



# General Report of Participatory Feedback Sessions for Women and Girls in Al-Anbar Governorate

As part of the project "Strengthening Women's Rights Movements on the Women, Peace, and Security Agenda in Three Fragile Contexts"

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## Introduction

### Introduction to the Baghdad Women Association

The Baghdad Women Association was officially established in 2004 and is duly registered with both the Federal Government in Baghdad and the Kurdistan Regional Government. Since its inception, it has been working to promote women's rights and combat all forms of violence against women and girls in Iraq. Based on its vision of ensuring equality, legal protection, and respect for human rights, the association has become one of the leading organizations supporting women's participation in political, social, and economic life.

Founded by eleven Iraqi women from diverse backgrounds, the association has provided essential services to survivors of violence, advocated for the implementation of laws and policies supporting women, and worked to develop their leadership capacities. From its first project funded by the UN Women's Development Fund in 2005 to the opening of women's support centers in marginalized areas, the association has demonstrated its resilience and commitment to its mission. Today, the Baghdad Women's Association continues to play a pivotal role in empowering women, enhancing protection, and contributing to Iraq's women, peace, and security agenda.

Over this more than two-decade journey, the association has proven its ability to persevere and act effectively despite challenges, serving as a genuine voice for women and girls in Iraq and as a platform for defending their rights and aspirations toward a more just and secure future.

### Project Introduction

The project "Strengthening Women's Rights Movements on the Women, Peace, and Security agenda in three fragile contexts (SWoMo)" comes as a strategic response to the challenges facing women and girls in Iraq, particularly in areas affected by armed conflict, economic deterioration, and social fragility, such as Anbar Governorate. The project is implemented from 1 July 2022 until 30 November 2025, in partnership with CARE International in Iraq (CARE Iraq) and funded by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ).

The project aims to build the capacities of women's rights organizations and marginalized groups of women and girls by enabling them to develop institutional strategies, mobilize resources, and strengthen their ability to engage in formal and informal decision-making spaces related to the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda. It also seeks to expand networking between civil society organizations and governmental entities to ensure a more inclusive and equitable environment that allows women to influence policies and development plans.

In Iraq, the project is implemented in three main governorates, including Anbar Governorate, where the Baghdad Women's Association works in partnership with six local organizations to reach a wide range of women and girls, particularly from marginalized groups such as widows, internally displaced women, and women with disabilities. The project focuses on providing genuine spaces for these groups to express their priorities and needs, and on ensuring that their voices are incorporated into advocacy strategies and development plans.

This project goes beyond providing direct support; it seeks to achieve sustainable change by empowering women and girls as key actors within their communities, enabling them to participate in peacebuilding, strengthen social cohesion, and contribute to reconstruction processes based on principles of justice and equality.

Within the complex context of Anbar Governorate—shaped by years of armed conflict, economic deterioration, and the erosion of infrastructure—women and girls face multidimensional challenges related to their social, economic, political, and legal realities. These challenges have directly affected women's access to basic rights and their ability to participate meaningfully in public life, while large segments of them continue to experience exclusion and marginalization.

In response to this need, and within the framework of the project “Strengthening Women’s Rights Movements on the Women, Peace, and Security agenda in three fragile contexts (SWoMo),” implemented by the Baghdad Women’s Association in partnership with CARE International in Iraq and supported by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), a qualitative field study was conducted from 2023 to 2025. The study was based on thirty (30) participatory feedback sessions with women and girls across four main administrative units in Anbar Governorate: Ramadi, Fallujah, Amiriyat al-Fallujah, and Habbaniyah.

These sessions aimed to explore and analyze the actual needs and daily challenges faced by women—particularly marginalized and excluded groups—through a participatory approach that places women’s voices at the core of the assessment process and reflects the local reality from the perspective of primary stakeholders. Participants represented diverse groups in terms of age, marital status, educational background (including students), and levels of exposure to conflict and displacement, including widows, divorced women, survivors, and women with disabilities.

The outcomes of these sessions seek to achieve the following objectives:

- Analyze the dynamics of the challenges faced by women in Anbar Governorate.
- Provide a quantitative and qualitative assessment of needs across key thematic areas: economic, social, educational, political, and legal.
- Highlight women’s experiences during and after conflict and examine its impact on their roles and positions within society.
- Present proposed solutions for local organizations and local authorities within the framework of project activities, based on an in-depth analysis of the local context.
- Support local organizations, civil society, and decision-makers in developing evidence-based plans and responses.

