UNFPA-Supported Women Shelters

Offering gender-based violence survivors a second chance

Survivors of gender-based violence often describe their lives as dark, sombre, and shameful. They blame themselves, become introverts and in many cases become victims of complete withdrawals. It takes a lot of courage for women to make the first step to leave an abusive partner and seek support. Women escaping gender-based violence, therefore, need a haven, a temporary shelter to secure their safety and mitigate risks and threats to their lives.

Shelters location
UNFPA supports five women shelters across Iraq run and managed by the Ministries of Labour and Social Affairs in the Federal Government and in the Kurdistan Regional Government.

Each shelter consists of rooms for accommodation, a room for counselling, a room for recreational activities, a room for psychosocial support and a kitchen.

Shelters capacity
- Baghdad: up to 80 women
- Duhok: up to 40 women
- Erbil: up to 20 women
- Sulaymaniyah: up to 40 women
- Germian (72-hour shelter): up to 20 women

The goal of the shelter is to create a safe community for women and girls at risk or survivors of gender-based violence, especially domestic violence, through the provision of an immediate and a temporary shelter, in addition to the delivery of emergency specialised services.

Services offered at the shelters
Medical services
Immediate upon need for consequences of GBV, in addition to facilitating the access to follow-up services;
Psychosocial support
Individual counselling and group psychosocial support are regularly offered by a senior social worker;
Mental health services
Psychological counselling, including psychiatric counselling when needed and group emotional support sessions;
Legal counselling
Legal assistance and consultations, including on family law, are available when needed;
Childcare programme
Recreational activities and psychosocial support for accompanied children;
Basic needs items
Food, NFIs, clothing, dignity kits, baby kits, shampoo, soap, toothbrush.

UNFPA, with funding from Canada and the European Regional Development and Protection Programme for the Middle East (RDPP), organised capacity building trainings for women shelter staff took place during the third quarter of 2018, targeting 32 persons from Baghdad, Basra, Erbil, Duhok, Sulaymaniyah and Germian.

The training aimed at strengthening capacities of women shelter staff in managing the women shelter as well as exchanging experiences among shelters in different locations of Iraq. The sessions included orientation on the international legal framework on women’s rights and gender equality, the objective of women shelter, guiding principles and standard operating procedures for women shelter.

UNFPA Mandate
UNFPA, the United Nations Population Fund, in Iraq works across the country to contribute to improving reproductive health service capacity, promoting gender equality and women empowerment, enhancing programmes for young people, and availing population data for development planning.

In 2018, UNFPA launched its strategic plan 2018-2021 with three transformative results in sight:

- End Preventable Maternal Death
- End Unmet Needs for Family Planning
- End Gender-Based Violence and All Harmful Practices

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