



**Evaluating the Status of
Iraqi Women
in Light of the Beijing Platform for
Action**

Introduction

These pages very briefly tackle the state of Iraqi women after the 1995 Beijing International Conference on Women. The conference identified 12 critical areas in which states and civil society organizations (CSO's) should focus their efforts on if they are to achieve a notable and measurable development in the status of women.

Although Iraq has lived through enormous events during the first quarter of 2003, ending with the fall of the former regime and the country's occupation, a new reconstruction phase has already started. The data contained in this study represents the situation of the country during a period of 30 years. The results of the data analysis, however, can be utilized in the years to come. Reconstruction pertains to both people and entities. Iraqi women can be said to be the first victims of the conflict, sanctions and the regime's bad policies. It is, therefore, their right to be very optimistic about the future.

It is our earnest hope that this study will be of help to those who would like to follow up on the experience of the last three decades and to develop, in light thereof, indicators for not only the near future but also for the distant future.

UNIFEM's efforts to document and develop the situation of Iraqi women in the post-1995 era are highly commendable and noteworthy. Our thanks go to UNIFEM for its ongoing efforts.

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Chapter 1

The Methodological and Authoritative Reference Framework of the Study

Section 1: Study Methodology and Sources of Information

This study uses the case study approach to describe the state of Iraqi women in the aftermath of the 1995 Beijing Conference. It is an integral part of an intensive effort made by the United Nations Development Fund for Women's (UNIFEM) Regional Office for Arab States to obtain information about the status of Arab women and diagnose obstacles hampering their development. It also aims to identify opportunities available to women within the framework of human development. For the purpose of this study, it is important to note that the years under review are years that have already passed, even though in reality their impact has not vanished. Those years will continue to overshadow the years to come. Therefore, the reader should put the study's timeframe in its broadest context in order to grasp the time variant treated in the study. Another important aspect to consider is that Iraq has recently been through a critical era during the past decade (1990-2003). This era has seen bloody military conflicts and prolonged international economic sanctions enforced in accordance with UN Security Council resolutions. These developments have impacted heavily on the situation of Iraqi women. Their price has been extremely heavy and their meanings have been profound. The data presented here is derived from the realities of the crises in terms of their complications and complexities at the state, community and individual levels. Therefore, if Iraqi women have achieved anything prior to or during this period, they have at the same time faced frustrations and lost many opportunities. It is for all the above reasons that we have chosen to use the case study approach. We seek to not only describe the situation in Iraq according to the available data and qualitative and quantitative indicators, but also to look at it in a critical manner. This critical version will attempt to reflect the link between the verbal enunciation of the situation in Iraq and the reality of the actual situation on the ground and in everyday life. This is a connection that is seen, albeit to different degrees, in most of Iraq's communities when they are approached regarding women's issues.

It is also worth noting that there are a multitude of sources for this study. In reviewing data, it is common to find disparities between figures and

different interpretations. The government tried over many years to justify the negative data, considering it a consequence of the international embargo. Other parties saw this information as a consequence of unwise government policies. Since Iraq's official stance was to present data in such a manner as to influence international resolutions with a view to lifting the embargo or easing it, much data was used to justify that goal. Because of this fact, it has been necessary to adopt a more critical position with regard to the data presented—a position that does not accept the data as is.

To better understand this rationale, one can look at calculations relating to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita. Measured by the parity purchasing power (PPP) of the Iraqi dinar, the GDP per capita was fixed at \$634 in 1995 (in relation to the US dollar, when the dollar exchange rate was almost 3000 dinars). This meant that the per capita income was almost 2 million Iraqi dinars, and that an individual's annual income when the PPP was measured according to the dinar was equivalent to \$807¹. It is clear that both calculations were wrong, since most Iraqis were receiving salaries in 1995 that could hardly meet their basic subsistence needs, according to several international organizations.

It is also useful to note that the concerned parties, such as the Central Statistics Bureau, did not provide the data needed by researchers under the pretext of the need to preserve the security of the country. It is for this reason that UNIFEM's efforts to establish a database on Iraqi women did not yield effective results after planning for it for more than two years. Due to the present state of emergency in Iraq, the project stopped. Problems of this nature make it crucial for a researcher to carefully examine the available data with an aim to use that which is the most objective and accurate.

Another important aspect is that the post-1995 data available on Iraqi women does not include those governorates under self rule (Sulaimaniya, Irbil and Dhuk). Regardless, most data available from these governorates takes the form of estimates and projections. This has been the case ever since the Gulf War of 1991, when they became outside the central government's control. This emphasizes the need for a special study on the state of Kurdish women.

Even though the data treated in this study focuses on the period of 1995 – 2003, this study's analysis does not ignore the fact that Iraq will chart its

¹ See the Planning Commission, "Human Development Report for 2000", 1st edition. See also Iraqi Economists Association, Human Development Report, 1995", Baghdad, page 166.

way anew on the path of the future. It is important to monitor the current situation and attempt to chart a path for the future, but it is also important to realize that today's problems are closely tied to the problems and events of the past. Consequently, it is extremely important to grasp the entire picture—the pre-April 2003 situation before the regime collapsed, along with post-April 2003, when Iraq fell under occupation and made its first step towards the future.

Section 2: Legitimate Ambitions and Status Quo-Related Frustrations: Critical Areas of the 1995 Beijing Conference

The International Conference on Women in Beijing is a landmark achievement in the international community's efforts to empower women to benefit from available opportunities and actively contribute to their societies as dynamic human beings capable of excelling. The conference is the culmination of earlier efforts, such as international declarations, conventions and conferences on development and the situation of women and children, which taken together have paved the way for landmark national achievements (at official and non-official levels). These achievements reflect the reality that a global movement, whose principles are developing and references are being articulated, is in the process of forming. The movement's ultimate goal is to liberate women from the shackles of their gender and reinforce a culture of gender based on rational equity.

The Beijing vision builds on the following objectives:

1. Identifying strategic goals for human communities to achieve
2. Defining implementation mechanisms
3. Defining the implementing bodies, i.e. governmental and non-governmental organizations (civil society organizations) and international agencies and institutions, such as UNIFEM and the World Bank.

In Iraq, for example, the government typically limited the role of the national voluntary sector and replaced it with organizations dubbed as "grassroots" or "people's organizations." These bodies were, in reality, an extension of the regime that reflected its ideology, adhered to its mechanisms and had a similar vision for the future. As a result, for four decades Iraq has not seen NGO's form an active and influential civil society.² This does not necessarily mean, however, that women's, youth, student or other organizations and associations did not affect community

² Several NGO's and societies concerned with children, women and the handicapped were affiliated with political parties yet enjoyed a degree of independence. An example from the mid-1950's is the religious and social service societies which played an important role in addressing problems like prostitution and, in cooperation with the World Health Organization, encouraged the state to issue the necessary legislation banning it.

life. They did, in fact, but they could not by any means be seen as part of an independent civil society insofar as they overlapped with the government.³

From another perspective, countries have different positions towards international funding institutions such as the World Bank. States that committed themselves to restructuring their economies and implementing liberal principles and market economies have maintained close relations with such institutions, while others have rejected their principles and clung to a central role played by the state. What is paradoxical with regard to Iraq is that international economic sanctions imposed on the country forced it to carry out economic restructuring despite its declared adherence to socialism. Iraq had raised taxes and lifted subsidies for health services yet adopted a self-financing health service system. The Ministry of Education also overlooked the burdens Iraqi families had to bear in order to educate their children despite a government decision making education free.

Thus, the critical areas and corresponding goals, procedures and implementing bodies look diverse in terms of prospects for acceptance and implementation. Iraq's case may be one of the clearest models, as we have indicated. In dealing with each topic, we will take into consideration that the Iraq after the Beijing Conference consists of two different stages, at least outwardly, with regard to the social perspective: the pre-April 2003 era and the post-April 2003 era. Both of these periods use two relatively different languages to tell the story of Iraqi women and their arduous march complete with setbacks and achievements.

The critical areas identified by the Beijing Conference include all aspects of women's lives from around the world, despite their different cultures and experiences. The applications of these areas in term of goals, procedures and objectives, however, should not neglect the cultural differences. It has been said that discovering cultural relativity was as important as discovering the law of gravity.⁴

Cultural relativity enables one to see the Other and interact with him/her rather than ignore him/her. Based on this, we believe that the topics emphasized by Beijing Conference participants, important as they are, will not command equal recognition in all societies across the globe. These same topics are not equally important in terms of the ability to recognize

³ As was the case in some states and communities such as Bologne.

⁴ UNDP, "Preventing and Eradicating Poverty", New York, 1997.

them in all societies. It should be noted that recognition of an issue does not always indicate objective performance nor actual respect for its merits. This reflects the apparent contradiction between verbal acceptance and behavioral rejection, as well as declared, conscious acceptance and invisible, subconscious rejection.

We believe that the reactions of states and societies to the Beijing Conference ranged between two positions: comprehensive, declared verbal acceptance and hesitant behavior. It seems that Iraq did not free itself completely from this contradiction, as the following pages indicate. It is true that Iraq has taken tangible steps to achieve the goals defined by the critical areas of the Beijing Conference, including the drafting of the National Strategy for the advancement of Iraqi Women; the formation of a Higher Committee, headed by the Minister of Labor and Social Affairs, to manage the strategy; promoting the culture of gender; and creating a network to follow up and coordinate between the various government departments on issues relating to the implementation of the Strategy.* However, nothing can hide the fact that Iraqi women have encountered enormous difficulties which those decisions and legislation, irrespective of how important and valuable they were, could not help alleviate the status of Iraqi women.

* Iraq ratified the 1979 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 1986 and acceded to the 1989 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1994. It also acceded to the International Convention on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in 1971 and endorsed the Anti-Violence and the Nairobi Forward-Looking Strategies to Advance the Status of Women in 1985. Iraq has acquired an advisory status at the UN in accordance with the Economic and Social Council's (ECOSOC) Resolution No. 32/1996.

Section 3: Some Basic Concepts of the Study

Some people deem it impossible to find comprehensive definitions for basic concepts used in human and social science. It should be noted that the Beijing Conference did not offer operational definitions for concepts contained in the final report. It is obvious that such concepts as poverty are so ambiguous that they lead to many definitions with different criteria. However, anyone who follows up on such issues will notice that human development reports have made serious attempts to reach an acceptable definition of poverty, which Amartya Sen defined as "human incapability." By making reference to the individual, the definition emphasizes the individual's failure to achieve a minimum level of welfare. Poverty does not refer to one's income, but rather whether the income provides enough in terms of human capability to be sufficient for an individual.

It is well-known that Amartya Sen used the competency of exchanges as an entry point in analyzing poverty in developing countries. This means that a person can exchange his/her property for another commodity through trade, production or both. Thus, a person is likely to die if his/her property does not include sufficient food. This approach defines maps of at least two types of exchanges: exchange of labor for income and exchange of cash income for commodities. It also specifies the circumstances leading to poverty, such as unemployment, insufficient wages and high prices of commodities and services.⁵ When looking at those with no access to health services, children under the age of five with low weight, and populations with no access to safe water, human development reports use the concept of human poverty (HPLI).⁶ This concept can be expressed in three operational indicators: lifespan, knowledge and decent living conditions.

It is clear that there is a correlation between human poverty indicators and human incapability (children with low weight, births not attended by medical professionals and illiteracy). There is also a relative conformity with the development indicator which is linked to gender and the measure of empowerment according to gender. The latter is based on a comparison of males and females with regard to political equality, life expectancy at birth, literacy rates, gross enrollment rates in the first three grades and income level.⁷ The above indicators appear in several areas such as

⁵ National Planning Institute, Egypt, "Human Development Report 1996", Cairo, pp. 16-17.

⁶ "Human Development Report 2002", (first edition with limited circulation).

⁷ Hamzeh, Dr. Karim Mohammed and others, *Poverty and Wealth in the Arab World*, 2002, Baghdad: Beit Al Hikma, page 36.

education, health, political and economic equality, management of human resources and others.

Iraq's Human Development Report did not contain a separate chapter to analyze the poverty phenomenon and its indicators. However, it specified the basic features of human deprivation in terms of the percentage of the population with no access to health services, safe water or sanitation; female illiteracy; children not attending primary school; children under five years old (U5) suffering malnutrition; and U5 child mortality. The report referred to wealth, poverty and social investment and identified six indicators: actual gross domestic product (GDP) per capita in US\$ according to the PPP, gross national product (GNP) per capita in US\$, the lowest 40% and highest 20% of families, social security expenses (% of GDP) and public expenditure on education and health (% of GDP).⁸

The Human Development Report for 2000, however, neither singled out a separate section for data on poverty nor used this concept.

In a previous study, we have distinguished between two types of poverty:

1. Institutional (empowerment) and economic poverty (income and standards of living), such as lack of knowledge, educational opportunities, health services and facilities, shelter, participation and social assistance (safety and solidarity networks)
2. Gender-based poverty, such as biological and physiologically based discrimination, age-based poverty (senility), discrimination because of disability and physical ailment (health poverty) and discrimination based on ethnic, religious or factional affiliation (lack of identity).

It is clear that the first type of poverty is related to a society's capabilities and available opportunities, while the second type relates to an individual's capabilities (is it true and objective, such as a disability or is it culturally ascribed, as in the case of women?).⁹

Looking at the critical areas contained in the Beijing report, one will notice that each area reflects, in one way or another, one of the aspects of poverty

⁸ The Iraqi Economists Society, "Human Development Report, 1995", Baghdad, pp. 168, 172.

⁹ See our study, "Poverty: Development of the Conceptual Framework Indicators", published in the previous source (*Poverty and Wealth in the Arab World*), page 46.

(education, health, violence, unequal distribution of economic structures and inequality in power-sharing and decision making).

Another important aspect is that reports and studies on women in a number of Arab states have not used standard criteria and indicators on poverty, but contain information based on researchers' references, perceptions and perhaps their specializations, as well as the amount and type of information and data available to them. We have encountered the same problem in this study, since we have found there is a lack of diverse information.

Therefore, we have done our best to utilize the official data as well as that contained in other official studies. In attempting to closely follow the areas specified by the Beijing Conference, we have addressed the concept of poverty through several procedural indicators, including

- Income and sustenance, unpaid work and property rights
- The most important indicators of poor women: family size, responsibility for supporting big families, inadequate empowerment opportunities (training, loans), poor quality of housing and lack of basic services
- Deteriorating economic conditions of Iraqi households
- Families supported by women, with reference to widows and divorced women
- Social safety nets and available mechanisms for social welfare and social security
- Perceptions of impoverished families regarding their capabilities

Meanwhile, the concept of violence has been cited as a critical area. The concept of violence in this context refers to the situation in which a woman finds that her dignity, physical integrity, close social relations or status in the family, with relatives or in the community is jeopardized solely because she is a woman. Thus, violence refers to an absence of human security or the violation of a woman's personal rights.¹⁰ This definition is based on the principle of rejecting gender-based discrimination. It is the same principle enshrined in Article 5 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).

