A GENDERED PERSPECTIVE

SAFETY, DIGNITY AND PRIVACY OF CAMP AND CAMP-LIKE SETTINGS IN IRAQ
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Individuals forcefully displaced because of conflict and violence migrate in the hope of reaching safety. However, the reality of displacement exposes families to insecure living situations, often making them vulnerable to various forms of exploitation and violence. Living with a sense of seemingly endless vulnerability causes lasting psychological and emotional trauma that impacts gender dynamics within families and society at large.

The protracted crisis in Iraq has distorted the notions of stability and security for more than 3.3 million individuals, with a differentiated impact on women, girls, men and boys. It is vital that the humanitarian community understands the influence of gender on the IDPs’ needs and perceptions of risk, for a more targeted and meaningful assistance response.

The fear and risk of gender-based violence may appear difficult to uncover in a context such as Iraq’s; this research will contribute to improving our impact on the most exposed and vulnerable of IDPs by examining gender dynamics and the associated challenges of displacement in camps and camp-like settings across Iraq.

In displacement, the first line of protection against such violence is a secure home, but many IDPs are deprived of this basic human need. Most IDPs have difficulties in accessing resources and are financially insecure, but the added stress of fearing violence, rape, abduction or kidnapping particularly affects women and girls.

The inadequate and overcrowded collective shelters increase women and girls’ fear of being sexually abused and their freedom of movement and privacy are often infringed upon, increasing their dependency and jeopardizing their direct access to life-saving services and needs. The challenges of conflict and displacement have significant implications on the well-being of individuals and on family relations, and often contribute to perpetuating gender-based violence at home.

Preventive action against this risk, especially in conflict zones, is often absent. With almost 30 per cent of all IDPs seeking shelter in collective formal and informal settlements, the trauma of exposure and fear of rape is something that IOM Iraq, as well as the United Nations Country Team (UNCT), can address by applying safety precautions and measures in shared and individual displacement sites.

This report outlines opportunities to prevent and reduce the fear of gender-based violence in collective settings for IDPs throughout Iraq. It underpins the daily burden and stress that IDPs face, and that often perpetuate violence within the family unit.

IOM Iraq has produced the first report of this kind to highlight gender relations and IDP perceptions on gender-based violence. Increasing the momentum to collect and disseminate timely and reliable information that accounts for the gender dynamics of humanitarian needs is indeed the first step to provide assistance that contributes to reducing gender inequalities and the risk of gender-based violence for IDPs.

Simple actions such as installing a lock or a light can significantly reduce the risk for gender-based violence. By taking small steps to ease the actual and perceived risks for women, girls, men and boys, we can contribute to restoring the human dignity of these vulnerable populations.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

For the past three decades, Iraq has witnessed conflicts that have caused multiple waves of human displacement. Since January 2014, the violence between armed groups and government forces has resulted in the displacement of more than 3.3 million individuals, of who over 552,000 are living in camps and camp-like settings throughout the country. This report analyzes gender-related concerns about the safety, privacy and dignity of internally displaced persons (IDPs) hosted in camp and camp-like settings across Iraq, and discusses the impact of these concerns, war and displacement on gender relations.

The findings of this report are based on 1,036 site assessments conducted across Iraq in camps and camp-like settings and 44 Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with IDP men and women—in equal numbers. Data was collected between February—July 2015. Initial findings of this report were shared with the Inter-Cluster Coordination Group in September 2015 during the Humanitarian Needs Overview process to ensure that the 2016 strategic plans of the humanitarian community would take these gendered findings into consideration.

Compared to males, female IDPs face disproportionate restrictions to live their lives in safety, dignity and privacy. This report highlights the impact of the violent conflict on women’s ability to independently access public spaces, services and goods, and the difficulty this poses on humanitarian actors to ensure that all groups of IDPs are represented and have access to assistance.

IOM has found that 91% of the assessed IDP camp committees have no female representation. Given the security and access challenges in Iraq, camp committees are a vital source of information to plan humanitarian responses, and if women are underrepresented in these committees, their voice may remain unheard unless directly sought out by humanitarian actors.

While the restrictions on women are strongly linked to preexisting gender roles, displacement has exacerbated these limitations, primarily because of the widespread fear of sexual violence against women and the stigma and social blame that would ensue. It is also associated to the influence that conflict has had on gender roles, whereby women’s role and freedom of movement have been curbed in the name of protection.

In order to protect women, IDP men and boys try to take the lead in addressing household needs, often putting themselves at risk of being arbitrarily arrested and detained, particularly in the conflict-ridden parts of Iraq, where IDP males are often seen with suspicion by different parties to the conflict. Similarly, men perceive that this suspicion will lower their chance to pass security clearance requirements for registering as IDPs, leading some of them to remain at home (i.e. in the location of origin), separating families and increasing the vulnerability of female-headed households.

Female-headed households are at greater risk for exploitation because the male-dominated and conservative workforce—mostly in rural areas and the southern governorates—generally limits women from independently accessing services and engaging in income generating activities. The lack of financial sustenance is reportedly a generalized deep concern for IDP families, which often reinforces child labor and child marriage.

In addition to the pressure of war and financial survival, IDPs living in camps and camp-like settings fear—and are at risk of—gender-based violence, partly because their homes are not adequately configured or protected (most do not have proper partitions, locks or doors) against assault, which particularly affects women and girls. IDP women and girls report fearing sexual assault and feeling that their movements are restricted both within their area of displacement and beyond. These restrictions make them dependent on others to access basic services (e.g. when using latrines or showers). Furthermore, women and girls are unable to independently access life-saving goods and services, namely GBV services. Female IDPs report they feel insecure, particularly at night, and unsafe in their own homes.

All these elements are causing significant psychological stress to IDPs. The information gathered demonstrates that the stressors associated to insecure living conditions, the challenges of displacement, and severe financial constraints are the main underlying reasons for physical, verbal and emotional violence within the home. IDP women and men note that intimate partner violence is associated with feelings of insecurity, lack of privacy and intimacy, financial worries and the stress of an uncertain future. IDPs also report that these frustrations often lead to parental abuse of children.
A Gendered Perspective: Safety, Dignity and Privacy of Camp and Camp-like Settings in Iraq

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

Enhanced understanding of the gender-specific concerns with regards to safety, privacy and dignity in collective shelter types would be an added value to humanitarian actors working in the areas of camp coordination and camp management (CCCM), shelter, water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), and protection. The IDPs’ living conditions and the contributing factors of war and displacement might impact gender relations and increase family tensions; they also affect access to services, an element that would benefit humanitarian actors working on livelihoods, food and non-food items distribution, psychosocial assistance, advocacy and social cohesion.

The below recommendations follow consultations with actors in September 2015 from all the above mentioned sectors; the main findings encourage considering gender perspectives in all pre-implementation assessments, whether in relation to setting up camps, rehabilitating IDP informal sites or camp-like settings, improving WASH facilities, or providing sealing materials. Detailed assessments of GBV risks in camps or camp-like sites, done in consultation with IDPs during rehabilitation or renovation operations, can provide safer living conditions, in dignity, for women, men, girls and boys.

To increase security, community-patrolling or community-policing groups can be established in consultation with the communities, including women and girls, as IDPs report feeling safer if there are patrols, especially at night. However, each community is different and their inputs are necessary for the design, frequency and composition of patrols. It is critical that women be consulted on this matter. Also, improvements such as lights, locks and segregated use of sanitation facilities can significantly reduce the perceived and real security threats. Furthermore, IDPs report that they feel safer in pre-fabricated containers rather than tents.

Services and goods such as water, food and non-food items (NFIs) need to be brought as close as possible to IDP communities, and ought to take into account the specific access and movement constraints that females face; considerations include location and distance to the distribution or service, lighting area, and weight of the goods delivered.

Camp committees are the foundation of community-driven solutions but lack female representation. Within the Iraqi context, further research and capacity building on either gender-inclusive camp committees or alternative means to incorporate women’s voices is necessary.

