



Funded by the
European Union

DRC DANISH
REFUGEE
COUNCIL



**MERCY
CORPS**

NRC
NORWEGIAN
REFUGEE COUNCIL


OXFAM

GENDER ANALYSIS OF LIVELIHOODS PROGRAMMING AND INDIVIDUAL, HOUSEHOLD AND COMMUNITY DYNAMICS IN IRAQ



Summary Report

KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. Livelihood programmes can support the participation and normalisation of women in income generation;
2. Women still bear the burden of unpaid care work so as they enter the paid workforce, efforts are needed to support redistribution of care and housework;
3. The social norm that discourages mixing of men and women who are not related continues to be a challenge to women's economic empowerment;
4. Livelihood programming creates opportunities for increasing social bonds between women to build and strengthen supportive relationships and social and economic networks;
5. Given that livelihood activities involving women interact with social norms, there is an opportunity to engage with men, boys, women and girls to address harmful or restrictive constructions of masculinity and femininity that drive gender-related vulnerabilities and inequalities.

INTRODUCTION

Women throughout the world are constrained in their economic activities, and face major challenges trying to pursue better paid and more productive jobs, including in Iraq. Iraq is in a time of change after ISIS and in light of the pandemic. Though economic upheaval brings hardship, it also can open doors for women's economic empowerment. Understanding how current livelihood and economic empowerment programming is impacting gender norms, roles, and responsibilities is a crucial starting point for improving women's economic position and well-being in the context of relief and recovery efforts.

In the autumn of 2020 the Cash and Livelihoods Consortium for Iraq (CLCI, formerly CCI) commissioned a study on gender and livelihoods. The purpose of the study was to explore gender norms in Iraq and the interplay between gender norms and livelihood programming in areas of intervention.

While the full report gave a comprehensive overview of the qualitative and quantitative findings, this report aims to distill those findings into key areas of interest, including supplementary reflections on the ongoing CLCI programme. The full report is unpublished; please reach out to vleape@oxfam.org.uk for a copy of the manuscript.

METHODOLOGY

The study used a mixed methods approach, complementing large-scale qualitative data collection through Key Informant Interviews (KII) and Focus Group Discussions (FGD), with a quantitative Household-level Survey. The study was designed as such that a total of 356 former livelihoods activity participants across four locations (Tel Afar, Mosul, Tikrit, Baiji) were interviewed by means of KIIs with 39 women and 22 men, FGDs with 54 women and 55 men and household survey with 83 men and 103 women. There was purposive sampling of male and female participants of different age groups, marital status, and engagement in different types of livelihood activities (see Annex 1). A trained and gender-balanced team of 22 Arabic-speaking livelihood officers from the Danish Refugee Council (DRC), the International Rescue Committee (IRC), and Oxfam supported the data collection efforts between 27 September and 8 October 2020.

The Saferworld ‘Gender Analysis of Conflict Toolkit’ defines ‘gender norms’ as “sets of expectations about how people of each gender should behave. They are not determined by biological sex but rather are specific to particular cultures or societies, and often to particular social groups within those societies. Thus, what may be expected behaviour for a man or woman in one culture may be unacceptable in another.” For the purposes of this paper, [Women’s Economic Empowerment](#) can be understood broadly as women’s inclusion in economic activities and addressing multiple inequalities that reduce women’s economic inclusion.

KEY FINDINGS BY THEMATIC AREA

THE EFFECTS OF LIVELIHOODS PROGRAMMING

According to study participants, the most significant change resulting from their engagement in a livelihoods programme were: (a) increased income, meeting needs and access to markets at the individual level; (b) more harmonious relationships, characterised as greater joint decision-making and fewer tensions, at the household level, and; (c) greater presence of women in the public space and more collaborative relations (especially between women) at the community level. Participants reported that longer-term interventions, such as vocational training or business grants, were preferable. Normalising the role of women in income generation and productive activities was an observed gender-transformative benefit resulting from livelihood programmes.

