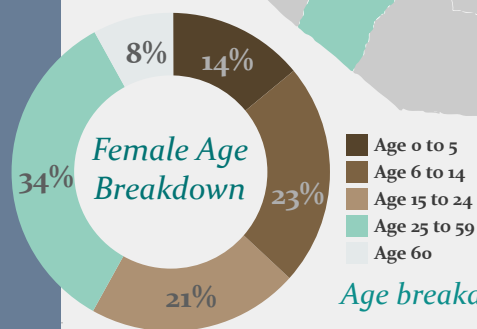
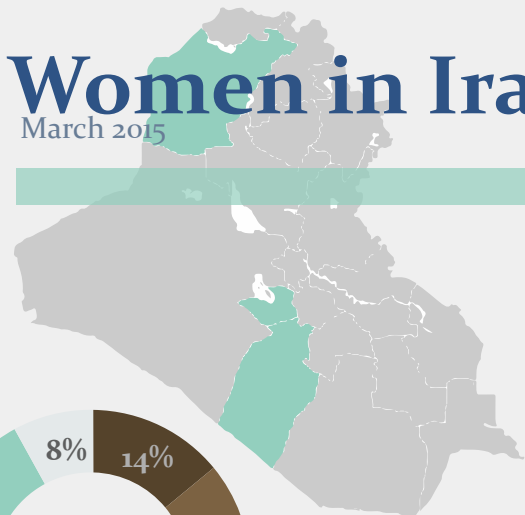


Women in Iraq Factsheet - Displaced Women and Women in Conflict

March 2015



Age breakdown of displaced women from the current Group Assessment sample, IOM.³

Violence against women is prevalent in all forms and occurs in peace-time, during conflict and after conflict. The intention of this factsheet is to highlight the forms of violence affecting women in conflict situations.

Already affected by years of economic sanctions and armed conflicts, Iraqis, particularly women and girls, have been negatively affected by the deteriorating security situation in recent months. The ongoing conflict with armed groups including the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) has forced nearly **2.5 million people**¹ to flee their home since January 2014.

In the recent wave of displacements, **more than half of displaced population (51%) are female**².

Violence and conflicts have impacted differently on men, women, girls and boys. In Iraq, women and girls have been subjected to gross human rights abuses such as abductions, killings, trafficking, torture, forced marriage, as well as exposed to risk of Sexual and Gender Based Violence (S/GBV).

Following the seizure of Mosul in June 2014, ISIL established a pattern of sexual slavery, abduction and human trafficking.

The situation of women and girls is alarming⁴.

Human rights violations have been perpetrated against a cross-section of community members. Women from diverse religious and ethnic communities have been particularly targeted for sexual violence.

Years of protracted conflict have

continued to produce dramatic changes to family structure with approximately **1,6 million widows**⁵ in Iraq and even more female-headed households. The ongoing conflict with ISIL has increased the number of widows and female-headed households.

Iraqi women, especially displaced women, widows and female-headed households, are particularly vulnerable to abuses.

The breakdown of law and order and the disruption of existing community protection mechanisms coupled by the increasing insecurity intensify the risk of S/GBV for displaced women.

Secondary effects of violence such as lack of access to shelter, basic food, water or medicine leading to hunger,

dehydration and disease, has also killed a large number of civilians; children, pregnant women, persons with disabilities and elderly people have been particularly vulnerable⁶.

Abduction: Thousands of men, women and children from the Yezidi and other ethnic and religious minority groups are still being held by ISIL since their abduction in August 2014⁷.

Human trafficking: Accurate numbers are impossible to obtain. ISIL has reportedly opened an office in Mosul (al-Quds) where they have been selling Yezidi women and girls to local men⁸.

Sexual violence: Reports of sexual violence against women and children have increased in Ninewa, Najaf and Kerbala⁹. Additionally, there are reports of an increase in abductions, trafficking and forced recruitment¹⁰.



Due to stigmatization of raped and sexually abused women, many S/GBV survivors are reluctant to seek assistance, or openly discuss their experience, and prefer to suffer internally “the Culture or Echo of Silence”.

Health: Essential services, for example health care, have sharply deteriorated and have been inaccessible in conflict affected areas. In areas hosting displaced population, health care services comprising maternal health have been overstretched by the IDP influx¹¹.