Livelihood interventions, such as cash assistance, cash-for-work, and asset replacement schemes for young IDP men and female-headed households have the capacity to prevent gender discrimination and risks for GBV. In addition to small business initiatives, programs such as traineeships or job placement programs with local industries, hotels and restaurants can be particularly constructive in the long-term. Both stabilization and emergency livelihood programmes in Iraq can turn to micro-saving strategies to improve the income of extended families or groups of female-headed households.

More importantly, ensuring the financial security of IDP families potentially reduces the risk for child labor, child recruitment in armed groups and child marriage, particularly in those cases reportedly influenced by financial challenges. Reinforcing the response mechanisms to these protection challenges across the country with advocacy campaigns on children’s rights, the value of education for children and the implications of child labor and child-marriage could help improving long-term outcomes.

Combining these strategies with psychosocial support is necessary to alleviate family tensions and address specific mental health vulnerabilities. Only a holistic understanding and response strategy can have a sustainable impact to prevent and reduce the fear and violence that IDP women, men, girls and boys face in Iraq.
INTRODUCTION

As a result of the worsening armed conflict in Iraq, new waves of internal displacement have been taking place since December 2013: from January 2014 to December 2015 IOM identified 3,320,844 internally displaced individuals (553,474 families), dispersed across 105 districts and 3,698 locations in Iraq. Forced to flee their homes and seek refuge elsewhere, Iraqi IDPs are often hosted in substandard shelter arrangements and face extremely challenging living conditions, including multiple risks of sexual and gender-based violence (GBV).

As an active member of the CCCM Cluster, and following the Inter Agency Standing Committee (IASC) guidelines encouraging humanitarian partners to recognize the different needs, capacities and contributions of women, girls, men and boys and to take action to prevent and mitigate sexual and gender-based violence, IOM conducted an assessment on the security, dignity and privacy of camp and camp-like settings across Iraq, with a focus on women and girls’ perceptions on GBV-related risks.

Underlying causes for GBV are multistranded and associated to attitudes, beliefs, norms and structures that promote and/or condone gender-based discrimination and unequal power relations. Linking GBV to its roots in gender discrimination and inequality enables humanitarian responses to anticipate and contextualize the factors contributing to GBV.

Under the frameworks of the PRM-funded Community Revitalization Programme (CRP) and the Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM), this report is intended to provide the humanitarian community in Iraq with information on the differentiated needs of women, men, boys and girls in camp and camp-like settings, to better understand the type of responses required to improve the IDPs’ living conditions in regards to security, privacy and human dignity.

Furthermore, the findings of this assessment contribute to bridging the gap on data on GBV risks in collective settings in Iraq. IOM Iraq has cross-referenced the findings of this report and co-developed the recommendations with humanitarian actors working in the fields of protection, GBV, child protection, gender, shelter/NFI, water and sanitation hygiene (WASH) and psychosocial services in Iraq. IOM Iraq shared the initial findings of this report through the Inter-Cluster Coordination Group during the 2015 Humanitarian Needs Overview process.

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2. The number of individuals is calculated by multiplying the number of families by six, the average size of an Iraqi family.
4. IASC guidelines specify for actors supporting CCCM initiatives, that assessments should evaluate “actual or potential security threats and the unique risks and vulnerabilities due to age, gender (including GBV), disability, social or economic status, the dependence of affected populations on natural environmental resources, and the relationships between affected populations and any host communities.” IASC GBV Guideline. (2015). GBV Toolkit. http://gbvguidelines.org/
5. Camp-like settings are informal or formal collective living conditions; defined as sites where IDPs are living in religious buildings, school buildings, other formal settlements, other informal settlements, and unfinished buildings. Also referred to in the DTM material as ‘Critical Shelter Arrangements’.
7. Ibid.
Gender refers to “the social differences between females and males throughout the life cycle that are learned, and though deeply rooted […] are changeable over time and have wide variations both within and between cultures. ‘Gender’ determines the roles, power and resources for females and males in any culture.”

Culture, society, and religious and traditional values contribute to and socially denote gender roles and the dynamics between women, men, boys and girls within a society. In Iraq, gender dynamics and gender roles are additionally influenced by a history of wars, ongoing conflict and three decades of militarization.

Gender-based violence (GBV) is used to define common violence that targets individuals or groups based on gender. By definition, gender-based violence is “any harmful act that is perpetrated against a person’s will and that is based on socially ascribed (i.e. gender) differences between males and females.”

This term encompasses acts that inflict physical, mental, or sexual harm or suffering, threats of such acts, exploitive or coercive acts —whether occurring in public or in private— types of intimate partner violence (IPV) and non-partner rape, as well as a range of violent acts including other physical, psychological, economic and sexual violence, as well as harmful traditional practices. GBV can take the form of sexual violence or persecution by the authorities, or can be the result of discrimination embedded in legislation or prevailing societal norms and practices.

The underlying causes of gender-based violence are associated with attitudes, beliefs, norms and structures that promote and/or condone gender-based discrimination and unequal power. Linking GBV to its roots in gender discrimination and gender inequality enables the humanitarian community to anticipate and contextualize the factors contributing to GBV. Analyzing gender relations and dynamics is key in anticipating potential risks of GBV.

It is important to remember that gender-based violence does not mean violence against women and girls (VAWG). Often GBV and VAWG are used interchangeably, but this is not accurate. VAWG is a form of GBV but GBV does not exclusively mean violence against women and girls. Most research documents violations against women and girls, such as rape in war and other types of violence including child sexual abuse, forced or coerced prostitution or trafficking and other forms of sexual exploitation. However, it is important to realize that men and boys are also targets of GBV in conflict and displacement, and documenting similar forms of GBV against conflict-affected men and boys is important and beginning to take place. Within a conflict-afflicted population, refugees and IDPs are particularly vulnerable to GBV: while the underlying causes of GBV are still unknown, conflict, forced displacement, separation of families and disruption of community and institutional protection structures have shown to increase the risk for GBV and to challenge the access to justice for survivors.

GBV may also occur during the movement of conflict-affected populations and/or in shelters and can be perpetrated by a wide range of actors, including family members.

In the last decade, there has been increasing documentation on the problem of GBV in conflicts, and on its devastating consequences on the lives of conflict-affected persons. The UN Security Council has recognized that vulnerabilities related to gender are exacerbated by
conflict and war; the humanitarian community needs to study and respond to these differentiated risks.  

This paper intends to do just that within the Iraqi context, as the on-going conflict has created one of the largest internal displacements at present. Furthermore, the ecological model of the risk factors for GBV supports the understanding that certain circumstances on a societal, community, relationship and individual level increase the propensity for GBV among a population. The model highlights the importance of understanding the complex interplay of biological, psychological, social, cultural, economic and political factors that increase the likelihood of experiencing or perpetuating violence.

