



**Under Supporting Recovery and Stability in Iraq
through Local Development Programme
Implemented by the United Nations Development
Programme, Funded by the European Union**

Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women Policy





Table of Content

1

Foreword

2

Acronyms

3

Definitions

4

Introduction

5

Policy Mandate

6

Policy Requirement

7

Ownership and
Implementation

8

Key Recommendations





Foreword

Gender equality and the empowerment of women is an important right and a powerful driver for growth, development, and stability. Women's empowerment and gender equality are integral to advancing Iraq's national interests and reflect Iraq's values of equitability and substantive equality.

This Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women Policy applies across all work undertaken by the Women Empowerment Departments. It strengthens gender equality and the empowerment of women as a priority across Iraq's policy, economic and development efforts. The policy acknowledges the systems and structures that can play a significant role in entrenching or exacerbating discriminatory practices.



Iraq's Women Empowerment Departments will use this policy to reinforce Iraq's government commitments on gender equality and the empowerment of women as part of the international conventions it has ratified. This policy provides guidance on gender equality and the empowerment of women in stakeholder engagement, in programming and within the department. It allows Women Empowerment Departments to share its approach to gender equality and the empowerment of women and draws in localized experience and evidence. It has been informed by approaches and feedback from the Women Empowerment Directorate and partners such as multilateral and regional bodies and leading non-government organizations.

Effective implementation of this policy will advance the material interests of local communities and economies across the Iraq region, contributing to economic development, decreased poverty, social progress, and security, thereby helping to make Iraq more resilient, safer and more prosperous.



Summary

This Policy sets out the guiding principles and mandatory requirements for mainstreaming gender across the Women Empowerment Department (WED) operations across governorates with a view to promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women in support of the WED's mandate.

Approved by

Women Empowerment Directorate

Approval Date

1st November 2022

Effective Date

31st December 2022

Applicability

This Policy applies to the Women Empowerment Departments (hereafter "WED"); and all WED programs and projects submitted on or after the date of effectiveness. For WED activities under implementation, the Policy applies to all annual project implementation reports as well as mid-term reviews submitted after one year of the date of effectiveness.

Related Doc

Terms of Reference

Women Empowerment Department Action Plan 2022-2023

Contact

Dr. Yoursa Muhsen, General Director, Women Empowerment Directorate in COMSEC



Acronyms

GOI: Government of Iraq

UNDP: United Nations Development Program

ICESCR: International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

CEDAW: Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women

SDG: Sustainable Development Goals

NAP: National Action Plan (NAP)

MENA: Middle East and North Africa.

KRG: Kurdistan Regional Government

WED: Women Empowerment Department

GSCOM: General Secretariat of the Iraqi Council of Ministers

CSOs: Civil Society Organizations

MoU: Memorandum of Understanding

WPS: Women, Peace, and Security





Definitions

Women's Empowerment Departments is the authority concerned with organizing and managing cases related to women's issues in entities not connected to all ministries, through its administrative affiliation with the office of the supreme president of the authority and linked to the Iraqi Women Empowerment Directorates in the General Secretariat of the Council of Ministers under the title "Women Empowerment Departments."

Human Rights are universal guarantees protecting individuals and groups against actions that interfere with fundamental freedoms and human dignity.

Gender refers to the roles, behaviors, activities, and attributes that a given society at a given time considers appropriate for men and women. In addition to the social attributes and opportunities associated with being male and female and the relationships between women and men and girls and boys, gender also refers to the relations between women and those between men. Gender is part of the broader socio-cultural context, including class, race, poverty level, ethnic group, sexual orientation, and age. In most societies there are differences and inequalities between women and men in responsibilities assigned, activities undertaken, access to and control over resources, as well as decision-making opportunities.

Gender Analysis means a critical examination of how differences in gender norms, roles, power structures, activities, needs, opportunities, and rights affect men, women, girls and boys in a certain situation or context. It includes collection and analysis of sex-disaggregated data and gender information to understand gender differences and gaps, determine gender differentiated impacts and risks, to identify measures to avoid adverse gender impacts, and to uncover and act on opportunities to address gender gaps and inequalities relevant to the activity.





Gender Equity (or fairness) and social justice are the long-term goals of gender analysis. It strives for an equitable distribution of social, cultural, and economic resources, improved quality of life, transformations of gender hierarchies, the empowerment of women, shared participation by men and women in decision-making activities in both households and in public life, and a gender-sensitive, people-oriented approach to social and economic policy and infrastructure development.

Gender Equality means that women and men enjoy the same status. Gender equality means that women and men have equal opportunities for realizing their full human rights and potential to contribute to political, economic, social, and cultural development, locally, nationally, and internationally, and to benefit from the results. The sameness of treatment and opportunity does not necessarily ensure equality because women and men differ in biological and other ways. Gender equality must continue to recognize the sexual difference but be consistently mindful of the parameters of equity.