EARNING INCOME

There has been a broadening of the accepted roles for women in income generating activities and the effects of earning income can be positive for women. While respondents reported overwhelmingly that it was men who engage in all productive activities rather than women, girls, or boys,¹ 51 per cent of respondents believed that women were engaging in new productive activities, i.e. activities they did not do two years ago. The types of productive activity where respondents most reported women as engaging were petty trade (52 per cent), collecting government support (46 per cent), and credit, loans and debt (45 per cent), where comparatively for men these were rehabilitation of infrastructure (81 per cent), Cash for Work (81 per cent) and construction (81 per cent). The results of the household survey revealed that most respondents, both female and male, agreed that when women earn income it leads to several positive outcomes. In the household survey, female and male participants were asked about the effects of women earning income on their self-esteem, relationships, safety, access and control of household assets, influence on decision making, networking opportunities, and being able to do something new that they were unable to previously.² More than 90 per cent of respondents reported that women earning income improved their levels of self-esteem, their feelings of safety, harmony of their relationships, and opportunities to connect with other women. More than 80 per cent of respondents reported that earning income allowed women to do something new they were not able to before and improved their access to and control over household assets and 72 per cent reported it resulted in more influence over decision-making in the household. In addition, 69 per cent of women agreed or fully agreed that their economic activity empowered them. The qualitative interviews revealed that some reasons for the broadening of accepted roles were that households were exposed to different cultures during the displacement period,³ women’s increased participation in vocational training programmes led to more job opportunities, and that non-governmental

1 These were casual labour, cash for work, construction, rehabilitation of infrastructure, petty trade, credit loan/debts, high risk/exploitative work, collect government support.

2 When answered positively, a broad range of examples were given including moving around freely, buying or driving a car, and starting a business.

3 There were specific references to more open-minded and liberal cultures in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq

organisations provide tailored support to women within communities. As the study sample was largely composed of livelihood programme participants, it is possible this finding is skewed towards overrepresenting the positive effects of income generation, given that they would have been exposed to NGO activities, which was identified by respondents as a key driver.

CARE WORK

Women bore the burden of unpaid care work within their households, which ultimately presents a barrier to their participation in paid work. While women appeared to be increasingly engaging in income-generating activities, unpaid care work and household management remained decidedly the responsibility of women. Most respondents reported that it was women and girls who engaged in a variety of caregiving activities rather than men or boys. This was the case for childcare, care for elderly or sick household members, cooking meals, housekeeping, and washing clothes. The household task of looking after livestock was more evenly split with 87 per cent reporting that women and girls were primarily responsible for this, and 76 per cent reporting men and boys.⁴ More respondents reported that men and boys were engaged in fetching water (72 per cent) than women and girls (61 per cent). Finally, when asked about change over time only 22 per cent of respondents believed that men were engaging in caregiving activities that they did not do before, with more women (32 per cent) than men (10 per cent) reporting this change. Of the caregiving activities men engaged with, they participated most in care for elderly or sick (36 per cent) and childcare (22 per cent) and were least likely to participate in washing clothes (3 per cent) and cooking meals (8 per cent). This highlights that while shifts in women earning income are taking place, similar shifts in the care work space are not, and that even when care responsibilities are assumed by men, there remains a hierarchy among the tasks of what is more or less socially acceptable. This suggests that working women will face a double burden of juggling both paid and unpaid work. Support is needed to address the gender division of labour in the household through a redistribution of care and housework and the introduction of possible services and technologies to reduce the burden.

SELF-ESTEEM AND CONFIDENCE

Self-esteem and confidence of women were boosted by their participation in income-generating activity and the resulting access to income. Almost all respondents (96 per cent) agreed that when women earned income it led to improved levels of self-esteem and self-confidence, with 99 per cent of female respondents and 92 per cent of male respondents reporting these effects. There were differences observed between demographic groups and between men and women. Respondents who were single and young (up to 30 years old) were somewhat less convinced that self-esteem improved (88% [100% for single women, 77% for single men] and 90% [97% for young women, 86% for young men] respectively). While most men agreed that women's individual situation changed positively as a result of earning income, levels were consistently lower than those of their women peers, as shown in responses to feeling more confident (92% for men, 99% for women), having more harmonious relationships in the household (88% for men, 99% for women), and feeling safer (92% for men, 97% for women). This means that while earning income for their households can provide essential consumption support, there were also psychosocial well-being benefits for women.