This report not only presents a picture of the realities faced by women in Anbar but also serves as a reference document grounded in direct field participation. It can be utilized in strategic planning, protection programming, advocacy efforts, and rights-based policymaking.

## Methodology

A participatory methodology was adopted to place the voices of women and girls at the center of the assessment process by collecting qualitative data that reflect their daily realities and the challenges they face in Anbar Governorate. This methodology was based on conducting interactive feedback sessions that facilitated open dialogue and encouraged free expression among participants.

A total of thirty (30) feedback sessions were conducted, each attended by approximately twenty-five (25) women and girls from diverse age groups, social backgrounds, and educational levels, to ensure broad and inclusive representation of women's voices in the targeted areas. In total, 756 participants were engaged.

These sessions were implemented in partnership with six active local organizations in Anbar Governorate, namely:

- Shams Al-Insaniyah Organization for Women and Children – Ramadi
- Almahabba Wes Salam Forum for Students and Youth – Ramadi
- Rasd Organization for Child and Women's Rights – Fallujah
- Al-Muna Humanitarian Organization – Fallujah
- Rahab Al-Khair Organization for Relief and Human Rights – Fallujah
- Women's Association for Widows and Orphans in Amiriyah Al-Samoud – Amiriyat Al-Fallujah

## Participant Selection Mechanism

Coordination was carried out with partner organizations to select the targeted women and girls based on beneficiaries' databases, while ensuring diversity and inclusion in terms of:

- Age groups
- Marital status
- Educational and professional status
- Women with disabilities
- Geographic distribution

## Implementation Period

The assessment sessions were conducted over the period from January 2023 to February 2025 and covered the following areas:

- Fallujah District
- Ramadi District
- Amiriyat Al-Fallujah District
- Habbaniyah District

## Work Methodology

Participatory sessions were conducted in each district of the governorate, with the participation of women and girls. The project team facilitated the discussions in a manner that encouraged open and honest expression. The discussions were guided by comprehensive guiding questions covering various aspects of social, economic, educational, and political life, as well as other dimensions related to the participants' daily realities.

Due to the limited literacy levels of many women and girls—particularly during the second and third years of the project—the use of written questionnaires was discontinued. Instead, the team relied on direct note-taking and documentation of responses during the sessions. This approach helped ensure accuracy and

transparency in capturing women's voices and provided a realistic and comprehensive representation of their needs and challenges.

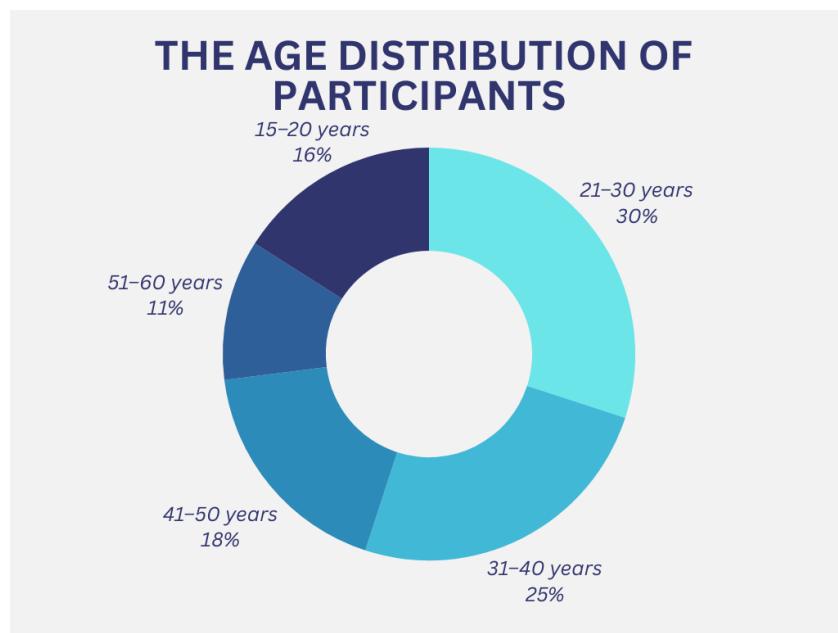
Group discussions focused specifically on United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325, with targeted questions aimed at assessing the current situation of women and girls in Anbar Governorate in terms of the challenges they face, their awareness of their rights, and their level of participation in decision-making processes. The discussions also explored participants' understanding of Resolution 1325 and whether they had observed any positive changes in their situations as a result of its implementation.