Gender Mainstreaming/Gender-Responsive Approach means that the needs, priorities, power structures, status and relationships between men and women are recognized and adequately addressed in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of activities. The approach seeks to ensure that women and men are given equal opportunities to participate in and benefit from an intervention and promotes targeted measures to address inequalities and promote the empowerment of women.

Gender Gap means any disparity and inequality between women and men's condition due to their position or role in society. It concerns inequalities in terms of their participation, their access to opportunities, rights, power to influence and make decision, incomes and benefits, and control and use of resources.

Gender-Sensitive Indicator means an indicator that can be used at various levels to monitor and report on socio-economic and gender-sensitive changes over a period of time.

Empowerment of Women means an expansion of agency throughout women's lives, via participation and decision-making, including support to (i) women's rights, access to and control over resources; (ii) women's access to opportunities and resources; (iii) actions to transform the structures and institutions which reinforce and perpetuate gender discrimination and inequality; and (iv) women's ability to exert influence in society.

WED Activity means any full-sized project, medium-sized project, enabling activity or regional or national outreach activity undertaken from any WED.

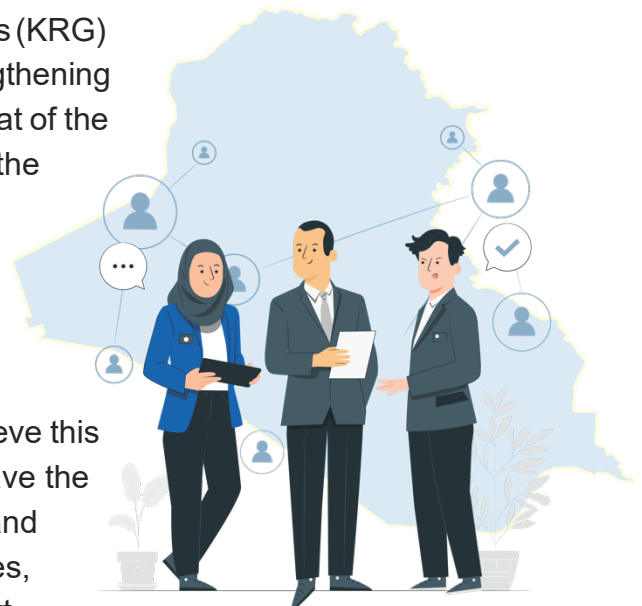
Stakeholder Engagement means a process involving stakeholder identification and analysis, planning of Stakeholder Engagement, disclosure of information, consultation and participation, monitoring, evaluation and learning throughout the project cycle, addressing challenges, and on-going reporting to stakeholders.



Introduction

The Government of Iraq (GOI) has taken several legal steps toward promoting women's empowerment, equality, and equity and has made significant progress across several areas and sectors. Foundational to these advancements, the Constitution of Iraq confirms that all men and women are equal before the law without discrimination based on gender, race, ethnicity, origin, color, religion, creed, belief or opinion, or economic and social status. The GOI is a signatory and/or has ratified multiple United Nations Conventions that amplify the importance of human rights and gender equality, including, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (CCPR), the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), and the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). Mainstreaming a peace, security, and development nexus, the GOI collaboratively adopted its first National Action Plan 1325 (NAP) for implementation between 2014 and 2018, making it the first country in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). Today, the GOI is collaboratively implementing its second NAP 1325 between 2019 and 2023. Fundamental to supporting the aforementioned steps, the GOI, in collaboration with the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and UN Women, is actively advancing Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5 which underscores that "gender equality is not only a fundamental human right, but a necessary foundation for a peaceful, prosperous and sustainable world."

With the GOI's and Kurdistan Regional Government's (KRG) commitment to promoting all efforts towards strengthening the role of women in society, the General Secretariat of the Iraqi Council of Ministers' (COMSEC) established the Women Empowerment Directorate by Cabinet Resolution No. 333 in 2016. The Women Empowerment Directorate works across all governorates with the strategic mission to adopt a strategy to advance the status of Iraqi women and support women and girls in rural areas, and to achieve this mission, the Women Empowerment Directorate have the following objectives: (a) Ensure gender concepts and mainstreaming are integrated throughout all policies, plans, and strategies of the government, (b) support,





advance and monitor the implementation of these policies and plans through an active national network of local level Women Empowerment Departments in coordination and collaboration with civil society organizations (CSOs), and (c) promote at the International and Regional level women empowerment methods and success in-line with signed and/or ratified UN Conventions by the Gol. Importantly, all these objectives are expected to progressively ensure girls' and women's human rights through more robust legal protections and result in an environment free of discrimination for all girls and women in Iraq.

