

Empowerment, participation and equality

Introduction: CSO conducted Iraq Women Integrated Social and Health Survey (I-WISH) in July 2011 in cooperation with KRSO, ministry of health, ministry of woman affairs and other relevant public bodies, with support from United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and **Pan Arab** Population and Family Health Project (PAPFAM), as well as WHO, UN-Woman, UNICEF and UNDP. This survey is the first survey that addresses women issues on the basis of life cycle approach (adolescence, reproductive, after productive and elderly stages) from empowerment, health, reproductive health violence against women and other relevant social and health dimensions to establish a comprehensive database on Iraqi woman issues across life cycle. The innovation in I-WISH is the comprehensive approach beyond reproductive role of women, and the involvement of new modules on female adolescent and a module on man knowledge, perception and behavior in regard to women issues. The survey is based on a cluster multi-stage sample of 10,620 households derived from the listing frame of population census conducted in 2009. Following is the main findings on “**Empowerment, participation and equality**”.

Education: I-WISH results showed that Iraqi women 15-54 years old have low level of education; about 22 percent were unable to read and write; this percentage increases by age. More than one-third of these women have not completed more than primary school. The results reveal also that only 18 percent of Iraqi women 15-54 years old have preliminary education or higher. It is worth noting that illiteracy rate among women in Kurdistan is 32 percent which is higher than other governorates (19.6%). The percentage is also higher in rural areas (36.5%) in comparison with urban areas (15.9%). The results showed that more than two-thirds (69.4%) have not completed the educational level they aspired. 82.1 percent of these women were in rural areas. Women reported that due to many reasons amongst refusal of their families (40.8%), inability to complete their education(20.3%), early marriage (13.1%), economic reasons (11.7%), and long distance between their homes and the educational facility (6.5%). More than one-third of women 15-54 years old showed the desire to go back to educational institutions especially in Kurdistan region (37%). Some women want to go back to school to complete their education (31.0%). About one fifth like to attend training, and more than one-fifth would like to join adult literacy education programs, and less than one-fifth wanted to join religious educational programs.

Access to information: I-WISH results revealed lack of access/interest in information. Less than half of women 15-54 years (47%) did not read any newspapers or magazines during the past year; this percentage is less in rural areas. Women in Kurdistan read more newspapers and magazines than women in other governorates. On the other hand, television is the main source of information for Iraqi women (91%). More than half of them do not listen to radio regularly, particularly in the rural areas; while women in Kurdistan listen to the radio more regularly than women in other governorates. Most Iraqi women (88%) do not use internet.

Political and community participation: Most Iraqi women believe that women should participate in the elections (84.8%) as voters, and 67.7 percent reported that women should also participate as candidates. This tendency to participate in politics is higher among women in Kurdistan region compared with other governorates; and no substantial differences by type of locality. More than 60 percent of women who did not want to participate in politics referred that to politics is "men business", while 19.7 percent because elections are useless, and about one quarter reported that due to lack of community support to vote for women. The tendency to participate in politics have increased from less than half in 2005 to more than two-thirds in 2010. It is worth noting that women community participation is very low; less than one women out of ten joined clubhouses, social clubs, unions, parties or women associations. About 30.6 percent of women reported that due to lack of time, or unavailability of nearby facilities (22.7%), 14.2 due to disapproval of husbands/fathers, and 13.6 percent were not interested.

Economic empowerment: I-WISH focused on women employment only. The results revealed that 10.9 percent of women 15-54 were employed for wage at the survey period; this percentage increases in Kurdistan (12.3%), and in the urban areas (12.8%). Most of "not working" women (57.8%) referred that to personal reasons (e.g. not interested, family affairs, etc), while 17.1% due to lack of competency (education, skills, etc), and 12.9 percent to economic difficulties (e.g. lack of work, low wages, dismissal factors of market, etc). As for the unmet needs, the survey results indicated that 35.3 percent of not working women are willing to work

if a suitable opportunity is made available, amongst 7.3 percent were available to be enrolled in labor market training programs, particularly in Kurdistan region (10.6%).

Gender Equality: About 29.5 percent of women 15-45 years believe that there is gender-based inequities in the way that parents raise up their children; particularly in the rural areas (33.4%). About 46 percent of women indicated gender-based inequality referred that due to parents preference of boys, particularly in the rural areas (59.1%). About 30.7 percent believed that this inequities is due to traditions particularly in Kurdistan region (58.7%), and 16.5 percent due to desire to protect the girls particularly in the other governorates (18.3%). Generally speaking, there is gender-based inequities in favor boys. For example, 47.8 percent of women 15-54 years old believe there is a gender-based inequities in favor to boys in the freedom to go out, 18.5 percent believed that males get higher allowance and more than 20 percent believe that male's ability to participate in decision making and freedom in choosing friends and spouses. More than one-tenth of families discriminate in favor to males in education expenses and in respecting boys' privacy. -WISH results showed that there is no discrimination in favor for girls at any level. This has coincide with women

statements when they were asked if they believed there is an equality between genders in rights and duties; 29.9 percent of these women said that they are equal, 38.6 percent said that there is a discrimination between genders. In Kurdistan region 59.9 percent of these women said that they are equal with men compared with 24.9 percent in the rural areas. Furthermore, 60.4 percent of women who believed that there is gender-based inequities referred that to the more responsibilities of men compared with women, 47.7 percent of them reported that men have more endurance than women, while 19.2 percent of them said that regulations are not fair to women.

Distribution of women 15-54years by perception regarding gender equality

Area	Gender equality	Inequality to women	Inequality to men
In front of law	64.3	2.8	32.9
Political participation	32.5	0.4	67.0
Social participation	47.9	2.8	49.3
Taking decisions for the family	43.4	1.5	55.1
Having jobs	52.2	1.2	46.5
Participating in different life aspects	57.5	1.1	41.4
Have the same salary in public sectors	66.8	0.8	32.4
Have the same salary in private sectors	49.2	1.6	49.2
Acceptance at university	77.7	1.1	21.2
Free to use special belongings	46.0	1.1	52.9
Free access to IT	48.2	1.0	50.8
Inheritance	39.6	1.0	59.4

Concerning changing of attitudes toward women rights amongst different generations, there seems to be a positive attitude for adopting more women rights in Iraq in the new generations. The gap is increasing across generations' attitudes towards equality between men and women and women freedom to choose the number of children. But there is still no substantial difference in regard to women's household and community role; women are still seen in the traditional role as a house keepers; there is also no substantial change in regard to early marriage.

Distribution of women 15-54years by perception regarding the support of youth and elderly to selected women rights/issues

Right/issue	Youth support	Elderly support
Right to education	71.9	47.7
Right to work	65.7	42.4
Gender equality	49.8	30.3
Women right to choose husbands	62.1	39.5
Natural place for women is house	43.5	49.1
women right to identify number of children	57.7	35.3
Support early marriages	42.4	45.1

Priorities to women empowerment: women have identified some priority interventions for executive and legislative authorities as well as civil society organizations to empower women in selected fields according to the following a summary table.

Field	Gov/parliament	Political parties	Civil society
Household empowerment	Support female headed households and provide education opportunities	Awareness campaigns and engage women public life	Training for men and women to empower women in the role
Social empowerment	Social support project and social forums for women	Provide support programs for women and emphasize women role	Support to vulnerable women and young females
Economic empowerment	Women projects and provide jobs	Supportive legislatives and support women engagement in economy	Awareness and economic support programs
Political empowerment	Increase number of women in leadership positions	Support legislation which support women	Training for women leaders
Protect from VAW	Law against VAW Protect women	Public campaigns against VAW	Awareness campaigns against VAW