The questions further addressed the experiences of women and girls before and after the conflict, with a particular focus on issues of protection, security, and access to resources and essential services. In addition, participants' perspectives on effective strategies for change and improvement in the field of rights were explored, as well as the roles that local and international organizations can play in supporting such change.

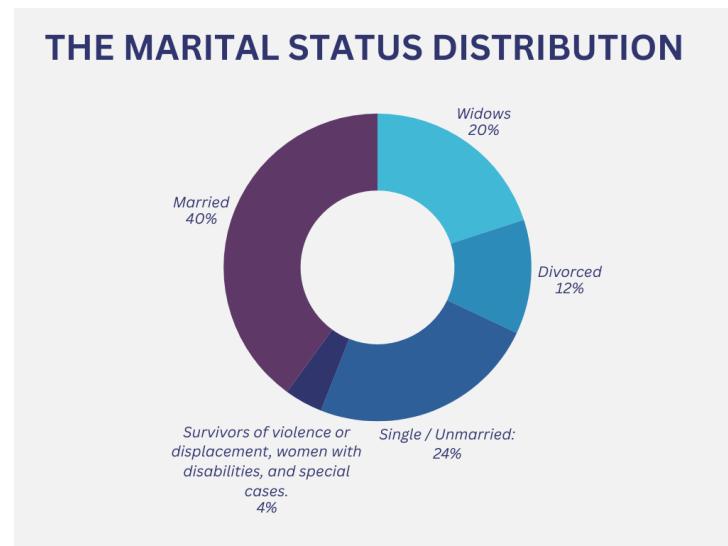
For details of the questions used in the assessment sessions, please refer to Annex 1 and Annex 2.

In the tables below, the report presents a summary of the data of the women and girls who participated in the group assessment sessions.

**Table (1): Distribution of Participants by Age Groups**



**Table (2): Distribution of Participants by Marital Status**



## Key Findings

The assessment sessions conducted in Anbar Governorate revealed significant diversity in the challenges and needs faced by women and girls, varying according to geographic location, social status, and age and educational levels. Despite differences across districts and areas, a set of shared priorities and challenges emerged, which can be outlined as follows:

### Economic and Livelihood Challenges

Difficult economic conditions represent the greatest obstacle facing women, as widows, divorced women, and female heads of households suffer from the absence of stable sources of income, placing them in a state of social and economic vulnerability.

Small-scale projects represent a source of hope for many women; however, they often fail due to lack of funding, limited access to training opportunities, and weak market linkages, hindering women's ability to achieve sustainable financial independence.

Some women with academic qualifications have been unable to enter the labor market, resulting in frustration and the underutilization of educated human capital.

### Limited Access to the Labor Market

Despite the presence of women holding university degrees, a wide gap remains between education and the labor market due to limited employment opportunities, workplace discrimination, and the absence of a women-friendly professional environment.

In certain areas, this challenge is exacerbated by social norms that restrict women from practicing specific professions or engaging in economic activities outside the home.

## Basic Services and Infrastructure

The health sector suffers from a shortage of adequately equipped health centers, limited availability of medicines and treatments, and insufficient attention to women's reproductive and mental health.

Public transportation is inadequate, particularly in Ramadi District and geographically expansive areas, making it difficult for women to access workplaces, educational institutions, or even medical services.

The absence or limited availability of recreational and community facilities (such as women's clubs or youth centers) has negatively affected the mental well-being of women and girls and increased their social isolation.

## Social and Cultural Constraints

Customs and traditions continue to pose major barriers to women's participation in both public and private spheres, restricting freedom of movement, access to education, and participation in community and political activities.

These constraints confine women to narrow, stereotypical roles and prevent them from fully expressing and realizing their potential.