CONTROL OF HOUSEHOLD EXPENDITURES

Decisions on household expenditure were taken jointly, and women perceived that engaging in economic activities positively affected their participation in decision-making, but men were less convinced. On who takes decisions on household expenditures, almost two-thirds of respondents agreed that decisions on purchases for household consumption, minor value assets, and expensive assets were taken jointly. Of these, the

⁴ Percentages do not add up to 100 because respondents could select up to 2 options.

largest difference in responses between men and women was on household consumption where 71 per cent of men saw it as a joint decision whereas only 58 per cent of women agreed, as 32 per cent saw themselves as the decision-maker.⁵ The definition of 'joint' may vary from person to person and requires further attention to determine the process used and the level of ownership, engagement and communications among both parties in decision-making

While the majority of respondents (72%) agreed that earning income increased influence over decision-making on household expenditures, there were large differences between women (86%) and men (53%). In addition, decision-making was judged to be the area that was the least positively affected by income generation.⁶

Almost two-thirds of female participants reported that since participating in livelihood programming, their participation in decision-making on household expenditures had changed. Of the women who reported change, the respondents indicated positive change related to the strength of the position of women and more shared decision-making.⁷ This means that while women who earn income may play a more prominent role in decision making regarding how their own income is spent, the scope of their decision-making authority remains within the sphere of responsibilities traditionally seen as women's purview (household expenditures such as food, child care, soap, etc), and that the majority of women's income may still be spent on purchases to support their households as compared to personal or leisure expenses. Additional investigation is required to better understand women's participation in decision-making on men's income, and the proportion of men's income spent on household purchases as compared to personal or leisure expenses, productive assets, or other.

CONTROL OF HOUSEHOLD PRODUCTIVE ACTIVITIES

Men appeared to control decisions around critical productive activities for the household, and it seemed that earning income increases the involvement of women.

91 per cent of women and 76 per cent of men reported that when women earned income it increased their access to and control over productive assets in the household. As above, two thirds of respondents (65 per cent) reported that buying or selling expensive household assets was a joint decision between men and women in the household (61 per cent of women, 69 per cent of men). Interestingly, of those who did not think it was a joint decision, a similar proportion of men and women considered themselves to be the decision maker with 22 per cent of women respondents and 27 per cent of men respondents reporting themselves as the primary decision-maker on the issue. Although the buying or selling of household assets was reported as a joint decision by most respondents, when asked about selling *productive* assets 79 per cent of respondents considered men to be engaged and only 26 per cent considered women to be engaged. This means that more efforts need to be made to support households to understand the benefits of joint decision making and of the increased participation of women in decision-making around the productive capacity of the household.

Being involved in economic activities was perceived to be empowering, especially business grants and vocational training. When asked whether their economic activity empowered them, both men and women responded affirmatively. However women responded more frequently that they 'fully agreed' that their economic activity empowered them (43%) compared to men's perception that women were empowered by their economic activities (29%). When asked which activities empowered them the most,⁸ women responded that business grants and vocational training were the most empowering. While both men and women agreed that business grants and vocational training were the top three ranked

5 Compared to only 18% of men seeing themselves as the decision-maker. Given that the sample for the quantitative interviews is made up of previous livelihoods participants, these results should be interpreted as indicative of that population and not necessarily representative of the population as a whole.

6 In comparison to self-esteem, relationships, safety, access and control of assets, opportunities to connect and being able to do something new that they were unable to previously

7 The question was 'What is your level of decision-making?' 'Decision-maker, Informed, Joint decision, No involvement'

8 More than one option could be selected

economic empowerment activities for women, men reported that livestock was most empowering (64%), which ranked third among women (40%). It appears that business grants and vocational training may be perceived as among the most empowering economic activities for women.

RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHER WOMEN

Increasing social bonds between women was seen as a positive effect of livelihood activities and was perceived to potentially have longer-term implications for women's empowerment. A different aspect of gender relations at the community level concerns relations among groups of women. Both the livelihood activities resulting in increased social bonds between women as well as calls for more women-only activities such as joint business grants, to create and strengthen bonds between women in the community were noted in the qualitative data. There are two illustrative examples from Mosul, firstly "*the relation between women in the same programme or work became better. Now we have strong and stable social relations*" (FGD, Mosul, Women, CfW); and secondly "*this is considered positive. Yes, because they feel closer to each other. These activities could gather women from different neighbourhoods in the same activity*" (FGD, Mosul, Women, CfW). Building and strengthening relationships between women is a key precondition for women to organise as a collective for change, provides valuable individual psycho-social benefits, and offers the opportunity for collective action across ethnic, tribe, or political divisions. Livelihood activities present an entry point for women to convene, strengthen bonds, and support to one another at the community level, group, and individual level.

GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

Transgressing social norms regarding women's participation in paid work may expose them to increased risks of gender based violence. The perceived cost for women of not conforming to gender norms varied, but could be considered high, including stigmatisation, harassment and exclusion.⁹ References were made by respondents to risks related to countering socially-accepted norms for women regarding 'respectability.' Several respondents, such as a male tribal leader from Beiji, pointed towards the cost of transgressing social norms including violence: '*abiding by the moral values and social traditions will minimize protection risks and sexual abuse or harassment cases.*' Such opinions regarding 'causes' of violence are reflective of deeply-ingrained social norms that fail to acknowledge both men's responsibility for perpetrating violence against women and girls as well as systemic power imbalances that lead to women and girls' oppression, exploitation, and abuse.

