

Policy Brief: Gender assessment in relation to Model Police Station Pilot Assessment



The Ministry of Interior (MoI) of Iraq, in cooperation with UNDP, is undertaking the Model Police Station Pilot (MPSP) initiative, the purpose of which is to design a context-specific model to restore a responsive, effective, and accountable local police service, that is accessible to both men and women.

The initiative is being implemented in a selected number of target locations in Anbar, Baghdad, Basra, and Ninewa governorates, with a view to replicate the concept over time. As part of the MPSP initiative, efforts were made to understand the presence and role of female police officers/policewomen in Iraq, as well as access to local police stations by women, girls, and youth from minority ethnic groups.

In parallel with the virtual interviews and physical visits that were part of the field assessments for the MPSP, UNDP conducted a series of semi-structured interviews with officers in charge of the police stations, as well as with chiefs of the Family Protection Directorate (FPD) and Community Policing Directorate (CPD) in Iraq, with the objective of understanding current practices related to:

- Access to police stations for women, young girls, and youth from minority ethnic groups;
- Presence of female officers/policewomen (both ranking officers and non-ranking staff) and their respective roles;
- Case handling and referral systems;
- Detention of women and children as suspects and management of witnesses;
- Sexual and gender-based (SGBV) specific crimes and their management.

This policy brief summarises the key findings and recommendations from the MPSP gender assessment.

Key Findings

Access to police stations for women, girls and youth from minority groups



- Women, girls and juveniles, and youth from minority ethnic groups, have equal access to police stations' facilities and services.
- Baghdad police stations receive 20-30% of their total cases from women and young persons¹. Other governorates serve at least 2-3 women on average each day².
- There are no separate rooms for women and children to be received or interviewed at police stations.
- The majority of women and young girls approach police stations for domestic violence and family related matters (criminal).
- In Anbar (specifically Fallujah) and Ninewa, there are more cases related to terrorism involving women and children compared to Baghdad.
- Women, girls and youth use designated hotlines in Iraq for complaint procedures and to share information with law enforcement.

Case handling and referral systems



- The FPD and the CPD are standalone directorates that operate in parallel alongside local police stations. Neither directorate has offices that operate alongside local police stations.
- All domestic violence and family matters (criminal) are referred to the FPD.
- Police commanders at police stations decide whether to refer family violence cases to the FPD. Once cases are referred to the FPD, the local police station ceases to engage further with the case.
- FPD offices do not have a sufficient number of trained female officers to deal with cases referred to them by the local police.
- There were 9,080 cases of domestic violence against women reported between January – November 2020 in Iraq, of which 755 cases have been resolved by the FPD, 3,433 cases have been resolved under the normal criminal justice system, and investigations are ongoing for the remainder of cases³.
- All cases involving juveniles are referred to the Juvenile Directorate, in accordance with the Juvenile Welfare Law.

Presence and role of female police officers



- There are no ranking female police officers, in any role, deployed in the four police stations interviewed. There are female police officers at the Female Training Institute (Baghdad) and the FPD, but they are not deployed to local police stations.
- All four police stations in Baghdad have policewomen (non-ranking) on staff. Their role is limited to searching female visitors and supporting male criminal investigators with processes related to women and young girls.
- There are no policewomen employed at police stations in Basra and Anbar.
- In Ninewa, one police station has a policewoman at the reception desk.
- Policewomen receive 4 weeks of basic law enforcement training, compared to the 6-month long mandatory training for police officers deployed on rank under the Mol.
- Police personnel have not yet received any specific training on handling gender-specific crimes.

- The majority of domestic violence cases are subject to reconciliation by the FPD to protect the sanctity of the marriage and family.
- There is currently no specific law in Iraq to deal with cases of family violence. Such cases are treated under the criminal justice system.
- The CPD engages with community members to prevent the escalation of disputes and engages in awareness-raising campaigns.
- CPD volunteers try to handle matters faced by women and girls at the community level to avoid the registration of criminal cases and to come to a peaceful resolution.
- Within the first three months of 2020, the CPD received 1,200 cases, of which 90% are from women and girls⁴.
- No standard operating procedures (SOP) exist for case referrals relating to family violence and juvenile cases. Police commanders rely on the Criminal Procedure Code and the Juvenile Welfare Law to process and refer cases to the relevant units /directorate offices.

¹ Interviews with Salhia, Khansa, Sha'ab and Ba'aa police station commanders. The figure is an approximate estimate as suggested by the commanders of the respective police stations subject to the assessment from October - November, 2020.

² Interviews with police station commanders in Anbar (Mala'ab and Fallujah city police stations), Ninewa (Al- Thaqafa and Shik Fathi police stations) and Basra (Shatt al-Arab, Al-Hadi, Al-Qibla, and Al-Euphoria police stations), from November - December, 2020. The range is an approximate estimate provided by the commanders of the police stations subject to the assessment.

