

IOM IRAQ

PERCEPTIONS ON WOMEN'S ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES IN URBAN AREAS OF IRAQ:

Motivations and Mechanisms to Overcome Barriers



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive Summary	4
Introduction	5
Objective	6
Methodology	6
Background	8
Theoretical Framework	11
Barriers to Women's Participation in Economic Opportunities	12
Normative Barriers	12
Consequential Barriers	14
Practical Barriers	14
Mechanisms Women Use Participate in Economic Opportunities	16
Micro-Level Mechanisms	16
Meso-Level Mechanisms	17
Women's Motivations to Participate in Economic Opportunities	18
Entry Points for Programming	20

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- This study identifies normative, consequential and practical barriers Iraqi women in urban areas face when seeking entrance to economic opportunities and the mechanisms these women use to overcome such obstacles. Data was collected through focus group discussions (FGD) held in four major urban areas: Mosul, Kirkuk, Baghdad and Basra (12 FGDs in total, three in each urban area).
- International sanctions and cycles of conflict since 1990 and the subsequent security and economic consequences have pushed Iraqi women into more traditional roles inside the household and left them with few viable economic opportunities.
- Normative barriers are the dominant barriers to women's access to economic opportunities, followed by practical barriers and consequential barriers in all the areas of study. Among the identified normative barriers, the most prominent are the culture and social norms, such as that women should not work later hours or overnight. The role of motherhood was the second-most commonly mentioned barrier. Finally, the designated decision-maker in the family can play a role in blocking woman's participation in employment.
- Consequential barriers are women's fears that employment outside the home will have negative effects such as retaliation. Fear of harassment in the workplace as well as when commuting are the main consequential barriers preventing women from participating in the work force. Harassment is also identified as a reason why women leave jobs.
- Practical barriers are logistical and day-to-day obstacles that prevent women from accessing economic opportunities. Lack of jobs and suitable job opportunities are the most prominent practical barriers in the four urban areas of Iraq. Maternity leave in the private sector was another practical barrier referred to by participants, who mentioned that most employers in the private sector do not provide it.
- Micro-level mechanisms are individual actions undertaken to overcome barriers to employment. Most prominently, women seek help from family, neighbors and childcare centers with tending to children while they work. Women lean on influential members in their family to influence a decision maker who may be preventing them from participating in the work force. Women also work from home to circumvent the aforementioned practical, consequential and normative barriers.
- Meso-level mechanisms are openings women find at the community level to access economic opportunities while tending to sensitive cultural and societal norms as well as family pressures. They work in a narrow set of jobs that society deems appropriate for women, such as tailors, hairdressers or government jobs. Working in the public sector or from home are common mechanisms to overcome the many barriers to access employment.
- Women's main motivations for wanting to secure employment are individual, social and economic. Economic motivators –including to support family needs– are the main drivers, followed by individual-level aspirations. The desire to develop one's self-reliance and self-esteem fall under individual motivators. Social motivators are the least common.
- To overcome existing barriers by making use of existing mechanisms in the community, IOM recommends advocating for more flexible work shifts or job sharing to accommodate women's schedules. Transportation services, job trainings for at-home work and community job aggregators are also points of entry for programming to help reduce barriers to workforce participation.

INTRODUCTION

The following study explores the barriers women face when attempting to access and participate in economic opportunities from which they benefit both financially and in personal self-fulfillment. The research identifies existing mechanisms women use to become employed and the motivations behind overcoming such barriers.¹

Iraq's 2005 Constitution grants all Iraqis the right to work.² Other laws guarantee protection from discrimination and benefits such as maternity leave.³ However, there are still certain discriminatory legal elements such as the law prohibiting employers from allowing women to work overnight.⁴ Moreover, there is a lack of legal enforcement such as the availability of maternity leave in the private sector. Therefore, despite these laws, women in Iraq continue to face obstacles in securing employment due to their gender.

This research identifies mechanisms women use to overcome these obstacles to inform feasible programming that can aid women in urban areas to gain an income. IOM actively seeks to streamline gender into its livelihoods and returns and recovery programming and IOM has undertaken this research as part of this process. The four urban areas selected are communities impacted by previous population displacement and return. The aim is to contribute to an evidence base of women-focused programming, which also includes programme reviews and evaluations. Specifically, IOM intends to design programming based on extensive community consultation and further research to understand both common barriers as well as opportunities for women's access to economic opportunities. This report is one part of that goal.



- 1 In this report, we will use the words *employment (formal and informal)* and *economic opportunities (formal and informal)* interchangeably.
- 2 *Iraqi Constitution (2005), Section 2, Chapter 2, Article 22. Furthermore, Article 14 states "Iraqis are equal before the law without discrimination based on gender, race, ethnicity, nationality, origin, color, religion, sect, belief or opinion, or economic or social status,"* https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Iraq_2005.pdf?lang=en.
- 3 *Iraqi Parliament, Law 37, 2015,* <http://arb.parliament.iq>.
- 4 *Iraqi Parliament, Law 37 (2015), Chapter 10, Article 86.*

OBJECTIVE

The following research explores the mechanisms used by Iraqi women in urban areas to overcome barriers to employment, as well as their motivations behind pursuing economic opportunities despite these barriers.

More specifically, the study:

- Identifies barriers (normative, consequential and practical) limiting women's participation in economic activities.
- Identifies mechanisms used by women to access employment at micro- and meso-levels.
- Identifies women's motivations in overcoming normative, consequential and practical barriers to seek employment.
- Offers programmatic recommendations aimed at better tailoring interventions targeting women's access to livelihoods and employment.

METHODOLOGY

- Primary data for this research project comes from qualitative analysis of twelve focus group discussions (FGDs) on female participation in the work force. The FGDs were conducted in four major urban areas of Iraq: Mosul (Qahira community), Kirkuk (Al Qadissiya), Baghdad (Shulaa, Karada and Hay Al Jamea) and Basra (Basra Center, Almushraq and Hay Alzohor).
- Three FGDs were held in each location. Participants were selected to include some all-male, all-female and mixed groups and various age brackets, levels of education and employment status.
- Data collection took place from November 21st to December 20th, 2018. All FGDs were conducted in-person by IOM research field teams. All locations included male and female facilitators leading the discussions.
- The data collection tool was designed by IOM Iraq and translated into Arabic. The data collection tool was reviewed during a two-day workshop from November 16th to 18th 2018, during which field teams were also trained. Subsequent modifications were made to the data collection tool before deployment.



BACKGROUND

Under the 2005 Iraqi Constitution, Article 22 guarantees all Iraqi citizens the right to work.⁵ The 2016 Law on Protection of Diversity and Prevention of Discrimination guarantees the right to employment opportunities without discrimination.⁶ The National Development Plan (2010-2014) called on creating an enabling economic environment for women within a broader call for empowering women.⁷ Iraq has also signed the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), among other international treaties on women's right to economic security and active participation in the economy.⁸

However, women in Iraq continue to face significant disadvantages in securing formal and informal work.