### Table 2: Risk Factors for Violence Based on the Ecological model

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Societal</th>
<th>Community</th>
<th>Relationship</th>
<th>Individual</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Broad factors that reduce inhibition against violence</td>
<td>Neighborhood, schools and workplaces</td>
<td>With family, intimate partners and friends</td>
<td>Personal factors that influence individual behavior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Poverty</td>
<td>- High unemployment</td>
<td>- Family dysfunction</td>
<td>- Gender, age &amp; education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Economic, social and gender inequalities</td>
<td>- High population density</td>
<td>- Inter generational violence</td>
<td>- A family history of violence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- poor social security</td>
<td>- Social isolation of females &amp; family</td>
<td>- Poor parenting practices</td>
<td>- Witnessing GBV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Masculinity linked to aggression &amp; dominance</td>
<td>- Lack of information</td>
<td>- Parental conflict involving violence</td>
<td>- Victim of child abuse or neglect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Weak legal and criminal justice system</td>
<td>- Inadequate victim care</td>
<td>- Association with friends who engage in violent or delinquent behavior</td>
<td>- Lack of sufficient livelihood &amp; personal income</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Perpetrators not prosecuted</td>
<td>- Schools &amp; workplaces not addressing GBV</td>
<td>- Low socio-economic status</td>
<td>- Unemployment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- No legal rights for victims</td>
<td>- Weak community sanctions against GBV</td>
<td>- Socio-economic stress</td>
<td>- Mental health and behavioral problems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Social and cultural norms support violence</td>
<td>- Poor safety in public spaces</td>
<td>- Friction over women’s empowerment</td>
<td>- Alcohol &amp; substance abuse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Small fire arms</td>
<td>- Challenging traditional gender roles</td>
<td>- Family honor more important than female health and safety</td>
<td>- Prostitution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Conflict or post-conflict</td>
<td>- Blaming the victim</td>
<td></td>
<td>- Refugee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Internal displacement</td>
<td>- Violating of victim confidentiality</td>
<td></td>
<td>- Internally displaced</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Refugee camps</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Disability</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The examples presented in the ecological model are illustrative; actual risk factors vary according to the setting, population and type of GBV. Even so, these examples underscore the existence of risk factors in the Iraqi context and the need to further study and address them in the framework of humanitarian responses. These risk factors include the existence of (but are not limited to): conflict, poverty, displacement, masculinity associated to aggression and domination, non-prosecution of perpetrators, weak legal and criminal justice system, risks associated with poor infrastructure or overcrowding in camp settings, unemployment, social isolation of females, lack of information, challenging traditional gender roles, blaming the victim, inadequate victim care, intergenerational violence, friction over women’s empowerment, ‘family honor’ taking precedence over female health and safety, witnessing GBV, and prostitution and trafficking. Bearing in mind the above understanding of the gender dimension in crises, and acknowledging the importance of assessing GBV-related risks in displacement settings, the following pages present some of the data collected through the DTM through a gender and GBV lens.

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METHODOLOGY

IOM contributes to understanding better the differentiated gender needs; this information provides guidance to IOM and its partners to take gender-sensitive decisions and adopt operational approaches in their support to the most vulnerable displaced populations in Iraq.

The dataset used to produce this report is generated from multiple IDP data sources including IDP Master Lists, IDP Group Assessment and Safety Audit, in addition to Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and Key Informant (KI) interviews. When collecting and extracting data from these sources, it was critical to include the views of both female and male IDPs.

The methodology for this report uses the access of the Rapid Assessment and Response Teams (RARTs) and the information management capacity of the Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) of IOM Iraq.

DTM

The DTM IOM’s information management system. Composed of a variety of tools and processes designed to track and monitor population displacement during crises, the DTM regularly captures and processes multiple layers of data, and disseminates various information products that facilitate a better understanding of the evolving needs of displaced populations, be that on site or en route.

Reinforced in January 2014 in response to the increased need for information on displacement due to the worsening armed conflict, the DTM program in Iraq collects key information on internally displaced persons and returnees through different components and methodologies across the entire country.

Rapid Assessment and Response Teams (RARTs)

Through IOM’s RARTs comprised of 140 field staff-present across the Iraqi territory, the DTM collects data on the numbers and locations of IDPs and returnees using an extended network of Key Informants (KIs).17 In addition to information collected by KIs, identified locations hosting IDPs are then visited and directly assessed by the RARTs to collect more detailed and in-depth information about the displaced population.

Sources of data used in this report:

- **IDP Master Lists: Dataset used in this report from February 2016, Round 38**
  - Published twice a month, the Master List is the backbone of the DTM in Iraq and the foundation of the DTM monthly report. Together with the monthly reports, the DTM team releases an information package including various maps and dashboards. Figures published in the monthly DTM Report are also published online. Figures from the IDP Master List on the total IDP population and their shelter types as of February 2016 are cited in this report.

- **Group Assessment:** Dataset from Group Assessment was collected between February and July 2015
  - IOM’s RARTs continuously collect data on the numbers and locations of IDPs and returnees, through their network of KIs. When possible, identified locations hosting IDPs are then visited and directly assessed by the RARTs to collect more detailed and in-depth information. Through this data collection tool, quantitative figures on the IDPs’ feeling of safety and general needs and reported. Figures of female-headed households and minor-headed households in camp-like settings are also included in the report.

A group of IDPs is defined as “a group of IDPs currently living in the same location, sharing the same shelter type. Where a majority have come from the same governorate of origin and displaced in the same period.”

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17. DTM collects and triangulates biweekly IDP and returnee data through a well-established large network of over 1,300 key informants. Community leaders, mukhtars, local authorities, and security forces make up most of the key informants. Additional secondary data is gathered from governmental registration data and partner agencies.

18. Following data collection for the Group Assessment Cycle 2, the DTM has introduced a change in the methodology. The DTM is now conducting a Location Assessment. Completed in three-month data collection cycles, the Location Assessment provides a more in-depth view of displacement in Iraq. The Location Assessment dataset and main findings are published online, and updates are recorded on a daily basis as new assessments are completed and registered by the DTM.
Limitations of the methodology

Access constraints due to ongoing conflict and inability to collect information in hard-to-reach areas of Iraq didn’t allow for a full IDP population representation in the Safety Audit exercise. In this pilot phase, a convenience sample of IDP sites was used, as it allowed for an easier approach to obtain basic data and trends regarding the study units.

Convenience sampling is a non-probability sampling method that relies on data collection from population members, groups, or sites (or whatever the unit of observation is) that are conveniently available to participate in a study. In other words, in convenience sampling the inclusion criteria are determined by convenience. In our case “convenience” or the inclusion criteria was determined by accessibility of the location and size of the group (site).

Therefore, generalizations should not be made with convenience sampling, since the sample is not representative of the population, and results of the study cannot speak for the entire population. Hence, the study does not necessarily represent IDP sites hosting relatively smaller numbers of IDPs, or sites more difficult to access, or IDP groups living within the aforementioned sites.

Additionally, due to the time elapsed between the data collection and the publication of this report, and given the fluidity of IDP movement and the uncertainty of Iraq’s environment, some figures and specific site-level issues might no longer be relevant.

However, the dynamics of the issues explained in the report and people’s attitudes towards these issues are expected to remain constant because the underlying causes of the issues are still present, and a collaborative systematic approach for GBV prevention at site level has not been determined.

19. Camp-like settings, also known as Critical Shelter Arrangements, are defined as: religious buildings, school buildings, informal/irregular settlements, unfinished buildings and other formal settlements.

20. Site is defined as any formal or informal collective settlement of five or more families.

21. Key informants for the Safety Audit have been defined as (1) the site leader or representative and (2) female and male IDPs present at the site. RARTs are encouraged to be gender-inclusive and ask gender specific questions to the appropriate type of key informants.
KEY FINDING ONE

GENDER DIMENSIONS RESULTING FROM ONGOING CONFLICT IN IRAQ

Fear and threat of sexual violence for women and girls

IOM did not seek to inquire about experiences or cases of sexual violence as a form of GBV. The study focused on general perceptions of safety, dignity and privacy. During FGDs, however, the fear of sexual violence—specifically the perpetration of sexual violence against females—was mentioned as a deep concern that determines much of the respondents’ stress and adaptive strategies. IDPs referred to the threat of sexual violence because of the weakened rule of law, stories they have heard and cases they know of.

Amongst the Yazidi population displaced in northern Iraq, for example, young women reported “fear of what had happened to their people, specifically to their sisters.” The Yazidi population in Ninewa was specifically attacked by ISIS in August 2014, when thousands of men were killed and young women and girls were taken as sex slaves and were subjected to torture and sexual abuse. Many of the surviving Yazidi IDPs seeking refuge in northern Iraq explain how the experiences of those events have them living a life of psychological distress and fear. The Yazidi women fear the potential sexual violence they might still suffer.

However, this fear is not specific to the Yazidi women. Most female IDPs living in hostile locations throughout Iraq expressed fear of sexual violence. Militias are known for using sexual violence as a method to control and humiliate. Raping women for revenge during the sectarian violence of 2006–2008 was a prevalent tactic in Iraq.22 Being exposed to sexual violence in areas of armed conflict is clearly a concern, as there is no rule of law and the likelihood for opportunistic or targeted sexual violence against females is perceived to be higher. “[We] become frightened when [we] hear the sound of the airplanes or the sound of nearby bombing. There are safety concerns, especially among the women, from the approaching insurgent groups to the areas where [we] live,” explain a group of women hosted in an unfinished building in Tilkaif, district of Nineewa.

