

ANNEX 1

IRAQ COUNTRY SUMMARY



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Annex 1: Iraq country summary

Evaluation of the UN Women Madad programme

January 2021

This country summary report presents the findings and recommendations of the independent evaluation of UN Women's Strengthening the Resilience of Syrian Women and Girls and Host Communities (Madad) programme in Iraq. The country summary is an annex to the main synthesis report covering the regional programme in three countries. For an account of the evaluation approach, methods and questions, please refer to the main report and relevant annexes.

Figure 1: The UN Women Madad programme in Iraq: key facts and locations



Introduction

UN Women's EU funded Strengthening the Resilience of Syrian Women and Girls and Host Communities (Madad) programme in Iraq employed a gender responsive resilience-based approach. The project prioritised women's resilience through capacity building and empowerment; enabling livelihoods and income; contributing to protection and gender equality and supporting social cohesion and peaceful coexistence.

Iraq was identified as one of the three country beneficiaries of the EU Madad programme due to the significant impact of the ongoing conflict in Syria and subsequent refugee crisis. By 2018, Iraq had provided aid and support to 1.8 million internally displaced Iraqis and a quarter of a million Syrian refugees. By the end of 2020, over 5 million people, half of them children, were in need of humanitarian aid in the region¹.

1-OCHA Operational Portal Refugee Situations (2020) Syria Regional Refugee Response "<https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/syria#null>"

The prolonged nature of the Syrian refugee crisis had put pressure on Iraqi public services. Among the consequences of this protracted situation was a deterioration in community cohesion and enhanced vulnerability of women and girls². A further consequence of the crisis was a lack of access to socio-economic and livelihood opportunities which, combined with diminishing resources and reduced humanitarian and development assistance, resulted in an increased risk of gender-based violence for female refugees³. These events revealed a pressing need for further international action and targeted gendered support. The project in Iraq aimed to fill these gaps in the national and international response to meeting these needs.



The total budget for activities in Iraq amounted to EUR 5 million. Projects were implemented in the locations of greatest need, which were predominantly in the refugee camps and in communities with high numbers of refugees. Project locations included Baghdad, Dohuk, Nineveh, Salah al-Din, Erbil, Anbar, Fallujah and Kirkuk.

2-3RP (2018) Annual Report 2018 "<https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/68557.pdf>"

3-REACH Initiative (2019) Assessment on employment and working conditions of conflict-affected women across key sectors, Final Report, November 2019, <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Assessment%20on%20the%20Working%20Conditions%20of%20Women%20across%20Key%20Sectors%20-%20Final%20Report%20-%20Iraq.pdf>

**Table 1:
UN Women core Madad partners and activities in Iraq**

<p>Baghdad Women's Association (BWA)</p>   	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cash for work opportunities in Dohuk - Job placement and apprenticeships for women with local businesses and private companies in Baghdad - Men-engagement activities on gender equality and GBV in Dohuk - Strengthening safe centers (Women's Centres) in temporary setting with multi-sectoral, including psychosocial and legal, services in Baghdad and Dohuk - Support the engagement of displaced/refugee women in the design and delivery of humanitarian relief using UN Women safe spaces through forming committees in their respective communities in Baghdad and Dohuk
<p>Tajdid</p>   	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provide cash for work opportunities to refugees; linked to local economic needs - Provided training and job placement in the private sector, in Ninawa and Salah al-Din - Supporting the engagement of displaced/refugee women in the design and delivery of humanitarian relief, using UN Women safe spaces through forming committees in their respective communities - Establish and strengthen women's safe centres in temporary settings for women and girls affected by crisis, in Ninawa and Salah al-Din
<p>Women's Empowerment Organization</p>   	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provide cash for work opportunities to refugees, linked to economic needs - Provide training and job placement in private sector - Support the setting up committees to support vulnerable women in Erbil - Establish and strengthen safe centres for women and girls affected by crises - Conduct awareness raising to reduce the stigma for GBV survivors
<p>Women Leadership Institute</p>   	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Engaging men and boys in awareness-raising programs on gender-equality and GBV issues via local partners in Fallujah and male-led community activities in Anbar - Support the engagement of displaced/refugee women in the design and delivery of humanitarian relief, using UN Women safe spaces. - Facilitate and support women's committees in Anbar and Kirkuk - Provision of psychosocial support and legal assistance in each of the safe spaces, including training for safe space staff on case management and documentations.
<p>Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Support Included psychosocial counselling, legal aid and referrals - Training shelter staff and local police/security forces on GBV and national/international law, and norms on women's empowerment and gender equality - Shelters supported to build better management systems, to help improve case management of women, and administrative and legal assistance

<p>High Council of Women's affairs</p> 	<p>- Conduct trainings for nine gender units in KRG Ministries Ministry of Interior, Health, Education, Labour and Social Affairs, Justice, Higher Education and Scientific Affairs, Agriculture, and Directorate of Foreign Affairs</p>
<p>DCVAW</p> 	<p>- Identify and support centers with host governments including shelters run by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs</p>

The challenges that refugees faced in Iraq were addressed through project activities including cash for work opportunities, training and job placements; engaging men and boys in awareness-raising interventions addressing gender-equality and gender-based violence (GBV); setting up committees to support vulnerable women; strengthening safe shelters in temporary settings for women and girls, which provided multi-sectoral services including psychosocial and legal support.