In 2017, women aged 15 and over made up 18.8% of the total labor force in Iraq,⁹ and it is estimated that only 13.4% of adult women who completed secondary education participate in economic activities.¹⁰ The unemployment rate of young females (15 to 24 years old) is double that of young males: 56% versus 29%.¹¹ Furthermore, women's rate of participation in the labor force is lower than the Middle East and North Africa region's average of 20.6%.

The public sector is the main employer in Iraq and women's representation in traditionally male-dominated areas is very low, such as in the judiciary, state ministries and local government. In 2013, 60% of working women were in the public sector and 40% were in private sector jobs.¹² Iraq's

economy is heavily dependent on oil and therefore the formal private sector is small and only plays a marginal role in employing women.¹³

During the 1960s and 1970s, Iraq had a substantial female working force and during the 1980s, due to labor shortages from the Iran-Iraq war, Iraq's regime encouraged the direct participation of women in both the public and private sectors.¹⁴ After legislation was passed in 1979 to address illiteracy in Iraq, the gap between men and women's illiteracy reduced.¹⁵ Legislation granting paid maternity leave, equal opportunities in the public sector and freedom from harassment in the workplace was also passed during the 1970s and 1980s. Women's participation in the work force increased from 2.5% in 1957 to 19% in 1980; in 1976, women made up 38.5% of educated professionals in the country.¹⁶

Starting in 1990, however, the trends reversed due partly to negative economic and security trajectories in Iraq. International sanctions from 1990 to 2003 impacted families' financial ability to send both boys and girls to school. Subsequently, female literacy rates had reduced substantially by 2000.¹⁷ As the economy worsened, women were pushed out of government jobs. The proliferation of armed conflict, terrorist attacks and violence from 2003 led to displacement and insecurity and resulted in high levels of unemployment all over the country. These developments contributed to a dramatic shift in the Iraqi social fabric—disproportionately affecting women—and forced Iraqi

5 *Iraqi Constitution (2005), Section 2, Chapter 2, Article 22. Furthermore, Article 14 states "Iraqis are equal before the law without discrimination based on gender, race, ethnicity, nationality, origin, color, religion, sect, belief or opinion, or economic or social status."*

6 *Iraqi Parliament, Law on Protection of Diversity and Prevention of Discrimination (2016), Clause 7, <http://arb.parliament.iq>.*

7 *Women's Economic Empowerment, Integrating Women into the Iraqi Economy (UNDP 2012), <http://www.iq.undp.org/content/dam/iraq/IQ%20Women%20EE%20-%20Final.pdf>.*

8 *Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR, 1959); International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR, 1969, ratified 1971); International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW, 1981, acceded 1986); Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention (1958, acceded 1959) (UNDP, 2012).*

9 *World Bank, Labor force participation rate, female (% of female population ages 15+) (modeled ILO estimate), ILOSTAT Database, data retrieved April 2019, <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.TLF.CACT.FE.ZS?locations=IQ>.*

10 *'Report on Men and Women' (Arabic), Central Statistics Organization, Ministry of Planning, Republic of Iraq, 2018, pg 43, <http://cosit.gov.iq/documents/Human%20Development/gender/fullreports/%202018%20الرجل%20والمرأة%20تقرير.pdf>.*

11 *ILO, "World Employment Social Outlook," 2017, https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/---publ/documents/publication/wcms_541211.pdf.*

12 *Women in Iraq Fact Sheet, March 2013, http://www.uniraq.org/index.php?option=com_k2&view=item&task=download&id=3a0648978643576b1765216c6562b256b&lang=en.*

13 *World Bank, "Iraq Economic Monitor, From War to Reconstruction and Economic Recovery," 2018, <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/771451524124058858/pdf/125406-WP-PUBLIC-P163016-Iraq-Economic-Monitor-text-Spring-2018-4-18-18web.pdf>.*

14 *Noga Efrati, "Productive or Reproductive? The Roles of Iraqi Women during the Iraq-Iran War," *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 35, No. 2, 1999, pg 28.*

15 *Human Rights Watch, "Background on Women's Status in Iraq Prior to the Fall of the Saddam Hussein Government," <https://www.hrw.org/legacy/backgrounder/wrd/iraq-women.pdf>, pg. 2.*

16 *Ibid., 2.*

17 *Ibid., 4.*

families to push women out of public and private sector jobs and back into more traditional roles.¹⁸

Most recently, conflict against the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and post-conflict instability has further reduced female participation in economic activities in Iraq. Women are the heads of 10% of Iraqi households either because they are widowed, divorced, involuntarily separated or caring for sick spouses.¹⁹ These women become the sole household caretaker. Many of them are unemployed and lack access to financial resources and social benefits.²⁰

Although the security situation has improved in the last two years in the assessed locations, the impacts of this period of instability remain. Iraq's unemployment rate rose from 8.6% in 2007 to 13% in 2017.²¹ Former ISIL-controlled areas have an average of 21.6% unemployment,²² twice as high as the rest of Iraq. The global drop in oil prices in 2014 has also hurt Iraq's economy. While 70% of Iraq's oil reserves are in Basra it is one of the poorest governorates and²³ the unemployment rate rose due to the oil price shock.²⁴ The World Bank reports unemployment rates among women in Basra

are 24% compared to only 11% among males.²⁵ However, reports on unemployment in Basra vary significantly. Some outlets report it to be as high as 30%.²⁶

Women, particularly female heads-of-household, still face difficulties in accessing paid employment to sustain themselves and their family and escape poverty. Female unemployment almost doubled from 11.3% in 2012 to 20.7% in 2017,²⁷ compared to 10.3% of males in the same year.²⁸ Urban female unemployment stood at 32.3% in 2017 compared to 10.5% male urban unemployment in all of Iraq.²⁹ In 2018, female unemployment in Baghdad was 20% compared to male unemployment which was 8%.³⁰ Kirkuk saw rates of 24% of unemployment among females and 7% among males.³¹

Iraq's labor participation rate is one of the lowest in the world at 48.7% in 2019.³² Among the employed population, 17% are underemployed as of 2019.³³ Youth unemployment stood at 16.5% in 2018,³⁴ however some estimate the rate could be as high as 40%.³⁵