Across Iraq, IDP men and women participating in FGDs expressed that their concern about women and girls moving around the site was associated to multiple factors, but predominantly to the fear and shame of being victims of rape or sexual violence. They specify that “anything might happen, particularly to our daughters or sisters,” alluding to the belief that females are more vulnerable to being preyed upon for sexual violence, be it in the form of harassment, rape, or attempted assault.

Women said that they coped with this fear by choosing not to go out alone, moving in groups or with a male and staying vigilant at night by taking turns to watch over the group, to “protect themselves and their daughters” from potential sexual threats. The occurrence of sexual violence against women and girls—although not easily discussed nor systematically documented in Iraq—was sufficiently alluded to in FGDs to indicate that deteriorating security has had a negative impact on the physical safety of men, women, boys and girls, and that the implications are greater on women and girls due to the associated stigma of being violated sexually.23 As stated in the Country Report on Iraq (2013):

Rape and sexual violence is severely underreported in Iraq namely because of the social system that condemns the [female survivor]. The legal system does not protect nor enable women having faced violence […] honor killing has a direct correlation to being a [survivor] of sexual violence. Essentially, women and girls have limited ways to gain justice, protection, or support as a victim of sexual violence, meaning that reports severely underreport [the issue]; the rate of sexual violence is really high when the rule of law does not properly condemn it.24

Therefore, although IDPs do not openly and explicitly discuss sexual violence, their coping mechanisms, heightened security concerns and repeated mention of the “fear of what might happen to women and girls” indicates not only the existence of the threat itself, but also confirms the fear of social blame and threat that survivors of sexual violence face.

Although this study did not specifically assess the risk of GBV for persons with disabilities, it should be noted that studies confirm that adults or children with disabilities are more likely to face violence. “Women with disabilities are more likely to suffer intimate partner violence and sexual assault than women without disabilities. And women with disabilities report abuse that lasts longer and is more intense than women without disabilities.”25 The inability to self-defend from sexual assault is explained by a woman in Baghdad: “My 17-year-old daughter was severely affected in an explosion in Salah al-Din governorate. The explosion shocked her and she now suffers from mental illness. The boys in the area harass her sexually due to her inability to defend herself”. According to Women’s Refugee Council, “[displaced] women and girls with disabilities are at higher risk of violence due to misconceptions, negative attitudes and social exclusion. Sexual violence against women and girls with mental and intellectual disabilities is often unnoticed until they become pregnant.”26

Increased threat for men and boys

As is the case in other conflict-affected countries, in contested areas of Iraq being male means being exposed to life-threatening risks because men and boys are often direct targets in the armed fighting. In addition to this, male IDPs also perceive the threat of sexual violence against women and girls, which leads them to strengthen their role of protectors, regardless of the additional threats they themselves may face.

Due to the complex nature of the conflict, many male IDPs are suspected of being associated to the warring factions. FGDs in the Khalidiya district of Anbar report that men and teenage boys are the most vulnerable in the governorate, as they are often targeted by armed groups for their alleged links to the tribal groups supporting the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF). Such allegations are life-threatening and not necessarily founded on evidence. Many of these civilians have no affiliation to the armed parties but were displaced to districts where the conflict is ongoing and tribal groups are based.

A participant from Ninewa who has been displaced to Kirkuk says: “Men are at great risk of being taken. Two of my brothers and three of my cousins were kidnapped by ISIS and we still do not have any news, we just hope to see them again. Boys are also subject to this type of violence because all males are seen as targets.”

To make matters more complex, IDP men and teenage boys report that government forces suspect them of association to the armed groups. Men explain that they feel their safety is threatened by the potential arrest by government forces. They report
that arrests tend to occur in overcrowded buildings or complexes based on allegations or suspicion.

Other significant reported issues are the raids in overcrowded IDP sites and the difficulty to legally resolve the allegations. As reported by female IDPs in a camp in Diyala, “Men are considered the most vulnerable group [in these warring areas] due to random arrest carried out against them, and [they are] targets of assassinations. Some of them are injured severely, sometimes causing death.”

Accessing goods for the household is often an additional problem for men and teenage boys, who cannot safely access goods as armed groups set up checkpoints and often question or detain them. Despite this, females do not attempt accessing essential goods for the family in these areas; although men are the primary target, women do not move around. As reported by a key informant from Anbar:

Despite the ongoing threats, men are still going out and returning to the district but with necessary precautions... As a matter of fact, men strongly believe that they can’t just walk away at the first sign of a problem and, therefore, they would take risks rather than have women help and be put in harm’s way. By doing so, men are protecting their families, especially the females, from difficult situations.

Gender roles for males in Iraq give them the responsibility to provide for and protect their families, especially their female family members. This, however, has implications for the boys as it is often more acceptable to put a 10-year-old boy in a situation of risk to support his family, rather than a female parent. This can be the case of teenage boys in female-headed households and, as reported, of boys encouraged to support their fathers—especially if the parent is injured or ill.

This situation also leads to reducing the movement capacity of women and girls, causing them to lose independent access to life-saving services, medical support and help that they may need if they are victims of non-partner or intimate partner violence. Because they are not able to access such services without the presence of a male figure, women and girls are more likely to refrain from seeking assistance, reporting, or obtaining the necessary and often life-saving treatment they require. Furthermore, the gender norms mentioned above may also indicate that the public sphere is dominated by males, which puts additional barriers for women to access basic goods and services independently, or for their needs to be expressed and addressed.

Restrictions on movement for women and girls

According to IDPs participating in FGDs, the movement restrictions on women and girls occur for multiple reasons, only one of which is to “protect females from threats of sexual violence.” Restriction of movement also occurs because of cultural norms, as noted by IDPs in south Iraq, and can be imposed directly by the armed groups.

The control and restriction of women and girls’ access to the public space is reportedly more prevalent and strict in ISIS-controlled areas, as the armed group seeks to confine women and girls. Women participating in FGDs felt that they suffered most in ISIS-controlled areas because of their confinement and inability to move freely. In the Heet district of Anbar, women report being policed to wear the abaya27 and khimar28 and are never allowed in public without a male relative.

Key informants in Anbar report that families do not risk disobeying these laws. Similar

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27. Abaya: literally translates as “cloak”, known as a loose over-garment that is dress-like.
28. Khimar: fabric that is used to cover from the top of the head and over the upper body.
accounts come from Mosul, Iraq’s second largest city and under ISIS control, where an improper dress code of women in public or unaccompanied movement would warrant flogging of their male relative. By punishing the male relative, such rulings oblige men to enforce these gender dynamics within the household, regardless of whether they agree with them or not. Thus, such rulings and restrictions have the capacity to entrench harmful gender relations that may continue to restrict independent access in the future.

When females are restricted or because of fear of punishment, abuse or of the harmful norms set by an armed group, the ability to access life-saving services and goods becomes a major concern for women. If their movement is only allowed with the escort of a male relative, women’s visibility and access to protection services for abuse, intimate partner violence or other forms of GBV are severely threatened.

Moreover, such restrictions have damaging effects on women’s access to income and livelihood; they could lead to denial to resources and services, and are particularly damaging to the survival of female-headed-households. In critical shelters alone, it is estimated that 4.5% of all households are led by females.²⁹

IDP women and men alike report that restrictions of movement and confinement are perceived to be particularly damaging to the mental and emotional well-being of girls in particular. “Young women and girls appear to be depressed from being confined and this exacerbates any preexisting mental illness or trauma,” report men in an irregular settlement in Baghdad. A male respondent reports that this was not the case for women and girls prior to 2006 in western or central Iraq. According to KIs, the rise of Al Qaeda in Anbar in 2006 changed gender dynamics and restricted the role of women in society; “My wife used to wear pants. Today she covers her face,” reports a KI from Falluja city.

It should be noted, however, that barriers to free movement for women and girls are not only reported in conflict-afflicted areas—for instance in Ninewa, Diyala, Baghdad, Salah al-Din, and Anbar—where armed forces impose their rules or where social norms are influenced by the absence of the rule of law.