¹⁰ Hamzah, Dr. Karim Mohammad, "Human Security for Women in Post-War Iraq", an unpublished study for UNIFEM, July 2003.

With this in mind, such traditional and cultural violence that occurs against women, such as beating them to discipline them, insulting them or committing crimes of honor are clear examples of violence acted out against women solely because they are women.

A stereotypical image is based on a generalization or a symbolic way of looking at something or someone. According to Webster's dictionary, a stereotype is a prevailing state of mind among members of a specific group which determines their behavior towards a specific person or thing. Others believe that image means the final outcome of self-impressions of individuals or groups towards a specific person or a regime or a nation or a race. The stereotypical image of women in the Iraqi and Arab mindset is culturally determined and taken from an inherited traditional culture. It is based on a discriminatory role that places women in a lower status than men.

This image is to blame for viewing the role of women as one which should be restricted to the boundaries of the home, and a woman's ascribed status (wife, mother, physically weak, represents or expresses the family honor, housewife) is opposed to that of being an achiever (worker, intellectual, entrepreneur). The stereotypical image is culturally imposed, while a woman's status as an achiever reflects her efforts and utilization of available opportunities.

Regarding the girl child concept, which has been specified by the Beijing critical areas, it is not clearly defined. According to Article 1 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), the definition of a child is "any person below the age of 18, unless he/she attains the age of majority earlier, under the law applicable to the child."¹¹ In Iraq, that age is crucial because it separates the pre-majority and the majority phases.

The term "violation" with regard to the girl child refers to her inability to acquire her legitimate rights as a person in specific areas such as education, health, recreation, expression of opinion, participation in family life and decision-making and preserving her dignity.

As we embark on the explanation and analysis of these concepts, it is important to realize that such concepts are just as much inter-related as they are differential. Consequently, the critical areas of the Beijing Conference need to be recognized and analyzed as an inseparable whole in undertaking a theoretical study.

¹¹ UNICEF, "Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)", Article 1.

Section 4: Iraqi Women: Language of Figures and Demographic Phenomena

Abstract figures are not a yardstick for measuring the weight of an individual or a group against others. The number or figure should fit in the context where it acquires a realistic indication. Therefore, when we say that women represent half of a society, it does not mean much so long as the opportunities available for them are not abundant and if their contribution to a society's life is limited. The total population of Iraq, according to the latest official census of 1997, was 22,017,983, including 11,077,219 females, or 50.3% of the total population, and 10,940,764 males, or 49.7% of the total population. Females outnumbered males for the first time in the history of Iraq's population census, with the gender ratio in 1997 of 98.8% vs. 105.8%.

In 2003, the total population of Iraq was 26,340,227, according to population projections, including 13,124,557 females (49.8%).¹² The gender rate was 100.6%, as opposed to 105.8% in 1997, thus registering a decrease in the ratio of females from the 1997 census.

The population of Iraq had been increasing by more than 3% until 1990, according to available data. In 1997, it dropped to 2.8% and 2.1%, respectively.

The fertility rate was 5.02 children per woman during the period 1994-1997, while the total marital fertility rate in 1999 was 7.71, with 6.87 in urban areas and 9.26 in rural areas. The fertility rate varied according to women's educational level, with 8.86 for illiterate women and 6.4 for those with an intermediate or higher education certificate.¹³

The 1990's have revealed significant demographic indicators, with the crude birthrate dropping due to a drop in marriages from 192,487 in 1989 to 136,149 in 1998.

The average live births during the period 1995-2000 was 509,274, as opposed to 526,597 during the period of 1990-1995. It is expected that the figure will drop to 471,886 during the period 2000-2005.¹⁴ In contrast, a

¹² See: 1) The Central Statistics Bureau, "Results of the Population Census of 1997" and 2) The Central Statistics Bureau, " Projections of Iraqi Population, 1998-2005", Report No. 2, Baghdad, page 217.

¹³ See The Planning Commission, "Human Development Report for 2000", chapter on population, preliminary edition with limited circulation, 2002.

¹⁴ ESCWA, "Bio-Statistical Data in the ESCWA Region", New York, 2003, page 63.

UNICEF survey has reported an increase in the infant mortality rate (IMR) between the periods 1994-1998 and 1994-1999. The IMR increased from 47 cases per 1000 live births during the period 1994-1998 to 107 cases per 1000 live births during the period 1994-1999. However, the IMR reached its peak in 1994 with 111.7 cases¹⁵ The Under 5 mortality rate (U5MR) increased from 56 cases per 1000 live births in 1994 to 131 in 1999, according to UNICEF.¹⁶

Malnutrition must have played the biggest role in these deaths. Indicators show that IMR and U5MR vary according to mothers' educational levels. IMR for illiterate women was 118 cases per 1000 live births, as opposed to 90 per 1000 live births for mothers who completed preparatory or secondary education. The U5MR also varied according to the level of the mother's education. The U5MR was 145 per 1000 live births for illiterate women as opposed to 106 for literate women (with preparatory or secondary education).¹⁷

From an environmental angle, the rural population has dropped from 28% in 1994 to 25% in 1997. Population density has also increased to 50 people per square kilometers.

In terms of population distribution by age, the data found that Iraq's population is young, with 4,406,800 of the female population under 15 (48.7%) and 4,635,100 of the male population under 15 (51.3%) in 1998. However, the proportion of under-15 females to males became 47.5% and 52.5%, respectively, in 2003.

Regarding the working age population (15-64 years), the proportion of females to males was 6,098,800 (48.4%) to 6,514,700 (51.6%), respectively, in 1998. However, the ratio was reversed in 2003 with 50.4% for females against 49.5% for males. In the age group of 65 years and over, in 1998, the total female population was 388,900, or 53.8%, as opposed to a male population of 334,500, or 46.2%.

However, the ratio of working age males vs. females in 2003 was 55.6% and 44.3%, respectively. In terms of education, the illiteracy rate in 1990 was 8.4% of the total population. Estimates indicated an increase to 9% in

¹⁵ UNICEF, "State of Iraqi Children, 2001"; See also Iraqi Economists Association, "Human Development Report for 1995", page 84.

¹⁶ UNICEF, same source.

¹⁷ "Human Development Report 2000", previous source, page 40.

1990. They also suggest that illiteracy rates among females are almost double the rates among males.

The above indicators may serve as an entry point to our study on the state of Iraqi women after the 1995 Beijing Conference.¹⁸

¹⁸ Abdul Hameed, Siham, *Iraqi Women and Socio-Economic Development*, Baghdad: Central Statistics Commission, 1999, page 6; see also Central Statistics Bureau, " Projections of Iraqi Population, 1998-2005", previous source.

Chapter 2

Iraqi Women: Victims of Gender-Based Low Status and Inadequate Empowerment

The poverty of Iraqi women is a complex phenomenon. On one hand, Iraqi women are part of their society's poverty, i.e., an institutional poverty reflecting the inability of the state and its various institutions to provide the necessary opportunities conducive to a decent standard of living and to enhance them in a manner capable of ensuring a balanced societal movement. Their poverty is also a female-related poverty resulting from discrimination against women and the questioning of their abilities to contribute to society. This is borne of traditional cultural stereotypes which continue to influence the life of Iraqi society. The data available does not capture this complex concept of women's poverty because it is, in large part, general data which conforms to the theoretical (particularly the legislative) situation which stresses the principle of equality without actually following up on its implementation. It should be noted that one common stereotypical notion of poverty does not define it as related to women but rather to those responsible for supporting the family, i.e., men, so a woman's poverty is considered that of the male family member responsible for her support.

Iraq saw huge economic deterioration in the aftermath of 1990 which persisted until the regime's fall in April 2003. The GNP per capita, for example, dropped from 32.4% in 1997 to 16.6% in the year 2000. As a result of population growth, the GDP average decline since 1989 became higher than the world figure, according to Tim Niblock. The 1995 estimates indicate that the total annual per capita income was no more than \$200 per year (less than \$0.5 a day), while the World Bank estimated it at \$2840 in 1989, taking into account the average version of the national currency over the 1990's (\$1 = 4 Iraqi dinars (ID's) in 1990; \$1 = 1000 ID's in 1996; and \$1 = 1985 ID's in 2000).¹⁹

¹⁹ Niblock, Tim, *Pariah States and Sanctions in the Middle East*, page 175.

A study conducted in 1998 based on a sample of a group of families from 58 residential areas shows that the overall poverty rate for the entire sample was 62%.²⁰

If we are to give an estimate of the number of Iraqis living in abject and absolute poverty in 1999 (on the basis of a population size of 21.2 million in 1997) at an average population growth rate of 2.7%, we will conclude that the number of people living in abject poverty was 8,398,809 and that the number of people living in absolute poverty was 10,144,830.²¹

By employing the income and basic needs perspective to specify poverty indicators, one can find the following:

Table 1²²
Poverty Indicators in Iraq (1993-1999)

Indicator	Year	
	1993	1999
Abject poverty line per person	649,076 Dinar/month	8405 Dinar/month
% of population living in abject poverty (rural areas)	22,28	31,199
% of population living in abject poverty (urban areas)	22,8	38,771
% of population living in absolute poverty (rural areas)	71,65	42,126
% of population living in absolute poverty (urban areas)	72,07	42,390
No. of people under the abject poverty line (nationwide)	4,138,488	8,398,809
No. of people under the absolute poverty line (nationwide)	4,138,488	1,0144,830
Abject poverty gap	233,379,091 Dinar/month	177,130,881,80 Dinar/month

²⁰ Hassan, Shaima'a Faleh, Diagnosis and Analysis of Income Distribution Disparities, with a Special Reference to Iraq, 1988-1998", an unpublished MA thesis, Baghdad University, Faculty of Administration and Economy, 1999, page 165.

²¹ Al Ma'mouri, Mohammad Ali, "Analysis of Poverty Behavior Between the Impact of Economic Growth and Political and Social Trends", an unpublished Master's thesis), Baghdad University, Faculty of Administration and Economy, 2000, page 166.

²² This table is a summary of several estimates; see Al Ma'mouri, same source, page 170.

Iraq was hit hard by conflict, wars and continuous siege, which altogether dealt a heavy blow to the economic conditions of Iraqi families. This resulted in high unemployment rates reaching as high as 13.5% during the 1990's. Unemployment rates in 1997 ranged between 15% and 21% for males and females, respectively. As a result, the Iraqi economy failed to achieve growth and provide new job opportunities.²³

Table 2²⁴
Decline and Rise of Family Income, 1990-1998

Area	Families with a Declining Income		Families Maintaining Their Income Level		Families With a Higher Income Level	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Urban	745	60	317	28	55	5
Rural	62	29	81	38	65	31
The entire sample	807	59	398	29	120	9

The above table shows that the percentage of families who moved to an income bracket lower than their income level before 8 years is seven times higher than the percentage of families who moved to a higher income bracket and two times higher than families who maintained the same income level.

The poverty phenomenon and its social dimensions certainly reflect on the situation of women. The number of women employed by their families who do not earn an income based on their work hours is by far higher than the number of men doing so. This reflects the discrimination against women and illustrates the burden of poverty on them.

²³ UNICEF, "Human Development Report 2000", previous source, chapter on population.

²⁴ Hassan, Shaim' Faleh, previous source, page 165.

Table 3²⁵
Percentage of Family Employees (Excluding Those Solely Performing Household Chores) in 1998 in Rural and Urban Areas

Type of Work	Males	Females
Urban (paid work)	76	12
Urban (unpaid work)	24	88
Rural (paid work)	53	2
Rural (unpaid work)	47	98

The table shows that 88% of urban women working for their families (apart from their traditional household chores) do not earn income. The rate goes up to 98% in rural areas. The number of women performing unpaid work accounts for 15.6% of the total workforce and reflects women's declining income. Women responsible for supporting their own families, in particular, are forced to intensify their working hours and send their children off to work. Similarly, a survey conducted in 1995 on a sample of women that included 1300 families in Baghdad and its suburbs found women's income categorically lower than men's income.

The survey showed that incomes of 61% of the women studied ranged between 3,000 and 5,000 dinars per month (around \$2.00). Small as it is, this income contributes approximately 33.7% of the total family income. On the other hand, women's income in the cooperative sector is much higher. It ranges between 17,000-47,000 dinars and illustrates that the type of work one secures is directly related to potential income generation.²⁶

It may be useful to point out that income earned from public posts did not exceed 38% of the gross family income, yet 72.9% of the female labor force works in the public sector despite its low pay. This can be ascribed to social norms related to the taboos on women's engagement in other sectors.

The level of women's education is yet another important factor governing their income levels. It should be noted that 27.7% of Iraq's women have not attained the intermediate level of schooling. In turn, low income levels and the need to contribute to the family income make it necessary for rising

²⁵ Same source, Annex to Tables, Table No. 38.

²⁶ Abdullah, Dr. Suhaila Nijem, *A Study on Women's Unemployment in Iraq*, the General Federation of Iraqi Women, Social Development Secretariat, Baghdad, 2002; see also "Beijing 25", Baghdad, June 2000, page 23.

numbers of women to perform up to four times the normal number of working hours.

Iraq's economic performance improved once the "Oil for Food" agreement commenced in 1990, along with the resumption of Iraqi oil exports in 1996. The food ration system, which began with the international siege on Iraq, eased the burdens of poverty, but the general situation remained bleak to a large extent. Since wages have been limited to the amount of work one performs, there is a severe imbalance in the wage amount for women compared to that of men. This consequently limits women's contribution to the family income. Work in the public sector (where wages are often low) is the sector in which women are most present at a national level. Limited job opportunities available for women outside the home, due to social reasons or experience-related causes, has made household work one of the few options for women—an option in which visible unemployment is transformed into invisible unemployment.

Public spending cuts have impacted negatively on the conditions for women's empowerment, including the opportunity for them to be educated. Because women have lower levels of education, they have a lower income and lower spending.²⁷ The number of female job seekers registered with employment offices has dropped since 1990 to 3.5% of the total number of job seekers in 1998.²⁸

Sustenance/Dependency:

Studies conducted on this topic have established a relationship between poverty levels and family size. Most research indicates that big families and high dependency rates contribute to poverty. The dependency rate has been estimated at 3.5 persons and the average family size 7.7 persons. Given the accelerating inflation rates, this illustrates the very real burden on those working to support the country's inactive population.²⁹ Other data has shown that the burden is growing larger on women in large families, where the average dependency rates exceed the national level of 3.1 persons.

²⁷ Al Salem, Dr. Imad Abdul Latif, "Effects Resulting from the Changing Patterns of Income Distribution in Iraq: an Analytical Study on Women's Economic Activity during the Siege", Baghdad, (no date), page 8.

²⁸ Abdul Hamid, Siham, previous source, page 15.

²⁹ Al Muhajer, Dr. Mohammad, "Poverty in Iraq Pre- and Post- Gulf War", ESCWA, pp. 14-15 and 21.