- 18 Dr. Yasmine Jawad, "The Plight of Iraqi Women, 10 Years of Suffering," Conference Speech, Geneva International Centre for Justice (GICJ), 2013, http://www.gicj.org/iraq_conference_speeches/Dr_Yasmin_Jawad_Presentation.pdf.
- 19 IOM, "Effects of Forced Migration on Women in Iraq: Livelihoods and Coping Mechanisms," 2013.
- 20 UNDP, "Women's Economic Empowerment, Integrating Women into the Iraqi Economy," 2012, <http://www.iq.undp.org/content/dam/iraq/IQ%20Women%20EE%20-%20Final.pdf>.
- 21 World Bank, Unemployment, total (% of total labor force) (national estimate), ILOSTAT Database, data retrieved in April 2019, <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.UEM.TOTL.NE.ZS?locations=IQ>. Furthermore, the World Bank estimates the unemployment rate could have been as high as 15% in 2017, according to 'Iraq Economic Monitor From War to Reconstruction and Economic Recovery,' Spring 2018, pg. 10, <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/771451524124058858/pdf/125406-WP-PUBLIC-P163016-Iraq-Economic-Monitor-text-Spring-2018-4-18-18web.pdf>.
- 22 Sinan Salaheddin, "Soaring unemployment fuels protests in southern Iraq," AP News, July 26, 2018, <https://www.apnews.com/c335ab38b6924cb8b71bf9579ff8380c>.
- 23 "In pictures: Fresh protests rock Basra in Iraq," BBC News, September 7, 2018, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-45444973>.
- 24 From June 2014 to January 2015, the price of oil fell from \$112 per barrel to \$48, affecting many oil-exporting countries. Prices have not returned to pre-crisis levels. Index Mundi, <https://www.indexmundi.com/commodities/?commodity=crude-oil&months=120>.
- 25 World Bank, "Mashreq Conference on Women's Economic Empowerment," Beirut, Lebanon, January 19, 2019, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/events/2018/12/05/mashreq-conference-on-womens-economic-empowerment#4>.
- 26 Erika Solomon, "Basra: Hopes of Iraq's oil capital going up in flames," Financial Times, October 3, 2016, <https://www.ft.com/content/b2e05e80-8723-11e6-a75a-0c4dce033ade>.
- 27 World Bank, "Overview, Iraq," April 1, 2019, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/iraq/overview>.
- 28 World Bank, Unemployment, male (% of male labor force) (national estimate), ILOSTAT Database, April 2019, <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.UEM.TOTL.MA.NE.ZS?locations=IQ>.
- 29 'Report on Men and Women' (Arabic), Central Statistics Organization, Ministry of Planning, Republic of Iraq, 2018, pg 43, <http://cosit.gov.iq/documents/Human%20Development/gender/fullreports/%202018%20المرأة%20والرجل%20تقرير.pdf>.
- 30 World Bank, "Mashreq Conference"
- 31 World Bank, "Mashreq Conference"
- 32 World Bank, "Overview"
- 33 World Bank, "Overview"
- 34 World Bank, Unemployment, youth total (% of total labor force ages 15-24) (modeled ILO estimate), data retrieved April 2019, <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.UEM.1524.ZS?locations=IQ>
- 35 'Iraq Economic Monitor From War to Reconstruction and Economic Recovery,' Spring 2018, pg 10, <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/771451524124058858/pdf/125406-WP-PUBLIC-P163016-Iraq-Economic-Monitor-text-Spring-2018-4-18-18web.pdf>



THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Women face multiple overlapping barriers when seeking employment in Iraq. Societal norms combined with logistical and financial barriers and fear of repercussions deter women from seeking and sustaining employment. This report classifies the different obstacles women face when attempting to enter employment as normative, consequential and practical barriers. Later, the research identifies the existing mechanisms women use to overcome these barriers at micro- and meso-levels.

Normative barriers (also referred to as cultural barriers) are those whereby women feel obliged to conform to “what is considered as social and cultural standards of appropriate behavior.”³⁶ They are deeply entrenched views of what is expected of women by the community. Widely held perceptions of women’s proper role and the shame attached to veering from it pose obstacles within the home, in the community, at the work place as well as at the governmental level. Although these barriers are more substantial in more isolated areas, they also impact families in urban areas.³⁷

Societal norms and the need to conform to a group identity strongly influence women when they are seeking or deciding to seek employment.³⁸ The perceptions that it is inappropriate for women to hold positions outside of the house that involve interacting with men, ones that involve working late hours or jobs that require physical labor inhibit women’s ability to participate in economic opportunities.

Consequential barriers are adverse physical, social, psychological and economic outcomes that are the result of female participation in the work force. Fear of these consequences can ultimately deter women from entering the workforce in the first place. Examples include fearing the social consequences from the negative perceptions of women working outside of the home on her and her family. Others include a fear of harassment or abuse in the work place or the negative impact on the wellbeing and education of children attending nurseries.³⁹

Practical barriers are administrative or sometimes monetary obstacles for women who want to access employment. Practical barriers may exist even when normative barriers are absent. Lack of childcare, safe transportation, jobs in the community, physical security, information about job opportunities,⁴⁰ adequate levels of education and technical skills are considered practical barriers.

The research identifies existing mechanisms women employ to overcome these barriers and access employment in the four urban areas. These mechanisms operate at three levels: micro, meso and macro. Micro-level mechanisms are found within the family and immediate social network. Meso-level mechanisms are found within the community, via group decision-making or interaction.⁴¹ Macro-level mechanisms are at state, policy or institutional levels. Women tap into these strategies to avoid or break down obstacles in order to gain employment. Micro- and meso-level mechanisms can overpower, to different degrees, normative, practical and consequential barriers. This research shows the link between women’s preexisting strategies and the specific barriers each strategy can overcome. Micro- and meso-level mechanisms can each apply to all three types of barriers. Some mechanisms are a tool for more than one barrier. This study identifies existing micro- and meso-level mechanisms used by the FGD participants.

36 Erica Gaston and Tim Luccaro, “Women’s Access to Justice in Afghanistan: Individual Versus Community Barriers to Justice,” Report, United States Institute of Peace, 2014, pg. 43, https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/182054/PW98_Women's-Access-to-Justice-in-Afghanistan.pdf.

37 Massoud Karshenas, “Economic Liberalization, Competitiveness and Women’s Employment in the Middle East and North Africa,” Department of Economics, SOAS, University of London, December 1997, <http://www1.aucegypt.edu/src/macroeconomics/pdfs/wp79.pdf>.

38 Erin L. Mead, Rajiv N. Rimal, Roberta Ferrence, and Joanna E. Cohena, “Understanding the Sources of Normative Influence on Behavior,” *Social Science and Medicine*, issue 115, 2014, pg. 139–143, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4124724/>.

39 Gaston and Luccaro, pg. 30.

40 Ylli Bajraktari, “Economic Empowerment of Women in Iraq: The Way Forward,” Peace Brief, United States Institute of Peace, May 10, 2006, <https://www.usip.org/publications/2006/05/economic-empowerment-women-iraq-way-forward>.

41 Marco Martiniello & Jan Rath (eds.), *Selected Studies in International Migration and Immigrant Incorporation*, Amsterdam University Press, 2010, pg. 60, <http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.452.9304&rep=rep1&type=pdf>.

BARRIERS TO WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES

There are three major barriers to women's participation in economic opportunities: normative, practical and consequential. Normative barriers force women to align with their prescribed societal role as homemakers. These were the most prominent barriers across all four urban areas of this study.⁴² Practical barriers limit women's participation in the work force. Examples include transportation costs, logistics and day-to-day obstacles. Consequential barriers are the fears of ramifications resulting from participating in the work force and defer women from seeking work. Practical barriers emerged as the second-most prominent⁴³ and consequential barriers were the least prominent⁴⁴ in the four areas of study.