## Concerning Social Phenomena

Early marriage remains prevalent in some areas, resulting in girls being deprived of education and exposed to health and psychological risks.

Marriage outside the court system has become an increasing phenomenon, depriving women of essential legal rights such as inheritance and family rights, and exposing them to additional social and legal risks.

## Psychosocial Support

A large segment of women—particularly widows and survivors of displacement or violence—suffers from the absence of structured psychosocial support services.

The prolonged impacts of armed conflict and displacement continue to affect women's psychological and social stability, with many participants expressing an urgent need for specialized psychosocial support and reintegration programs.

## Participation in Decision-Making

Women's participation in local decision-making processes remains extremely limited and is often symbolic or tokenistic.

This exclusion contributes to the continuation of policies and decisions that fail to address women's real needs, further deepening their sense of marginalization.

## Needs of the Most Vulnerable Groups

Women with disabilities (physical and mobility impairments):

They face a lack of accessible public facilities, educational institutions, and health centers equipped with appropriate infrastructure, such as ramps and assistive devices. They also encounter compounded difficulties in accessing employment opportunities or vocational training.

### Deaf and mute women:

They lack sign language interpretation services and specialized educational support, which limits their participation in education and training programs and highlights the need for more inclusive community and educational integration programs.

### School-age and post-school girls:

They experience challenges in continuing their education due to poverty, social norms, or displacement. There is a pressing need for after-school programs to enhance learning and protect girls from school dropout.

### Social welfare salaries:

A large proportion of widows and divorced women do not receive social welfare benefits or face delays and complex administrative procedures in accessing them. Even when obtained, the amount remains insufficient to cover households' basic needs..

## Quantitative Findings / Sub-Results

The quantitative findings derived from the community sessions revealed noticeable variations in priorities across the districts and targeted areas, reflecting differences in women's needs based on their social, educational, and economic circumstances. Despite this variation, recurring patterns were observed and quantified, providing a clearer picture of the scale of common challenges.

The data indicate that economic and livelihood issues constituted the largest proportion of women's priorities, followed by concerns related to access to education and health services, and then societal challenges linked to cultural restrictions and phenomena such as early and unregistered marriages. The results also showed that the most vulnerable groups—widows, divorced women, women with disabilities, and deaf and mute women—experienced additional gaps in accessing services and support.

Thus, the quantitative analysis does not merely provide raw numbers; it contributes to a more precise understanding of women's priorities and assists in designing practical interventions that respond to their actual needs on the ground.

## Overall Distribution of Needs

Based on the analysis of discussion topics in the thirty (30) sessions, which included 756 women and girls from various districts of Anbar Governorate, the main needs can be categorized as follows:

| Related Qualitative Notes   | Estimated Percentage of Participants Who Identified It | Area of Need                                    |
|---|--|---|
| Lack of stable income sources, need for small business support programs, limited access to job opportunities.                         | 38%  | Economic and Livelihood Needs                   |
| Difficulties in completing secondary and university education, need for after-school programs, girls most affected by early marriage. | 20%  | Education                                       |
| Shortage of health centers and medicines, weak reproductive and mental health services, limited public transportation.                | 15%  | Health and Basic Services                       |
| Restrictions on freedom of movement, prevention of girls from education or work, traditional gender roles.                            | 12%  | Social and Cultural Constraints                 |
| Prevalence of early and informal (out-of-court) marriage, lack of legal assistance, weak protection for survivors.                    | 8%   | Protection and Justice                          |
| Need for specialized programs for survivors of conflict, displacement, and domestic violence.   | 5%   | Psychosocial Support                            |
| Lack of accessible facilities and services, need for specialized educational and vocational support.                                  | 2%   | Women with Disabilities and Deaf and Mute Women |

## Most Vulnerable Groups

The assessment findings revealed that certain segments of women and girls in Anbar face compounded challenges compared to others, due to overlapping factors such as conflict, poverty, and social discrimination. The most prominent of these groups include:

**1. Women with disabilities (physical and mobility impairments):**

They lack accessible environments in educational institutions and health centers, such as ramps or assistive devices. This deficiency severely limits their opportunities for education and employment and increases their social isolation.

**2. Deaf and mute women:**

The absence of sign language interpretation services or specialized educational programs significantly restricts their integration into society, education, and employment opportunities. This group expressed an urgent need for comprehensive inclusion programs to ensure their participation.