Respondents reported that participation in livelihood activities made relationships at home more harmonious. The study did not explicitly explore changes related to experiences of domestic violence or intimate partner violence. However, respondents mentioned having more harmonious relationships in the household (88% for men, 99% for women) as a positive effect of women's engagement in livelihood activities. For example, respondents stated that relationships became more harmonious by easing financial pressure on the household, which led to fewer tensions. It is well documented in the literature¹⁰ that at times of financial strain and reduced assets, the risk of intimate partner violence increases. Possible causes for reduced tensions may be a reduction in the need for women to negotiate with men to access their financial resources for household expenditures when women have their own income that can be dedicated to this purpose. Future studies should seek to better understand the linkages between intimate partner violence and women's participation in livelihood activities in Iraq, as well as the reasons why household tensions reduced.

9 Saferworld, 2016.

10 Lucero, Lim, & Santiago (2016). Changes in Economic Hardship and Intimate Partner Violence: A Family Stress Framework. *J Fam Econ Iss* 37, 395–406.

MOBILITY

Women are more accepted in public spaces than in the past and livelihood activities allow women to be freer to move around, though men are less convinced than women. Within the study sample, women and men participants agreed that women were more accepted in public spaces than in the past. This was mostly connected to physical presence and visibility, particularly relevant in the context of departure from practices under IS-occupation (of women to be accompanied by male ‘guardian’). It also referred to freedom of movement, connected to access to markets, being able to fulfil daily needs to care and provide for the family. Based on the household survey, respondents overall reported that as a result of livelihood programmes, women were freer to move around. More women than men reported this; 85% of women reported being freer, compared to 52% of men who reported that women were freer. Similar to freedom of movement, respondents also considered livelihood activities to increase the visibility of women (on the street, for example), with 83% of women respondents and 61% of men respondents reporting that women were more visible. Similarly, women were also perceived to have more access to markets - according to 87% of women and 70% of men respondents.

At the same time as observing changes to mobility, one of the most consistent gender norms expressed was that unrelated men and women are not supposed to mix. The study found that there are costs of non-conforming to this gender norm including women’s reputations being undermined, rumours being spread and the standing of the woman in her community. Some respondents mentioned that the concerns around reputation can lead to permission to participate in livelihoods activities not being granted. Strategies seeking to mitigate protection risks that result in restricting women’s mobility and their already-constrained access to the public sphere may serve to reinforce these harmful norms. Instead, efforts must focus on identifying how to work with women and men, girls and boys and relevant institutions on understanding the power and control dynamics that lead to violence against women and girls.

MASCULINITY

Masculinity norms played a key role in women’s access to livelihoods opportunities. The perception of masculinity in a society is an important enabling or disabling force when it comes to the empowerment of women. A recent Oxfam study dove deeper into the topic of masculinities in Iraq.¹¹ Within this study, masculinity norms were explored in the qualitative data centred around themes of the men as providers and protectors. Concrete traits referenced by both men and women respondents included being honest and polite, showing leadership, caring for one’s family and being a decision-maker. *“He must have a strong personality, be honest with his wife and family, faithful to work with colleagues; he wishes goodness for others; he helps people in need”*, as well as *“should be generous and support people in need, have good behaviour, be brave and stand up for the rights of others”* (FGD, Tel Afar Male, Grant) and *“the ambitious man, a strong-willed man who supports women. A man who maintains his family, a good man with high morals”* (FGD, Tel Afar Women, CfW).

The perceptions of masculinity found in this study do not necessarily indicate Iraqi men have antagonistic attitudes towards women’s empowerment, though men’s primary breadwinning role and the existence of certain masculinity norms that perpetuate violence against women and girls, adhered to by certain men, should be acknowledged. A nuanced understanding of the local expressions of masculinity is crucial in identifying appropriate strategies on how to engage men as allies and advocates for women’s empowerment. In addition to understanding, a gender synchronised approach that reaches both men and boys and women and girls and challenges them on harmful or restrictive constructions of masculinity and femininity that drive gender-related vulnerabilities and inequalities.¹²

11 Oxfam (2021) A Study on Social Norms of Masculinities, Gender Roles and Stereotypes to Identify the Common Misconception Men and Boys Have Around Women and Girls’ Empowerment.