NORMATIVE BARRIERS

Normative barriers are the biggest factor influencing women's participation in the labor force. Those mentioned in this study include cultural and social norms, responsibilities of motherhood, the perception that certain jobs are not suitable for women, lack of awareness of women's right to work and prohibition by the family to work.

Cultural and social norms are the most prominent normative barrier blocking women from entering the work force.⁴⁵ Although these are applicable to a slightly lesser extent compared to more isolated areas, Iraqi families in urban areas follow these societal and cultural guidelines.⁴⁶ These include perceptions that women should not work at night, long hours or far away from home. Article 86 of Law 37 states that employers are not allowed to let women work at night unless it is necessary for the position, for example to preserve perishable items or in the case that other employees are unavailable.⁴⁷ This law does not allow women to choose if they wish to work at night and therefore bars them from employment opportunities that require such shifts.

“ It would be considered shameful [for women to] work long hours...or to work in the business sector where there are many men.

Participant 5 (female, 40, unemployed, educated),
Basra FGD 2, November 26, 2018

The second most prominent normative barrier is motherhood.⁴⁸ Motherhood in this sense constitutes the duties of the household and child-rearing as well as the societal view that women should not prioritize anything other than these duties. Most of the burden of such activities is placed on women and therefore inhibits Iraqi women from participating in economic activities, creating “gender gaps

42 56 normative-barrier references of 95 barrier references: Baghdad (21 of 27 references), Basra (13 of 21), Kirkuk (13 of 22), and Mosul (9 of 15)

43 20 of practical-barrier references of 95 barrier references: Baghdad (5 of 27 references), Basra (5 of 21), Kirkuk (4 of 22) and Mosul (5 of 15)

44 9 consequential-barrier references of 95 barrier references: Baghdad (0 of 27), Basra (4 of 21), Kirkuk (4 of 22), Mosul (1 of 15)

45 39 of 56 references to normative barriers.

46 Karshenas.

47 Iraqi Parliament, Law 37 (2015), Chapter 10, Article 86. Article 86 falls under Chapter 10, which is titled “Protection of Working Women”.

48 10 of 56 references to normative barriers. Aspects of motherhood, such as access to and quality of childcare, can fall under practical or consequential barriers. Because women are expected to be solely responsible for those things, however, makes it overall a normative barrier to employment.

in employment outcomes, wages and pensions.⁴⁹ Several women said that “the basic duties of women are to take care of children and household matters and [that] work [is] a second priority.”⁵⁰

The third most prominent normative barrier is the perception that some jobs are not suitable for women.⁵¹ This plays a leading contribution to women's absence in traditionally male-dominated sectors.⁵² In particular, participants referred to four sectors where female participation was not well perceived: security / military, transportation (taxi and bus drivers were specific examples referred to by participants), jobs involving the use of physical force (construction labor, car repair, and blacksmith) and jobs that require close interaction with men (barber shops or restaurants and cafes).⁵³

A first-line relative designated as a decision-maker in the household can also be the one to bar women from entering jobs perceived to be reserved for men. The household decision maker is mainly the father, husband, uncle or brother.⁵⁴ However, in some cases participants indicated female figures hold the final say in their families,⁵⁵ either the mother⁵⁶ or the woman who wants to work herself.⁵⁷ In some instances, the decision is taken as part of a family agreement.⁵⁸

Perceptions of Women Working Inside and Outside of the Home

Despite the prevalence of normative barriers, female participants perceive other women working outside the house

positively. Women described other women who work outside the home as brave, independent⁵⁹ and praised their ability to balance housework and employment⁶⁰ and reach their goals in life.⁶¹

In contrast, male respondents' perception of women working outside the home is mainly negative.⁶² The main response was that women should fulfill their role in the home, housework and raising children, rather than pursuing employment.⁶³ The participants also stated that men's perception of women's employment is unfavorable due to interaction with the opposite gender⁶⁴ in the workplace. They also stated that men can feel that they do not want to be outperformed by women.⁶⁵ There is therefore a rift between males and females on the acceptance of women working outside the home.

“ I am definitely against women's work and I think that their job is to take care of the family.

Participant 5 (male, 49, unemployed, incomplete education), Baghdad FGD 2, November 25, 2018

There are, however, some positive perceptions. Some male participants agreed that women have the right to work outside of the home⁶⁶ and some actively wanted women to work so they could contribute to the household income.⁶⁷ Moreover, some mentioned that women working was a source of pride for male family members.⁶⁸

49 Jorge Moreira da Silva, “Why you should care about unpaid care work,” March 18, 2019, <https://oecd-development-matters.org/2019/03/18/why-you-should-care-about-unpaid-care-work/>.

50 Participant 8 (female, 45 years old, employed, incomplete education), Kirkuk FGD 3, November 27, 2018.

51 4 of 56 references to normative barriers.

52 Aaron D. Pina, “Women in Iraq: Background and Issues for US Policy,” Congressional Research Service, 2006, <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/RL32376.pdf>.

53 Examples: “Working in the public places is not acceptable here, such as working in cafés, cafeterias and other public places in society; these jobs are considered wrong and violate public morals.” (Participant 7 (female, 27, unemployed, educated) Mosul FDG 1, November 26, 2018) and “Women cannot work in restaurants or malls because they are afraid of the society to speak bad about them” (Participant 8 (female, 45, employed, incomplete education), Kirkuk FDG 3, November 27, 2018).

54 51 out of 73 references, either the father (22), husband (14), brother (13), or an uncle (1) (in cases of widowed or divorced women).

55 8 of 73 references to a main decision-maker indicated a female-decision maker.

56 4 of 73 references to a main decision-maker indicated it was a mother.

57 4 of 73 references to a main decision-maker indicated it was the woman herself.

58 14 of 73 references to a main decision-maker.

59 4 of 18 references to women's perception of women working outside the home.

60 6 of 18 references to women's perception of women working outside the home.

61 3 of 18 references to women's perception of women working outside the home.

62 34 of 51 references to men's perception of women working outside the home.

63 27 of 51 references to men's perception of women working outside the home.

64 1 of 51 references to men's perception of women working outside the home.

65 6 of 51 references to men's perception of women working outside the home.

66 7 of 51 references to men's perception of women working outside the home.

67 4 of 51 references to men's perception of women working outside the home.

68 6 of 51 references to men's perception of women working outside the home.

CONSEQUENTIAL BARRIERS

Fear of sexual harassment and abuse was the most significant consequential barrier that constrains women's ability to join outside employment.⁶⁹ According to one participant, "harassment is the most influential [consideration in]... women going out to work."⁷⁰ This actual and / or perceived fear of harassment occurs not only in the workplace but also when commuting to and from work.⁷¹ Harassment does not only make women less willing to be employed outside the house, it is also one of the main contributors to women dropping out from their outside-the-home employment.⁷²

Inability to balance the responsibilities of both the household and work⁷³ and the perceived negative effects on children in their absence was the second most-mentioned consequential barrier for women not joining the work force. One participant mentioned women "may be afraid of not being able to balance between her family and her work."⁷⁴

Normative barriers reinforce and magnify consequential barriers. Women experience harassment from their communities in retaliation to participation in the workforce outside

the home because it can be considered inappropriate. Women "are afraid of society[']s perspective"⁷⁵ that employment of women is unacceptable and therefore do not seek work outside of the home.