The overall purpose of the programme was to support women to recover and rebuild, contributing to the social and economic stabilisation of women and girls. It envisaged that women refugees and host country nationals would be empowered through increased longer term social and economic recovery and livelihood opportunities. The programme had the following outcome and output targets:

Outcome 1: To support economic empowerment and resilience of women (refugee, displaced and host country nationals) and contribute to the resilience of local economies.

• **Output 1.1:** Women are supported through productive and financial assets and skills, graduating from short-term interventions into longer-term employment opportunities – with a focus on entrepreneurship and job placement

• **Output 1.2:** Employment opportunities generated for women (by UN Women and international actors) are monitored for compliance with ‘decent work’ standards, and advocacy campaigns on decent work standards are undertaken

• **Output 1.3:** Women have increased access to comprehensive essential services, particularly in women-only centres, for preventing and responding to GBV

• **Output 1.4:** Host governments are supported to hold perpetrators to account for violence against women, through support to the national justice chain.

Relevance

The UN Women Madad programme was highly relevant to international and national response plans and beneficiary needs in Iraq. It was particularly relevant and responsive to the specific needs of refugee women in camps, while there was less focus on other groups of vulnerable women, such as internally displaced persons (IDPs), which are also populations in need. The programme offered a highly gender-responsive approach to assistance.

UN Women's Madad programme demonstrated strong alignment with the regional and national priorities of Iraqi authorities and other humanitarian and development agencies. The programme's focus on strengthening the resilience of Syrian women and girls to conflict, displacement and other crises, are highly relevant to the objectives in the Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan (3RP). UN Women's approach in Iraq complemented and added value to that of other regional and international actors operating in the country, in particular through its support of vulnerable women refugees and its emphasis on GBV. A representative from the EU delegation confirmed the value of UN Women's work delivered in Iraq through its focus on GBV, saying that "the added value of UN women toward gender issues is not arguable" (Representative, EU Delegation)⁴.

The Madad programme's Theory of Change embodied the two themes of supporting Syrian women's resilience through economic empowerment and strengthening the role of women and girls in social cohesion and co-existence. The relevance of this focus was recognised by a number of beneficiaries and partners interviewed. A representative from the Tajdid Foundation, one of UN Women's programme partners, said:

“I think it was a big success, we have great respect to them; we have been working very well and have been able to achieve a lot. They [UN Women] have been very useful and they have had great impacts on the community” (Representative, Tajdid Foundation)

The programme was particularly relevant and responsive to the specific needs of refugee women in camps, providing valuable support to vulnerable refugee women. However, there was less focus on other groups of vulnerable women, such as internally displaced persons (IDPs), which are also populations in need. The project interventions supporting vulnerable women were predominantly delivered in refugee camps and in the Kurdistan region.

The design of the interventions was arrived at through a thorough needs analysis which identified local gaps in provision. In addition to providing much-needed GBV support services, the project responded to the poor economic situation, providing access to sustainable employment opportunities for Syrian refugee and Iraqi women. Providing employment opportunities for both of these groups were extremely challenging. Eighty percent of the women in Iraqi female-headed households were either widowed, divorced, separated or caring for sick spouses. The socio-economic situation in the camps was equally distressing, with refugee families being forced to adopt negative coping mechanisms to survive⁵.

5-UN Women (2018) Madad Programme Newsletter "<https://arabstates.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2018/12/madad-programme-newsletter#view>"

The Reach report of November 2019 highlighted the many obstacles Syrian women refugees and Iraqi women faced when trying to secure employment, noting that “Conflict-affected women can face additional barriers such as legal restrictions, a lack of social support, exacerbated vulnerability, and increased levels of unpaid work, particularly for displaced and female-headed households”⁶.

[The Madad programme has demonstrated flexibility in responding to emerging needs in Iraq](#), despite the challenging political situation in the region that has resulted in constantly changing refugee numbers and, more recently, the impact of Covid-19 on delivery. Beneficiary feedback was used effectively to adapt interventions in response to emerging needs. Interventions were seen by beneficiaries to be most relevant when they had a practical focus on skills development and opportunities for income generation. For example, workshops and training in sewing skills were considered useful for beneficiaries in the support of SME creation.