Restrictions on females to move independently have also been reported in FGDs from south Iraq, where conflict dynamics are not as prevalent. In these areas, it is rather social and cultural norms that have traditionally limited women’s participation in the public sphere.

In Missan, male IDPs from Ninewa believe that the restriction of movement for women is necessary, even though violence levels are not comparable to those in central and western Iraq. According to KIs, the attitudes and behaviors of IDPs are influenced by either their own experiences, fear of the new host community/environment, or the differences in social norms regarding gender. Governorates in southern Iraq are also reported to be more conservative, which has an impact on women’s role in society in general and tends to influence the gender dynamics of IDP families displaced to these areas.

Therefore, the restrictions on women and girls are influenced by society, traditional values and family honor, but also by the presence of armed groups and the perception of threats or attacks that would dishonor the family, such as rape. As the ecological model highlighted, these existing factors contribute to the potential for violence against women; in this case, it also limits females from independently accessing services, deepens their dependency—and therefore their vulnerability—in accessing goods, and limits their participation in humanitarian actions. In fact, much of this research was designed to deliberately seek the participation and voice of women, while acknowledging that it is difficult to access them through our regular data collection systems.

Impact on the inclusion and participation of women

Findings further indicate that women and girls living in critical shelters and camps are
not only limited from independent access to the public sphere but are also not included in decision-making regarding their camps’ needs. This assessment found that the participation of women within IDP populations living in camps and critical shelters is very low, and therefore females’ concerns and needs are often not taken into account in camp committees.

Assessments carried out by IOM found that about 41.4% of assessed IDPs address needs through a committee, and yet women are rarely represented in these bodies: 91% of these committees have no female representation.

Such gender dynamics have an impact on the humanitarian response to displacement in the country. In the context of Iraq, due to access constraints, humanitarian actors rely on and often seek input from camp committee leaders and members to inform their response to IDP needs. Because women have limited or no participation, no decision-making power and a restricted public access, the needs and concerns of women and girls are potentially being overlooked.

IDP women and girls report that they cannot independently access distribution sites or services that are not close to their locations. When distribution sites or service centers are far from the camp, women might be forced to exchange or sell part of their rations in return of help to collect the assistance, including basic goods such as water or fuel.  

“In order to achieve more stable and secure communities, IDP women need to be supported in taking leadership roles, as well as provided with opportunities to become self-reliant and engage in livelihood programs.” Humanitarian actors must therefore consider their role in encouraging gender equality within IDP leadership systems. While there have been growing efforts and significant progress to increase female participation within camps and other displacement contexts, “men are overwhelmingly assigned the role of ‘leaders’ in distribution systems of food, medicine, clothing and other items and in consultations with the international community, thereby increasing the dependence of women on men.”

Understanding existing gender dynamics and challenges is valuable to increase equal access to service provision.

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31. Ibid.

32. Ibid.
KEY FINDING TWO

GENDER DIMENSIONS OF CONFLICT-INDUCED DISPLACEMENT

After exploring the gender dynamics linked to the current conflict in Iraq that confine and exclude female IDPs, this section discusses how these gender dimensions and considerations are further affected by security, privacy and dignity concerns of IDPs, particularly with regards to: migration and relocation and living in collective settings.

Challenges to safe migration and relocation

IDPs perceive that two main institutional barriers to migrating within Iraq increase their vulnerability: sponsorship laws to allow IDPs into a governorate, and the security clearance requirements needed to register as an IDP in the new governorate. Both issues are perceived as obstacles for families to achieve safety and security, while the second one is perceived as a barrier particularly for men, exacerbating women’s vulnerability.

Sponsorship laws are implemented by the governorates, and require IDPs to obtain a sponsorship before being allowed in.

Reportedly, governorates with this type of policy include Baghdad, Erbil, Duhok, Sulymaniyyah, Missan, Wassit, Kirkuk, Basra and Salah al-Din, as well as the reclaimed parts of Ninewa. In June 2015, sponsorship laws prevented hundreds of Iraqis fleeing the ISIS takeover of Ramadi city in Anbar from entering Baghdad. Field reports indicated that sponsorship laws in Baghdad and neighboring governorates created a huge blockage of IDPs on the Bzebiz Bridge between Baghdad and the town of Amiriyat al-Fallujah in Anbar province. Such barriers to safe and legal movement within Iraq increase the risk for exploitation, because fleeing IDPs might seek unofficial paths to reach safe areas.

33. These are the governorates that partners have confirmed to have sponsorship laws. Other governorates such as Babylon and Kerbala are said to also have sponsorship requirements but was not clear at the time this data was being validated. Regardless, the majority of governorates of Iraq have these laws that IDPs perceive as obstacles.
Once relocated in a governorate, IDPs are required to register with the authorities and pass a security clearance to receive support. IDPs report that they perceive security clearance requirements as barriers for male IDPs displaced from ISIS-conflicted areas. Sunni IDP men, for example, fear being denied security clearances in the Shi'a majority southern governorates because of their different sectarian belonging and because they come from ISIS-controlled areas. They believe they will be suspected of having links to the armed group and hence denied security clearance, which would harm and risk the entire family.

As a result of this, many IDP men reportedly remain in conflict areas or move elsewhere, and send their families south to seek refuge. This correlates to IOM’s findings that the highest percentage of female-headed households in critical shelters or camps is concentrated in the southern governorates. The majority of the female-headed households come from Salah al-Din, Ninewa and Anbar (all Sunni majority and contentious locations with ISIS presence). These female heads of households report to have either lost their husbands or to be separated from their spouse because of perceived access barriers for men fleeing ISIS.

This indicates that misinformation or perceived fears and prejudices between religious sects may be resulting in family separation, which, as noted by KIs, further contributes to men choosing not to move with their families. Ultimately, men displaced from northern regions feel they cannot safely travel to southern Iraq and are thus forced to remain in insecure areas, while women have to move and provide for the family on their own.

The specific challenges faced by female-headed households are linked to the social restrictions facing women and girls: the difficulty in accessing income, goods and services hinders their ability to head their household and has financial implications, based on the gender of the head of the household. Later sections of this report will provide further details on the high risks faced by female-headed-households in Iraq.

In the southern states, IDP men who relocated from ISIS-controlled areas report being verbally abused and discriminated against. They report being humiliated and feeling emasculated as they were verbally abused for not being “men enough” to fight. IDP men in Wassit are often told to go back and “liberate their cities.” Masculinity is influenced by the conflict and associated to participating in military operations and protecting land and property; these are societal factors that contribute to greater risks for GBV, as noted in the ecological framework.

The effects of such feelings of emasculation were reported to be emotionally damaging and have potentially dangerous consequences. IDP men in FGDs report that feelings of stress and emasculation negatively impact their temperament and indicated that these feelings contribute to adverse behavior -including aggression- within the household.

"We are verbally abused by taxi drivers who blame us for not fighting with the army to liberate areas from ISIS. This makes us feel ashamed and we consider it unwelcoming of the host community; it upsets us deeply."

Report male IDPs from Ninewa and seeking refuge in Missan
Security, privacy and dignity challenges in camp and camp-like settings

General Sense of Security

According to IDP men and women, two factors help increase security in collective living situations: the presence of security patrolling and adequate lighting in communal areas of the site.

Security Patrols

Regardless of the subjectivity of perceived safety, it is important to note that out of the IDPs who report feeling generally safe, approximately 81% have some form of security patrolling in their area of displacement, while 99.78% of those who reported feeling unsafe had no security patrolling around them.

The qualitative reports further confirm the value that IDPs give to security patrols in collective settings. Both males and females recommended that security patrols be made available and their frequency increased, particularly at night. Across Iraq, of those who reported having security patrols almost half felt that an average of three patrols per day had a positive impact on their personal safety.

It is important to highlight that IDPs report feeling that security patrols reduce risk of sexual or physical attacks from militias, gangs, armed groups and unknown males in their area, and also prevent the risk of sexual violence within a settlement with multiple families living together.