“ Men do not accept the idea of women working so they try to harass them in the workplace in retaliation.

.....
Participant 8 (female, 45, employed, incomplete education), Kirkuk FGD 3, November 27, 2018

Childcare facilities were considered sufficient in number and functioning in the four urban areas of study.⁷⁶ Sending children to these facilities was viewed positively by some participants.⁷⁷ However, some voiced that no matter the quality of the childcare center, time with parents is irreplaceable.⁷⁸

PRACTICAL BARRIERS

The lack of employment opportunities available to women was the most-commonly mentioned practical barrier.⁷⁹ International economic sanctions from 1990 to 2003 and the continued violence and instability has severely limited job opportunities for all Iraqis and especially women.⁸⁰ One participant stated, "the available job opportunities are few or almost non-existent."⁸¹

“ Social constraints...prevent women from working late at night.

.....
Participant 1 (female, 48, employed, educated), Basra FGD 1, November 25, 2018

69 5 of 9 references to consequential barriers.

70 Participant 1 (female, 35, unemployed, educated), Mosul FGD 1, November 26, 2018.

71 Participant 7 (female, 35, employed, incomplete education), Mosul FGD 3, December 6, 2018: "Surely there is fear, including fear of harassment, where some women are harassed by some young people while they go to work in transportation"; Participant 9 (female, 39, employed, incomplete education), Mosul FGD 3 December 6, 2018: "Harassment is one of the biggest challenges and problems that women are afraid of when they leave home and not only when they go to work. Therefore, many girls are afraid of leaving the house without their mothers or someone old."

72 Participant 1 (female, 40, employed, incomplete education), Kirkuk FGD 3, November 27, 2018.

73 Participant 1 (male, 51, employed, educated), Kirkuk FGD 1, November 26, 2018.

74 Participant 1 (male, 51, employed, educated), Kirkuk FGD 1, November 26, 2018.

75 Participant 5 (female, 19, unemployed, incomplete education), Kirkuk FGD 3, November 27, 2018.

76 Participants mentioned at high rates that childcare centers are available (44 of 26 references) and fit the needs of working women (42 of 62).

77 27 of 61 references to childcare. Few participants mentioned the quality of nurseries' education and treatment of children as a concern, especially government-run nurseries. These comments were in the minority, however.

78 23 of 61 references to childcare. "There is no attention and care [that can] compensate for the mother," Participant 10 (female, 19, unemployed, incomplete education) Mosul FGD 3 December 6, 2018.

79 13 of 30 references to practical barriers.

80 "Few jobs are available compared to the number of women who want to work," said Participant 4 (female, 33, unemployed, educated) Basra FGD 2, November 26, 2018.

81 Participant 6 (male, 60, employed, educated) Baghdad FGD 2, November 25, 2018.

Unsuitable workplace conditions were the second most common practical barriers mentioned.⁸² These included:

- Late working hours and overnight shifts⁸³ that prevent women from participating in certain jobs due to security constraints.
- Perception that there is little to no maternity leave in the private sector. Participants mentioned that most employers in the private sector do not provide maternity leave.⁸⁴ Additionally, they pointed to the fact that in Iraq, the private sector is not required to provide maternity leave. This statement reveals a lack of enforcement and understanding of the law. Participants were unaware that under Law 37, private sector female employees have paid leave 8 days before the due date and up to 14 weeks after giving birth.⁸⁵ However, in practice, women in the private sector are not receiving maternity leave.
- The responsibility of unpaid household tasks such as childcare disproportionately falls on women. This makes having a child and maintaining a job extremely difficult.
- Unequal wages in the private sector. Several female participants argued that salary levels of men and women are not equal in the private sector.⁸⁶ Iraqi law requires men and women to be paid equally.⁸⁷ Nevertheless, in the absence of monitoring, is impossible to determine whether women and men are in fact paid equally.

The final practical barriers were the lack of university degree and relevant skills. Women noted that they had constraints in accessing employment because they did not possess a university degree⁸⁸ and/or the technical skills necessary for the type of job they sought. These included languages, including English, computer and vocational skills.⁸⁹ In 2017, 13.4% of women who completed secondary school participated in economic activities compared to 73.8% with university degrees. Men who completed secondary

school participated in economic activities at a rate of 59.6% compared to 88.1% with university degrees.⁹⁰

Corruption and poor governance were also seen as limiting factors for women in finding employment. Although this takes place in all sectors, this is particularly acute in the public sector, which is women's preferred employer because of the economic benefits, fewer hours and better protection of rights.⁹¹ Participants stated that patronage negatively affects access to employment opportunities as well.⁹² Like in other societies, the culture of "wasta" in Iraq means personal connections often are the only path to employment, educational and other opportunities that are unavailable for the rest of the population. Connections are often a prerequisite for a job rather than experience or merit, meaning many skilled and educated workers are to secure employment. The patronage system affects both men and women, however because men have more social capital and therefore ability to network, it has a greater effect on women.



82 6 of 30 references to practical barriers.

83 4 of 30 references to practical barriers.

84 Participant 10 (female, 29, employed in unofficial capacity, incomplete education), Baghdad FGD 3, November 26, 2018.

85 Iraqi Parliament, Law 37 (2015).

86 Participants in the focus group discussion shared that there is no discrimination of wage based on gender in public sector because Iraqi law grants equal rights to men and women employees.

87 Iraqi Parliament, Law 37 (2015), Article 7. Furthermore, minimum wage is only mandatory in public sector jobs. A formula predicts an employee's salary based on their educational attainments, experience, and other factors. The enforcement of equal minimum wage for men and women with the same qualifications is difficult to determine due to lack of monitoring.

88 5 of 30 references to practical barriers.

89 Participant 9 (female, 32, employed, educated), Basra FGD 2, November 26, 2018; Participant 6 (female, 25, unemployed, educated), Basra FGD 3, November 27, 2018; and Participant 1 (female, 40, employed, incomplete education), Kirkuk FGD 3, November 27, 2018.

90 'Report on Men and Women' (Arabic), pg 43.

91 Women reported being attracted to government jobs due to better working hours and more holidays. Less pressure was referenced four times in Baghdad.

92 Patronage, also known colloquially as "wasta", refers to the system of special connections, favoritism and nepotism that often dictate who and who does not receive opportunities.

MECHANISMS WOMEN USE PARTICIPATE IN ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES

Despite the existence of many normative, consequential and practical barriers to employment, there are existing mechanisms women are using to overcome such obstacles. Most predominantly, women use micro-level mechanisms to enter the work force.

“ Women want to work in the government sector because it guarantees...privileges such as retirement and maternity leave without deduction of salary.