**3. Widows and divorced women:**

They face dual economic and social vulnerabilities, struggling to support their households. Most do not receive social welfare benefits, or if they do, the amounts are insufficient to meet the minimum household needs.

**4. Displaced women and conflict survivors:**

They continue to face challenges related to lack of shelter or legal stability concerning property and land. They are also exposed to risks of domestic and community violence due to the absence of effective protection mechanisms.

**5. School-age girls:**

Many face the risk of dropping out due to early marriage or limited family financial capacity. There is a clear need for after-school programs to ensure continuity in education and skill development.

**6. Conflict and Women's Experiences in Anbar**

Women in Anbar endured harsh years of armed conflict followed by forced displacement, which profoundly affected their social, economic, psychological, and educational lives. They faced cumulative challenges that their communities were unaccustomed to, placing heavy burdens on their ability to reintegrate after periods of violence.

The loss of a breadwinner was among the most painful experiences, as many women lost their husbands or family providers due to violence, detention, or enforced disappearance. This sudden absence forced women into roles for which they were not socially prepared, becoming primary household providers under deteriorating economic conditions, exacerbating both psychological and financial pressures.

Forced displacement represented a pivotal experience for women and girls, leading to the dismantling of social support networks that had provided safety and security. Thousands of girls were removed from education during critical stages, deepening illiteracy and increasing school dropout rates. Many families lost their homes and property rights, which affected women's economic and family stability for subsequent years

In the context of conflict and displacement, women and girls experienced multiple forms of violence—from domestic violence at home to harassment and violations in camps and

displacement areas. Despite the recurrence of such incidents, there were insufficient protection mechanisms or effective avenues for accessing justice, which intensified feelings of marginalization and isolate

Early marriage also emerged as a strategy for some families to cope with poverty or insecurity, leading to increased rates during this period. Its consequences were catastrophic for girls, depriving them of education and exposing them to health and psychological risks, as well as potential early domestic violence.

Despite the burdens borne by women during and after the conflict, their presence in reconstruction and societal reform remained marginal. Their participation was often limited to symbolic attendance that did not reflect their sacrifices or contributions, reinforcing a sense of exclusion from shaping the future of their communities.

### **Participation and Decision-Making**

Although women constitute a large segment of the Anbar population, their presence in decision-making positions has remained limited and marginal. They are often invited to community meetings and consultations symbolically, without real opportunities to influence local policies or development plans. This form of token participation has reinforced women's sense of marginalization and kept their voices outside actual decision-making spheres.

The sessions revealed that many women possess high academic qualifications and extensive professional experience in various fields. Yet social and cultural barriers have prevented them from reaching leadership positions in municipal councils or local governance structures. The lack of transparency and accountability in local administration has further reduced opportunities for women's inclusion and weakened community confidence in their leadership capacities.

Despite these challenges, women demonstrated clear willingness and readiness to engage in public work, provided that a safe environment and genuine spaces for expression are available. Therefore, it is essential to promote women's political empowerment through specialized training programs and to establish mechanisms that ensure their actual participation, such as implementing quota systems at the governorate level. Such measures would allow women to become genuine partners in shaping decisions that affect their lives, their families, and their communities.

### **Protection and Security**

Protection and security issues emerged as a central theme in the contributions of women participating in the assessment sessions in Anbar. Many expressed recurring concerns about domestic violence as well as harassment in public spaces. These concerns were exacerbated by weak security services and the absence of mechanisms responsive to women's specific needs, leaving many women more vulnerable—particularly in remote areas and villages far from urban centers.

The lack of protection infrastructure has further increased women's vulnerability; the absence of safe shelters or hotlines for immediate response made reporting incidents of violence a daunting choice, fraught with fear of stigma or retaliation. Many women pointed out that local police lack adequate training to handle cases of violence against women, which amplifies their sense of insecurity. Participants expressed an urgent need for

community policing units, including female or mixed teams specifically trained to respond to gender-based violence.

In addition, security restrictions on movement—including checkpoints throughout the governorate—posed an additional barrier to women's freedom of movement, often isolating them from basic services such as schools, hospitals, and markets. These restrictions not only limited mobility but also reinforced dependence on others to meet basic needs, reducing women's independence and consolidating their vulnerability within the community.

