



DRC-HAWA-JCI

**THE DOUBLE BURDEN: THE LIVED EXPERIENCES OF  
DISPLACED AND RETURNEE WOMEN IN IRAQ**

# CONTEXT AND OBJECTIVES

- Over 1 million remain internally displaced
- 4,9 million face precarious conditions as returnees
- Shrinking humanitarian funding and shifting global attention away from Iraq
- **Understanding the obstacles faced by women IDPs and returnees is key**
- **Aim to highlight perspective of IDP and returnee women and raise their voices**
- **Delves into the conditions of participants against 5 out of 8 IASC criteria of the IASC framework for Durable solutions for IDPs (2010)**
- **Provides actionable insights for policymakers, humanitarian and development actors**

# METHODOLOGY

- FGDs conducted with 120 women across Diyala, Salah al-Din, and Ninewa governorates
- 15 key informant interviews (KIIs) conducted with experts involved in policy or programming around Durable Solutions
- The participants included both returnees and IDPs residing outside of camps.

# 1. CHALLENGES WITH HOUSING AND TENANCY

- Living in illegal residences, limited access or no access at all to basic services
- Living in rented accommodations, substandard housing with no access to services.
- Relying on relatives for shelter: overcrowded living arrangements in already cramped accommodations and lack of privacy
- Only a minority of participants owned homes (damaged)
- Frequent relocations due to evictions, rental disputes, or inadequate living conditions
- Some perceived that leaving the camps has improved their housing conditions

## 2. ACCESS TO LIVELIHOODS AND EMPLOYMENT

- Most participant women reported that they do not have jobs.
- Rural groups living off livestock and agriculture, especially in rural areas.
- IDPs that are currently residing in urban areas expressed lacking skills for other employment opportunities, having gone from rural to urban settings.
- Others have skills for specific employments, but did not own tools
- Returnees to rural areas still unable to farm their land due to destruction or at the injunction of armed groups.
- Some living on a social welfare salary or martyr's salary. Those mechanisms do not cover basic living expenses
- A majority of women depend on community or relatives' support, NGOs, Ramadan offerings and loans.
- Child labour frequently reported
- NGO-led vocational trainings lack of financial support to small projects

## 2. ACCESS TO LIVELIHOODS AND EMPLOYMENT

- The report highlights two opposing perspectives on social perception of women employment:
  - A smaller group of women considers being a woman poses no unique challenges to working outside the home
  - A larger share of participants pointed out two significant cultural and societal factors as barriers to employment for women:
    - **lack of permission from family members**
    - **societal disapproval of women pursuing work outside the home, especially of male figures. Some expressed having to cut ties with families to work**

### 3. ACCESS TO COMPENSATION AND SAFETY NETS

- All interviewed IDP women reported having received no support from the government.
- Among returnees, some mentioned receiving a one-time payment after returning to their Areas of Origin. Although promised, others did not receive this assistance
- Many women stated not receiving social welfare/martyr's salary as applications were rejected, or they are still waiting for the answer from the government.
- Across all governorates and all demographic groups, participants perceived needing connections or pay bribes to access compensation. They also all agreed on high costs of processes and lengthy delays.
- Most reported having little or no information about available support from the government or NGOs
- Common perception of information about assistance is selectively shared by local authorities
- Women highlighting feelings of discomfort and unease while speaking with government officials was common in all groups

## 4. SOCIAL (RE)INTEGRATION, PARTICIPATION IN PUBLIC AFFAIRS & GOVERNANCE

- Some IDPs reported positive relationships with host community
- Others IDPs and returnees shared experiences of suspicion and discrimination
- Greatest challenges faced by women perceived to have affiliation with ISIS.
- None of the women are involved in community planning, highlighting their personal situation as the main challenge.
- Economic situation leads to de-prioritising all the other matters



## 5. FEELING (UN)SAFE

- Equal expression of safety or insecurity in both areas of displacement or origin
- Particularly concerning were the experiences of women perceived to have affiliations with ISIS. These participants feared for their families' safety, citing risks of retaliation, harassment, and discrimination by community members.

# RECOMMENDATIONS

## *The government of Iraq should:*

- Strengthen IDPs' and returnees' access to social safety nets
- Include the displaced and returnee women in the planning and execution of local and national policies
- Enhance security in the areas of origin through stabilization programs and conflict
- Ensure that policies, laws and their implementation are cognizant of the specific social pressure and violence that women and girls face

# RECOMMENDATIONS

## ***Both the government of Iraq and the international community should:***

- Implement social cohesion programs to foster trust, ensure integration among IDP, returnee and host communities and reduce stigmatization
- Ensure thorough monitoring and evaluation of the government and donor programs, policies and decisions

## ***The international community should:***

- Continue providing financial support to rebuild and repair damaged homes in areas of origin
- Continue funding projects expanding livelihood opportunities for the displaced and returnee women
- The International donor community should take a similar and consistent approach in both humanitarian and longer-term aid strategies and programmes for durable solutions.



**DRC** DANISH  
REFUGEE  
COUNCIL