12 <https://www.igwg.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/synchronizing-gender-strategies.pdf>

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PROGRAMME

1. Livelihood programmes can support the participation and normalisation of women in income generation; efforts need to centre on promoting women's meaningful engagement in activities that lead to safe, dignified, productive, and sustainable income generation opportunities.
2. Beyond economic improvements, psychosocial wellbeing outcomes resulting from livelihood activities should be acknowledged, measured and considered during programme design.
3. Women still bear the burden of unpaid care work due to gender norms. As they enter the paid workforce, efforts are needed to support redistribution of care and housework in the home and the introduction of services and technology to support this.
4. The social norm that discourages mixing of men and women who are not related continues to be a challenge to women's economic empowerment. Further steps to offer the choice to participants about the setting of livelihood activities are needed, while simultaneously addressing these and other norms that restrict women's participation in livelihood activities by engaging with the women and men, girls and boys in gender synchronised behaviour change activities on the power dynamics and systems that perpetuate gender inequality.
5. Men should be engaged with as allies and advocates for women's economic empowerment, as well as in activities that support them to consider the impact of gender norms around masculinity on the financial health and overall well-being of themselves and their households.
6. Given that livelihood activities involving women interact with social norms, there is an opportunity to introduce gender synchronised behaviour change activities whereby men, boys, women and girls are engaged to address social norms, inequalities and vulnerabilities.
7. Livelihood programming creates opportunities for increasing social bonds between women to build and strengthen supportive relationships and social and economic networks, which are key to creating access to more productive and higher value economic opportunities.
8. While decision-making around household expenditures is shared in certain areas, more concerted efforts are needed to develop a common concept and skills in joint decision making among women and men, and to promote joint decision making in decisions related to all aspects of household management including those related to the financial health of the household.

ANNEX 1. PURPOSEIVE SAMPLE BREAKDOWN

	Mosul	Tel Afer	Tikrit city	Beiji
TOOL 1: Household Survey	25M 25F	25M 25F	25M 25F	25M 25F
Female-headed households	5F	5F	5F	5F
Widowed and divorced women	5F	5F	5F	5F
Young unmarried women (up to 30 years old)	5F	5F	5F	5F
Remainder female beneficiaries (no specific category)	10F	10F	10F	10F
Disabled men	5M	5M	5M	5M
Young unmarried men (up to 30 years old)	5M	5M	5M	5M
Widowed men	5M	5M	5M	5M
Remainder male beneficiaries (no specific category)	10M	10M	10M	10M
TOOL 2: Key Informant Interviews (Kiis)	6M 9F	6M 9F	6M 9F	6M 9F
Community leaders (tribal, religious and women's)	3M 2F	3M 2F	3M 2F	3M 2F
Programme beneficiaries from community committees, and other outspoken beneficiaries (particularly female)	3M 7F	3M 7F	3M 7F	3M 7F
TOOL 3: Focus Group Discussions (7 Participants Each)	2M 2F	2M 2F	2M 2F	2M 2F
Female/male beneficiaries from apprenticeships and job placement activities	1F 1M	1F 1M	1F 1M	1F 1M
Female/male beneficiaries from vocational/employability training, and business development services	1F 1M	1F 1M	1F 1M	1F 1M

Contact:

Virginia Leape

CLCI Research, Policy & Advocacy Coordinator
vleape@oxfam.org.uk

Riaz Khan

CLCI Director
rkhan@mercycorps.org

About the Cash and Livelihoods Consortium for Iraq (CLCI):

The Cash and Livelihoods Consortium for Iraq (CLCI), previously known as the Cash Consortium for Iraq (CCI), is a multi-donor, multi-program partnership that has implemented over \$160,000,000 USD in humanitarian and recovery funding since its formation in 2015. The CLCI is comprised of the Danish Refugee Council (DRC), the International Rescue Committee (IRC), the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), Oxfam and Mercy Corps as lead.

The CLCI focuses on harmonized implementation at scale to meet basic needs and support the self-reliance of vulnerable populations with cash- and market-based livelihoods approaches.

RELIEF
RECOVERY
RESILIENCE

DRC DANISH
REFUGEE
COUNCIL



MERCY
CORPS



Funded by the European Union, through the EU Regional Trust Fund in response to the Syrian crisis, the EU Madad Fund

This publication was produced with the financial support of the European Union. Its contents are the sole responsibility of the Cash and Livelihoods Consortium for Iraq and do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Union