In Salah al-Din, IDP women in an irregular settlement stated that police patrols at night would help them sleep as they often hear young men’s voices late in the night, which disconcerts and alarms them. Similarly, in other places such as in a camp in Diyala, both women and men felt that security patrols would protect their families from outlaws, thieves, armed groups and other violent actors.

According to the assessments, 99.78% of people who feel unsafe also live in areas without security patrols. Most IDPs (90%) indicate feeling safe, but 81% of those families have a form of security patrolling in their location or vicinity. Additionally, 45% of these families report feeling safe with three patrols per day, suggesting security patrols are linked to a higher sense of security regardless of the geographical location or shelter type.
IDPs in Dohuk and Sulaymaniyah felt that the fear of GBV risk is higher when mixed groups live collectively. The norms and cultural interaction between genders differs between ethno-religious groups, and living together can create tensions or fears, whereas in one assessed settlement of Yazidi members only, there was no fear from internal risks, but rather a desire for patrols to prevent external threats.

*Female IDPs in a camp in Sulaymaniyah reported feeling insecure.*

"We already tend to limit our movement within the camp just so that we safeguard ourselves from what might happen...This camp has 3,000 families of different kinds of cultures, languages, beliefs, ethnic backgrounds and ages, therefore, no individual will feel 100% safe." The fear grows significantly when patrols end at 11 pm, and women feel at night that "every other hour a guard should check up between the tents."

**Functional and Adequate Lights**

Lighting enables individual control of people’s surroundings and reduces fear of attack, assault and physical insecurity. Lights are necessary within people’s dwellings and for the pursuit of work, education, household chores and other activities. Lights also provide safety and have been associated with a reduction in the risk of assault, particularly in communal or shared spaces.

Most importantly, lights reduce fears and enable people to feel more independent to move around at night, as stated by IDPs. Male and female IDPs alike report inadequate lighting in the common areas as an inhibiting factor to safe and free movement; they also state that more public lighting will make them feel more secure and safe in their sites at night.

IOM found no lighting in 25% of all assessed shelter types and that 31% of existing lights were inadequate. This indicates that fear associated to lack of lighting is a greater concern in camp and camp-like settings than one would initially anticipate and that it is not enough to check whether there are light fixtures in a collective site; it is necessary to ensure that IDPs feel there is enough illumination. The most pressing issues in relation to lighting—lack of or inadequate—are found in unfinished buildings, religious buildings and camps. The specific case of unfinished buildings is highlighted below.

**Lighting in Unfinished Buildings:**

The most alarming shelter type in regards to lighting is unfinished buildings. Even though a majority (81%) of assessed unfinished buildings had lighting fixtures, most of those lights (77%) provided inadequate illumination. The governorates where this challenge is most apparent are Duhok, Diyala, Salah al-Din, Kirkuk, Anbar, and Ninewa.
Lighting is particularly problematic in unfinished buildings because the lack of electricity infrastructure is often the source of the problem. “To increase the sense of security, the area needs more lighting, especially at night; also, most of these houses do not have electricity because they are unfinished buildings, which affects lighting,” explain women in Kirkuk. Similarly, in a religious building in Babylon, women and men say that lights are often broken and that the constant electricity cuts and absence of a backup generator lead to long periods of darkness at night.

Given that unfinished buildings are hazardous, religious buildings tend to be overcrowded and both shelters and camps tend to house non-related families. Not having adequate lighting might further contribute to IDPs fearing for their physical safety.

Lighting has an effect on free movement and contributes to restricting access to basic needs such as latrine facilities or communal services. Female IDPs in Kerbala report they do not access the bathroom on their own when lighting is insufficient or non-existent.

37% of IDPs living in religious buildings in Kerbala and Najaf do not have adequate lighting or working lights at night.

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34. Please look to the next section on Dwelling Privacy and Sense of Security, for more details on this finding (page 29).
35. Please refer to previous section on Security Patrolling. IDPs report feeling more fearful of moving around the site when they live with non-family members and other ethno-religious groups.
Latrines, Showers, Water points: A Matter of Security, Privacy, and Human Dignity

“Our concerns regarding security and safety are that the bathrooms are shared between women and men, and the locks are broken... water is limited, so women are forced to bring the water from far away places in order to wash the clothes and cook; women take their husbands or sons with them in order to feel more secure.”

Say women in a religious building in Babylon.

Water and sanitation are a matter of survival and human dignity. All persons have the right to sufficient, safe, acceptable, physically accessible and affordable water for personal and domestic uses and accessible sanitation facilities. 36 Through lessons learned, hygiene facilities need to take into consideration cultural and gender-specific needs and concerns, and reduce the possibility for GBV risks around such facilities. 37 The Sphere Standards and IASC GBV Guidelines recommend that basic prevention indicators look at segregation, interlocks and lighting around facilities.

The findings of this assessment indicate that latrine and shower facilities are the most discomforting issue for IDPs living in camps or camp-like settings. In particular, IDPs identify two key issues: the non-segregation of the facilities and the lack of doors or locks as sources of humiliation and insecurity. Both situations are described by IDPs as degrading, unsafe and uncomfortable.

This increases stress levels for both men and women with concerns of indecent exposure when using the facilities. IDPs report feelings of insecurity, shame and discomfort, the disruption of their ability to comfortably use the facilities and a heightened sense of fear of vulnerability to assault or attacks.

Almost half of the assessed group lacks segregated latrine facilities. Even more concerning is that 64% of these shared latrines do not have interlocks. About 54% of the assessed population has to use unsegregated shower facilities with no interlocks. Both unsegregated latrines and showers without interlocks were most often in unfinished buildings. For IDPs, the notion that someone may walk in at any point creates a high level of fear of assault and exposure, as well as discomfort and anxiety. “The toilets are located outside the house so females go in groups at night, as they are afraid to go alone because there are no locks on doors,” report IDPs from Kirkuk.

In FGDs, women and men described that some latrine and shower structures did not have proper doors, but a piece of fabric that shields the person using the facilities from the long line of men and women waiting outside and provides little to no privacy or security.

The humiliation derived from such situations affects both females and males.

A 35-year-old male participant, explains:

“I live with my family of six sisters, four brothers and my parents. When I want to take a shower, I get really shy because we don’t have a door or window in our shower room, nor do we have enough rooms to change our clothes, so I feel I am not comfortable and

do not have any privacy in my life
or in the site because we do not
know the neighbors in the area we
have been displaced to - they are
all strangers to us.

Despite the fact that both men and women
report a sense of fear and anxiety caused by
unsafe sanitation facilities, it is felt mostly by
females. Female IDPs in Qaddissiya report
self-restricting their movement due to fear of
assault, and mention the need to take a male
relative with them to the latrines located a
mere 20 meters away from the religious
building where they are hosted. According to
field reports and FGDs, females suffer the
most in coping with shared and insecure
sanitation facilities. “They have specific
hygiene needs and privacy needs that are not
met by the conditions they have to endure
in some of these sites,” report field staff.

Latrine and showers are a basic necessity
that must be accessible to all genders.

According to KIs and field reports,
water collection is traditionally a female
responsibility. IDP men and women in critical
shelters and camps report sexual harassment
or fear of sexual harassment around water
points as loitering is an issue in these sites.
IDP males and females in FGDs felt that
loitering is the result of young men being
unable to work or feel productive.

Additionally, IDPs reported that insecure
water points impact gender dynamics. Safety
concerns to collect water mean that women
do not go to fetch water as they did before:
they have stopped going alone, go with other
women, are accompanied by husbands or
brothers, or just stop going and men take
over the role. IDPs report that the distance
of the water point is an additional reason why
males have been taking on this role.

IDPs report that the gender shift at water
points creates issues. In the words of a fe-
male IDP, “at the water points when we need
to fill our containers, it is very crowded and
people fight in the queue to fill them first,
and some people fight over why both males
and females are coming at the same time.” It
is important to note that if a space primarily
used by females becomes gender-mixed or
male-dominated, females might not feel safe
or comfortable going there; it might be seen
as socially or culturally inappropriate, or they
might even be prevented by their spouse/
male relatives from going. The distance to
water points, the lack of lighting along the
path, the location of the water point, or in-
sufficient lighting around water points con-
tribute to GBV risks and concerns.