Living conditions of displaced women including *lack of segregated living*



quarters, lack of security, inadequate water and sanitation facilities and increasing rents, can significantly intensify women and girl's exposure to S/GBV – especially in female headed households¹².

Women living under ISIL

Actual conditions of population living under ISIL, comprising access to basic services and health and nursing facilities, are extremely difficult to assess. The UN Iraq team nevertheless has collected matching testimonies confirming ISIL's gruesome violations of women's rights such as freedom of movement. Serious penalties like lashings and execution are also applied on women for transgressing ISIL rules¹³.



Existing frameworks addressing the needs of Iraqi women affected by conflict

- **Iraqi National Action Plan on United Nations Security Council on 1325 (2000):** Iraq was the first country in the Middle-East to launch a national action plan on UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (UN SCR 1325) focusing on women and peace and security in February 2014;
- A national Multi-Sectoral Strategy for Combating Violence Against Women (VAW) was formulated by the State Ministry of Women Affairs, with several ministries and UN support. The Strategy was approved by the Federal Council of Ministers, early 2014;

- Similarly, a Kurdistan Strategy for Combating VAW was also formulated by the Kurdistan High Council of Women

Affairs (HCWA), and UN support. The strategy was formally approved by Kurdistan Council of Ministers in 2013.

- The Kurdistan HCWA also launched in December 2014 a call for action declaration as part of its national campaign to combat violence against women among Iraqi displaced population and Syrian and refugees in the Kurdistan region.

Priorities in addressing the needs of women affected by conflict

- Ensure GBV training and capacity building of medical and paramedical staff working inside camps, and those working in Primary Health Care (PHC) centers in host communities;

- Provide and secure psycho-social and social integration services to S/GBV survivors among displaced and refugee women and young girls;

- Secure educational facilities in camps and encourage enrollment of IDPs children, particularly adolescent girls, in schooling opportunities;

- Organize capacity building programmes for police and security officers, particularly those in charge of refugees & IDPs camps;

- Promote economic empowerment of women and girls, through education, vocational and livelihood trainings and opportunities.

* *Due to access limitation, figures mentioned should be regarded as absolute minimums. The actual numbers could be much higher.*

1 IOM'S DISPLACEMENT TRACKING MATRIX (DTM), 26 FEBRUARY 2015, P. 1.

2 IOM'S DISPLACEMENT TRACKING MATRIX (DTM), 26 FEBRUARY 2015, P. 1.

3 IOM'S DISPLACEMENT TRACKING MATRIX (DTM), 26 FEBRUARY 2015, P. 13.

4 FAST-TRACK PRIORITIES IRAQ, FEBRUARY-JUNE 2015, P.5.

5 UNCT IRAQ INPUTS TO THE UNIVERSAL PERIODIC REVIEW, 2014, P.5.

6 UNAMI/OHCHR: REPORT ON THE PROTECTION OF CIVILIANS IN ARMED CONFLICT IN IRAQ: 11 SEPT. – 10 DEC. 2014, P. 4.

7 UNAMI/OHCHR: REPORT ON THE PROTECTION OF CIVILIANS IN ARMED CONFLICT IN IRAQ: 11 SEPT. – 10 DEC. 2014, P. 7.

8 UNAMI/OHCHR: REPORT ON THE PROTECTION OF CIVILIANS IN ARMED CONFLICT IN IRAQ: 6 JULY – 10 SEPT. 2014, P.15.

9 IASC, HUMANITARIAN CRISIS IN IRAQ GENDER ALERT: SEPTEMBER 2014, P.4.

10 IASC, HUMANITARIAN CRISIS IN IRAQ GENDER ALERT: SEPTEMBER 2014, P. 1.

11 IRAQ: HUMANITARIAN NEEDS OVERVIEW 2014-2015.

12 IASC, HUMANITARIAN CRISIS IN IRAQ GENDER ALERT: SEPTEMBER 2014, P. 3.

13 UNAMI/OHCHR: REPORT ON THE PROTECTION OF CIVILIANS IN ARMED CONFLICT IN IRAQ: 11 SEPT. – 10 DEC. 2014, P. 12.