[The programme offered a highly gender-responsive approach to humanitarian and development action](#)⁷. One particularly responsive outcome from the project was the development of a gender sensitive Resilience Measurement Analysis (RIMA). Although not originally planned nor budgeted for, the RIMA offers the promise of a more nuanced tool to identify the cohort of vulnerable women in Iraq and their specific needs. Evidence generated by the tool could be used to support advocacy to ensure that funds are made available to target all vulnerable groups, and extend the focus from refugees to include comprehensive programming for other vulnerable women and girls in future iterations of the project.

[The programme responded in particular to UN Sustainable Development Goals \(SDG\) 5 and 8 – Gender Equality and Decent Work and Economic Growth](#), as well as SDG 16, Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions, through its focus on integrating refugee women and IDPs into communities. Under SDG 5, the interventions for men in Iraq focused on changing the norms and attitudes necessary for an enabling environment for women. The interventions aimed at creating decent work opportunities for vulnerable women refugees living in camps were particularly relevant to SDG 8.

The Cash for Work intervention focused on enabling vulnerable women beneficiaries to develop skills that could be used to generate an income. The project also looked beyond a skills focus to addressing the many barriers to longer term economic empowerment facing vulnerable Syrian refugee women, as well as host community women. Its comprehensive approach to resilience encompassed both livelihoods and protection-based psychosocial support activities and aimed to bolster achievements for women beneficiaries by also targeting gender-sensitivity training at men in the women’s communities.

The GBV services offered through the project were particularly responsive to the pressing protection needs of women in the camps. Moreover, many women benefitted from comprehensive GBV support services delivered by WLI through temporary safe spaces in Kirkuk. In addition, the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs (MoLSA) identified and provided shelters in four locations in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI).

⁶-REACH Initiative (2019) Assessment on employment and working conditions of conflict-affected women across key sectors, Final Report, November 2019
“<https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Assessment%20on%20the%20Working%20Conditions%20of%20Women%20across%20Key%20Sectors%20-%20Final%20Report%20-%20Iraq.pdf>”
⁷-UN Women (2018) Unpacking gendered realities in displacement: The status of Syrian refugee women in Jordan, Lebanon and Iraq “<https://www2.unwomen.org/-/media/field%20office%20arab%20states/attachments/publications/2018/refugeecrisis-all-brief-final-links.pdf?la=en&vs=2008>”

Effectiveness

The interventions were generally effective for female beneficiaries, improving income generation and making women feel more self-reliant, self-confident and empowered to make their own decisions. The capacities of national authorities and CSOs were strengthened and there was some success in addressing structural barriers to women's economic empowerment. Additional investment in advocacy for women could support efforts to reduce or break down barriers at policy level (such as unequal laws). Although project beneficiaries were among the most vulnerable, effectiveness of the overall project could be improved if its reach was more equitable across the three categories of refugees, IDPs and host communities.

Table 2:
Overview of objectives, outcome and output targets, their indicators and reported results

Results chain	Indicators	Targets	Results (31 st March 2020)
<p><u>Overall objective impact:</u> To strengthen the resilience of Syrian and host community women, girls and their communities to conflict, displacement and other crises</p>	% change in income of women from refugee and host community receiving assistance from the programme. (Baseline to be set in first three months of implementation)	30%	50%
	# of vulnerable community members, including women, reporting increased access to income generating opportunities	910 <i>(Adjusted from 800)</i>	1,156
	Change in beneficiary coping capacity (as measured through selected coping Strategies)	10%	25% reduction in Crisis and 4% reduction in Emergency type

Specific Objective Outcome 1:

To support economic empowerment and resilience of women (refugee, displaced and host country nationals) and contribute to the resilience of local economies

% of women (from overall total enrolled) employed 12 months after graduation from UN Women support	20%	80%
% of women reporting increased decision-making within the household	10%	10%
Number of women and girls directly accessing UN-Women supported humanitarian services (UN Women SP indicator).	12,420 <i>(Adjusted from 10,800)</i>	14,838
Number of women receiving cash for work	400	513
Number of initiatives and dialogues initiated by men promoting women's rights and empowerment	20	21

Output 1.1:

Women (displaced, refugee and host country nationals) are supported through productive and financial assets and skills, graduating from short-term interventions into longer-term employment opportunities with a focus on entrepreneurship and job placement

Number of men engaged in dialogues promoting women's rights and empowerment	960 <i>(Adjusted from 800)</i>	1,254
Number of women placed in decent employment through job matching	320 <i>(Adjusted from 200)</i>	360
Number of women supported to establish or expand businesses	190 <i>(Adjusted from 200)</i>	283
Number of women accessing EU supported community level, (micro-) financial services (EURF) (EU gender action plan indicator. Number 15.8)	190 <i>(Adjusted from 200)</i>	283
Number of Syrian refugees and host community members participating in employability, vocational and entrepreneurial skills training programme funded by the Facility	1,000 <i>(Adjusted from 800)</i>	1,199