Participant 2 (female, 51, unemployed, incomplete education), Mosul FGD 3, December 6, 2018

MICRO-LEVEL MECHANISMS

Women employ micro-level mechanisms to overcome practical barriers related to childcare and finding job opportunities as well as normative barriers such as a male decision-maker who does not want them to work.

Seeking help with childcare is the dominant micro-level mechanism mentioned by participants. Women use childcare centers, babysitters, relatives—including men—and neighbors to assist with tending to children so they can earn income.

The male decision-maker may sometimes prevent women from seeking employment. In this case women will employ other micro-level strategies to overcome this cultural barrier. Female participants reported that they attempt themselves or call on another influential, neutral member of the family to try to convince the decision-maker to allow her to work.⁹³ Often a mother, uncle or a brother will talk to a father or a husband about the woman's access to employment. Previous research conducted by IOM Iraq has shown that women tend to draw upon family or relatives first when facing conflict as conflict resolution mechanism, as well as when trying to access institutions or public services.⁹⁴ This is a form of overcoming the societal barrier where the oldest or dominant male is the decision-maker for female household members.

Tapping into personal networks to request information on job opportunities as well as using the internet and social media to search for jobs were also ways that women were looking for employment.

Working from home helps women overcome both normative and practical barriers. On the micro level, working from home allows women to overcome practical barriers such as unsuitable working conditions and lack of financial resources. Late and overnight working hours deter women from securing jobs outside the home. However, working from home allows women to have flexible schedules and not be constrained by unsuitable schedules of outside jobs. Women who work from home can also avoid certain start up costs, such as a business venue. A participant in Baghdad indicated she is a hairdresser and although she would prefer to work outside the home, she cannot afford it.⁹⁵ By basing her hairdressing business at home and avoiding additional rent costs, she is able to make money.

Avoiding harassment in the workplace and en route to work is another advantage of working from home. As participants mentioned, harassment is a significant consideration for women when deciding to enter the work force as well as a reason they leave jobs. Working from home gives female workers the opportunity to make money and avoid harassment.

93 “She talked to her uncle to convince the father” (Participant 2 (male, 41, unemployed, educated), Baghdad FGD 2, November 25, 2018).

94 *Women in Peace and Security: The Experience of Women in Northern Diyala*, IOM, 2016.

95 Participant 10 (female, 29, employed in unofficial capacity, incomplete education), Baghdad FGD 3, November 26, 2018.

MESO-LEVEL MECHANISMS

Women also employ meso-level mechanisms to overcome normative barriers such as not being able to work outside of the house, in sectors deemed inappropriate for women and consequential barriers of harassment. Women seek jobs that are more accepted in the community to break into the workforce. Participants reported that women seek occupations such as tailoring, hairdressing, mentoring, teaching, as well as activities such as cooking and crafts.⁹⁶ These jobs are both logistically and socially easier on women. One male participant explained that two female members of his family sell clothing on the internet from their home. He said they do this because the two “fac[e] different environments, one supportive and the other disapproving environment.”⁹⁷ To participate in the business together, the two decided to work from home. In this case, working from home allowed one of the females to earn an income in the face of a normative constraint from her family. Furthermore, such occupations allow women avoid harassment on their way to work because they do not need to commute.

“ [A] woman can work as a hair dresser without affecting her reputation.

Participant 4 (female, 33, employed, educated),
Baghdad FGD 1, November 25, 2018

Another meso-level mechanism used by women is to seek employment in the public sector. When it comes to normative barriers, participants argued that male heads-of-household prefer for women to take up government jobs.⁹⁸ When it comes to consequential barriers, public employment is perceived as an environment widely preferred over the private sector because, among other financial and practical advantages, women experience less harassment

in government jobs.⁹⁹ Finally, women discussed feeling less pressure in public-sector posts because there is higher job security and fewer hours.¹⁰⁰

Patronage was perceived as both a barrier and a mechanism and is the only entity to fall into both categories. Women identified cases in which they lacked personal connections as barriers to employment. Participants mentioned over and over that securing a job is made easier with connections and favoritism, including in the public sector. “If you do not have acquaintances for favoritism, it will be difficult to get a government job or in any other institution,” said a participant in Kirkuk.¹⁰¹ Another participant in Kirkuk added “favoritism is the most influential thing in the labor market today.”¹⁰² At the same time, they mentioned using their own personal networks to seek opportunities.

Recruitment companies were less useful for the group of participants in this study. Few local recruitment companies work in Iraq, and there was no mention of female-specific recruitment companies/centers in the research areas.

Working from home addresses certain practical barriers at the micro level. At the meso level, working from home overcomes several normative barriers. In some families, women are prohibited from working outside the home because it is considered improper. Therefore, conducting activities from within the house is more digestible for the family and society, giving women a chance to participate in the work force and generate income. A participant in Basra shared that there are home-based jobs, considered women's businesses or jobs, such as the sale of women's cosmetics and clothing, as well as sewing and cooking, that are not opposed by the family or society.¹⁰³

Although working from home allows women to participate in economic activities, it offers fewer choices of occupation.

96 “Women can work as a hair dresser without affecting her reputation.” Participant 4 (female, 33, employed, educated) Baghdad FGD 1, November 25, 2018.

97 Participant 8 (male, 25, unemployed, educated), Basra FGD 1, November 25, 2018.

98 “Generally speaking most families prefer public sector and this that voluntary work or private sector jobs are not appropriate for women.” Participant 2 (female, 27, unemployed, educated) Baghdad FGD 1, November 25, 2018.

99 “Public sector provides supervision and no chances of any harassment incidents” (Participant 7 (female, 37, unemployed, educated) Baghdad FGD 1, November 25, 2018) and “Women are more likely to be harassed in the private sector than in the government sector. This does not mean that the phenomenon of harassment is not found in the government sector, but it is rather at a lower rate” (Participant 6 (female, 28, unemployed, educated) Kirkuk FGD 2, November 27, 2018).

100 “Work pressures will be larger in the private sector and there [are] also conditions as well as women may be exploited regarding the salary amount.” Participant 2 (female, 22, employed, educated), Kirkuk FGD 2, November 27, 2018.

101 Participant 5 (male, 36, employed, educated), Kirkuk FGD 1, November 26, 2018.

102 Participant 7 (male, 24, employed, incomplete education), Kirkuk FGD 1, November 26, 2018.

103 Participant 8 (male, 26, unemployed, educated) Basra FGD 1, November 25, 2018.

WOMEN'S MOTIVATIONS TO PARTICIPATE IN ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES

Participants in the FGDs also spoke on the motivating factors¹⁰⁴ behind their drive to seek employment.