Ownership and Independent Work:

It is true that women's lack of acquisition of production tools and women entrepreneurs' low returns negatively affect their contribution to the development process and contribute to enhancing poverty. A study conducted by the General Federation of Iraqi Women found that only 2% of Iraqi women were entrepreneurs as opposed to 22% of Iraqi men. The study also showed that 8% of women were self-employed, compared to 23% of men, and that 71% of the sample of women performed paid jobs, compared to 47% of the men. Women's lack of acquisition of the tools of production and lack of regular income preclude their utilization of services provided by financial institutions, which link funding to traditional guarantees.³⁰

Despite this, there has been a significant development in terms of women's utilization of funds provided by such institutions. Data from the Industrial Bank, for example, shows that the number of women who benefited from development loans increased from 3% in 1990 to 9% in 1995 and that women obtained 9% of the total loans granted in 1990. However, the figures jumped to 19% in 1995 and 40.4% in 1999. On the other hand, the number of women who owned industrial projects dropped progressively from 6% in 1992 to almost 3% after 1995.

It may be useful to note that traditional culture, which is based on discrimination against women, acknowledges men's ownership but often puts women's ownership at the disposal of the family or one of its members, such as the oldest brother. This is most prevalent in rural areas, where women are denied the freedom to dispose of their own property under such justifications as preserving the collective property of the family or fear that their ownership will be transferred to their husbands. This situation puts women who supposedly own property in the same boat as women who do not. Similarly, the ratio of women who own businesses or who work independently is by far lower than men.

³⁰ The General Federation of Iraqi Women, the Economic Development Secretariat, *The Economic Situation of Iraqi Women under the Siege: Indicators, Reflections, and Programs of Action*, Baghdad (no date specified), page 9; see also the 1997 Population Census Results.

Table 4³¹
Percentage Income Distribution by Job According to the Gender and
Work Relationship (1998)

Work Relationship	Males	Females	Total
Employer	22	2	17
Self-employed	23	8	19
Paid work	47	71	53
Work for the family	8	19	11

Data available on housing in Iraq indicates an improvement in the 1970's and part of the 1980's in terms of providing housing units for Iraqi citizens. The number of housing units has increased to 1,839,117, up from 888,278 in 1978. However, the need has been growing since the late 1990's, due to an increase in housing unit occupancy (from 8.5 persons in 1987 to 8.9 in 1997). The absence of a clear housing policy, coupled with the rising need for formal housing, has resulted in the crisis of squatter settlements—of which there were 25 in the mid-1970's. Some of these sites reflect the tragic situations of women living with a lack of basic services and continuous contact among other squatter families due to overcrowding. This results in daily problems. In many cases, as is the case in the Tanak (Tin) neighborhood and in some sectors of Al Sadr City as well as in other squatter settlements, several families live in one unit, with the number of people exceeding 20. This results in health and social problems and affects the behavior of many families to the extent that they are self-restrained and self-isolated.

In some of these settlements, women find themselves in situations where they must spend long working hours outside the house while their husbands sit idle at home or at a café.³² Housing construction activity retreated after 1999, and the housing situation in underdeveloped areas has deteriorated because of the scarcity of construction material, discontinuation of loans by real estate banks and rising construction taxes. A sum of 1010 new homes have been added to the 1999 total and 2415 new construction cases have been added.³³

Field visits to a number of areas in and around Baghdad have also disclosed the prevalence of behavior targeting women, particularly young women,

³¹ Al Salem, Imad Abdul Latif, previous source, page 1.

³² For a good idea of the state of squatter settlements, see ESCWA, "Urban Settlements and Poverty", particularly the data relevant to the illegal settlement of Al Fadilieh, New York, 1999 page 23.

³³ Planning Commission, Central Statistics Bureau, "Statistical Collection for 2001".

including prostitution, sexual abuse and rape. Their presence can be attributed to poverty, limited housing space and young girls' work as housemaids. Young girls are frequently neglected, and male children are often called upon to provide additional income for families. However, recent years have seen an increase in the number of small girls working in the markets and on the streets, away from their homes. The last five years have also seen the emergence of yet another phenomenon in which women from impoverished areas such as Al-Taji (to the north of Baghdad) come to central Baghdad seeking job opportunities in houses, farms and factories. Many young girls find themselves in situations in which they have no choice but to work—both to bring in income and to escape their tough life.

Single Female Headed Households:

The frequency of single female headed households due to the husband's absence, disability, or chronic illness has been increasing. Persistent wars and conflict which have taken a heavy toll on men's lives have further aggravated the situation by leaving behind a huge burden on their families, wives, mothers and sisters. Families supported by women in general have unique features—mainly that of the economic burden resulting from the mother having to support the family on her own. A survey of a sample representing women-supported families throughout the second half of the 1990's has found that 60% of these families have the woman shouldering this burden alone. The survey also found that 26% of the female-headed households supported 7 persons each, in comparison with the national mean dependency rate of 3.1 per person. Moreover, the survey found that 89.6% of those households surveyed live below the poverty line, with 16.6% of the families living on an average monthly income of less than 1000 dinars (almost half a dollar) per family. Another important finding is that most of these families have low educational levels and, thus, are unable to fully compete in the labor market due to their inability to adapt to the market needs for skilled labor. Since salary structures prioritize those employees with the most skills, women with the least amount of education are the hardest hit.

As has been mentioned, Iraqi families tend to favor work in the public sector. However, women-supported families demonstrate a relatively different approach. With the dwindling role of the state in creating jobs and the decrease in private sector activity, women are increasingly participating in the marginal, or informal, labor force. This includes limited-scale trade, small businesses specialized in clothes and food production and domestic help. As this type of work is marginal, it does not provide financial or psychological stability. The informal labor sector is characterized by high

demand for unskilled labor, so it does not generally provide a fair salary despite the great effort and productivity it requires. Unlike the public sector, which allows minor differences in wages payable to male and female workers, the gender-based salary gap in the informal sector is huge.

Additionally, the response of women-supported families to regular labor market incentives is weak. Despite an increase in the number of economically active women (who accounted for 48.9% of the total surveyed) these women have had a weak response to the crisis situation in terms of economic gain. This can be seen in the high rate of unemployment among women (43%) and the trend to send their sons and daughters to work, which could also be attributed to the lack of suitable job opportunities for women. In the study sample itself, 42% of the female workers work solely at home and 70% of them work continuously or intermittently in the informal employment sector. The data also reveals that 35.3% of them cannot work outside the house because of family reasons and that 24.7% were jobless because of the lack of suitable jobs or because they are unaware of job opportunities.

Table 5
Reasons for Unemployment among Iraqi Families Supported by Women

Economic and Social Conditions	Unemployment Rate
- Lack of job opportunities for women who are willing and able to work	20.2 %
- Changes in the labor market	7.2 %
- Bad rehabilitation policies /lack of skills	11.5 %
- Personal factors relating to family circumstances (e.g., young kids) limiting women's ability to work outside the house.	53.3 %
- Social circumstances (habits and traditions)	21.3 %
- Lack of information about job opportunities	4.5 %

Studies about families supported by women have found that 97.6% of these families do not have sufficient income and that 49% of them cannot meet their needs.

The following table shows some of the ways that these families meet their income shortfall.

Table 6

Patterns of Families' Behavior to Gain Additional Income

Behavior Pattern	%
- Selling family assets	73.07
- Debt/loans	7.90
- Selling part of their food rations	6.13
- Begging	0.13
- Nil	11.90

It should be noted that the food ration does not meet more than 35% of the families' needs and that it does not include nutritious items such as red meat and dairy products, among others. The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) stated that because of low income and lack of food, thousands of Iraqis have found themselves in situations where they have had to sell their furniture and supplies (even doors in some cases). Despite the low rate of beggars, begging is on the increase.³⁴

The study below has defined the following conceptual framework for the causes of poverty among families supported by women:

³⁴ For families supported by women, refer to

- Shalash, Dr. Amal, *Poverty Levels Among Women-Supported Families*, Baghdad, The General Federation of Iraqi Women, 1998.
- Al Salem, Imad Abdul Latif, previous source.
- The General Federation for Iraqi Women, *Assessment of the Economic Role of Women in the Baghdad Governorate*, September 1996.

Table 7³⁵

First: Personal Reasons:	
1. Family reasons	- Loss of supporter (breadwinner), heavy sustenance load - High percentage of children, old age
2. Social reasons	- High illiteracy rates, unsuitable levels of education
3. Economic reasons	- Lack of information about job opportunities - Lack of skills, unsuitable skills
4. Vital (Life-related)	- Malnutrition, deteriorating health conditions
Second: Environmental/ Institutional Reasons	- Low wages - Insufficient job opportunities - Unsuitable job opportunities - Dilapidated services and ancillary infrastructure - Lack of organizations - Lack of or poor support systems

In order to get a clearer picture of the features and characteristics of families supported by women, as compared to those supported by men, let us have a look at the following table:

³⁵ Shalash, Dr. Amal, "Women's Poverty: Causes and Results" (a working paper presented to the International Week for Poverty Alleviation), The General Federation of Iraqi Women and UNDP, 1998.

Table 8³⁶
Comparative Indicators for Families Supported by Women and Men
(1998)

Characteristics	Sample of Women-Supported Families	Sample of Men-Supported Families
% of Housewives	43.4	63.4
% of Working Women	56.7	33.4
Workplace:		
- Outside the House	58.1	71.3
- In the House	41.8	28.6
Type of Work: Employee	31.9	55.4
No Education	58.95	32.2
Income:		
- Average Monthly Income of Women	5578 dinars	7403 dinars
- Average Monthly Income of the Family	10,336 dinars	23,233 dinars
% of Families with Income Less than 1000 Dinars	16.6	8.7
% of Female Dropouts	49.9	57.5
% of Working Children under 15	7.7	5.2

Income disparities are clear, and so are the rates of working women and housewives. In an effort to learn more specific features of women-supported households, we looked at the following sample of 150 families divided among the four governorates of Baghdad (49%), Diala (36.1%), Basra (15.5%) and Ninawa (19.3%). The survey found that the largest category of women was aged 24-43 (41.29%), with 63.23% of these women illiterate, 22.5% with the ability to read and write and who have completed primary school and 22.5% widowed due to war.

Data has also shown that 34% of these women have families consisting of more than seven members and that 21% have families with 5.6 members. The study also shows that 72% of them are housewives and 22% earn income. The high unemployment rate is attributed to the fact that 57.4% of the women earn income from their husbands' pensions. However, most widows reported that their incomes are very low, and 96% of them said their salaries were barely sufficient, forcing them to sell their furniture and house supplies to bridge the income gap (63%) or engage in begging (23%). Less than half the women (43%) said they are willing to work, notably in sewing (40%), domestic work (20%) or baking (20%). The data also shows

³⁶ Shalash, Dr. Amal, "Women's Poverty: Causes and Results", previous source, page 6.

that 27.7% of the widowed families live in rented housing, with 74% of them living in stand alone houses.³⁷

The problems of families supported by women, whether the women are widows, divorcées, or otherwise, are indeed a reflection of the series of complicated crises that Iraqi society has witnessed. These problems have been further complicated by the poverty burden on women, despite the Iraqi economy's relative improvement after 1995 when the Oil for Food program was endorsed.

Welfare and Safety Nets:

The economic distress resulting from the siege on Iraq warranted a series of measures and new policies. It has contributed to the reinforcement of already existing measures to address the impact of increasing poverty. The Ministry of Islamic Affairs has set up a fund for alms to provide limited and sporadic assistance to hundreds of individuals and families. The fund is financed through contributions from individuals as well as the state.

Social solidarity funds have also been set up in many ministries and departments through informal and spontaneous initiatives. The family welfare salary, which was issued in accordance with Law No. 126 of 1980, however, has been the most important and sustainable regulation to date. The increase in the number of beneficiary families and individuals due to Iraq's successive crises has made this law's impact greater and more sustainable.

³⁷ The General Federation of Iraqi Women, Study and Research Division, "The Social and Economic Status of Widows in Iraq: a Field Study", 1995.

Table 9³⁸
Number of Social Welfare Salary Beneficiary Families According to Year

Year	No.	Total Amount Spent (in Millions of Dinars)
1980	147	0.6
1990	71,775	35 (approximately)*
1995	70,641	1861
1998	55,211	1524
2000	44,961	2452
2001	47,714	1145

A drop in the number of families along with a relative rise in the monetary amounts, due to the erosion of national currency values, has been noted. A study designed to identify the number of beneficiary families has found that 35% of the families were supported by widows and 23% were supported by divorced women. The study also found that the mean age of the family supporter was 42.6 years and the average family size was 7 persons. It also found that 81.5% of the sample household share housing with other families, and 82.5% of the women surveyed reported that the welfare salary, meager as it is, contributes to alleviating burdens of poverty. Other data has shown that the social welfare salary covers families encountering complex problems (in a sample of almost 400 beneficiaries).³⁹

³⁸ Al-Obeidi, Kawther Fadel, "Economic and Social Implications of Welfare Salaries and Their Impact on Iraqi Families", an unpublished PhD dissertation, Baghdad University, Department of Sociology, Faculty of Arts, 2002.

* The social welfare salary was discontinued for poor families in the self-rule areas in 1991.

³⁹ Same source, different pages.

Table 10⁴⁰
Relative Distribution of Categories Covered by
Social Welfare Salaries

Category	Males	Females	Total	%
Unable to work	66	41	107	26.75
Widows with children who are minors	--	89	89	22.25
Divorced women with children who are minors	--	56	56	14
Minor orphans	43	--	43	10.75
Poor children attending schools	49	--	49	12.25
Inmates' families	--	14	42	3.5
Others	42	-	42	10.50
Total	200	200	400	100

It should be noted that widows and divorced women account for one third (1/3) of the total sample.

In another development, the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs and the General Federation of Iraqi Women launched small loan programs in 1996. The total number of loans provided by the Ministry in coordination and cooperation with the Arab Labor Organization in 2001 and 2002 was 407 loans, worth 118 million Iraqi dinars. Regarding the General Federation, under agreement with the UNDP, it has begun a pilot project in Basra and Diala which covers 30 projects.

Pilot small income generation enterprises guided by findings of feasibility studies began their activities in August 1998. The Federation's pilot project primarily aimed to enhance the capacity of its training center, develop the trainers' skills, and involve and train poor women on skills relevant to the economic sector through small income generating enterprises and taking on influential roles in the battle against poverty. There were seven small enterprises in the Basra governorate and nine in Diala. An additional 16 other projects have been selected for implementation. These projects include poultry farms, foodstuff processing, ceramics, printing, football, industry, sewing and embroidery. The total amount of loans provided was 28,814,240 dinars, of which 5,241,055 dinars has been regained. A total number of 27 cooperative markets and 26 exhibitions have been opened in Diala and Basra governorates to distribute products from these projects.

⁴⁰ Mustafa, Dr. Adnan Yasin and Dr. Karim M. Hamzeh, *State of Social Work Institutions in Iraq: a Study Presented to the League of Arab States, Council of Arab Ministers of Social Affairs*, Baghdad, 2002, page 30.