³ Data provided by Director – General, Family Protection Directorate, Mol.

⁴ Data provided by Director – General, Community Policing Directorate, Mol.

Key Findings

Management of gender-specific crimes



- SGBV cases are most commonly recorded against offenders outside the family and are related to rape, kidnapping, physical assault and grievous injury.
- Victims of SGBV receive immediate medical attention and are then referred to the investigating judge for further decision and action, after which time the local police cease to engage with the cases.
- There is no SOP for police in relation to the handling of SGBV crimes in Iraq.
- UN Women and UN Population Fund (UNFPA), in coordination with Mol, are currently developing a SOP for handling and processing of SGBV crimes by police in Iraq.

Detention of women and children as suspects and management of witnesses



- Women and children are not commonly detained at local police stations, which generally do not have separate detention facilities for women and children.
- Women suspects are normally held at a temporary women's only detention facilities in the capitals of each governorate and managed by the Mol. In Baghdad, there is a special women's prison managed by the Ministry of Justice.
- Most convicted women from all governorates are transported to the women's prison in Baghdad. However, due to logistical issues, this process does not regularly take place and there is overcrowding at the temporary women's only detention facilities at the governorate level. This is especially a challenge in Ninewa, where there is a high number of women convicted of terrorism.
- Where women and children are witnesses to crimes, the local police take them to the investigating judge, who records their statements in confidence in accordance with the Criminal Procedure Code.
- Where there are women who have no family members and require shelter and protection, police request that community elders extend some form of protection for women within the villages/districts. In Baghdad, police work with NGOs to place such women in women's shelters.

Recommendations

Ensure availability of all services at local police stations

- Family and domestic violence matters are currently referred to the FPD, which creates a gap in the efficiency and ability of the police to respond to life-threatening and urgent family violence cases. It may also lead to situations where crucial evidence cannot be collected, and delays expose victims to further threats and re-victimization. Small units of FPD officers should be co-located at each police station to allow for increased coordination between the FPD units and the local police.
- CPD units should also be co-located in local police stations as the CPD receives a substantial number of cases from women and girls in relation to harassment and other crimes.

Improve the number of female police (both ranking officers and non-ranking staff) and their respective roles

- The Mol should consider, as a matter of utmost importance, the recruitment, training and deployment of female ranking officers as well as non-ranking policewomen at police stations, who can directly engage with female victims and/or young men who are subject to different forms of violence in the community. Female officers and policewomen should be recruited locally in each governorate, as they will then understand the local community and practices and it may also assist those female officers/policewomen to manage the expectations of their own family members by remaining close to them.
- Female police officers as investigators should also be recruited to improve the confidence and willingness of women and girls to engage with the criminal justice system in Iraq. Female investigators should be specifically trained in the SOP for Criminal Investigations and any future SOPs for family and domestic violence, as well as SGBV cases.
- There is also a need for more female ranking officers and policewomen within the FPD and CPD, as they are directly involved in cases related to women and girls.

Develop and implement SOPs for family and domestic violence cases as well as SGBV cases

- SOPs for the types of cases handled by the FPD need to be immediately developed, with adequate follow-up procedures and criminal investigation procedures for such cases. Family and domestic violence matters are currently handled on an ad-hoc basis and the lack of a SOP has led to FPD officers engaging in a process of reconciliation between family members, with no assurances or guarantees that violence will not be repeated, or the life of the family members will not be threatened in the future. The process for the development of a SOP for SGBV cases has now been initiated through UNFPA and UN Women, jointly with the Mol.

Improve infrastructure at the Model Police Stations to improve access for women, girls and youth

- Separate entrances to police stations for women and young persons should be created to encourage more people to engage with the local police and to reduce the risk of ostracization of such individuals due to their visit. Separate interview rooms for interviewing women and children should also be created.

Improve infrastructure at the Model Police Stations to support the role of female police officers and policewomen

- Separate female restrooms, dressing rooms for changing, prayer and short rests, as well as separate workstations for female officers should be created to ensure that ranking female officers can work side-by-side with male counterparts. A needs-based assessment of the Model Police Stations must be carried out to identify the specific needs of the ranking female officers and policewomen.

Improve the joint operations capacity of both female and male ranking officers at the Model Police Stations

- Upon the recruitment and training of female police (both ranking and non-ranking), a capacity building and training session must be undertaken to improve the joint operational capacities of both male and female police working together within the same local police station.

Improve public trust (especially for women and children) in local police stations through socio-behavioural change communications

- It is necessary to create a strategy for advocacy and outreach for the Model Police Stations to engage with community leaders and community members. The communications strategy should focus on behavioural change to positively influence knowledge, attitude and social norms among individuals, institutions and communities to influence better access to and service delivery of democratic policing services.