Male IDPs note that sharing one latrine
facility for multiple families is not only
a cause of fear for assault and exposure
for women, but also embarrassing for
everyone having to share the space,
men included. Wassit, Thi-Qar, and
Qadissiya all have a high prevalence
of unsegregated latrine facilities in the
religious buildings.
Dwelling Privacy and Sense of Security

“Fear for my wellbeing and lack of privacy in this dwelling affects me psychologically. Everybody [needs] privacy. Now we lack this privacy. We are all living together, this makes me feel anxious and also creates tensions between my husband and I. I know there is no solution under these hard circumstances but I can’t get over it because we are human beings and have rights of living. We lost our living rights.”

An IDP woman from Wassit.

The dwelling structure and protection poses differentiated concerns for women, girls, men and boys. This is particularly the case when doors do not have interlocks for family protection, when there is no privacy within the family unit, and when non-family members live within the dwelling, sometimes without any partitions. The impact of these concerns is far greater on women and girls than on men and boys, and is a source of tension and stress that is reflected in changing behaviors and violence within the home.

An estimated 46% of the population living in camps or critical shelter arrangements throughout Iraq does not have doors on their dwellings. Additionally, half of those who do have doors do not have any interlocks either, making safety a source of great stress for those living in critical shelters and camps.

Camps constitute three fourths of the doorless shelters across Iraq. “A zipper can’t protect me. If I need to change my clothes, someone has to guard outside my tent so I feel safe enough to do so,” reports a woman IDP in Diyala. Similarly, women in camps in Sulaymaniyah and Ninewa expressed their concern over the little protection that tents with zippers provide. Men and women recommended that they be given prefabricated containers, not tents, to increase their physical safety.
Unfinished buildings and irregular settlements also offer little protection, as they reportedly have the fewest doors and interlocks. Families often try to build a nuclear dwelling space with fabric, a tent, or if provided, prefabricated containers within the unfinished building or settlement.

Women in an irregular settlement in Salah al-Din report that “all women suffer from the lack of freedom in the tents, especially when they change clothes; usually a woman will protect the other one by closing the tent and standing outside until the other woman finishes, and then they switch.”

In FGDs, IDPs across governorates report that in collective living situations, a dwelling without a door or a lock is terrifying. It makes women and girls feel uncomfortable and particularly unsafe if alone at night. It causes them to depend on a companion for safety and to change clothes, and it prevents everyone from sleeping well.

“[W]e are living in uninhabitable shelters such as tents and caravans that don’t have doors or roofs, so this is very dangerous, especially for families that have daughters and are afraid of the people who live around them.”

One of the female participants said

“I can’t sleep at night because I am afraid that [armed men] may suddenly enter this caravan and hurt my daughter.”

Furthermore, in addition to living in fear from external threats, IDPs have to cope with dwellings where there is no privacy and this greatly affects women and girls. Almost 37% of IDPs assessed in critical shelters and camps report they live with non-family members. The majority of these cases are in unfinished buildings and religious buildings—namely religious buildings in the Kerbala governorate.

Having male strangers or men from the extended family constantly present reportedly creates tensions and is a burden on women and girls and on their male relatives; it is also affecting gender dynamics. In the Iraqi context, specifically its Muslim environment, the mannerisms and attire of women are restricted in front of non-mahram38 males, even if the male is a relative (i.e. cousin or brother-in-law).

38. Non-mahram: refers to all males other than women’s husbands, or their fathers, or their husband’s fathers, or their sons, or their husband’s sons, or their brothers or their brother’s sons, or their sister’s sons. Traditionally, Muslim women cover their heads, in front of non-mahram males, but do not need to be veiled in front of other women or small children.
In Baghdad, IDP female participants report

“We, as women, have to be very careful of how we behave, dress, speak and move within our tent or outside our tents. Even inside our tents we don’t have privacy, because multiple families live in the same tent; although we are relatives, each family and its members need privacy and time to themselves. Our behavior and clothing are strict even inside our tents.”

In traditional Islamic societies, privacy needs to be maintained amongst the extended family as well. Women veil themselves in front of cousins, brothers-in-law and men that are not directly related to them. With a continuous presence of relatives or non-relatives, women report having absolutely no privacy to relax and remove their veils.

Partitions for privacy within the dwelling are a necessity for IDP women regardless of religious and ethnic groups. Teenage Yazidi girls report that they cannot change their clothes in front of their fathers or brothers, and “this makes the situation in the dwelling very uncomfortable for the males and females.” These dwelling limitations take a heavy toll on women and girls, and alternatives for creating a sense of normalcy within the dwelling structure are important to the mental well-being of women, men, boys and girls.

An important consideration is the effect that lack of privacy can have on people’s sex life. A lack of separation and privacy even within the nuclear family means that parents are unable to have intimacy, as explained by participants: “married people have

IDPs participating in FGDs felt that the lack of privacy has severe implications as it exacerbates stress and tensions within the family. Frustrations with living conditions are reported to cause parental abuse, as tolerance towards children is lower. Women in Baghdad also felt “unable to maintain a healthy marital relationship due to the lack of privacy, which leads to tension and temperamental [spouses].”
KEY FINDING THREE

THE GENDER/AGE DIMENSION OF DISPLACEMENT-INDUCED FINANCIAL INSECURITY

Understanding the IDPs’ perspectives on security, dignity and privacy with regards to the collective settlements informs possible responses to the differentiated fears, concerns and needs of men, women, girls and boys. However, IDPs are not only concerned about their physical safety: another major source of stress and vulnerability is associated to their sustenance and ability to be financially secure.

In addition to the risks IDPs face whilst in movement and the threats posed by critical shelters and camps, displacement has created financial constraints and concerns that are highly gendered and/or directly and indirectly encourage and perpetuate GBV. The dire financial conditions of IDPs have implications on child labor and early marriage, and increase the risk of exploitation of female heads of households.

Child Labor

“Boys are losing their childhood because they have to work; this exposes them to greater risks.”

Reported from Qadissiya.

In FGDs, some respondents felt that displacement puts boys at particular risk. Child labor is extremely prevalent across the country for both girls and boys. For the assessed IDP population in critical shelters and camps, child labor was reported more frequently in Iraq’s southern governorates, including Missan, Basra, Qadissiya and Wassit, and in the ISIS controlled areas of Anbar and Ninewa.

When they work, children are exposed to emotional, physical and psychological distress, as well as difficult and sometimes deadly working conditions. Children face higher risks of exploitation and are being deprived of their basic right to education. FGDs indicated fear that displaced boys traveling unaccompanied to the cities, often distant, to look for jobs, are exposed to trafficking, abuse, assault, exploitation, physical hazards (i.e. traffic accidents) as well as kidnapping and recruitment by armed groups.

“In some families, the father urges boys to go to the market to look for jobs; if they don’t get a job he will beat them or threaten them.”

Report IDP men from Qadissiya.

Many children in displacement are encouraged and, in some cases, forced to leave school and engage in household chores or in income generating activities. Women in Missan report that “girls often drop out of school and assist in fetching water or in house chores as it is financially more convenient for the family to have them out of school.” In other instances, the family feels they have no other choice but to have their children supporting them financially. These cases are most common for impoverished IDP families, families with a head of household that has a physical disability, and for female-headed houses.

According to participants, gender roles in Iraq encourage sons —even if they are as young as 10 years old— to work, rather than the mothers. Field staff and IDPs explain that this is mostly the case in conservative communities in rural parts of the country where it is deemed socially inappropriate for a woman to be publicly active.
The southern governorates of Iraq are also reported to be more conservative, and there women can only work in the private sphere: hair salons, tailoring or making food products. The high percentage of female-headed households and the conservative nature of society, which prevents women from accessing income-generating activities, could be having an impact on child labor.

All FGDs in the southern governorates of Iraq raised concerns about the number of children, particularly boys, exposed to labor and prevented from living a healthy childhood.