It is thus clear that protection and security are not merely issues of physical safety but extend to the right to access justice, benefit from public services, and ensure freedom of movement—fundamental rights that women in Anbar continue to strive for amid complex challenges.

## Access to Services and Resources

The assessment sessions revealed significant challenges faced by women in Anbar regarding access to basic services and resources. Weak infrastructure and disparities in service quality between urban and rural areas placed women in a more vulnerable position compared to other societal groups.

**Health:** Participants highlighted the scarcity of health centers and the lack of female specialized staff, particularly in remote areas, making it difficult for women to access primary care, reproductive health services, and psychosocial support. This gap has led to higher rates of unsafe births and increased reliance on alternative solutions that may lack basic medical standards.

**Education:** Girls experienced years of interrupted schooling due to conflict and displacement. Even with relative stability returning, school infrastructure remains insufficient to accommodate all students. Shortages of teachers, long distances between villages and schools, and lack of safe transportation have all contributed to higher dropout rates, especially among middle and high school girls.

**Public transport and community services:** Limited safe and suitable transportation prevented many women from accessing workplaces, educational centers, or markets. The absence of community facilities, such as recreational and cultural centers, further limited women's participation in public life and weakened their presence in social activities.

**Economic resources:** Women faced limited access to financial support programs or microloans, despite many being ready to start small businesses or engage in productive activities. Widows, divorced women, and female heads of households particularly complained about the lack of regular support from social welfare networks or government protection programs, increasing their economic dependence.

This reality makes access to services and resources not merely a technical issue but one of social justice and empowerment, as deprivation limits women's ability to improve their lives and actively contribute to community reconstruction.

## Strategies for Change

Based on the assessment findings, addressing the needs of women in Anbar requires multi-level strategies, including:

- **Sustainable economic empowerment:** Through vocational training programs, support for small enterprises, and facilitation of access to loans and financial assistance, particularly for widows and divorced women.
- **Enhancing political and civil participation:** By implementing quota mechanisms and creating community dialogue platforms that allow women to engage in decision-making.
- **Policy and service reform:** Supporting women's protection policies, establishing shelters and hotlines, and training security and health personnel to respond sensitively to women's needs.
- **Education and training development:** Improving school infrastructure, providing safe transportation for girls, and launching literacy and adult education programs.
- **Creating a safe environment:** Activating community policing with dedicated female units and working to reduce social and cultural restrictions that hinder women's freedom.

## Analysis

The assessment results indicate that the challenges faced by women in Anbar are not merely individual or circumstantial difficulties; they are a direct reflection of accumulated historical and structural factors linked to armed conflict, persistent poverty, social discrimination, and weak government services. These interrelated factors have created a fragile environment that hinders women's full participation in society and increases their reliance on short-term solutions that do not address root causes.

A notable feature is the compounded vulnerability experienced by certain groups, such as widows, divorced women, displaced women, and women with disabilities. These groups have found themselves outside traditional protection networks, making them more susceptible to poverty and social isolation. Forced displacement has also led to the disintegration of social structures and the absence of family solidarity, which traditionally served as a safety net for women during crises.

Institutional gaps have also played a major role in prolonging suffering, with limited coordination between government institutions, international organizations, and local NGOs, leading to fragmented interventions lacking a comprehensive vision. Most programs focused on emergency relief rather than building long-term development strategies, leaving women dependent on temporary solutions that do not ensure sustainability.

On the other hand, data reveal a wide base of educated and active women who represent an untapped opportunity for social change. This group could serve as a cornerstone for community transformation if supportive environments and practical mechanisms were

provided to enable them to access decision-making positions, participate in policy development, and manage resources in an equitable manner.

Finally, addressing women's conditions in Anbar requires a shift from emergency humanitarian response toward sustainable development, integrating women's needs into economic, social, educational, and security policies comprehensively. Investing in women not only improves their individual circumstances but also represents a fundamental pathway toward stability and post-conflict community reconstruction

## Recommendations

### 1. Economic Recommendations

The economic situation of women in Anbar represents one of the most significant challenges affecting family and community stability. It is therefore recommended to launch direct financial support programs targeting female household heads and widows to ensure a stable income that reduces dependence on temporary aid.