Several training workshops have also been held within the framework of the project. The number of female trainees in both governorates was 4144.⁴¹

A credit fund for women with a capital of 10 million dinars was also established, with 50% of the fund's capital coming from the Federation and the remaining 50% from individual women. This fund grants loans to women who want to set up small household projects and those intending to pursue their academic education. The total amount of loans granted up until 2001 was 15,290,000 dinars, and the number of beneficiaries totaled 47 women. The Federation also earlier cooperated with the Development Program (DP) to set up a 50,000,000 dinar fund, with the DP contributing \$100,000 to support it. This fund has provided loans to approximately 220 women in the governorates.⁴²

Since 1995, the small loans program has been a landmark achievement toward the goal of reducing women's poverty. The prolonged siege has prompted the Federation to adopt a relatively large-scale social solidarity program to help poor women and their families through the provision of clothes, food baskets, and medical treatment for children with chronic diseases. Due to the Federation's limited resources, assistance has been allocated to widows and divorcées supporting their families as well as to malnourished children. However, the lack of sufficient funding has resulted in a drop in the number of training courses held by the Federation from 4011 in 1993 to 779 in 1996.

In 1998, the number of courses increased to 25,537, and so did the number of beneficiaries (155,470). Total revenues coming from these courses amounted to 71,705,586 dinars, and net profits were 53,328,332 dinars. These increased figures were directly related to the Federation's need to self finance after government financing dwindled.

It should be noted that poor mothers and their families not only need financial subsidies but also psychological aid, since they suffer from social and psychological pressures and problems. It has been found that these women suffer from anxiety, sleeplessness and fear. To address such problems, family counseling centers were established in 1995. The volume of problems reported to these centers has increased from 8% of the total number of problems in 1996 to 15.8% in 1998. The success rate in finding solutions to these problems was nearly 91% in some branches.

⁴¹ Rashid, Dr. Fakhita Shaker, *The Strategic Importance of Loans and Small Enterprises on Women's Empowerment*, The General Federation of Iraqi Women, Baghdad, March 2002, page 4 onward.

⁴² Same source, pages 9-10.

The post-1995 era has seen several remarkable developments and breakthroughs for women, including the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between Iraq and the UN. The MOU allowed Iraq to export oil and thus contribute to financing several strategic programs, such as improving income and enhancing the state's capability to provide food rations for Iraqi families. In fact, the food ration was the most important of the social safety nets. These developments have precluded imminent starvation, according to several international organizations, despite estimates that food rations fall short of meeting the needs of 84% of Iraqi families.

A survey conducted in May 2000 has found that the white flour ration is exhausted within 21 days and the dry milk ration within 12 days. Moreover, the food ration provides only 16% of the fat needed in an individual's diet and does not include all the necessary vitamins.⁴³

It should be noted that the National Strategy for Advancing the Status of Iraqi Women has suggested several measures to achieve the goals of the MOU. However, the cumulative effects of the siege, the dangers posed by military conflict, the diminishing role of the General Federation of Iraqi Women and general administrative problems have made it difficult to effectively implement the Strategy. An evaluation study of the Federation's activities conducted in 2000 has found that the Federation will encounter enormous tasks and responsibilities in the years ahead which will subsequently limit its ability to act due to its limited resources. The study made a set of recommendations aimed at developing the Federation's organizational structure and reinforcing decentralization. However, one of the most important recommendations contained in the report emphasized the need for the Federation to better interact and make contact with its beneficiaries.⁴⁴

⁴³ Planning Commission, *Human Development Report for the Year 2000*, previous source, chapter on health and food.

⁴⁴ Findings of the study conducted by Dr. Nabil Al Nawwab in the "Report on the Consultative Mission to the General Federation of Iraqi Women: Project Proposal for the Development of the Women's Sector", 2000, different pages.

Chapter 3

Iraqi Women in the Educational System: Indicators of Progress and Regression

Significant developments have characterized the educational status of women in terms of the institutional opportunities made available to them and their growing potential to benefit from these opportunities despite pressures from traditional culture. Traditional culture typically places obstacles in front of women wishing to further their education. Free and compulsory education in Iraq and the literacy law of the 1970's have provided a legal framework, and sheer political will has also helped women to better benefit from the educational system. However, the eight-year Iraq-Iran War (1980-1988); the Gulf War (1991); and the crises, conflicts and economic sanctions befalling the country since August 1990 have all impacted heavily on the education system, albeit to varying degrees. In 1990, the number of students enrolled in the educational system was 4,715,000, of whom 44.7% were females. In 1995-96, the figure dropped to 4.4 million students, i.e., one-fourth (1/4) of the population. However, in 1998-99, the figure jumped to 5.1 million, with a compound annual rate of 109% for the periods 1995-96 and 1998-99, or 28% of the total Iraq population. These general figures hide detailed indicators which are not necessarily positive in terms of education quality, teachers' efficiency, educational structures and educational waste and output, particularly after 1991, when the educational system sustained losses amounting to \$3.4 billion as a result of the Gulf War.⁴⁵

If one considers the educational system in general, he/she will find the average registration rate in the primary years during the period of 1995-96 and 1997-98 dropped from 78.6% to 50.9%, while the registration rate in the intermediate years dropped from 50.7% to 46%. The vocational preparatory rate also dropped from 3.7% to 1.6%. Despite this gloomy picture, positive developments have taken place during the same period: the average registration rate in the academic preparatory stage increased from 1.6% to 19.1%, and higher education rates rose from 7.8% to 9.5%, albeit with very minor changes in the numbers of teachers and parallel education. Based on the above figures, a (-1.3) annual average growth in intermediate

⁴⁵ Iraqi Economists Society, "Human Development Report, 1995", previous source, p. 66

education and (-12.7) average annual growth in vocational preparatory education have been recorded.⁴⁶

In looking at women's educational status within the overall framework of the effects on the educational system, one comes to the conclusion that women's education has been hit hard due to the damage caused to the education system and the obstacles facing its progress throughout the 1970's. The annual growth rate of women's enrollment in schools was 3.8% during the period of 1987-90, but this rate dropped to 1% between 1990-98. The female enrollment rate in parallel education dropped from 27% in 1990 to 8.8% in 1998. Overall, the annual female educational rates are on the decrease.

Table 11
Average Female Education Drop Rates, 1995-1999

Education Stage	Average Drop Rates
- Primary	1.20
- Intermediate	1.30
- Secondary	0.03
- Vocational	1.40
- Teacher Training Institutions	0.2

Data shows a clear tendency among females to join the literary stream in secondary education. It has also found that 52% of the total number of girls attending secondary education during the periods 1995-96 and 1998-99 were enrolled in the literary stream. Additionally, there has been a remarkable increase in the number of females attending the commercial education stream, with 65% joining it during 1995-96 and 72% in 1998-99. Regarding teacher training institutes, female enrollment rates in 1995-96 and 1998-99 were 70% and 72%, respectively.⁴⁷

Parity Indicators for Male and Female Students:

Despite the abnormal circumstances in Iraq, there has been a clear parity in terms of male and female attendance at the various stages of education:*

⁴⁶ The Planning Commission, "Human Development Report for 2000", previous source (the 1999 data does not include the self-ruled governorates).

⁴⁷ Same source, Chapter 5.

Table 12
Parity Indicator for Males and Females
Attending the Various Stages of Education

Year	Primary Education	Secondary/Academic & Vocational Education	Technical/ Tertiary Education
1990	0.84	0.65	0.59
1998	1	0.65	0.56

It is important to note that gender-based discrimination in education may be part of the culture of mothers themselves. A survey conducted by UNICEF covering a sample of 3510 women has found that almost 41% of them strongly agree that boys' education is more important than girls'. In rural areas, this rate goes up to 64%.⁴⁸

A look at the male vs. female rates in primary education during the periods 1994-99 and 2000-01, illustrates the following:

Table 13⁴⁹
Development of Primary Education during the Periods
1994-99 and 2000-01

Year	No. of Females	%	Grand Total
1994 – 1995	1,298,973	44.5	2,913,533
1995 – 1996	1,301,852	44.8	2,903,923
1996 – 1997	1,318,329	44.7	2,947,217
1997 – 1998	1,351,421	44.6	3,029,386
1998 – 1999	1,392,892	44.5	3,128,368
2000 – 2001	1,500,406	44.2	3,392,547

It is clear that female primary education is moving slowly. A comparison between the years 1995-96 and 2000-01 clearly demonstrates the difference. The female primary enrollment rate dropped from 44.8% in 1995-96 to 44.2% in 2000-01. However, if we take enrollment rates for males and females together at the age of six, there is an increase from 88.2% in 1994-95 to 95.1% in 1999-2000.

⁴⁸ UNICEF and Iraqi partners, "Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices (KAP)", page 50.

* The closer the parity indicator is to 1, the less the disparity; the closer it is to 0, the greater the disparity.

⁴⁹ Kazem, Dr. Abdul Rahman Ismail, *The Educational Rights of the Child*, Baghdad, 2000, page 9; Also see The Central Statistics Bureau, "The Statistical Clusters for 1997", Baghdad, 2001, page 332.

In schools, there are other significant indicators which can be summarized as follows:

With minor exceptions, a researcher can easily find out that the number of boys' schools is higher than the number of girls' schools. The total number of primary schools during the school year 2001-02 was 9115, including 1729 male schools, or 18.9%, and 1462 female schools, or 16%, with a few exceptions in the Diala governorate (82 boys' schools vs. 92 girls' schools).

The number of co-educational schools is 5924, or 65% of the total number of schools. This, by itself, is a significant indicator. It should be noted that 13.9% of the total number of girls' schools and 17.8% of the total number of co-educational schools are in Baghdad.⁵⁰

The following table summarizes the development of secondary education:

Table 14⁵¹
Development of Secondary Education
(Intermediate and Preparatory)
for 1994-98

Year	No. of Girls	%	Grand Total
1994 – 1995	383,413	38	1,009,105
1995 – 1996	406,025	39.1	1,037,482
1996 – 1997	411,186	38.9	1,056,929
1997 – 1998	400,444	39.2	1,020,823

The table shows that female education rates are lower than male rates. However, the development illustrated in the table is more obvious than the development of primary education shown in the previous table. The number of schools has also increased from 2658 in 1994 to 2822 in 1997-98, including 1342 schools for males (47.5%) and 484 schools or (17.1%) for females. The number of mixed schools is 996, or 35.2% of the total number of secondary schools.

In terms of vocational education, the number of schools (agricultural, industrial, commercial and handicraft schools) is 236, attended by 18,657 students. This number includes 3643 females, or 19.5% of the total number

⁵⁰ Ministry of Education data.

⁵¹ The Central Statistics Bureau, *Statistical Collection 1997*, page 326.

of students. The number of girls attending commercial schools is 2694, as opposed to 555 boys. In contrast, there are no girls attending agricultural and industrial schools.

A sole local handicraft school is attended by 199 girl students, or 1.64% of the total number of students. The number of teacher training institutes has increased from 36 in 1994-95 to 54 in 1997-98.

Table 15 ⁵²
**Central Teacher Training Centers:
 Number of Institutes, Newly-Admitted Female Students
 and Actual Number of Female Students**

Years	No. of Institutes	No. of Females Admitted	%	No. of Females Attending	%	Total No. of Students Attending
1994 – 1995	36	2752	62.6	15,567	59.7	26,069
1995 – 1996	35	3121	66.9	14,393	60.4	23,807
1996 – 1997	35	3448	64.4	14,078	59.3	23,714
1997 – 1998	54	5158	65.3	19,496	63.7	30,567

The table clearly demonstrates that the number of girls admitted to or attending teacher training centers is by far higher than the number of male students. This shows that Iraqi families are more inclined to engage their daughters in teaching professions than in any other governmental jobs. As a result, the feminization of the Iraqi educational system is quite evident. The increase in the number of females became clearer after the 1994-95 school year.

Table 16 summarizes the enrollment status in universities, technical education institutes, and national colleges:

⁵² Previous source, page 338.

Table 16 ⁵³
**Number of Students Attending Universities, Technical
Institutions and National Colleges
during the Period of 1994-1998**

Years	No. of Female Students	%	Total No. of Males and Females
1994 – 1995	68,457	35.1	194,921
1995 – 1996	77,388	34.2	225,644
1996 – 1997	85,889	34.3	250,132
1997 – 1998	90,220	34.8	259,130

The proportion of female students to male students has dropped from 35.1% during the school year 1994-95 to 34.8% during 1997-98, despite a rise in the absolute number of female students during the reporting period (from 68,457 female students to 90,220.) In the school year 2001-02, the total number of students (males and females) admitted to schools was 93,359, including 28,278 females, or 30.2%.

The total number of male and female students during the school year 2001-03 was 264,476. This figure included 92,513 females (34.9%) and marked a slight increase over the figures for 1997-98 (see previous table).⁵⁴ The number of teenage schools in 1995-96 was 31, with 64.5% located in the Baghdad governorate.* The total school population was 2205—10.2% of whom were females. The number of these schools dropped to 4 schools attended by 388 students. As a result, large numbers of girl students aged 10 to 14 have been deprived from schooling.

Dropout:

To get a comprehensive picture of some of the aspects of educational dropout, let's look at the following table:

⁵³ Same source.

⁵⁴ Data provided by the Central Statistics Bureau.

* These schools accept students, aged 10 -14 years, who are not accepted by primary schools.

Table 17 ⁵⁵
Number of Student Drop-outs

Years	Primary	Intermediate	Preparatory	Vocational	Teacher Training	Total
1994 – 1995	86,412	58,465	4079	2337	191	151,484
1995 – 1996	89,531	53,056	1089	2150	1640	149,870
1996 – 1997	75,217	51,125	5316	2228	237	134,123
1997 – 1998	72,598	33,390	3645	1919	509	112,061

This table indicates a student drop-out population that went from 151,484 in 1994-95 to 112,061 during the school year 1997-98. This drop is attributable to a host of factors, the most important of which are better living conditions and allocation of more funds for education after the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the United Nations (UN) **.

With regard to illiteracy, the Planning Commission estimated the average female and male illiteracy rate for 1990 at 8.4%, with 12% for females and 5.1% for males. The year 1996 witnessed an increase in overall illiteracy rates to 9% (with 13% for females and 5.4% for males). The data provided by the population census of 1997 has found that the average literacy rate for those aged 15 and above was 67.3% for females as opposed to 89.4% for males and that the number of schooling years for girls was 5 years in comparison to 7.4 years for males. It also found that the academic achievement indicator was 0.615 for females vs. 0.843 for males, and 0.540 nationwide. For 25 year olds, the literacy rate was 60.7% for females as opposed to 83.5% for males, and average schooling years were 4.8 years and 7.3 years, respectively. Academic achievement indicators were 0.560 for females and 0.670 for males, with a nationwide rate of 0.781.⁵⁶

This translated itself into much lower levels of educational achievements among girl students. This will, in turn, have a great impact on human development in the near future. According to the 1997 census, the number of illiterate females aged 10 and above was 2,048,373, or 68.7% of the grand total of illiterates (males and females), which stood at 2,979,973.