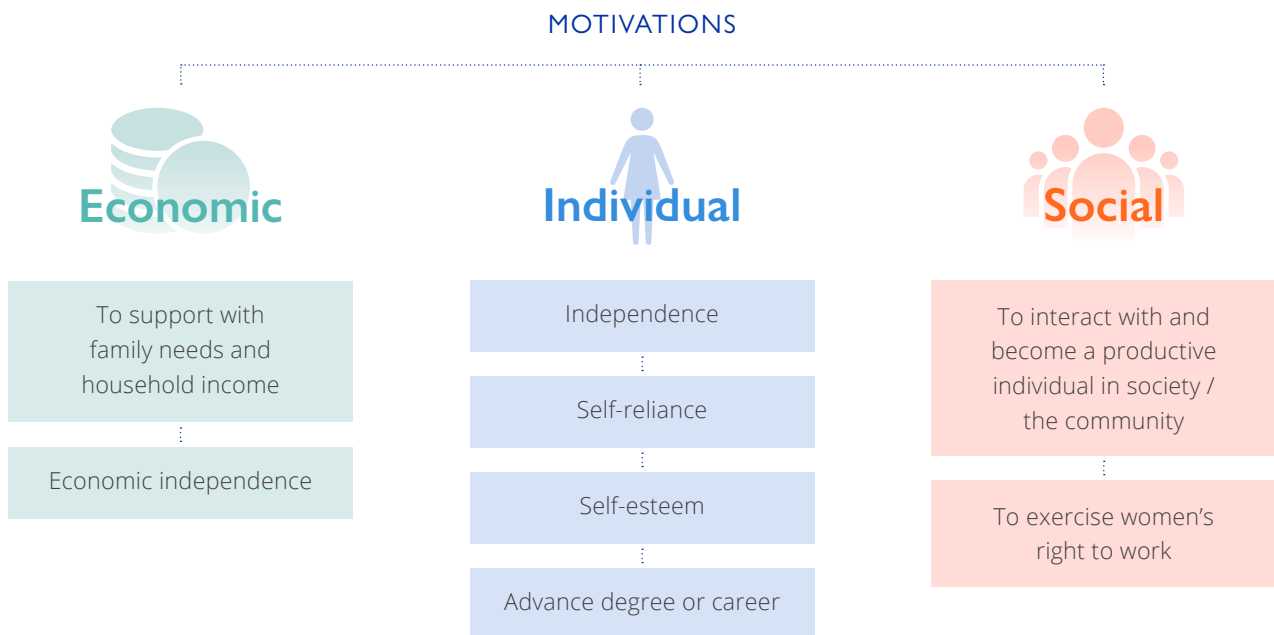
Economic reasons were the largest motivator for women to look for employment in the four urban areas of study in Iraq. Half of participants said that financial need was their motivation to seek employment.¹⁰⁵ Specifically, family needs and income was the most common,¹⁰⁶ followed by economic independence.¹⁰⁷ It cannot be ruled out that contributing to the family income and achieving independence are not mutually exclusive. In fact, helping the family could in some cases give the woman more input in family decision-making and therefore make her more autonomous in the family. Participants did not specify whether they sought economic independence from or for their families.¹⁰⁸

The second most common category of motivators was on the individual level.¹⁰⁹ Developing self-reliance and self-esteem,¹¹⁰ advancing in one's education or career¹¹¹ or gaining independence¹¹² are all individual motivators that push women to seek employment.

Two main social motivators¹¹³ were exercising women's right to work¹¹⁴ and becoming a productive member of society / community.¹¹⁵

“ *The income assists me to meet my daughter's basic needs, to give some money to my mother and contribute to support my family.*

Participant 3 (female, 38, unemployed, educated), Baghdad FGD 2, November 25, 2018



104 These factors were internal, self-derived reasons to be motivated to seek work. Participants also spoke on ideas to motivate other women.

105 36 of 68 references to motivations were economic motivations

106 28 of 68 references to motivations

107 5 of 68 references to motivations

108 5 of 68 references to motivations

109 23 of 68 references to motivations were individual motivations

110 12 of 68 references to motivations

111 7 of 68 references to motivations

112 4 of 68 references to motivations

113 9 of 68 references to motivations were social motivations

114 3 of 68 references to motivations

115 5 of 68 references to motivations

Table 1: Mechanisms used by women to overcome barriers

TYPE OF BARRIER	BARRIERS WOMEN FACE IN SEEKING EMPLOYMENT	TYPE OF MECHANISM	MECHANISMS WOMEN USE TO OVERCOME BARRIERS
Normative	Societal and cultural norms: some jobs are not considered suitable for women	Meso	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Choose occupation socially accepted by community
Normative	Societal and cultural norms: male decision-maker blocks women's access to employment	Micro	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dialogue between woman seeking employment or trusted family member and decision-maker
Normative	Societal and culture norms: unacceptable for women to work outside the house	Micro / Meso	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work from home to earn income
Consequential	Fear of harassment and sexual abuse	Meso	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Employed in public sector as perceived as a "safer" environment Work from home to avoid harassment
Consequential	Dropping out due to harassment	Meso	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Employed in public sector as perceived as a "safer" environment Work from home to avoid harassment in the workplace
Consequential	Fear of not being able to balance both housewife duties and work outside	Meso	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Employed in public sector due to fewer hours Work from home to balance duties of work and family
Practical	Childcare	Micro	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Childcare help from family members and relatives; Enroll children in childcare centers
Practical	Distance and transportation cost for women	Micro	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work from home reduce transportation costs
Practical	Lack of financial resources to start job	Micro	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work from home to decrease start-up costs
Practical	Lack of suitable job opportunities	Micro	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reach out to personal network and internet/social media searches
Practical	Lack of university-level education	Meso	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seek jobs that match skills
Practical	Late and overnight working hours	Micro	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work from home to achieve a flexible work schedule
Practical	Patronage	Meso	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seek opportunities through personal network when possible¹¹⁶

¹¹⁶ Patronage is the only entity to constitute both a barrier and a mechanism. Participants mentioned that securing a job is made easier with connections and favoritism. At the same time, they mentioned using their own personal networks to seek opportunities as a mechanism to secure employment.

ENTRY POINTS FOR PROGRAMMING

Based on the barriers and mechanisms mentioned in the twelve focus group discussions held across Iraq, IOM Iraq identified several programming measures that can help women overcome barriers to employment.

APPLYING THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

IOM builds upon these consultations to explicitly program culturally appropriate livelihood activities and the services needed to allow for fuller participation of women in the workforce. This includes more cooperation from employers to provide more flexible work schedules as well as universal paid maternity leave, the provision of transportation services, a community job aggregator and the design of

gender-appropriate trainings including those for jobs that can be done from the home to reduce barriers to workforce participation. Innovative community-based solutions can be piloted after further research. Increased data from the World Bank and the Iraqi Government throughout Iraq's labor sector and access to data would improve IOM's recommendations.

FOR INCREASED WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION TO OUTSIDE EMPLOYMENT

- Allow more flexible shifts for women (i.e. part time, telecommuting or four-day work weeks) and increase benefits to women with dependents (children) in the private sector. Job sharing by which two people split the duties and hours of one job is another mechanism that

could give women more freedom to choose manageable hours. Flexible working schedules and increased benefits would allow women to better arrange work around childcare and enable more women to secure employment.