Additionally, the compulsory education age in Iraq (6 to 11 years) is lower than the legal age of employment (15 years). As a result, children’s access to income generation is often within informal markets. Field staff and IDPs report that children mostly peddle, beg, informally work in agricultural or industrial capacities, and in certain areas, become child recruits. With no legal employment protection in informal markets, children are exposed to the worst forms of child labor, including forced begging, commercial sexual exploitation, and soldiering—including intelligence gathering, couriering, planting
improvised explosive devices (IEDs), and becoming a suicide bombers.39

IDP children are reported to be working in many informal capacities, particularly begging in the streets—an easy place for recruiters to focus on. News reports indicate attempts to radicalize or recruit children in the streets of the KRI.40

Child recruitment is an active strategy of armed groups where unaccompanied and separated children, minor-headed households, and children who peddle, beg, or need income, are at risk. According to our field reports, this is particularly concerning in Ninewa and Anbar, where child recruitment into ISIS often correlates with impoverished families desperately in need of the financial income that recruitment offers. Child recruits are paid about 150 USD per month, KIs report.

In ISIS-controlled territories, child recruitment is an active agenda for the group because it allows it to develop an army and raise a generation brainwashed with their values, ideals and principles. This is reflected in their recruitment strategies, which include monetary incentives, instigating fear and campaigns in educational institutions. IDP families also report they are unable to prevent their children’s recruitment because of their deep fear of the armed groups.

Reporting cases of child recruitment is therefore low, as families fear backlash if they were to speak out. Often, child recruits and their families are seen as aligned with the extremists’ ideology. However, findings indicate the significant role that financial desperation and fear have in the recruitment and use of children in this war.

Child Marriage

The reiterated fear of sexual violence by IDPs has implications on perpetuating other forms of GBV, such as child marriage. Child marriage is certainly not only a result of fear and stigma; it increases considerably when families struggle financially.

Child marriage is viewed as the ultimate, community-level protection mechanism for preserving a girl’s sexual purity. This is because marriage prevents girls from “unsanctioned sexual activity” such as intimate relations with unfamiliar men, as any improper associations for girls and women permanently damage their honor and the families. Early marriage ensures virginity at the time of marriage and reduces the likelihood of the girl or the family’s honor being questioned. In Anbar, men specified that IDP girls around the age of 15 and younger are at risk of early marriage and sometimes are pressured to marry a male relative.

A United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) report revealed that early marriages are underreported, particularly marriages of girls younger than 15, as the practice is recognized as illegal. According to the Iraqi Penal Code, the legal age of marriage for both males and females is 18 years, while special authorization, at the judge’s discretion, can be made for marriages of individuals as young as 15 years of age based on the “attainment of legal puberty and physical ability.” Despite this law, early marriage continues to persist in Iraq.

According to reports from male and female IDPs, girls are particularly vulnerable to early marriage when the family is going through financially difficult circumstances. Men and women in Qadissiya report that: “Young girls are forced to drop out of school to marry at an early age as a result of harsh displacement conditions.” Almost 76% of Iraq’s internally displaced children have missed, on average, a year of schooling, according to UNICEF and Save the Children. There is limited information on the number of children in schools across the different governorates; further research on this would better reflect the number of children out of school and, thereby, more exploitable for early marriage or child labor.

Poverty pushes girls to accept abuse to get money or, at times, even to [become] vulnerable to violence, and losing their childhood to marriage.

Reports a woman in Missan.

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44. Iraqi Penal code (1959). No. 188, Articles 7 & 8.
Specific challenges for female-headed households

Displacement circumstances that are contributing factors for risk of GBV—e.g., limited access to life-saving services, physical insecurity in shelter arrangements, and exploitation from financial challenges—are even more acute for female-headed households. In a society that has created a public sphere dominated by men, women who do not have a husband or male figure struggle to cover their basic needs, particularly financially, which reportedly exposes them to higher risks of exploitative situations. “Widows suffer from harsh living conditions and they would accept to marry any man proposing to them so he can assist them in this difficult situation,” report female participants from Missan, indicating a higher risk for forced marriage and exploitation. IDPs and our field staff report that children of FHH are more at risk of labor and marriage if the family is financially challenged.

In relation to accessing distribution items, field observations from the southern governorates note that NFI distributions have a more gender-balanced turnout when the goods are distributed to IDPs in their sites. Field staff report that in the southern governorates, they almost never see women collecting NFIs from a distribution office or distant location. Given that items are not issued to children, female-headed households may be particularly affected as they are potentially being left out.

The constraints facing female-headed households, coupled with the stressors of displacement and the trauma of conflict, can be so devastating that suicide is a real threat for many female IDPs. IDP women in Ninewa explain, “Poor women who also run the household don’t have money to eat or cover their children’s needs. These challenges make them angry and sad, and those feelings lead them to kill themselves. We have rescued women from suicides.” A similar story is heard from other IDP women throughout Iraq, and field staff and psychosocial specialists confirm this concern.
KEY FINDING FOUR

STRESS OF DISPLACEMENT AND CONFLICT AND INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

Intimate partner violence (IPV) and violence within the home are often higher during displacement. “Women and children may encounter physical abuse from male family members in the camps or temporary homes as a result of tension, uncertainty about the future and the breakdown of traditional norms and sanctions.” When asked who within the IDP group is most vulnerable, men displaced from Ninewa to a camp in Missan reported: “We believe women [are] the most vulnerable, because [we] men, reflect our anger on them even though they seem to cope with this harsh reality.”

Reportedly, “women fear being beaten by their husbands and the temperament of their husbands.” In an irregular settlement in Baghdad, women say that:

Husbands have become more temperamental and there is more tension because of their economic circumstances, lack of work and fear for the security of the family. They say hurtful things to their wives and beat the children to release anger and mental tension. The main reason behind this violence is our economic situation.

Male IDPs report that not being able to protect and sustain their family is emasculating and frustrating, and feelings of emasculation contribute to their bad temper. As reported by male IDPs:

The reason [for our behavior] lies in the lack of job opportunities and lack of income. [Heads of] households in general are incapable [of] providing basic needs for [their] family as most men work for a day or two per week. This has impacted the male household heads psychologically and leads them to treat their family members harshly.

The frustrations of displacement might potentially to parental abuse. Female IDPs participating in FGDs reported being less patient and more abusive towards their children due to their frustration and stress. Participants expressed that they felt they had lost control of their children and their lack of patience led them to verbally and physically abuse their children to control them.

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CONCLUDING REMARKS

The findings presented in this report highlight gender considerations for humanitarian actors in Iraq, particularly in setting up camps, capacitating or rehabilitating informal and formal camp-like settings, and on-site assessments. The challenges faced by IDP women and girls are multi-sectorial and therefore should be taken into account across programming components.

In response to the findings of this report, data collection and response strategies for IOM Iraq are incorporating a gender lens. As part of the common service sector and primary source of information on IDPs and returnees in Iraq, IOM’s Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) is actively mainstreaming gender within its different components, notably in the Location Assessment and the Safety Audit.

Both tools were designed in a consultative process with the GBV Child Protection sub-clusters, as well as with the WASH cluster. Information pathways and information sharing protocols are being established with working groups, clusters and mobile teams to improve the operational response to GBV risks in IDP sites. Enhanced coordination and clear information channels between operational actors will contribute to responses aligned to the IASC GBV guidelines.

The Community Revitalization Program within IOM has used the findings of this report to specifically identify FHH within vulnerable Iraqi communities for livelihood initiatives. As a mission with great geographic access and distribution capacity, IOM Iraq conducted a gender NFI needs assessment in late 2015 to inform a gender-informed response. Where possible, IOM field teams are being capacitated with more female enumerators, and focal persons have been designated within IOM’s Rapid Assessment and Response Teams (RART) to ensure the dissemination of protection and gender trainings to all 140 field staff.

As the plight of men, women, boys and girls continues with the changing dynamics of the violent conflict in Iraq, IOM encourages collaboration and coordination among humanitarian partners, as well as acting upon and extensively sharing the report’s information and recommendations in order to address its key issues and capitalize on its findings.
A GENDERED PERSPECTIVE

Safety, Dignity and Privacy of Camp and Camp-like Settings in Iraq

FEBRUARY 2016