⁵⁵ Ministry of Education, Center for Research and Educational Studies, "Impact of Sanctions on the Education Sector", Baghdad, April, 2000, page 6.

** Spending on education amounted to 2.5% in 1997 and 2.8% in 1998. An amount of \$23 million has been allocated for the educational sector, according to the MOU. However, the amount has been increased to \$351 million. The total government spending on education amounted to \$18 billion in 1997.

⁵⁶ United Nations, "Human Development Report 2000", chapter on education.

The highest female illiteracy rate (16.2%) was found in the 65+ age category. On the other hand, the female illiteracy rate among 10-14 year old was 10%, and it was only 6.1% among 40-44 year old.

The status of education in Iraq reflects a host of serious problems, with the poor quality of education being the primary hindrance, followed by inefficient teachers; poor curricula; weak teacher-student relationships; inefficient management and educational supervision; bribery and corruption; and shortage of school supplies and buildings. Up until 2000, some 8613 school buildings out of a total of 10,316 buildings (85% of the total number of schools) needed maintenance and renovation. The high student-class ratio is yet another problem. The total number of male and female students in some primary schools was as high as 3370 students.

Regarding educational supplies, there was a need for 750,000 schoolbooks, 500,000 units of educational aids, 62 million writing pads, 68 million workbooks and 15,000 computers. The interruption of production at Ministry of Education plants has led to an annual loss of 1,958,092,560 Iraqi dinars. It is for the above reasons that the educational plans for the years 1994-95 and 2005-06 have not been implemented.⁵⁷ Many factors such as poverty, poor health, the need to send children to work and the deteriorating standards of the educational system have intertwined to minimize the benefits of the educational system for females. This uncovers new factors responsible for inequalities in certain educational stages in addition to the cultural restrictions limiting girls' enrollment in schools. One of these factors is that education, albeit free in theory, has started to place a burden on the family. This results in boys' education taking priority over that of girls', in accordance with the traditional stereotypical male and female roles. The incidence of school-aged males working has relatively encouraged girls education, as families do not tend to send girls to work, but it has been noticed that families have been forced to send their daughters to work due to the pressures and burdens posed by poverty. Although traditional culture might not hamper female education in the primary stage, it does place moral and behavioral obstacles in front of them that limit their ability to pursue their education.

In conclusion, it could be said that female education was progressing until Iraq's emergency and extraordinary circumstances curbed its growth.

⁵⁷ Ministry of Education, "Impact of Sanctions on the Education Sector", previous source, miscellaneous pages.

Chapter 4

Iraqi Women's Health: The Controversy over Life and Death

One of the worst aspects of women's suffering due to the prolonged international sanctions on Iraq is the deterioration of health conditions throughout the 1990's and the early years of the present decade. Although Iraq has been able to spend larger amounts of money on the health sector under the MOU with the UN, the health situation has been precarious, and even more so for women.* The inequality in health care provision is attributable to many factors, most important of which is the traditional culture which prevents women, particularly pregnant women, from visiting male doctors and encourages them, instead, to see birth attendants who frequently are not trained enough. Moreover, some families pay less attention to female health and give preference to male health.

Women are affected more by health conditions than men. They are also more affected by the practical repercussions of illness. Mothers with sick or disabled children or those with malnourished children or children who have died show psychological and physical attributes that are by far different from those of the men in similar situations. This can be ascribed to motherhood being a natural instinct for females and not an acquired one, as in the case of fathers, as Rivulets claims. The above reasons contributed to Iraqi society's deteriorating health after 1991, with particular ramifications for women and their increased inequality in health care provision.

In 1970, Iraq introduced a health insurance scheme which annually imported 400-500 million dinars' worth of drugs in addition to locally produced drugs. The compound annual growth rates for general practitioners (GPs), specialists and health professionals was 4.5%, 5.5% and 9.5%, respectively, during the period of 1985-1991. Since the Gulf War in 1991 and due to prolonged sanctions, however, the situation rapidly deteriorated. It is believed that the inequality gap in health care provision and related health services can be attributed to factors much narrower than those of education, unemployment and violence. Iraqi mothers were the most affected by their children's illnesses, disability and mortality.

*The year 1997 saw a large increase in government spending on the health sector. Iraq signed supply and logistics contracts worth \$2.1 billion during the first seven phases of the MOU. See The Iraqi Economists Society and Baghdad Bureau for Economic Consultation, "The Arab Regional Human Development Report, Country Report", Iraq, 2000, page 3.

Life Expectancy at Birth:

Iraq's Life Expectancy at Birth (LEB) was 63.9 years in 1990. It dropped to 60.3 years in 1993 but increased to 62.5 years in 1997. Between 1995 and 2000, it dropped to 62.4 years.⁵⁸ However, we believe that these figures are exaggerated to a certain extent.

The deteriorating health standards in Iraq bode of a drop in the LEB. The LEB was set at 63.9 and 60.9 years for women and men, respectively.⁵⁹ However, we believe that both figures are exaggerated. It is important to note that disparity between males and females may be attributable to the fact that males were at a higher risk of death at an early age in the battlefield rather than because of factors inherent in the medical system.

The Nutritional Status:

Prior to 1991, Iraq was producing one-third of its food requirements and was bridging the gap through food imports worth 2 billion dinars. After 1991, the nutritional status has been described as catastrophic. The Food and Agriculture Organization's (FAO) mission estimated food shortage at more than \$2.5 billion in 1993-94 and \$2.7 billion in 1995-96. Recalling Amarthias' perceptions referred to in Chapter 1, we are citing the following as examples of the poor nutritional situation: The price of flour increased 11,667 times its 1990 price, that of rice and dried milk have increased 4375 and 5500 times, or 37% and 58%, respectively. UNICEF has summed up the nutritional status by indicating that the Food Purchasing Power Indicator (FPPI) for Iraqi families has dropped from 3.62 in 1990 to 0.15 in 1996. This means that families spent no less than 80% of their income on food. This situation must have reflected on females. A survey on the nutritional status of females between the ages of 10 and 60 in the Baghdad governorate found that 9.6% were suffering from chronic diseases and that 1.7% were disabled. The survey, which covered 2636 families, also found that 31.7 percent of the survey sample had miscarriages. The percentage was particularly high (42.5%) among illiterate women. It appears that malnutrition was prevalent in all age groups, but that it was the highest (15.9%) among 10 to 14 year old.⁶⁰ Niblock, who monitored the situation in Baghdad in November 1997, said in his description of the economic and

⁵⁸ "Human Development Report 2000".

⁵⁹ "Human Development Report 1999".

⁶⁰ Sweidan, Dr. Amal, *Assessment of the Nutritional Status of Women Aged 10-60 in the Baghdad Governorate, 1997-99*.

health conditions that public sector salaries start at a rate of 3000 dinars a month. This amount is the equivalent of the price of 1 kilogram of meat. Estimates made by Iraqi academics from Baghdad University indicate that the monthly cost of sustenance for a family of four is approximately 250,000 dinars.⁶¹

Maternal Mortality:

A UNICEF report notes a rise in the maternal mortality rate from 117 deaths per 100,000 live births prior to 1990 to 294 deaths in the year 2000.⁶² A report issued by the General Federation of Iraqi Women established a link between the successive crises in Iraq, particularly during and after the 1990's, and the rise in maternal mortality rates to 294 deaths per 100,000 live births during the period of 1990-96 compared to no more than 107 deaths per 100,000 live births.⁶³ The country has seen an outbreak of malnutrition among pregnant and lactating women in particular, as well as an outbreak of goiter as a result of iodine deficiency and communicable diseases.⁶⁴

Table 18
Maternal Mortality Rates (MMR)

MMR per 100,000 Live Births	1989 - 1994	1994 - 1999
	117	294

Illness:

Iraqi women have suffered from serious diseases and ailments. A report issued by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) has noted an increase in anemia among children and women due to iron deficiency. Consulting doctors throughout the country, particularly in the southern region, have noted a remarkable increase in incurable diseases, including miscarriage, tumors (particularly breast, uterine and blood cancer), malformed and still births, anemia, diabetes and malignant pregnancy poisoning.

⁶¹ Niblock, previous citation, page 174.

⁶² UNICEF, "State of the Children in Iraq", 2001.

⁶³ General Federation of Iraqi Women, *The Siege Imposed on Iraq*, June 2000, page 12.

⁶⁴ Ministry of Health, UNICEF, "Child and Maternal Mortality Survey", 1999, page 15; also mentioned in the "Human Development Report, 2000".

Table 19⁶⁵
Number of Miscarriages

Year	No. of Cases
1995	441
1998	1307

Table 20⁶⁶
Distribution of Cancer Cases and Number of Women with Cancer

Years	No. of Registered Cancer Cases	No. of Affected Women	% of Women
1990	7058	3145	44.5
1991	5720	2595	45.3
1992	8526	3791	44.4
1993	8471	3839	45.3
1994	7750	3555	45.8
1995	7948	3604	45.3
1996	8360	3890	46.3

The table shows that the number of cancer cases among women has increased during the period of 1990-96 from 44.5% of the total number of cases to 46.3%.

A study conducted by the Basra governorate health department found that malformation rates were 58% higher among females than males of the total registered cases and that congenital malformation was 93% higher among females than males. Most of the abnormal and malformation cases have been found among new mothers (those less than 30 years old), while scientific studies always stress that women above the age of 45 are more likely to give birth to congenitally-malformed children.

Niblock states that the number of people suffering from psychological and mental disorders has been on the increase throughout the 1990's. The UN estimates that the figure has increased from 200,000 when the Gulf War began to more than 510,000 in 1998. Other studies have found that 57% of Iraqi women suffered from psychological symptoms such as depression, insomnia, loss of weight and headaches. The number of registered female patients visiting the psychological clinic at Basra Hospital has increased

⁶⁵ Planning Commission, "Advancement of Iraqi Women: Current Status and Future Prospects", Baghdad, November 1997, page 12.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

from 191 in 1990 to 374 in 1997.⁶⁷ It should also be noted that many people do not visit hospitals but instead receive traditional treatments. Interviews with a number of psychiatrists in Baghdad have shown that the number of psychologically or mentally ill persons after 1995 has relatively dropped in comparison to the period of 1990-95. Despite this, the number of cases among females is still higher than that of males. Most doctors attribute this figure to shock caused by military bombardment, anxiety and uncertainty about the future, feeling threatened and overuse of tranquilizers.

Child Mortality:

Child mortality has catastrophic consequences on mothers. Therefore, the rising levels of infant mortality rates (IMR) and Under-Five mortality (U5MR) pose a direct threat to the physical and mental health of mothers along with their plans for the future and relationships with their husbands and their other children. A survey conducted by UNICEF has found that the IMR has increased from 47 cases per 1000 live births during the period of 1984-93 to 107 cases during the period of 1994-99. The IMR reached its peak in 1994 with 117 cases.

According to estimates, the IMR was 104 per 1000 live births in 1999. A joint study conducted by UNICEF, the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) and the Nutrition Research Center in Iraq has also found that the IMR has increased from 0.0804 prior to the siege to 0.1607 after the siege (1995). Infant mortality is attributed to a multitude of factors, including malnutrition, ignorance of family and mothers, poor environmental and household conditions, shortage of medicine and lack of proper health care.

Table 21⁶⁸
Malnutrition Cases among Infants

Weights vs. Length	Nutritional Status	Consequences	% of Children Affected				
			April 1997	Oct. 1997	1998	1999	2000
Weight for Age	General Malnutrition	Under-Weight	14.7	14.6	13.2	14.1	15.9
Height for Age	Chronic Malnutrition	Stunting	15.3	12.2	16.2	12.8	22.1
Weight for Height	Serious Malnutrition	Wasting	9	7	8.3	9	6

The above table shows a drop in the weight vs. height category between April 1997 and the year 2000. It also shows a remarkable rise in the other

⁶⁷ Niblock, page 145.

⁶⁸ Planning Commission, "Human Development Report for 2000", previous source.

two categories (weight for age/height for age). The average U5MR was 56 cases per 1,000 live births in 1994, according to UNICEF. However, the figure increased to 131 cases in 1999.

Table 22⁶⁹
Under-Five Mortality Rates per 1000 Live Births

1984-1989	1989-1994	1994-1999
56	92	131

Given the different reasons for the U5MR, including, for example, the educational level of mothers (which directly affects mortality rates), the malnutrition factor is also extremely important. The following table explains these relationships.

Table 23⁷⁰
The Impact of Malnutrition Levels on U5 Children

Indicator	Nutritional Status	Consequences	Relative Significance				
			1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
Weight for Age	General Malnutrition	Under-Weight	23.4	24.7	22.8	21.3	15.9
Height for Age	Chronic Malnutrition	Stunting	32	27.5	26.7	20.4	22.1
Weight for Height	Serious Malnutrition	Wasting	11	8.9	9.1	9.3	6

The mortality rate for children above the age of five increased by 2.5% during the period of 1990-95, 0.72% during 1995-96, 3.2% during 1996-97, 3.3% during 1997-98 and 9.8% during 1998-99.

Table 24⁷¹
Infant and Under-Five Mortality
According to Mothers' Educational Levels for the Period 1994-99

Mothers' Educational Level	U5MR per 1000 Live Births	IMR per 1000 Live Births
No Certificates	145	118
Primary Education	133	115
Secondary/Higher Education	106	90

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Ibid.

The above data not only reflects the mothers' responsibility in child mortality, but it also shows the interaction and interrelations between the variants of education and household conditions in general, including, among others, the IMR. Hence, an educated woman is better equipped to provide health care to her children. The mother's close relationship with her children makes her suffer as a result of her children's sickness. Similarly, children's health conditions have an impact on their overall comprehensive development. A knowledge, attitudes and practices (KAP) survey has found that 6.1% of children aged 5 to 15 in urban areas have not received education due to sickness, as opposed to 4.6% in rural areas.⁷² It should be noted that the immunization campaigns carried out by the Ministry of Health, in cooperation with several national and international organizations, have not covered all children. A high proportion of them, particularly in rural areas, remain un-immunized. This results in high morbidity rates among children and impacts heavily on mothers as a consequence.

Health Services:

Despite the above factors, there have been positive developments in other areas. The number of grassroots clinics increased from 282 in 1996 to 320 in 1998 and to 380 in 2001. These clinics provide vital services to local communities and meet the health needs of families and women in their different locales. The number of health service units (hospitals, clinics and other health institutions) has also increased to 1994 and 2018 in 2000 and 2001, respectively, thus achieving a growth rate of 3.8%. The establishment of reproductive health centers and clinics is a significant indicator that signals the development of health services for women. A total of 27 counseling clinics were established by 1996, including six clinics in Baghdad and nine specialized clinics in public hospitals, along with 10 reproductive health clinics. The former General Federation of Iraqi Women participated in the activities of the reproductive health clinics, as well.⁷³

The Family Planning Society was established in 1971, and it became a member of the International Federation of Planned Parenthood (IFPP) in 1975. The Society has a General Assembly which includes professionals with all medical, scientific and technical specializations. The former General Assembly has 1207 members, 63.5% of whom are women. The Ministry of Health and the Family Planning Society share the responsibility

⁷² UNICEF and Iraqi partners, "Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices (KAP)", draft report, Baghdad, 2003, page 39.