	Number of MSME's benefitting from the training	100	0
	Presence of business incubator online platform providing entrepreneurship skills building for women	Yes	No
<u>Output 1.2:</u>	Number of decent work standards related monitoring reports produced integrating ILO decent work standards	7	0
Employment opportunities generated for women (by UN Women and international actors) are monitored for compliance with 'decent work' standards, and advocacy campaigns on decent work standards are undertaken	Number of decent work standards related advocacy statements produced	8	0
	Number of partners take membership in the decent work coalition	6	6
<u>Output 1.3:</u>	Number of women accessing GBV-related services through the community centres	10,500 <i>(Adjusted from 10,000)</i>	14,138
Women (displaced, refugee and host country nationals) have increased access to comprehensive essential services, particularly in women-only centres, for preventing and responding to GBV	Number of EU funded humanitarian targeted actions that respond to GBV (EU gender action plan indicator. Number 9.7)	1	1
<u>Output 1.4:</u>	Number of lawyers and judges trained in their representational and adjudication roles on GBV cases as per international standards	50	105
Host governments are supported to hold perpetrators to account for violence against women, through support to the national justice chain			

The programme's overall target was successfully achieved. The number of women accessing UN Women-supported humanitarian services was 14,138, exceeding the target of 12,420. While the evaluation cannot verify the exact percentage-changes reported from the survey, a combination of survey results, interviews and focus groups confirm that the programme was successful in enabling women beneficiaries from refugee and host communities to achieve a notable positive change in income. A total of 1,156 women gained increased access to income generating opportunities, meeting and exceeding the target. Interviews and focus groups also confirmed the survey result – although exact percentages cannot be given – that there was a positive change in beneficiary coping capacity, with a reduction in crisis and emergency types of support needed.

The interventions were generally effective for female beneficiaries. This included income generation and making women feel more self-reliant, self-confident and empowered to make their own decisions. The Cash for Work training had the outcome of improving the overall quality of life for a number of women participants. In a group discussion, it was reported that after joining the paid training, beneficiaries gained enough money to make an impact on their own daily life. For example, one of the participants **“used the cash to buy daily groceries and other stuff needed for home and such activities made me feel happier about my own life”** (Group interview participant).

Participants agreed that their participation in the project helped them to become more self-confident because they were able to earn money for their family. The project changed the participants' lives as it enabled many to cover the healthcare and education needs of their family. For example, one was able to provide money for her husband to have surgery. Another beneficiary was able to save money for her own medical treatment. One said that the project had a positive impact since **“It has not only helped the women develop skills but made positive changes in their lives”** (Group interview participant).

The project has been effective in creating an enabling environment for building resilience of affected populations. While evaluators could not verify the results statement that 80% of women enrolled in the project were employed 12 months after graduating from the project⁸, the survey combined with qualitative research confirms improvements in employment status for the beneficiary population. In the last quarterly report of 2018, a total of 97 women were reported as employed with a daily wage of USD 15 for at least 60 days each⁹. A Cash for Work trainer interviewed noted:

8- This results statement cannot have been based on the survey alone, since the survey questionnaire does not provide a way of identifying individuals that have graduated from the programme. All survey questions are phrased as if the respondent is currently enrolled. Evaluators were thus unable to verify the 80% figure.
9-UN Women. Strengthening resilience of Syrian women and girls and host communities in Iraq, Jordan and Turkey. Programme update, 1 October 2018-31 December 2018 (unpublished).

“The project was very inclusive, in the sense that it was not only about training the people, it provided cash and also opened up job opportunities; thus, it had a sense of sustainability to the beneficiaries. The projects had liaison and links with factories, private sectors and investors as well. Some of the beneficiaries were sent to tailoring factories and others to private sector. ” (Cash for Work trainer)

Women have been supported through the development of productive and financial assets and skills.

These have been used to graduate from short-term interventions into longer-term employment opportunities, with a focus on entrepreneurship and job placement. Positive results include:

- **513 women received cash for work.**
- **340 women placed in decent employment through job matching.**
- **283 women supported to establish or expand businesses.**
- **283 women accessed EU-supported community level, micro-financial services.**
- **1,199 Syrian refugees and host community members participated in the employability, vocational and entrepreneurial skills training programme.**
- **21 initiatives and dialogues started by men promoting women’s rights and empowerment.**
- **1,254 men engaged in dialogues promoting women’s rights and empowerment.**

Considering the major contextual constraints facing women, these results suggest that the project had some success in addressing structural barriers to employment, participation, safety and economic wellbeing of refugee, displaced and host community women. In addition, employment opportunities generated for women have been monitored for compliance with ‘decent work’ standards and advocacy campaigns on decent work standards were undertaken.

