforts to promote gender equality and empower women in all spheres of life (Millennium Development Goal Three) and will provide impetus to Iraq's efforts to achieve all of the Millennium Development Goals.

Although women's political representation has increased and the Government of Iraq has committed to achieving MDG 3, this has not yet translated into a broader recognition of gender equality across Iraqi society and government bodies.

Domestic violence

Violence against women in the home is a major problem that prevents women's full participation in society. One in five women (21%) in Iraq aged 15-49 has suffered physical violence at the hands of the husband.¹ 14% of women who suffered physical violence were pregnant at the time.² 33% have suffered emotional violence,³ and 83% have been subjected to controlling behaviour by the husbands.⁴

Emotional violence includes insults, threats and public humiliation, and many men seek to control the wife's social life and access to medical care.

Early marriage

Early marriage still occurs, but is decreasing. 4% of young women aged between 15 and 19 were married before they turned 15, compared to 11% among those aged 15-49.⁵

Marriage before the age of 15 is illegal in Iraq, and marriage between the ages of 15 and 18 requires special authorization from a judge.⁶

Millennium Development Goal 3: Promote Gender Equality and Empower Women

There are 94 girls aged 6-11 enrolled in primary school for every 100 boys, up from 80 in 1990.

2015 TARGET: 100

Women make up just 7% of those employed in paid work in non-agricultural sectors, down from 11% in 1990.

2015 TARGET: 50%

Women occupy 27% of seats in Iraq's Council of Ministers, up from 13% in 1990.

2015 TARGET: 50%

Trafficking

Anecdotal evidence suggests that many women are being kidnapped and sold into prostitution. Victims are trafficked internally and to neighbouring countries including Syria and the Gulf states.⁷

What is violence against women?

Violence against women is defined in the 1993 Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women as:

"...any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life."

Female genital mutilation

Reports have indicated that female genital mutilation affects large numbers of women and girls in northern Iraq, though the exact extent is unclear.⁸ There is an ongoing campaign among civil society organizations and the Kurdistan Regional Government to outlaw the practice.⁹

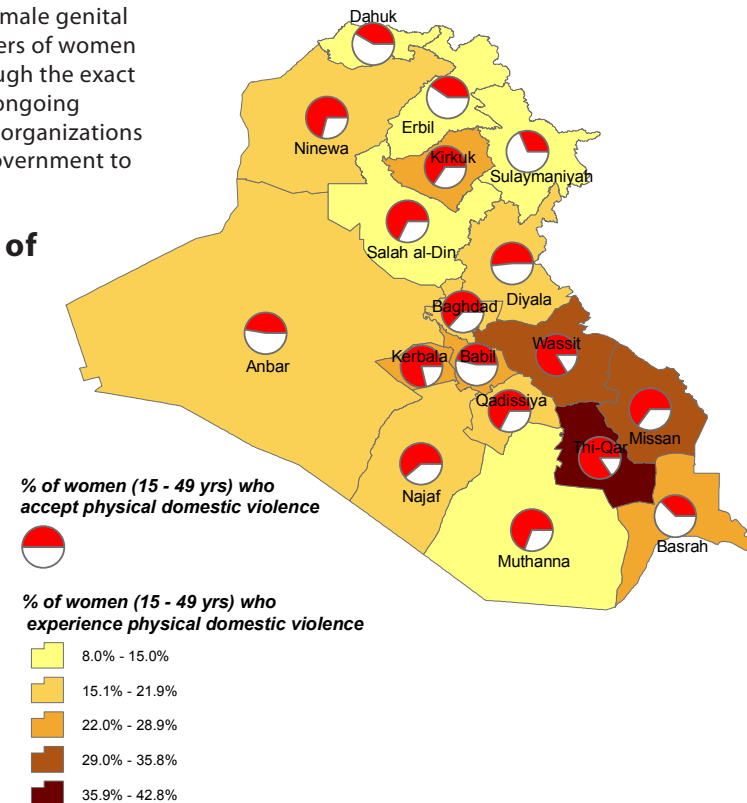
Women's awareness of their rights

Evidence shows that many Iraqi women and girls are not fully aware of their rights. 59% of women aged 15-49 believe that it is acceptable for a man to beat his wife under certain circumstances.¹⁰ This figure is higher in rural areas (70%) and among women with no formal education (71%).¹¹ Women aged between 15 and 24 are as likely to tolerate abuse as older generations.¹²

In spite of legal barriers to early marriage, one in ten young women aged between 12 and 30 believe that it is best for a girl to marry before she reaches the age of 18.