⁷³ The Iraqi Family Planning Society, "Reproductive Health Forum," Baghdad, October 1996.

for the Reproductive Health Project. The number of the project's clinics increased from 136 in 2000 to 145 in 2001. The number of beneficiary women increased to 1.2 million in 2001, up from 355,000 in 2000. The General Federation of Iraqi Women received 3,084,212 Iraqi dinars in financial support to establish reproductive health clinics whose cash returns to the Federation amounted to 23,382,892 dinars.⁷⁴

Table 25⁷⁵
Distribution of Reproductive Health Clinics
in Iraq as of December 31, 2000

	Type of Clinic	Number of Clinics	%
In conjunction with the Ministry of Health	Consulting	28	20.5
	Specialized	28	20.5
	Primary Health Care	20	14.7
	Grassroots	14	10.3
In conjunction with the General Federation of Iraqi Women	Multi-functional	24	17.6
Private and in conjunction with ministries, societies and associations (syndicates)		12	9
In conjunction with the General Federation for Cooperation		6	4.4
Self-rule area		4	3
Total		136	100

It should be noted that the presence in the health system of women of various medical specializations must have been influential on its various functions. The number of specialized female doctors has increased from 2.5% in 1990 to 31.6% in 1998. The number of female doctors also increased from 36% to 37.2% during the same period. The number of female dentists increased from 55% to 57.4%, while the number of female pharmacists dropped from 74.1% to 72.9%. Similarly, the number of nurses graduating from nursing college decreased.⁷⁶

⁷⁴ The General Federation of Iraqi Women, "Report on the Federation's Activities and Future Plans", 1999, Baghdad, page 40; see also, Family Planning Unit, "Educator's Manual on Reproductive Health", Baghdad, page 4.

⁷⁵ Family Planning Society, "Reproductive Health Manual", Iraq, December 2000, Baghdad, page 29.

⁷⁶ Abdul Hameed, Siham, previous source, page 61.

The health system in Iraq has fallen short of providing much-needed psychological/mental health services, given the catastrophic effects on the psychological state of Iraqi women and Iraqi citizens in general. A study covering a sample of Iraqi women has found that 57% of the women studied suffered from psychological symptoms such as anxiety, depression, insomnia and headaches. A Harvard study has also found that 73% of the sample suffer from the psychological consequences of war and that 46% have bad and disturbing dreams. Another study conducted in 1999, documented by Basra Hospital, reported an increase in the number of women registered at the hospital.

Table 26⁷⁷
Number of Women Registered at the Basra Mental Health Clinic

Year	No.
1990	191
1996	294
1997	374

The lack of efficient mental health facilities is one of the weaknesses of the health system. The 1990's have seen the proliferation of facilities providing spiritual services, along with many individuals working as palm readers and fortunetellers. This reflects a state of anxiety, social tension and uncertainty about the future. Herbal pharmacies and shops have also grown in numbers. They were initially set up in a random fashion until the Ministry of Health intervened to organize them in accordance with technical and health conditions.

Although the health system has seen a relative improvement following the signing of the MOU, mortality and illness rates have remained high. Health problems accounted for 15.4% of the total number of cases seen in 1998 at family counseling centers run by the General Federation of Iraqi. In 1996, this number was 27%.

The Ministry of Health, in cooperation with UNICEF and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), has mounted consecutive immunization campaigns, such as those for women of childbearing age, along with national campaigns for the control of diarrheal diseases and acute respiratory infections. The second half of the 1990's has also seen the establishment of baby-friendly hospitals and maternal health centers. Health activities have accounted for 50% of the entire activities carried out by the

⁷⁷ Al Salem, Maha Hussein Yousef, *Some of the Negative Aspects...*, previous source.

former General Federation of Iraqi Women, and this activity reflects the need for special medical care to deal with incurable diseases.

The number of in-patients at the Radiology and Nuclear Medicine Hospital in Baghdad was approximately 2000 patients a month, and the bed occupancy rate was 100% in the year 2000. This already difficult situation is further aggravated by poor water quality, illiteracy, population congestion, poverty and malnutrition, all of which directly affect the Iraqi health system. A study conducted by UNICEF has found that the provision of iron pills for women falls short of meeting the actual need. Efforts made by health care centers to raise women's awareness and influence their decisions on family planning were also limited, as it appears that husbands largely have the upper hand in decisions regarding pregnancy.⁷⁸ This criticism of family planning centers in no way means they have not been active. For example, they have contributed to the drafting, improvement and effective implementation of midwife training curriculum and its supervision and monitoring. Promoting awareness about the importance of breastfeeding has contributed significantly to the reduction of IMR and has enhanced pregnant women's knowledge. It has been noted that the situation of urban women was better than that of rural women, particularly before 1995, due to the shortage of supplies, communications and transport. However, the situation in rural areas has relatively improved since the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding with the United Nations.

As previously indicated, health, social, economic and cultural aspects have inter-related and causal relations. For example, a UNICEF study has found that 6.1% of the children of the women surveyed in urban areas and 4.6% of the children of the women surveyed in rural areas do not go to school because of illness, and that 21.8% of children nationwide do not go to school because of the long distance between the schools and their houses. Diseases are also to blame for the dropout rate of 7% of urban and rural children. Mothers' health education level also plays an important role in reducing their children's health problems.

A survey covering more than 3510 Iraqi women has found that 6.3% of urban women do not know the causes of diarrhea, opposed to 15.4% in rural areas.⁷⁹

⁷⁸ UNICEF/Iraq, "Situational Analysis of Children and Women in Iraq", Baghdad, 1997, page 55.

⁷⁹ UNICEF and Iraqi partners, "Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices (KAP)", previous source, pages 39 and 41.

Despite improvements in funding opportunities after 1995, Iraq's health policy failed to solve the problems resulting from war and siege. For example, health institutions' self-financing system has had a negative effect on overall health service. In fact, it has placed a heavy financial burden on the health system. Trading in drugs and the spread of black markets, coupled with the state's rejection of international assistance, have resulted in drug scarcity and limitations on the ability of poor families to obtain them. The situation has been aggravated by limited services. For example, the percentage of pregnant women receiving prenatal care did not exceed 35% in 1991, despite a relative growth in the following years. The information and research systems failed short of addressing the situation on the ground. Centralized management has been cited as one of the obstacles facing the delivery of medical services and the reason for the drop in numbers of surgical operations by (-1.8%) on the average. The number of surgical operations dropped from 4492 in 1995 to 4357 in 1997, but it rose to 4442 in 1999.

Moreover, the medical cards issued to families so that they can receive medicine free of charge or at reduced prices have been discontinued. Alternatively, patients suffering from chronic diseases began receiving their medicine from Balat Al-Shuhada'a hospital at symbolic prices.

Table 27⁸⁰
Human Development Indicators for Rural and Urban Areas in Iraq, 2000

Indicator	Urban	Rural
% of children receiving high doses of vitamin A	28.8	22.4
% of low birth weight children	12.9	11.3
% of mothers receiving high doses of vitamin A	23.2	18.7
% of mothers receiving at least 2 doses of anti-tetanus vaccine	62.6	48.2
% of women receiving pre-natal care from qualified health care facilities	81.5	66.2
% of women receiving neonatal care at birth from qualified cadres	79.0	60.2
% of women using contraceptives	49.2	30.4
% of officially registered newborn babies.	98.7	97.2
% access to drinking water	97.5	51.5
% of people using latrines	99.1	77.8

⁸⁰ "Human Development Report 2002", "The Year 2000 Multi-Indicator Survey", chapter on health.

Chapter 5

Iraqi Women and Violence

No data is available about violence against Iraqi women and its forms, causes and effects. This is not because statistics authorities hide data, but because a large number of cases are not reported. In addition, violence against women, even in its most dangerous forms, does not attract attention. It is regarded as a permissible traditional cultural trait favored by an existing traditional culture which discriminates against women. In a patriarchal Arab society with strict traditions, especially in rural areas, an aggressive tendency is instilled through family upbringing and the manner in which children are treated. One with an aggressive personality often prides himself on that trait and is keen to gain others' respect for his stature and reputation.⁸¹ As traditional culture regards women as pudenda or defective creatures that are a source of shame with the potential to defame the family's reputation—especially that of men—cruelty, deterrence and violence are called for to stereotype her behavior and define a narrow circle of what is allowed for her. Accordingly, we find differences in the way boys and girls are raised. Boys enjoy extra attention at the expense of girls, hence the persecution of women is a common form of discrimination and oppression in Iraqi society.⁸²

A quick review of higher study research in faculties of sociology and psychology at Baghdad University clearly illustrates that what has been written about violence against women in no way reflects the true scale of the problem. This can be seen in a study in the sociology faculty about wife beating in Palestine, another study in the same department regarding social violence in general and general psychological studies on aggressive behavior. Possible reasons for this are that the issue of violence against women is a taboo subject to study or that its existence is so common that its occurrence is no longer regarded as surprising. The renowned scientist Jaston Potol observed that “science begins with surprise.” It is clear that the National Strategy for the Advancement of Iraqi Women rightly made the link between violence against women and human rights. But in defining its general objective, it placed the aim of providing necessary protection for women within the framework of the family and society. Additionally, the Strategy referred to institutional procedures and indicated the need for curricula to be developed and a database to be built on the subject.

⁸¹ Sharabi, Dr. Hisham, *Introductions to the Study of Arab Society*, Beirut: Al Ahlia, 1977, page 24.

⁸² UNICEF/Iraq, page 92.

Indirect results of some studies have shown that poverty has shaken family structure and mixed social roles. Also, the inability of heads of families to provide for the family's livelihood has stirred rebellion, egoism and individualism among children. This, in turn, has invited fathers to engage in more violence. A UNICEF study has established a link between a man's inability to provide family income and rising violence and family unrest.⁸³

Fifty students of the Faculty of Sociology at Baghdad University were asked to define three forms of violence. Their answers illustrated that females are more aware of the diversity of the forms of violence than males. Female students mentioned personal insults, the use of verbal abuse and harassment in crowded areas and beating. Male students, however, disregarded all of these forms and focused, instead, on beating, rape, sexual assault and defamation. Eighty percent of the total surveyed believed that some sort of violence was necessary for "upbringing and education."

Another study has concluded that the various forms of violence are abundant in Iraqi society (for example, most Iraqis resort to firing guns in the air as an expression of sadness or joy), and some practices against females appear to be quite cruel, especially in rural areas, where the hand of an eloping girl is amputated. In many instances, when a man beats a woman on the street, bystanders do not interfere once he claims that he is her father, brother or cousin, as these family relations are seen as allowed to use violence against women in public. Violence is deeply rooted in the Iraqi cultural structure and is condoned by the conception of the value it adds, which has, in turn, been adduced by traditions and norms to concepts such as revenge, strength and tribal affiliation. The study also shows that verbal abuse is more widespread than other forms of violence (which is probably why it passes unnoticed as compared to physical violence). It was also observed that violence was more prevalent in big families than in smaller ones. Rating violence according to its perpetrators, however, was a different story; as it was found that the highest percentage of violence was committed by state institutions, followed by people on the street and in society and finally by the family.

⁸³ UNICEF/Iraq, p. 92

Table 28⁸⁴
Forms of Violence According to Type and Location

Type	Family		Street		Institution		Society	
	Average	Order	Average	Order	Average	Order	Average	Order
Physical Violence	6.6	2	7.2	2a	6.2	3	6.5	2
Damage to Property	5.6	4	5.7	3	5.8	4	5.6	3
Verbal Abuse	6.2	3	7.2	2b	7.3	2	7.6	1b
Mockery	7.8	1	7.6	1	8.5	1	7.6	1a

The entire Iraqi society fell into the grip of constant violence since its participation in wars and political and military rivalries in 1980. Prior to that, Iraq witnessed several coups and tribal rebellions that were marked by severe and rampant violence that included murder and facial deformity. This was particularly seen in areas in which organized prostitution was widespread before it was banned in the mid-1950's upon the signing of the International Agreement on the Prevention of Prostitution. Violent behavior against women typically becomes more severe when a woman's body, and consequently the family stature in local communities or among the clan's families, is perceived as used in an unacceptable manner. Thus, an Iraqi family's treatment of a woman who elopes with a man or runs away for one reason or another is often violent and deadly. Even a woman who is kidnapped, whether she is raped or not and despite the fact that she is a victim in this case, faces murder on many occasions under the pretext of preserving family honor.**

Years of being a militarized society has resulted in most Iraqi men—and even many women—gaining military experience. They participated in wars for long durations to the extent that violence became a very ordinary part of their lives. No doubt that their absence, perhaps for many months, from families during these wars reflected negatively on their temperament and led to tension, which in turn affects the manner in which they deal with members of their families. Consequently, it can be said that the state encouraged violence in one way or another, whether directly or indirectly. The Iraqi penal code also includes texts that are in line with prevailing

⁸⁴ Jamil, Asma, "Social Violence", (an unpublished Master's thesis), Sociology Department, Faculty of Arts, 1999, several pages.

** In our study about women's human security after the fall of Baghdad on April 9, 2003, we recorded in the field some incidents of families killing their daughters despite the fact that they had been kidnap victims amidst the cycle of anarchy witnessed in Iraq.

traditions and cultural values. These justify the killing of females on grounds of family honor and washing away disgrace. With lenient punishment, the culprit finds better chances of leaving prison in the first amnesties granted by the state.

Killers even find positive and encouraging attitudes from their families, clans and local communities, since they are regarded as gallant and honorable for washing away the disgrace brought about by their sisters or wives by killing them.

Moreover, the law allows a man to use violence against his wife or daughters—sometimes including beating—if the aim is to chastise, discipline or educate them. One cannot find a single case in Iraqi society in which a family reports to police or any official or unofficial circle a man who severely beats his wife or daughter, because this is strictly considered a family affair. It can be said that Iraqi society itself lacks disciplinary measures or an opinion against violence. Many of the cases reported to family counseling centers in the General Federation of Iraqi Women, and which smack of matrimonial differences, used to be recorded under social or family problems and, despite the apparent male violence against women, simply ignored. There is no direct data or statistics in these centers about violence against women. What is available are only marginal notes to the effect that most cases of family violence are in the form of verbal abuse before they reach incidents of severe beating coupled with the destruction of family property such as dishes and glassware. Due to unemployment, poverty and the long absence of fathers from the home (with mothers taking on fathers' roles), it can be expected that cases of violence would increase. However, all of these factors do not dispel the fact that Iraqi society justifies violence, especially against women and children, in the name of preserving and protecting family honor and dignity or asserting the father's dominance and absolute authority over the family.