The capacities of national authorities and CSOs have been strengthened as a result of the interventions.

Host governments have been encouraged to hold perpetrators to account for violence against women through support to the national justice chain. For example, in January 2019, UN Women Iraq organised an event in Baghdad to bring together different state actors from the justice sector, including lawyers and judges, to discuss the legal status of women and children with family ties to violent extremists and find proper solutions to the issue¹⁰. Further, a total of 105 lawyers and judges have been trained in their representational and adjudication roles on GBV cases as per international standards. This figure exceeded the original target of 50.

¹⁰UN Women (2018) Madad Programme Newsletter. <https://arabstates.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2018/12/madad-programme-newsletter#view>

Legal awareness sessions have been able to familiarize many women with their rights. All agreements with Madad partners were concluded during the last quarter of 2019. Overall implementation of GBV specific action of UN Women, supported by EU, have been on track since 1 February 2018.

The programme took a holistic, women-focused approach to a range of activities. Capacity building and empowerment, women's livelihoods and income, protection and gender equality and social cohesion and peaceful coexistence are all supported in one major project. Despite such complexity, a coherent programme Theory of Change provided direction to the initiative. However, in a programme the size of UN Women's [Strengthening the resilience of Syrian women and girls and Host Communities](#), there are inevitably a range of external enabling and limiting factors that have contributed to the achievement of results. Additional investment in advocacy for women could support efforts to reduce or break down barriers at policy level (such as unequal laws). Although project beneficiaries were among the most vulnerable, effectiveness of the overall project could be improved if its reach was more equitable across the three categories of refugees, IDPs and host communities. In addition, it was argued by beneficiaries that more interventions that included men would increase effectiveness of the project.

Efficiency

The programme interventions were for the most part efficient and there was an appropriate distribution of resources between components and actors. Beneficiaries were regularly asked about the value of the training activity to ensure relevance to their needs. One important area impacting on the efficiency of the programme was that the business incubator was not well-understood nor budgeted for. Strong partnerships played an important contributory role to programme efficiency

The efficiency of the project was furthered by an appropriate distribution of resources between components and actors. Beneficiaries were regularly asked about the value of the training activity to ensure relevance to their needs. As a result, interventions were changed in light of beneficiary feedback, responding to their interests and acceptability to the community.

Improved prioritisation and agile deployment of interventions to meet immediate needs could have increased impact (eg, prioritisation of income generating activities). One important area impacting on the efficiency of the project was that the business incubator was not well-understood nor budgeted for and was therefore not implemented.

Although the efficiency of the project appeared to some extent to be impacted by the multi-dimensional nature of the project services, finding the right balance between intensity and spread is not easy, but is core to effective and quality service delivery. It is not surprising, perhaps, that project components were described by beneficiaries as being more relevant when they were practical and resulted in income, enabling women to gain skills and start small businesses. This was further illustrated in the REACH report (November 2019)¹¹.

Feedback from beneficiaries showed that Cash for Work was the most successful project whereas awareness-raising initiatives were not seen as being equally beneficial since they did not generate any income for the women. After joining the paid training, however, they gained enough money to make an impact on their own daily life. Many noted that the income was spent on basic needs such as groceries and health. One participant was able “to buy children’s clothes in order for them to feel happy at Eid by wearing new clothes” (Group interview participant).

Syrian beneficiaries found the workshops and training in sewing skills very useful, as they were relevant to meeting both the immediate and medium-term needs associated with SME development.

The quality of the programme was enhanced by its clear relevance to regional priorities, thus maintaining the efficient use of resources. This included, for example, the priorities of MoLSA and the Ministry of Interior (MOI). The programme was closely linked to the EUTF Madad Fund objectives and was well aligned to international and regional priorities. In addition, it demonstrated good coordination with the regional humanitarian and development assistance efforts. Efficient, value-added impact was provided by the project’s emphasis on vulnerable women and GBV.

11-REACH Initiative (2019) Assessment on employment and working conditions of conflict-affected women across key sectors, Final Report, November 2019.

A number of beneficiaries provided feedback that childcare needs were not considered nor provided for. If they had been, then it is likely that there would have been more options for other women to participate, contributing to the increased efficiency of fund deployment. One of the participants said that leaving her children at home “was a big challenge” for her as “there was no one taking care of them, so having a childcare service would be a good idea because many other women would be happy to join if they feel their children would be safe while they are at the training centre” (Group interview participant).

Some of the beneficiary feedback highlighted that the project content was not sufficiently up to date. Advanced modern and technological skills were not covered to a strong degree since the skills training offered was oriented towards traditional livelihoods rather than modern 21st century technology industries.