On 10 June 2021, the Women Empowerment Directorate and UNDP signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to support the mission and objectives by further building upon existing structures and ongoing gender mainstreaming, women's empowerment, equality and equity commitments and steps forward at the national to local governorate level across Iraq. A central focus of this MoU is the formulation of a strategic WED specific Gender Policy consultatively designed and collaboratively implemented in alignment with the Gol's UN Convention commitments, the SDGs with a focus on Goal 5, and Iraq's Vision for Sustainable Development 2030. As presented throughout the subsequent sections, the WED Gender Policy is consultatively designed and collaboratively implemented to empower and support institutional development, increase productivity, and ensure effective gender mainstreaming, women's empowerment, equality and equity across Iraq. Fulfilling the international commitments that Iraq ratified such as UNSCR 1325 six pillars, (participation; protection and prevention; promotion of social and economic empowerment; legislation and law enforcement; resources mobilization and monitoring and evaluation), concerning gender justice, equality, and human rights issues. Women's Empowerment Directorate works in line with Iraq's government to meet the international commitments that aim to empower women and girls through the national plan that focuses on: (a) Strengthening women and girls' participation in leadership and legislative positions, (b) protecting women and girls from conflict effects and all forms of GBV, and (c) protecting women and girls from risks in work environments inside public





and private institutions.

Although women face unique barriers, they are also increasingly recognized as a positive force in society who make valuable contributions. The mandate that WED serves increasingly underscores the important role women play in the realization of each of the objectives and call for specific actions to ensure that gender equality, including women's participation and empowerment, is a priority in achieving them. The recognition that efforts to combat and address gender inequality can be mutually supportive is also reflected in NAP 1325 and Iraq Vision for Sustainable Development 2030 which recognizes gender equality and women's empowerment as a sustainable development goal in and of itself, as well as a cross-cutting theme for reaching all other goals.

It is in recognition of this that this Policy understands that a gender-responsive approach – i.e., one that identifies gender differences, promotes shared power, control of resources, decision-making, and empowers women and girls – is integral to the WED's ability to achieve gender equality and empowerment of women.

Policy Mandate

Application

This Policy applies to the Women's Empowerment Departments (Hereafter referred to as "WED"). The Policy applies to all WED activities.

Purpose and Objective

1. This Policy sets out the guiding principles and mandatory requirements for Mainstreaming Gender across WED's operations with a view to promoting Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women in support of the WED's mandate.
2. This Policy aims to ensure equal opportunities for women and men to participate in, contribute to and benefit from WED activities in support of the WED's efforts to achieve gender equality and the empowerment of women.
3. The Policy recognizes that gender relations, roles, and responsibilities exercise an important influence on women's and men's access to and control over decisions, assets and resources, information, and knowledge while responding to shifting social and economic conditions of society over time across Iraq.



Guiding Principles

The following principles guide efforts to promote Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women in WED operations:

- Efforts to promote Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women are done in accordance with the mandate that WED serves, and in recognition of related international and national commitments to gender equality and human rights.
- WED activities address and do not exacerbate existing gender-based inequalities.
- WED generates sex-disaggregated data, reports key findings, and promotes the exchange of information and innovations in support of their actions and programmes on the national, and regional level.
- Stakeholder engagement and gathering data is done in a gender-responsive and inclusive manner so that women's and men's different knowledge, needs, roles, and interests are taken into consideration.

Policy Requirements

The Policy establishes mandatory requirements in four areas: (A) Program and project cycle; (B) Monitoring, accountability, learning and capacity development; (C) Engaging Stakeholder policies, procedures, and capabilities; and (D) Sustainability considerations

A. WED Program and Project Cycle

In Program and Project Documents, WED provide indicative information on Gender considerations relevant to the proposed activity, and any measures to address these, including the process to collect sex-disaggregated data and information on Gender.

Departments provide:

- Gender Analysis or equivalent socio-economic assessment that identifies and describes any gender differences, gender differentiated impacts and risks, and opportunities to address Gender Gaps and promote the Empowerment of Women that may be relevant to the proposed activity.



- Corresponding gender-responsive measures to address differences, identified impacts and risks, and opportunities through a gender action plan or equivalent.
- If gender-responsive measures have been identified, the logical framework includes actions, Gender-Sensitive Indicators, and sex-disaggregated targets.

In its review of Program and Project Documents, WED ensures the documentation reflects the principles set out in this Policy and is in accordance with the provisions of the policy requirements.

WED oversees the implementation of gender-responsive measures, and provide information in their annual project implementation reports, mid-term reviews and final evaluations on progress, Gender-Sensitive Indicators, and results.

WED updates and maintains project templates, in consultation with relevant stakeholders so that they reflect the principles set out in this Policy and are in accordance with the provisions of the policy requirements

B. Monitoring, Accountability, Learning and Capacity Development

WED tracks and reports annually to the Directorate, and, as required, to stakeholders which the WED cooperates on project-level progress, sex-disaggregated data, gender information and results.