A great effort has been exerted to better educate women and provide them with services, but no clear and real effort has been made to liberate them from culturally justified violence. On top of all this, the period in which sanctions were leveled against Iraq was characterized by elements leading to further tension, the pressures of poverty, uncertainty and conflict between generations. All of this, in turn, generated more violence.⁸⁵

⁸⁵ Yassin, Dr. Adnan and Dr. Karim Mohamad Hamza, *The Effects of Wars and Sanctions on the Iraqi Family*, Baghdad, September, 2003.

It is important to note the contradiction and paradox between what is said and actual behavior with regard to violence. For example, a study on children, involving 500 mothers in an area of Baghdad, has shown that more than 90% of these mothers believe that beating is unnecessary as an educational measure. However, researchers report that the reality on the ground is that violence is extremely common and natural in the life of the Iraqi family. Although it is common for Iraqis to call handicapped people names, a UNICEF survey has shown that 95.6% of mothers in urban areas and 90.9% of mothers in rural areas know that the practice has a negative effect on the handicapped.⁸⁶

Iraqi women lack appropriate mechanisms for legal or institutional protection, such as centers to report cases of violence or call on police intervention when needed. On the contrary, there have been witnessed cases of institutional collective violence against thousands of women. In 2001, tens of Iraqi women were beheaded without trial for prostitution. Concerned authorities did not even issue an official statement. This practice partly reflects traditional cultural trends and partly a political stance, which in either case was not met with rejection by the Iraqi street.

⁸⁶ UNICEF and Iraqi partners, "Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices (KAP)", page 77.

Chapter 6

Iraqi Women and Armed Conflict: Feminizing the Face of Death

Lack of data on the effect of wars and armed conflicts on Iraqi women is only outmatched by the frequency of these wars and conflicts in Iraq. The concerned authorities in Iraq were keen to portray the wars as part of a framework of necessity for achieving strategic objectives. Accordingly, human losses were justified and authorities withheld all data on all victims of these wars and conflicts. Certainly, their price was paid from the development budget and its programs to the extent that Iraq will remain hostage to them for years to come.*

The justification of war in the media, school curricula and cultural courses, among others, and the interpretation of the embargo as an aggression on Iraq provided data for the 1990's solely in terms of the effects of sanctions, apart from a bit of diagnosis of the damage caused by the Gulf War in 1991. This included a booklet issued by the Ministry of Culture and Information in 1992. As for military operations in 1998, very little was released or published.

Generally speaking, part of the data on the impact of the sanctions and the Gulf War was state propaganda, and this trend continued throughout the 1990's as Iraq was part of a cycle of conflicts.

The data contained in the following two tables gives a small idea of the effects of wars, rivalries and strife on civilians and the military alike.

Iraqi women did not directly take part in the first Gulf War as they did in the eight-year Iraq-Iran war. During that war, Iraqi women bore its brunt (sometimes in the form of involvement in the battlefield, donating jewelry and birthing children) in order to provide human support for the war effort and greatly suffered at the loss of their sons, husbands, relatives and other acquaintances. Some women were even taken prisoners, though this was not mentioned in official statements.

* On Dec. 13, 1991, Iraq's debt exclusive of interest and loans from Gulf states was estimated at around 41.2 billion dollars. In 2000, the Economist Intelligence Unit estimated Iraq's debts to be in the vicinity of 21.2 billion dollars, exclusive of military debts. (UNDP and the World Bank, "Watching Brief Report", first draft, Baghdad, August 2003, page 21).

Table 29
Number of Deaths among Females According to
Age Group, 1991

Age Group	Number	%
Under 1 to 4 years	101	13.3
5-14	280	37
15-44	347	45.7
45-65	9	1.2
65 & over	21	2.7
Total	758	100

Notably, the highest percentage of women who died that year was in the 15-44 age group, followed by those in the 5-14 age group. As for the wounded, they are classified as follows:

Table 30⁸⁷
Number of Wounded Women According to
Age Group, 1991

Age Group	Number	%
Under 1 to 4 years	145	12.5
5-14	312	27.5
15-44	572	49.4
45-65	102	8.8
65 & over	21	1.8
Total	1152	100

The effects of armed conflicts and wars on women are not confined to physical injury or death. They also include house demolition and destruction of property in addition to ruined infrastructure such as water, electricity and sanitation services. Iraq has witnessed the longest and most horrific wars, but their available human data was withheld and not allowed to be circulated. The state, though, made attempts to formulate laws, establish institutions and introduce measures to alleviate the scourge of war on women and the family. These included military pension laws; decisions relating to family care, missing civilians and military personnel and caring for them in line with military service and pension laws; the law on caring for those who are underage; the military real estate possession law; laws pertaining to honoring martyrs' families; the adolescent care law; and the

⁸⁷ Ministry of Culture and Information, Information Department, Publications Section, *Destruction-Baghdad*, 1992, pp. 72-73.

social care law, among others.⁸⁸ It also established data on prisoners of war and made arrangements to care for their families (through bodies such as the Al-Qadysiyah Fighters Welfare Society).

As we have mentioned, the effects of wars and military conflicts vary, for, in the absence of their husbands, women (according to a study of the Iraqi family during the Iraq-Iran War) played the combined roles of mother and father (82%) and had to shoulder the responsibility of solving family problems (36.5%). Data has also shown a clear trend in militarizing the Iraqi family. Respondents said 86% of family members had direct participation in the war, with 53% trained to carry arms and 52% who donated money and gold.

Another study has shown that divorce rates are higher in families whose male heads have military jobs. It also shows that 54% of the surveyed families attributed income insufficiency to the husband's preoccupation with war and continuous absence from home (45% of the women had to work outside their homes for the same reason). The survey also revealed that 33% of divorce cases occurred because of worry and tension resulting from the war.⁸⁹ Similarly, thousands of men have been taken as prisoners in both of the Gulf wars, and this has had a direct effect on the Iraqi family and ultimately on women. A study on prisoners of the first Gulf War shows that their families frequently were broken up. According to the study, 37.5% of the men divorced their wives, 22.5% were separated and 10% still live with them but with no concord. The researcher pointed out that the dissolution of prisoners' families is often due to a shift in a woman's vision of herself as a result of her husband's long absence which leads her to continue performing the dual roles she has become used to do and finds difficult to relinquish. Additionally, deep differences over the husband's salary and financial privileges as a prisoner, the husband's doubts towards his wife and interference from the families of both aid to bring the family apart. Other surveys have also referred to similar results.⁹⁰

On the other hand, wars in Iraq have led to a mass displacement and transfer operation that has had devastating effects. For example, a study on

⁸⁸ See Ministry of Justice, "Legislation and Social Welfare", Baghdad, 1999.

⁸⁹ Thikra, Jamal M. H. Al Banna, "Divorce as a Consequence of War and Sanctions ", unpublished M.A. Thesis, Faculty of Arts, Sociology Department, 1995, miscellaneous pages.

⁹⁰ See Karim Mohammad Hamzah, "The Holder and the Captive", an unpublished PhD thesis, Faculty of Arts, Sociology Department, 1994; also refer to Hassan, S. H., "Psychiatric Problems of Prisoners of War", Faculty of Medicine, Ain Shams University, 1989, page 1112.

transferred people has shown that the numbers of those displaced from the north ranged between 500,000-800,000 in 2000. In 2001, the US Committee for Refugees reduced that figure to 600,000. A UN agency estimated the figure at approximately 805,505 in October 2000. This is in addition to the thousands who evacuated areas of one party or another in northern Iraq.⁹¹

After the second Gulf War, UN organizations were able to operate in northern Iraq, and some of their studies show that security concerns had a great impact on the lives of refugees. For example, 3400 mine-infested areas covered 900 square kilometers of the land needed for settlement, construction and agriculture. This affected 1100 population concentrations. A report by the UN Secretary-General said that because of lack of cooperation on the part of the central government, mine removal could take 35-75 years. Moreover, the UN had earmarked 30 million dollars of oil revenue annually for this operation. Other reports speak of the catastrophic and squalid conditions of refugee and displaced persons' dwellings, as 60,360 of them lived in tents. The United Nations estimated that 26,290 housing units were needed to solve the problem. As for health services, Habitat said that 2000 families, representing 8% of the displaced families, did not have access to health centers and that only 40% of the families lived in housing units with water and an electric supply.⁹² Similar conditions prevailed in the south, where thousands fled towards Saudi Arabia or were captured by coalition forces and held in detention camps since 1991 (they began returning after September 2003).

There are no in-depth studies on the social, psychological and economic implications of wars, but as we endeavored to look into the condition of Iraqi women after 1995, we can say that the effects of wars and conflicts that began in 1980 can still be felt today and that they are extremely complex and longstanding. With the length and intensity of the wars, the measures adopted to alleviate their scourge were indeed limited. Moreover, most of these measures were not appropriate, such as the act of building special centers for handicapped people (Al-Thara township in Baghdad, for example) due to the wars' and conflicts' psychological, health and social impact. Other measures were worthless, such as the military pension and gratuity, while the country still blatantly lacked psychological and social services and counseling.

⁹¹ See Faust, John and Victor Tanner, *Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) Iraq*, limited edition, Baghdad: Beit Al-Hikma, 2002, pp. 26-28.

⁹² Same source, several pages.

Chapter 7

Iraqi Women and Labor: Under-Utilized Capabilities

Since the early 1950's, and with the country receiving 51% of its oil revenue, along with the establishment of the Construction Council and later the Ministry of Planning, Iraqi society has witnessed a remarkable degree of social, cultural and economic openness which allowed Iraqi women into the job market on a larger scale. This in turn helped to provide them with useful experience and to change their stereotyped images.

The Iraqi economy contains characteristics that reflect on the volume of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and its sectoral distributions, including a narrow productivity base which reduces the non-petroleum sectors' contribution to the GDP. As a result, available job opportunities are both less in number and diversity. In addition, the 1991 GDP dropped, and its downward trend continued to affect every activity except for the agricultural sector.

Table 31⁹³
GDP Estimates in Iraq at Fixed Prices
1990-2000

Year	GDP (Except Oil)		Added value in the Oil Sector (Million Dollars)		Total GDP (Million Dollars)
	Million Dinars	Million Dollars	In Current Prices	1990 Prices	
1990	21,068	67,418	3331	10,659	78,077
1996	13,239	42,365	300	291	42,656
1997	16,549	52,956	4800	4888	57,844
1998	19,031	60,899	5400	5806	66,705
1999	21,315	68,207	11,700	12,676	80,883
2000	23,020	73,665	21,100	22,786	96,451

What likely led to a decline in available job opportunities was that the state, since the beginning of sanctions, directly reviewed state-funded investment projects in the annual investment plan and gave priority to production

⁹³ UNDP and the World Bank, op.cit., page .27.

projects, which it regarded as more important. It similarly stopped working on projects that required foreign currency.

On the other hand, the private sector has greatly suffered because it used to rely on state support and subsidies for its foreign currency needs before the imposition of sanctions. In this context, the inflation rate reached its peak in 1995, when at the end of that year prices rose 700 fold compared to those of 1988. It was noticed that the effects of wars had distorted the structure of age and gender distribution.

Table 32⁹⁴
Female Population Distribution According
to Age Group Percentage, 1987-1997

Age Group	1987		1997	
	Females	Total	Females	Total
Under 15	46	45.6	43.3	44.2
15 – 64	50.2	50.7	52.8	52.4
Over 65	3.8	3.5	3.9	3.4

The above table shows that the percentage of females of working age was higher than that of males in 1987 and rose further in 1997 (52.8%). As for females under the working age (under 15), their percentages dropped from 1987 to 1997 (46%-43.3%), and in both censuses, the percentage of males was higher. Despite this, the description of the under 15 category as being under the working age is inaccurate since the marginal job market in Iraq has begun to attract children from both sexes. Thus, it is no longer strange to see 10 year-old girls selling plastic bags or soft drinks in the markets.

The following data gives a more detailed picture of the structure of the workforce in 1997, when the last census was taken:

Table 33⁹⁵

⁹⁴ Results of the two censuses (1987 and 1997).

**The Workforce Structure According to Age Group
and Sex (%), 1997**

Age Group	Males	Females	Total
15-19	57.5	2.8	30.5
20-24	78.5	7.1	42.7
25-29	94.8	12.2	53.5
30-34	95.5	14.5	54
35-39	93.8	15.8	51.5
40-44	87.9	12.8	49.1
45-49	79.5	10.3	43.2
50-54	71.6	9.1	40.8
55-59	63.3	5.8	34.8
60-64	56.6	4.2	28.4
General Average 15-64	79	9.2	43.6

The table shows that the highest average for males was among the ages of 30-34 (95.5%). As for females, the highest average was among the 35-39 age group. Results of the 1997 general census showed that the percentage of the workforce in urban areas reached 70.7%, while rural areas registered 21.7%.

On the other hand, data shows that the highest percentage of work is concentrated in the education sector (40.9% for females against 3.3% for males), followed by agricultural activity, hunting and public sales (21.7% for females against 19.8% for males), general administration and defense and mandatory social security (9.4% for females, but the male rate in this activity is higher at 26%). We also realize that certain professions are available to women, such as army officers and juvenile police, but job opportunities in these areas are closed and women's experimentation in them can be said to have failed. Women's participation in processing industries stands at 6.8% and in health and social work at 6.7% (against 1.5% for males). Women's involvement in activities such as fishing, hotels and restaurants is low despite the existence of such professions, as well as due to the situation of tourism in Iraq since the 1980's.

⁹⁵ Results of the 1997 census.

Table 34⁹⁶
Relative Distribution of the Workforce
According to Economic Activity and Sex, 1997

Economic Activity	Males	Females	Total
Agriculture, fishery and forestry	19.8	21.7	20.1
Fishing	0.7	0.1	0.6
Mining and masonry	0.8	0.8	0.8
Processing industry	5.4	6.8	5.6
Electrical, water and gas installations	0.7	0.9	0.7
Construction	6.2	0.6	5.5
Retail/wholesale: vehicle, engine, bike repairs and personal goods	23.8	4.5	21.5
Hotels and restaurants	1.2	0.2	1.1
Transport and storage	7.9	1.8	7.1
Financial brokerage	0.1	2.5	0.4
Real estate, rental and commercial enterprises	0.6	0.6	0.6
Administration, defense, mandatory social security	26	9.4	24
Education	3.3	40.9	7.8
Health and social work	1.5	6.7	2.1
Social service activities and social and personal services	1.8	2.2	1.9
Families with private workers	0.2	0.2	0.2
Organizations and institutions beyond the provincial boundaries	0.03	0.1	0.04
Total	100	100	100

It is important to note that women's participation in the workforce dropped from 11.1% in 1987 to 9.2% in 1997. The drop in the rate of general activity increased the burden of providing for families from 3 persons in 1987 to 4 persons in 1997, which in turn amounts to a heavier economic burden. This subsequently leads to poor results with regard to the realities of lower incomes and limited job opportunities. Some comparative studies show that the workforce in the processing industry sector dropped from 7.1% in 1987 to 5.6% in 1997 and from 9.1% to 5.5% in the construction sector in the same period. All of this has translated into limitations of work opportunities for females. If we look at the relative importance of the female workforce in accordance with economic activity, we find that 79.3% of it is concentrated in the services sector (this rate has been on the rise since 1990). In the processing industry, the situation was quite the opposite, as the relative importance of the female workforce has shown a continued decline since 1987 (8.1%, then 6.8% in 1990, then 5.1% in

⁹⁶ Ibid.