Equity of programming efforts between host and refugee population is central in a setting where hostility towards ‘job-stealing’ refugees is high and easily triggered. Therefore, detailed needs analyses, focused on host community women as well as refugee women, may help draw host community women to the integrated services and ensure the use and efficiency of resources. As it were, programme resources were generally focused on the most needed initiatives rather than being spread across many different communities. This meant that the programme reached mainly refugee women in camps, and to a lesser extent IDPs and host communities.

Strong partnerships with well-qualified partners played an important contributory role in the achievements of the programme. Partners were selected who had relevant and proven expertise and implementation experience, thus assuring the efficient and well-placed use of funds. Human and financial resources were efficiently deployed to achieve the programme’s results, as evidenced by almost all outputs/outcomes being met and/or exceeded. Partners included:

معهد المرأة القيادية
WOMEN LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE



Women Leadership
Institute



Tajdid - which specialises in GBV and economic
empowerment for women



Baghdad Women's
Association



Women Empowerment
Organization

Gender Equality

Gender equality ran through all of the Madad programme's interventions. Based on the positive findings from activities engaging men on women's empowerment issues, a future lesson would be to include more initiatives targeted at men in future programming.

Efforts to address causes of gender inequality and discrimination facing women refugees in the refugee camps in Iraq was a central aim of the Madad programme in Iraq. The Theory of Change identified the need to build refugee women's resilience through contributing to and benefitting from economic growth. The Cash for Work project was consistent with the expected outputs as it supported a number of women (513 beneficiaries) towards financial independence, thus making a contribution to the removal of one of the major barriers to gender inequality.

To a lesser degree, the Cash for Work project also offered some financial empowerment and independence to internally displaced women. This became particularly relevant during the Covid-19 pandemic, which markedly reduced the number of employment opportunities available for women in Iraq. Cash for Work provided a number of IDP women with money directly, enabling them to support their families at a time when there was no other source of income.

The programme's ability to challenge the underlying causes of inequality and discrimination can be best illustrated through its focus on addressing men's perceptions of women and women's rights¹². Interventions implemented under this agenda demonstrated good efforts to redress the gender imbalances created by patriarchal societal norms at a local level.

In 2019, UN Women and the Women Leadership Institute organised a highly successful awareness workshop for 22 media practitioners in Fallujah. The workshop addressed gender equality, using media channels to communicate more effectively with men about gender-based violence¹³.

Particularly successful were interventions in Anbar and Fallujah that engaged men in dialogues promoting women's rights and empowerment. Interviews with beneficiaries of the [Men engaged in dialogue and women empowerment](#) initiative suggest some successes in challenging men's views about women's rights. The aim of the initiative was to support male participants to respect women and show that women have the right to work.

It was reported by the beneficiaries that the project improved their confidence level and changed the way they dealt with female colleagues to show them more respect. A lesson from this programme would be to focus more in the future on such initiatives focused on men as part of women's empowerment programmes, As one male beneficiary told us: [“men should be educated about women's rights in order to give them the freedom to work because we live in a complicated community which doesn't allow women to work, so such programmes would be important to change beliefs and ideologies”](#) (Group interview participant).

12-United Nations General Assembly (19 April 2018) Review of promising practices and lessons learned, existing strategies and United Nations and other initiatives to engage men and boys in promoting and achieving gender equality, in the context of eliminating violence against women." <https://undocs.org/Home/Mobile?FinalSymbol=A%2FHRC%2F38%2F24&Language=E&DeviceType=Desktop>

13-UN Women (2018) Madad Programme Newsletter. <https://arabstates.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2018/12/madad-programme-newsletter#view>

The training activities on international standards in adjudicating cases of GBV delivered to lawyers and judges were also seen as beneficial in contributing to addressing gender inequality¹⁴.

In the design and delivery of the project, internationally recognised standards of accountability, assessment and criteria for assessing vulnerability were used. These included AAP complaints and feedback mechanisms and UNHCR, WFP and FAO assessment indicators of the most vulnerable¹⁵.

14-Vilardo, V., and Bittar, S. (December 2018) Gender Profile – Iraq: a situation analysis on gender equality and women’s empowerment in Iraq, UN Women Iraq Office.”<https://oxfamlibrary.open-repository.com/bitstream/handle/10546/620602/rr-gender-profile-iraq-131218-en.pdf>”

15-IASC Task Team on Accountability to Affected Populations and Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (September 2016) Suggested Actions for intercluster coordination groups to strengthen Accountability to Affected Populations and Protection in the Humanitarian Programme Cycle.”https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/sites/www.humanitarianresponse.info/files/documents/files/suggested_actions_to_strengthen_aap_and_protection_for_intercluster_final_02092016_1.pdf”

Sustainability

At the individual level, women beneficiaries described not just – for some – improved economic circumstances, but that the skills training and emotional support they received from the programme led them to feel less isolated, and more confident, capable and empowered. This is an important sustainability outcome for women’s resilience in a context of worsening economic conditions in Iraq. The evaluation also found that capacity building of local CSOs will likely have lasting impact. However, programmes of this kind remain highly dependent on international donor funding. A stronger focus on IDP and host communities may lead to a stronger sense of support and ownership of women’s empowerment activities among Iraqi constituents.