WED develops and disseminates guidelines and action plans within six months of the adoption of this Policy, in consultation with relevant stakeholders and expert organizations/individuals, to ensure that this Policy is implemented effectively and coherently.

WED and relevant stakeholders generate and share knowledge on best practice, methodologies and lessons learned on promoting Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women related to the WED's areas of work, to inform programming in accordance with this policy.



WED and relevant stakeholders leverage national, and regional outreach activities to raise awareness and support capacity development on gender mainstreaming.

C. Engagement of Stakeholder policies, procedures, and capabilities

Stakeholders demonstrate that they have in place the necessary policies, procedures and capabilities required to ensure that:

- Gender Analyses, socio-economic evaluations or the equivalent are applied to inform Gender-responsive design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation, including budgeting and staffing, of stakeholder activities.
- Activities implemented by the Stakeholder do not exacerbate existing gender-related inequalities and, where relevant, address Gender Gaps.
- Activities implemented by the Stakeholder strive to provide equal opportunities for women and men to benefit.
- Women and men are provided equal opportunities in terms of participation and decision-making throughout the identification, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of activities implemented by the Stakeholder.
- Collection of sex disaggregated data and information on gender, and the use of Gender-Sensitive Indicators, sex- disaggregated targets and results, as relevant, are regularly incorporated in monitoring, evaluation, and reporting of Stakeholder activities.

D. Sustainability Considerations

- Engage local authorities in mandatory training on gender equality, human rights, and gender mainstreaming at the national and sub-national levels.
- Assess and identify the gender gaps in different sectors and provide support to strengthen gender equality and the empowerment of women.
- Engage lawyers, judges, prosecutors, governorates, and municipalities' staff in capacity-building training about the importance of gender equality, human rights, and protection from discrimination, such as GBV.



- Increased capacities for the application of International and Regional conventions, such as CEDAW, and Resolution number 1325, that Iraq ratified in court disputes.
- Engage men and boys in awareness raising on gender equality and the empowerment of women.
- Build partnerships across a wide range of stakeholders, (CSOs, municipalities, governorates, and international actors), to strengthen gender equality.
- Support the Ministry of Planning in providing data segregation for the digitized platform according to gender for the development of strategies and programs focusing on gender equality and women's empowerment, as stated in the MoU signed between UNDP and WED on June 10th, 2021
- Increase coordination with data collecting bodies to develop an efficient statistical system to provide the government with, to support evidence-based decisions making in policies and strategies related to gender equality.
- Increase public awareness of the importance of gender equality, and the empowerment of women, by conducting a nation-wide media campaign aimed at eliminating socio-cultural gender norms.

Policy Ownership and Implementation

The Women's Empowerment Departments on the local level are the prime owners and implementers of this Gender Policy with the support of UNDP and UN Women. The Gender Policy is to assist stakeholders on the local level in integrating more robust and impactful gender mainstreaming, empowerment of women, equality, and equity methods across all their actions and programmes.

With this framing, each stakeholder on the local level must adopt and/or refine and implement all policies progressively based on their current and expected organizational capacities and their specific programmes working on gender equality, and the empowerment of women.

Effectiveness

Upon the completion of the validation session in October, the Policy will take effect on 31st December 2022 and will remain in effect until amended by the WED. The Policy applies to all new WED Activities submitted on or after the date of effectiveness. For WED Activities under implementation, the Policy applies to all annual project implementation reports as well as mid-term reviews and final evaluations submitted after one year of the date of effectiveness.



Review of the Policy

WED decides on the review and revision of this Policy.

Key recommendations

1. WED to ensure the implementation of a gender mainstreaming strategy for its department and projects.
2. WED to use this policy for advocacy at all levels of governorates and raise awareness of the importance of gender equality and the empowerment of women.
3. WED to work on capacity building within government institutions to develop gender-sensitive policies.
4. Engage stakeholders in capacity-building training for gender mainstreaming and the empowerment of women.
5. WED to encourage women's representation in the political process at the level of local governorates.
6. Engage communities in inclusive consultation and particularly women activists and women's organizations, for a better understanding of the impact of a gender responsive approach.
7. Lead advocacy to ensure representation of women's voices in decision-making on all levels of the governorates and public policies.
8. Advocate for increasing women's participation in political representative and executive bodies on the level of the governorate, by measuring the 25% of quotas guaranteed, for women's representation in parliament, and strengthening their equal access to public offices.
9. Implementation of leadership development programs for women.
10. Enhancing women's voice and ability to raise participation in civil society by capacity building to communicate with officials and have the political courage to defend their rights and develop their organizational and leadership skills.
11. Implement awareness campaigns to combat gender stereotypes and social norms in society.
12. Capacity building of local governments to ensure that gender mainstreaming and the empowerment of women are taken into consideration in the development of policies and strategies.