Economic empowerment through promoting small and medium-sized enterprises is essential, achieved by providing concessional loans, training on financial management, and marketing skills. Expanding employment opportunities for women, particularly university and vocational graduates, through partnerships with the private sector and government agencies, constitutes a key pillar for building their economic independence.

Furthermore, social protection coverage should be expanded to include the most vulnerable groups, such as women with disabilities and displaced women, through welfare programs and financial assistance.

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### 2. Social Recommendations

Women face significant social pressures due to the loss of traditional support networks and the prevalence of violence and discrimination. There is a need to establish specialized psychosocial support centers that provide counseling, rehabilitation, and safe spaces for women to recover from the effects of conflict.

Community awareness campaigns to combat social stigma, particularly toward survivors of violence, widows, and divorced women, will contribute to reintegrating them into society. Establishing women's associations and neighborhood clubs can strengthen solidarity, build alternative protection networks, and provide platforms for local advocacy and expression.

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### 3. Educational Recommendations

Education is among the sectors most affected by conflict, resulting in higher illiteracy and school dropout rates, especially among girls. It is recommended to expand educational infrastructure by building additional schools and creating safe and girl-friendly learning environments.

Scholarships should be provided to girls from poor or conflict-affected families, alongside school transportation services to reduce dropout rates. Non-formal education and literacy programs for girls who have dropped out should be enhanced, providing a second opportunity to reintegrate into the educational system.

Extracurricular activities and after-school programs are vital for developing life and leadership skills, preparing girls to face challenges and fostering a more informed and capable generation.

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#### **4. Health Recommendations**

Assessment results show significant gaps in women's health services, particularly in reproductive and mental health. Existing health centers should be strengthened to offer women-specific services such as regular check-ups, psychosocial support, and care for survivors of violence.

Reaching women in rural areas requires activating mobile clinics and ensuring the presence of female medical staff to facilitate access. Training programs for health personnel on responding to cases of violence against women are also essential to ensure sensitive and effective service delivery.

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#### **5. Security Recommendations**

Protection and security are central challenges for women, especially given weak institutional response. It is recommended to establish female or mixed police units trained specifically in handling cases of violence against women, enhancing women's confidence in security services.

Safe and confidential shelters should be established to provide temporary refuge and legal and psychological support to survivors of violence. Implementation of laws against domestic violence and facilitation of reporting mechanisms, ensuring confidentiality and rapid response, is crucial. Security restrictions on women's movement, particularly related to checkpoints, should also be addressed to ensure access to essential services such as schools and hospitals.

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#### **6. Political Recommendations**

Although women constitute a large segment of the population, their political participation remains limited. It is recommended to adopt policies guaranteeing women's representation in local and municipal councils through quota systems, ensuring meaningful participation beyond tokenism.

Leadership and public policy training programs for young and active women should be provided to enhance their capacity for effective engagement. Safe spaces for dialogue and local consultations should be established, allowing women to contribute to development priorities. At the same time, transparency and accountability in local government institutions should be strengthened to ensure equitable inclusion of women in decision-making and strategic planning processes.

## Conclusion

This report shows that women and girls in Anbar face a complex set of interrelated challenges resulting from decades of armed conflict, forced displacement, increasing poverty, and social discrimination. These challenges are not transient but have left deep and long-lasting impacts on all aspects of their lives, from the loss of breadwinners and assuming unprecedented household and economic responsibilities to deprivation from education and continued exposure to violence and insecurity.

Nevertheless, this bleak picture carries significant opportunities for positive change if women's actual needs are addressed seriously and comprehensively. Despite the fragility of many women's situations, they have demonstrated remarkable resilience, bearing substantial social and economic responsibilities during and after the conflict.

A growing base of educated and active women provides a real opportunity to shift the balance toward a more just and equitable society. Investing in women and girls should not be viewed merely as a rights-based obligation or humanitarian duty, but as a strategic entry point to achieve political stability, social development, and economic growth in the governorate.

Empowering women, enhancing their participation in decision-making, and ensuring equitable access to services and resources not only benefits women themselves but also contributes to building a stronger society capable of facing future challenges.