At the individual (programme beneficiary) level, some impacts are likely to have a lasting effect on women participants’ resilience. Some features of the Madad programme in Iraq may be sustainable, particularly relating to employment and income generating opportunities for vulnerable women. This need was significant in Iraq across the refugee and host communities. The project’s emphasis on improving the economic empowerment of women led to many vulnerable women having been trained in skills that would allow them to generate their own income. From interviews, focus groups and the survey data, the evaluation concludes that, despite the economic downturn in Iraq, the programme has contributed to the improvement in the overall resilience of households, something that is predicted to continue once the funding is withdrawn.

However, one suggestion for future sustainability of the programme was that **“better progression and having different entry levels to courses would have improved the acceleration of training and the subsequent skills transfer”** (Group interview participant). If training were aligned to the skillset of the beneficiary, there may be more sustainable impact of the interventions.

The programme made good use of the ‘snowball effect’ through encouraging beneficiaries to teach others about what they had learned throughout their training. This contributed to both programme efficiency, in spreading the capacity building beyond direct beneficiaries, and sustainability of results by consolidating the skills and learning of the ‘beneficiary trainers’.

Specific training delivered by the project was aimed at upskilling beneficiaries to take advantage of employment opportunities and develop new businesses. Even if the training did not lead to improvements in employment, many women reported that nevertheless they felt they were empowered and more capable to take on challenges and deal with adversity. One interviewee reported that **“The program was also helpful in the sense we got to make some nice friends. Sometimes we call each other and hear from each other”** (Group interview participant).

Overall, interviews with beneficiaries indicated that the cash for work activities helped the participants change their family lives. For example, an interviewee said she was “feeling sad and depressed due to joblessness” (Group interview participant) but after spending time at the training, her mood changed and she became happy, which had a positive impact on her and her family.

There were some signs of sustainability of results at the institutional level. The project’s capacity building activity with community-based organisations was, according to representatives, “of quality and effective” (Group interview participant) and have set the stage for smaller local organisations being in a better position to continue to provide support for vulnerable women in the future.

Sustainability of funding is a serious challenge. The long-term future sustainability of UN Women’s work in Iraq will require further financial investment. This investment might best be targeted at providing small grants to community-based organisations and supporting, for example, micro-business activity. This could also include continuing delivery of the comprehensive support services provided through the refurbished shelters in the camps and at other locations¹⁶. This can only take place if international donors contribute further funding.

The desire to broaden the reach of the programme to engage with host communities was, to a certain extent, superseded by a growing need to support vulnerable refugee women in the Iraqi refugee camps. The programme’s Cash for Work project offered a successful and pragmatic response to the increasing need to provide humanitarian and financial support to women refugees living in these camps. However, as a result, IDP women and host community women were not prioritised. The future sustainability of the programme might have benefitted from placing a stronger focus on creating sustainable and decent income generating opportunities equally for women from Syrian refugee and host communities, including IDPs. This would be likely to create a stronger sense of ownership and support for this kind of programming among host communities.

¹⁶-UN Women. Strengthening resilience of Syrian women and girls and host communities in Iraq, Jordan and Turkey. Programme update, 1 October 2018-31 December 2018 (unpublished).

Communications and visibility

The programme was supported by a strong communications and awareness-raising effort. The visibility activities were in line with the agreed communications and visibility workplan and showcased the EU's work for women's empowerment in Iraq.

Communications and awareness-raising play an important part in the work of UN Women, and this was also evident in this programme. The visibility of the project ensured that achievements and challenges, as well as efforts and contributions of the programme, were highlighted to show a development-focused response to the Syrian crisis¹⁷. The resulting visibility of the interventions and results helped gain the confidence of local stakeholders and partners involved in the project. The high visibility also showcased the donor. One interviewee, representing a partner, explained that: “Everyone knows about the funder, given that the EU logo was on all the materials, slides, billboards and leaflets we were providing to beneficiaries” (Project manager, partner organisation for UN women project).

Communications and visibility workplan activities were in line with the EU Communication and Visibility guidelines. These required partners to plan communication activities from the start of their programme. Activities were carried out in close coordination with the EU Regional Trust Fund in Response to the Syrian Crisis, the EU Madad Fund and EU Delegations in target countries as well as with the Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations (DG NEAR).