BARRIERS IT ADDRESSES

NORMATIVE BARRIER	of being responsible for childcare
PRACTICAL BARRIER	where women are unable to work late and overnight hours
PRACTICAL BARRIER	of transportation and costs to commute to work because commuting time would be reduced
CONSEQUENTIAL BARRIER	where women fear being able to balance household duties with a job

MECHANISMS IT FEEDS INTO

MICRO-LEVEL MECHANISM	where women who already seek child care in order to work
MESO-LEVEL MECHANISM	where women seek employment in the private sector due to fewer hours

- Provide safe, reliable, female-only transportation to and from work (“Pink” transportation) to avoid harassment. Women encounter harassment during their commute, which deters them from seeking employment. Providing reliable transportation would increase the number of

women that can access employment. Organizing transportation using locally based drivers would create reliable and trustworthy transportation for women wanting to travel to and from work.

BARRIERS IT ADDRESSES

NORMATIVE BARRIER	where the main family decision-maker prevents a female member from entering certain jobs. The reassurance of her safety may persuade the decision maker to allow her to go to work.
PRACTICAL BARRIER	of harassment on the way to the workplace; dropping out of work due to harassment
PRACTICAL BARRIER	of transit cost and distance

MECHANISMS IT FEEDS INTO

MICRO-LEVEL MECHANISM	of seeking employment in the public sector, which is perceived as “safer”
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- Support the quality of childcare centers to allow women to better balance work and childcare responsibilities. Most participants indicated that they have sufficient childcare options. However, they raised concerns about the quality of education and care in these facilities. Therefore,

programming should focus on the quality of services. Additionally, promoting the use of childcare facilities would help mothers feel more comfortable using these services in order to work.

BARRIERS IT ADDRESSES

NORMATIVE BARRIER	of responsibilities of motherhood
PRACTICAL BARRIER	of time constraints

FOR INCREASED WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN IN-HOME EMPLOYMENT, INCLUDING BUSINESSES FROM HOME

- Develop trainings and reach out to women with financial opportunities (micro-loans or grants) to encourage and enable more women to generate income from home. Women are sometimes barred from employment due to societal retaliation for females working outside the home. Thus, providing resources and guidance will help greater

numbers access income while working from home. IOM supported the opening of a women's center in Tel Afar that offered skills training, such as tailoring and hair dressing. IOM could develop similar trainings tailored to the context of the communities in the study.¹¹⁷

BARRIERS IT ADDRESSES

NORMATIVE BARRIER	that establishes it is unacceptable for women to work outside of the home
NORMATIVE BARRIER	where the main family decision-maker prevents a female member from entering employment
PRACTICAL BARRIER	where women do not have financial resources to begin an economic activity
PRACTICAL BARRIER	of transportation and costs to commute to work
PRACTICAL BARRIER	where women are unable to work late and overnight hours
CONSEQUENTIAL BARRIER	where women leave work due to harassment
CONSEQUENTIAL BARRIER	where women fear harassment while commuting
CONSEQUENTIAL BARRIER	where women fear being able to balance household duties with a job

MECHANISMS IT FEEDS INTO

MESO-LEVEL MECHANISM	where women work from home
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117 "Creative Center For Women, The first window tending to and refining talents of females in Tal Afar," Kirkuk Now, April 19, 2019, <http://www.kirkuknow.com/ar/news/33895/%D8%A7>

FOR INCREASED ACCESS TO OUTSIDE AND IN-HOME EMPLOYMENT

- Advertise opportunities in public spaces and platforms (including social media), create an online job aggregator for communities and establish physical, locally accessible job centers. Participants stated that not being able to find job opportunities was an obstacle to employment. Gathering information and resources in a known, aggregated location would increase women's ability to

find and apply to open opportunities both online and in-person. Other steps include advertising job opportunities with women's groups that already exist in Iraq. Finally, including lines such as "female applicants are strongly encouraged to apply" in job advertisements is a small but additional step in helping women secure employment opportunities.

BARRIERS IT ADDRESSES

PRACTICAL BARRIER

where women have difficulties finding job and suitable job opportunities

PRACTICAL BARRIER

of lack of a university degree because women could be exposed to the jobs they are qualified for and better matched to jobs with the skills they possess

MECHANISMS IT FEEDS INTO

MICRO-LEVEL MECHANISM

where women search online and on social media for job opportunities

FOR INCREASED SUPPORT BY THE COMMUNITY TO FEMALE EMPLOYMENT

- Adapt the communication campaigns to target men and women differently. Perceptions of women working outside vary. Whereas women perceive other women working outside positively, men's perception is, in general, negative. Thus, campaigns aimed at encouraging women's participation in economic opportunities should adapt

their messages to female and male audience differently. Encouraging women to use childcare centers would help them access employment. Mothers sometimes feel they are not fulfilling their full role by using childcare centers due to societal pressures. Shifting this perspective would help more women into employment.

BARRIERS IT ADDRESSES

NORMATIVE BARRIER	of men's negative perception of women working
NORMATIVE BARRIER	that establishes certain jobs are not suitable for women
NORMATIVE BARRIER	where the main family decision-maker prevents a female member from entering certain jobs
NORMATIVE BARRIER	that society and households hold where it is not appropriate for women to work outside of the house
NORMATIVE BARRIER	of the responsibilities of motherhood
CONSEQUENTIAL BARRIER	of harassment in the workplace

MECHANISMS IT FEEDS INTO

MICRO-LEVEL MECHANISM	where females seek permission through dialogue with the main family decision-maker to pursue employment
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- Provide trainings to women on their rights under Iraqi law to support reducing the gap between existing laws and their implementation. For example, several participants stated there is no law requiring maternity leave in private-sector jobs. This perception is incorrect. Under Iraqi Law 37, female employees in the private sector have

the right to paid leave 8 days before the due date and up to 14 weeks after.¹¹⁸ Therefore, providing trainings for women on their rights under Iraqi law, such as the right to maternity leave, child support and social security, would benefit women who want to enter the work force.

BARRIERS IT ADDRESSES

NORMATIVE BARRIER	of lack of awareness of women's right to work
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118 Iraqi Parliament, Law 37, 2015, <http://arb.parliament.iq>.

POSSIBLE PILOT PROGRAMS OF INNOVATIVE COMMUNITY-BASED SOLUTIONS

This report further suggests innovative initiatives that could be piloted with implementing partners in community specific contexts. The impact and acceptance of such programs is community specific and therefore requires further research at the community level on how it would be received by the community and how it would feed into the existing mechanisms in the community.

- 'Women in Business' Associations. Facilitating communication between women in businesses and creating local women workers' associations and business associations would also enable women to share opportunities with each other and create spaces to brainstorm ideas for collaboration.

BARRIERS IT ADDRESSES

PRACTICAL BARRIER of patronage

MECHANISMS IT FEEDS INTO


MICRO-LEVEL MECHANISM where women search online and on social media for job opportunities




PERCEPTIONS ON WOMEN'S ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES IN URBAN AREAS OF IRAQ:


Motivations and Mechanisms to Overcome Barriers

IOM IRAQ

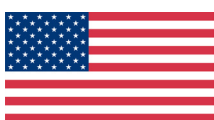
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