Effective responses to these needs require integrated policies and programs linking economic, social, educational, health, security, and political dimensions. Only through such integration can challenges be transformed into opportunities, ensuring that women in Anbar become active participants in the reconstruction process rather than mere recipients of aid.

The future of Anbar and its political and social stability depend on the ability of state institutions and local and international organizations to integrate women and girls into long-term development plans. This report is thus not only a presentation of the current situation but also a clear call to action for policymakers and stakeholders to work seriously toward justice, comprehensive empowerment, and sustainable peace in the governorate.

## Annex 1: Open-Ended Questions for Women and Girls Needs Assessment in Anbar Governorate

### Purpose of the Assessment:

Despite numerous initiatives by governmental and non-governmental institutions to conduct studies aimed at understanding the needs of target groups of women in their programs, the real experiences and needs of women, particularly in relation to UNSCR 1325, have not been fully reflected. This assessment aims to provide general indicators of the real situation of women in Anbar to help institutions at different levels adopt policies and programs addressing previously overlooked or invisible issues.

The assessment focuses on collecting data and evaluating the needs of women and girls in Anbar, identifying gaps, and building an understanding of priorities and expectations. It also aims to increase knowledge about the Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) agenda, review existing services, governmental strategies, and the representation of women's and girls' needs.

### Recommended Target Groups for Interviews:

- Women (ages 19–59; 60+ as well)
- Girls (ages 9–18), divided into subgroups: 6–9, 10–14, 15–18

### Open-Ended Questions:

1. What are the main sources of income in your community, and how do they affect women's and girls' needs? How do organizations contribute to women's income generation opportunities?
2. What are the educational needs of women and girls? How adequate are resources, budgets, and policies in ensuring access to education for all?
3. What are the effects of the armed conflict since 2014 on women, including displacement, detention, sexual violence, and psychological impacts? How have NGOs and government agencies addressed these effects?
4. What services are currently available to combat violence and discrimination against women? Which needs remain unmet?
5. What psychosocial support and services have been provided to survivors of violence, and how effective have these services been in changing their circumstances?
6. How familiar are women with the National Action Plan for the implementation of UNSCR 1325 in Iraq?
7. How have organizations contributed to improving women's role in security and peacebuilding, and reducing violence against women?
8. How have organizations supported the creation of a safe and violence-free environment for women and girls?
9. What are the operational and strategic needs of women in Anbar? Have organizations effectively identified and addressed these needs?
10. What are the main obstacles to women's empowerment in Anbar from the perspective of women themselves?

### **Acknowledgment:**

We extend deep gratitude to all participating women for sharing their personal experiences and providing insights into the various aspects covered in this assessment.

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### **Annex 2: Closed-Ended Questions for Women and Girls Needs Assessment in Anbar Governorate**

#### **Personal Data:**

| Attribute         | Options   |
|-------------------|---|
| Age               | <input type="checkbox"/> 15–18 <input type="checkbox"/> 19–25 <input type="checkbox"/> 26–35 <input type="checkbox"/> 36–45 <input type="checkbox"/> 46–55 <input type="checkbox"/> 55+ |
| Marital Status    | <input type="checkbox"/> Single <input type="checkbox"/> Married <input type="checkbox"/> Widow <input type="checkbox"/> Divorced   |
| Education Level   | <input type="checkbox"/> Primary <input type="checkbox"/> Middle <input type="checkbox"/> Secondary <input type="checkbox"/> University <input type="checkbox"/> Illiterate             |
| Employment Status | <input type="checkbox"/> Government Sector <input type="checkbox"/> Private Sector <input type="checkbox"/> Self-Employed <input type="checkbox"/> Unemployed                           |

#### **Challenges and Barriers:**

What challenges in your community prevent you from accessing education or employment?

- Social challenges
- Economic challenges
- Political challenges
- Psychological challenges

#### **NGOs and UNSCR 1325 Awareness:**

Have you received services from a civil society organization in Anbar?

- Yes
- No

If yes, what type of service?

- Economic
- Social
- Psychological
- Legal
- None

Do you have knowledge of UNSCR 1325 and the Women, Peace, and Security agenda?

- Yes
- No
- Limited knowledge

In your opinion, do women have a role in peacebuilding, decision-making, and promoting social cohesion?

- Yes
- No
- I don't know