The approach to disseminating communications material for the programme seemed appropriate and effective, given the nature of the programme and the challenges faced in the region. For example, one interviewee from an international organisation involved with the programme said: “I think UN women have done quite a good job in having effective social media and online presence and they have managed to have a high reach to the people because a lot of people in Iraq rely on social media as an information resource” (Delegate, international organisation).

¹⁷-UN Women Arab States, Regional Office for the Arab States”<https://arabstates.unwomen.org/en/about-us/regional-office>”

Conclusions and Recommendations

In conclusion, UN Women's EU funded Madad project in Iraq was successful, relevant and responsive to the specific needs of vulnerable refugee women in camps. Its gender-focused, holistic approach added value to the work of other humanitarian and development actors operating in the region, through an emphasis on GBV which was well-aligned to international and national priorities. The programme was aimed at helping women through economic empowerment, by providing the training and skills needed to access appropriate, sustainable employment. This was achieved for a number of vulnerable women through Cash for Work and skills training. Overall, the programme was seen by beneficiaries as effective in helping them access employment, encouraging participation in the workforce and supporting the safety and economic wellbeing of refugees. In addition, the high visibility of Madad activities helped to gain the confidence of stakeholders and local partners in the project.

With the notable exception of the business incubator, which was abandoned, the programme's targets were met or exceeded. This was achieved in the context of a country facing numerous political, security, social and economic challenges, which have been exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic.

The overall impact of the project could have been improved if its reach had been more equitable across the three categories of refugees, IDPs and host communities. In addition, more interventions that included men would also have contributed to its effectiveness.

Table 3 below lists the evaluation's Iraq-specific recommendations.

These should be viewed in conjunction with the programme-wide recommendations listed in the main evaluation report.

Table 3: Iraq-specific recommendations

Recommendations Iraq programme		Section/page number	Directed	Ranking	How Action Can be Supported
1	Programming aimed at addressing the barriers women face in reaching economic empowerment should include consideration of the provision of childcare support, since lack of childcare is a key barrier for women to access the labour market in Iraq	Iraq country summary	UN Women Iraq / All countries	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - All livelihoods training and cash for work programme should include support for childcare as a matter of best practice for allowing more women to access training and engage in economic activity. - Childcare support is particularly important for refugee and IDP women, who are less likely to have wider family support networks to draw on, as well as for women heads of households. - By providing good quality childcare, the programme would also contribute to the well-being and development of children (a benefit noted by beneficiaries both in Jordan and Turkey).
2	Consider conducting needs assessments at two stages for livelihoods training programmes: First, at design stage, a community-level needs assessment to identify target groups and geographical areas. Then, during implementation, at individual level in order to better align and adapt training opportunities to existing skill levels.	Iraq country summary	UN Women Iraq	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Needs assessments at community level are important when designing programmes, but during the implementation stage of interventions aimed at enhancing livelihood and employability skills, a more nuanced approach should be adopted that takes into account the individual backgrounds and starting points of vulnerable women and girls, including a comprehensive vulnerability assessment, in order to 1) support eligibility for entry into the programme and 2) support alignment of the programme activities with the skills of women.

Recommendations Iraq programme		Section/page number	Directed	Ranking	How Action Can be Supported
3	In order to ensure equitable programming and reaching vulnerable women and girls from all backgrounds, intervention sites and beneficiary populations should be selected on the basis of a review of programmatic data about the population in need, offering opportunities based on vulnerability rather than displacement status. This will support equitable programming and reach of vulnerable women and girls from all backgrounds.	Iraq country summary	UN Women Iraq / EUTF	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Needs analysis should focus on host community women as well as refugees, both from an equity perspective of focusing on vulnerability regardless of displacement status, and in support of social cohesion in a setting where refugees can often be viewed with hostility and depicted as 'job stealers'. - Since Iraq's refugee camps are sites of great need at population level, Madad programme activities were focused there. However, if future programming takes a more granular approach to assessments, UN Women would be better placed to reach vulnerable women in host and IDP communities in greater number.
4	In any further iteration of the programme, UN Women should prioritise the quality improvement of pragmatic, income-generating activities for women and girls, as these were identified as the most impactful interventions, but also those which would benefit from enhanced alignment with beneficiary needs and expectations.	Iraq country summary	UN Women Iraq	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Programming could include working with local and national businesses and business organisations to develop training activities that are relevant to preparing women to take advantage of Iraq's emerging 21st century business sector.
5	UN Women should strengthen efforts at country level to ensure that the programme design and implementation are owned by the government in order to support sustainability purposes.	Iraq country summary	UN Women Iraq	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - This could be achieved through the establishment of reference groups and/or steering groups during the design phase of the programme, who are actively involved throughout the programme timeframe. - UN Women country managers can play an important role in ensuring that information on the programme at a regional and country level is shared with relevant government counterparts.