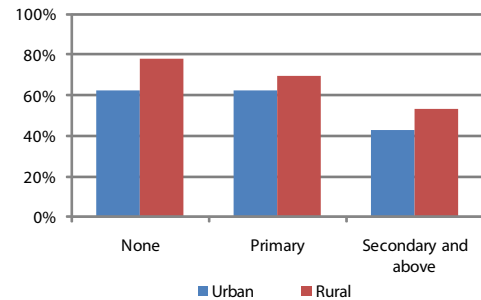
Forced marriages are entirely illegal,¹³ but a third of young women believe that a girl must marry her relative if it is her guardian's wish.¹⁴

Experience and acceptance of domestic violence among women aged 15-49



Proportion of women aged 15-49 who believe that domestic violence is acceptable

(By education level and area)



Access to care and justice

The capacities of the state authorities to prevent, protect and prosecute are limited. Medical and police authorities lack adequate training on caring for and protecting survivors of violence, leaving women vulnerable to stigmatization and reprisals from family members for reporting their case.

Few shelters are available to provide a haven for victims. The lack of a strong legal framework for prosecuting perpetrators and supporting victims means that mediation

Uncharted suffering: the information gap on violence against women

Efforts to respond to violence against women are hampered by the lack of data on the extent and nature of the violence. Survivors are reluctant to report their cases due to poor handling by medical, police and judicial authorities. When women do come forward, their cases are not recorded systematically.

between the victim and her family is often preferred to prosecution of the perpetrator.

Women's rights activists and shelters have been threatened and attacked by armed groups and family members of those they seek to protect.¹⁵

Eradicating violence against women

Young Iraqi women and men cited family upbringing (40%), religion (37%) and the law (35%) as major factors that would help prevent violence against women.¹⁶ Little confidence was expressed in the power of the media (6%) or schools (3%).

Men and boys play an important role in eradicating violence against women. 57% of young Iraqi men believe that, in general, violence should not be used to solve problems.¹⁷ 63% believe that a woman is no less than a man,¹⁸ rising to 75% among those with a university education. However, 68% believe it is acceptable to kill a girl for profaning a family's honour and 50% believe wife beating is acceptable.¹⁹

UN and Government of Iraq response

Through several entities, the United Nations is helping Iraq to combat and end violence against women in the country.

The Government of Iraq (GoI) is taking steps to address violence against women including drafting a Domestic Violence Bill, establishing an inter-ministerial to address issues of violence against women. With the support of UNICEF, the GoI is developing policies and assessments on gender-based violence and violence against children, with particular sensitivity towards the needs of

Iraq's international obligations

Iraq has ratified, signed or acceded to the following international instruments related to the rights of women and girls:

Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948)

International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1969, ratified 1971)

International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1969, ratified 1971)

International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (1981, acceded 1986)

Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989, acceded 1994); Amendment to Article 43(2) (1985, accepted 2001)

Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women (1993)

Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict (2000, acceded 2008)

girls. In the Kurdistan Regional Government, the government is working closely with civil society to establish a shelter for victims of trafficking and forced prostitution.

UNIFEM, UNHCR, WHO and UNAMI Human Rights Office are cooperating under the leadership of UNFPA to develop Iraq's capacity to combat violence against women. These agencies are working to enhance the government's capacity to develop national plans and programmes to combat violence against women; the ability of government institutions and civil society organisations to deal with survivors; and increase knowledge among community leaders, teachers, students

and local communities on gender equality. UNDP is providing technical support to the Directorate for Tracing Violence against Women and the Family Protection Unit.

UNDP is working together with the Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs and civil society organizations to finalize the shelter policy and draft a database tracking violence against women. Technical support is also being provided to the Kurdistan Regional Government with the development of its Domestic Violence Bill.

Endnotes

1. WHO/COSIT/KRSO/Ministry of Health Iraq Family Health Survey 2006-2007
2. Ibid
3. Ibid
4. Ibid
5. Ibid
6. Iraqi Penal Code 1959, Number 188, Articles 7 and 8
7. Organisation of Women's Freedom in Iraq, Prostitution and Trafficking of Women and Girls in Iraq, (2010), cited in UNAMI Human Rights Office, Human Rights Report: 1 July-31 December 2009 (2010)
8. Asuda, Diakonia, Survey of Female Genital Mutilation in Sulaymaniyah Governorate(2009); Wadi, Female Genital Mutilation in Iraqi Kurdistan (2010)
9. UNAMI Human Rights Office, Human Rights Report 1 July-31 December 2008
10. UNICEF/COSIT/KRSO/Ministry of Health Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2006
11. Ibid
12. Ibid
13. Iraq Personal Status Code 1959, Number 188, Article 9
14. UNFPA/COSIT/KRSO/Ministry of Youth and Sport Iraq National Youth Survey 2009
15. Amnesty International, Iraq: Civilians Under Fire (2010)
16. UNFPA/COSIT/KRSO/Ministry of Youth and Sport Iraq National Youth Survey 2009
17. Ibid
18. UNFPA/COSIT/KRSO/Ministry of Youth and Sport Iraq National Youth Survey 2009
19. UNFPA/COSIT/KRSO/Ministry of Youth and Sport Iraq National Youth Survey 2009