1998.) We can come to a general conclusion that the relative importance of the female workforce has dropped in all economic activity sectors except the services sector.

Table 35⁹⁷
The Relative Importance of the Female Workforce
According to Economic Activity, 1990-1998

Economic Activity	1990	1998
Agriculture, hunting , forestry and fishing	1.6	1.3
Mining	1.0	0.9
Processing industries	6.8	5.1
Water, electricity and gas	1.5	1.3
Construction sector	2	1.1
Commercial sector	4.2	2.6
Transport and storage	3.6	2.9
Real estate, financing and insurance	6.2	5.5
Services sector	73.1	79.3
Total	100	100

It is worth mentioning that state employees of both sexes had already begun abandoning state jobs to join free enterprises and the marginal job market due to low salaries and wages. For example, the rate of executive employees and clerks dropped from 38.6% in 1987 to 20.6% in 1997. In contrast, the percentage of the self-employed rose from 14.8% in 1987 to 29.6% in 1997. At the same time, the unemployment rate shot up from 3.7% to 13.5% for the same period.⁹⁸ However, the general percentages for both sexes vary.

Table 36
Female-Owned Industrial Projects Registered in the General Industrial
Development Directorate, 1996-2000

Type of Industry	Number of Projects
Food industries	172
Textile industries	649
Chemical industries	227
Construction industries	150

Source: The Industrial Development General Directorate

⁹⁷ Abdul Hamid, Siham, *Iraqi Women and Socio-Economic Development*, earlier source, page 16.

⁹⁸ "Human Development Report 2000", earlier source.

Table 37
Loans Given to Women by the Industrial Bank (%)
1990-1999

Year	Development Loans		Commercial Credit Facilities	
	% of Beneficiaries	% of Loans	% of Beneficiaries	% of Loans
1990	2.9	0.9	---	---
1995	8.9	18.9	6.2	1.7
1999	7.1	3.6	40.4	1.4

Source: Industrial Bank

A review of the data of working women in the various sectors shows an increase in the percentage of those working in state-run institutions from 34.6% in 1990 to 40.3% in 1997. This means that public sector jobs are more attractive to females than to males despite their salaries' weak purchasing power and lack of fringe benefits.

At the same time, this reflects women's weakness in establishing their own projects. In addition, traditional cultural directives do not encourage them to work for the private sector.

Table 38⁹⁹
Percentage of Working Females per Sector, 1999
(Establishments Employing 30 Workers or More)

Data Sector	Public Sector	Mixed	Cooperative	Private Sector
% of working females in the female workforce	72.9	8.6	4.2	14.3
% of working females in the general workforce	18.4	25.5	82.4	21

In addition to the high percentage of women workers in the public sector, the table shows the high rate of women workers from the general workforce in the cooperative sector (82.4%). The percentage of females working in the public sector in 1990 did not exceed 34.6%, but it began to grow up until 2000 (40%), and then dropped slightly in 2001 (39.6%). The 1997 census showed that there are some females who work for themselves, for others or for a family although they are from the 6-9 age group. They

⁹⁹ "The 2000 Statistical Data", previous source.

numbered 4369 and represented 15% of the total population in this category. However, the percentage drops to 2.4% of the total population in the 10-14 age group. This reflects the family's fear of sending their daughters to work at this age, and the high number of female workers in the cooperative sector compared to male workers also reflects this typical family fear. This sector includes productive families' societies and cooperatives.

For example, the rate of women working for productive families' societies was 90%. These societies account for 77% of the total production societies of the General Cooperative Union.

The number of women's affiliates in this sector was 4000. On the other hand, there was insufficient statistical monitoring of women's professional status. For example, the 1997 census questionnaire was lacking in the sense that it regarded rural women working in agricultural activity as performing household duties and considered them housewives. But the reality is that women work in agriculture within the framework of a large family and do not take pay. When a woman works at huge farms not belonging to her family, she gets lower wages than those of men. As for professional workers, they are classified in the following table:

Table 39¹⁰⁰
The Structure of the Workforce According to Profession and Gender, 1997 (%)

Professions	Males	Females	Total
Specialists, technicians and subordinates	5.6	4.6	9.9
Legislators, bosses, administrative officers and directors	0.2	0.4	0.3
Executive staff, clerks and subordinates	21.2	16	20.6
Salespeople	16.6	3.8	15.3
Service workers	3.1	4.8	3.2
Agricultural and forestry workers, cattle breeders and hunters	18.5	21.6	18.8
Production workers and subordinates and transport machinery operators	19.9	5.4	18.4
Unemployed with no profession	14.9	2	13.5
Total	100	100	100

Wages:

¹⁰⁰ 1997 Census.

Among the results of wars and the sanctions were the devaluation of the Iraqi dinar and the high rise in the prices of commodities and services. This rendered women's incomes important even though the state ignored a salary review of employees in the public and mixed sectors until after 1996, when it began pumping huge quantities of oil, and reduced spending on social services. Nevertheless, women strove to help support the family budget. A survey conducted on 1300 families in Baghdad in 1995 by the General Union of Iraqi Women found that 61% of the women polled earned between 3000-5000 dinars a month (about two dollars, according to the exchange rate of the day).

A joint study carried out in 1997 by the Planning Authority, ESCWA and the Development Program found that 70.3% of the female sample earned 1000-5000 dinars a month, illustrating that women's incomes did not fluctuate in the years between 1995 and 1997.

Women's low income is due to many factors. The high percentage of females working in the public sector necessitates a lower income. Also, the division of labor patterns within families is based on the principle of allocating lucrative hours for men's work and assigning women's time for housework. On the other hand, weakening economic activity in the public and private sectors has led to greater female participation in the unofficial sector, and the wage gap sometimes reflects women's lack of skill coupled with traditional cultural values which discriminate between men and women.¹⁰¹

Public sector job incomes represent only 30% of the family's total income. This is also due to the need for several family members to work. As a result, families relying solely on a public sector job income must seek other sources of income in order to cover 70% of its needs. Businesses, on the other hand, are able to secure 38.7% of a family's income, while trade assures 11.8%.

Some data shows that after 1995 an increased number of females began establishing and managing small projects. In 1996, women benefiting from trade facilities stood at 40.4% and 19% from loans, respectively.

Unemployment:

¹⁰¹ "Human Development Report 2000", chapter on Women and Development.

It is difficult to determine the unemployment rate among males and females for many reasons; foremost among these reasons is that many regard themselves as unemployed if they do not have a government job. Others believe that an on-and-off job in a certain profession is also a form of unemployment.

In fact, unemployment has mushroomed in Iraq. The industrial sector used to operate at low capacity (not exceeding 25%) due to the scarcity of foreign currency.

Accordingly, the workforce dropped to 59% of the total workforce, with 41%, or about 1.461 million workers, unemployed. If we add the females of working age to the amount of those unemployed due to social circumstances, they make up 82% of half of the workforce (2.46 million). Thus, the total number of unemployed people in the country becomes 3.921 million, or 65.4% of the workforce (those between the ages of 15-65). Other studies have revealed similar rates. In an unpublished PhD thesis, we find that the unemployment rate among the survey sample groups was 35.5%. Another study of 1350 families in Baghdad showed that the rate of unemployment among them was 43%.¹⁰² Detailed data about 1998 shows other useful information:

Table 40
Distribution of Formerly Employed Women who Became Unemployed in 1998 (%), According to Environment¹⁰³

Environment	Former Workers	Unemployed
Urban	22.34	51.22
Rural	5.32	3.66
Both	27.66	54.88

The table shows that 51.22% of former workers in urban areas and 3.66% from rural areas have become unemployed. In both rural and urban areas, the downward percentage was high at 54.88%.

Recruitment office data shows that the number of women registered with them was 2668 in 1990. Of this number, 833 were employed (30%), while the rate dropped to five job seekers, of whom only 2 were employed. This

¹⁰² The Iraqi Economists Society and the Baghdad Bureau for Economic Consultation, "The Arab Regional Human Development Report, Country Report", previous source, 2000, pp 14-15.

¹⁰³ Al-Salem, Emad Abdul Latif, previous source, page 12.

indicates dwindling job opportunities or lack of interest in dealing with such offices.

Educational Status of the Female Workforce:

Perhaps the most notable figure with regard to this topic is that the percentage of female workers without a degree (who are either illiterate, can read or can read and write) dropped continuously from 13.4% in 1987, to 10.4% in 1998, to 10.1% in 1999. Similarly, the rate of elementary certificate holders dropped from 8.7%, to 6.6%, to 6.2% during the same period. Undoubtedly, these rates reflect the status of educational development of the female workforce. Additionally, the percentage of those with preparatory certificates also dropped (from 34.3% in 1987, to 32.6% in 1990, to 30.6% in 1998—and further down to 30.4 % in 1999). The percentage of those employed in this category remained the highest among all groups, however.

Table 41
Relative Importance of the Female Workforce
According to Education¹⁰⁴

Education	1987	1990	1998	1999
Without certificate	13.4	12	10.4	10.1
Elementary	9.7	8.7	6.6	6.2
Intermediate	1.1	8.2	6.7	6.5
Preparatory	34.3	32.6	30.7	30.4
Diploma	13.9	18	23	23.5
BA	18.7	19.5	21.9	22.5
Higher Diploma	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.27
MA	0.5	0.6	0.4	0.44
PhD	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.09
Total	100	100	100	100

Those with an educational level lower than the elementary stage saw their percentages drop from 20.7% in 1990, to 17% in 1998, then to 16.3% in 1999. As for BA and diploma holders, their percentages rose remarkably (from 37.5% in 1990, to 44.9% in 1998, and 46% in 1998). However, comparisons also show that the growth rate recorded between 1977 and 1987 dropped in relation to the periods of 1987-1990 and 1990-1999.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁴ Abdul Hamid, Siham, previous source, p. 26; also "Human Development Report 2000".

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

The following table shows the practical and educational status of women:

Table 42*
Educational Conditions of Economically Active Women¹⁰⁶
at Age 10 and Above

Education	Population	Working	Unemployed Looking for a Job	Housewife Working Part-Time	Retired	Total
Illiterate/ reads and writes	3,634,752	77,980	4411	62,409	121	144,921
Elementary	1,686,208	31,239	2023	21,582	43	54,887
Preparatory/ intermediate/ secondary	731,463	54,847	952	2504	44	58,347
Vocational school	114,877	44,013	684	380	21	45,098
Diploma	163,789	96,901	1444	257	29	98,631
BA	149,893	80,550	2368	212	72	83,202
Higher studies	17,391	10,824	84	41	14	10,963
Other	20	9	---	---	---	9
N/A	153,720	234	261	743	6	3354
Total	6,652,113	398,707	12,227	88,128	360	499,412

The table above shows that illiterate females number 3,634,752, with 2.1% of whom are employed, 0.1% unemployed and 1.7% housewives who work on a part-time basis. Those working women with elementary and preparatory education make up 1.8% and 0.1%, respectively. Generally speaking, the percentage of working women at all the various levels of education is 5.9% of the total female population.

Iraqi women wishing to work have faced two types of obstacles. One is the difficulties experienced by the Iraqi economy as a whole, and the other stems from the general discrimination against women, whether in the form of barring them from work, limiting their available job opportunities or offering them lower pay than that of males.

While housework is important, since 2001-2002, the state has attempted to encourage it at the expense of working outside the home. Female doctors, engineers and other professionals have been pushed to open offices in their

* Data is based on Table 32 of the 1997 census.

¹⁰⁶ Abdul Hamid, Siham, previous source, pp. 26-27.

homes, when doing so ends up linking them with lower wages and traditional interpersonal relations. This, in turn, affects their self confidence and ability to have a positive self image.* Families encourage housework for women, in general, and lack of training opportunities and rehabilitation for women has aided that trend. Typical jobs from home have been confined, as well, to traditional professions for women, such as sewing, weaving and embroidery. Data also shows that training courses in these skills have dropped.

As an example, the cooperative union organized 18 specialized training courses in 1995, in which the percentage of participating women was 37.5%. The number of courses held thereafter dropped to 16, with only 31.7% percent participating, and training activity at Ministry of Labor institutes and centers has declined so sharply that there has been no room for females to attend. The General Union of Iraqi Women held thousands of training courses in 1995 (4281 courses benefiting 57,197 women), and 8299 courses in 1998, but this figure dropped to 4234 courses in 1999 with the number of beneficiaries at 67,342.

A host of circumstances in Iraq, namely wars, sanctions and unbalanced economic policies, deprived Iraqi women of many opportunities after 1995. This likely prompted thousands of women to target the free job market to work as full-time employees or as part-time employees in difficult or low-paying jobs.

Table 43
Number of Training Courses and Women Trained at the Cooperative and Rehabilitation Institute¹⁰⁷

Year	Total # of Courses	% of Female Trainees	Total # of Trainees
1993	16	52.1	307
1995	18	37.5	408
1999	15	35.2	357
2000	16	31.7	557

Chapter 8

* The General Union of Iraqi Women and the Ministry of Planning were asked to follow up on this experiment, and women were in fact provided with sewing machines.

¹⁰⁷ Data is from the General Cooperative Union and the Cooperative Rehabilitation and Training Institute.

Iraqi Women and Authority: Uneven Distribution

It can be said that the other side of distributing authority within a household is distributing authority in society, i.e. outside the home, as there is a link between them that cannot be ignored or overlooked.

For people living in cultures that tightly prescribe life in the home, they do not lose their roles outside the home despite all attempts at change at both official and unofficial levels. At the same time, analysis of data relating to women and the extent of authority they are allowed to wield and exercise in society reveals a very important, albeit expected, fact. This is that laws and legislation do not discriminate between sexes, but they remain mere official theoretical statements that do not completely reconcile with the division of authority according to gender in everyday life.

The 2000 Human Development Report sums this up in saying that “it is clear that women do not participate in general policymaking at present.”¹⁰⁸

Table 44
Workforce Structure According to Profession
and Gender (%), 1997¹⁰⁹

Profession	Males	Females	Total
Specialists, technicians and subordinates	5.6	4.6	9.9
Legislators, bosses, administrators and directors	0.2	0.4	0.3
Executive staff, clerks and subordinates	21.2	16	20.6
Sales workers	16.6	3.8	15.3
Service workers	3.1	4.8	3.2
Agricultural and forestry workers, cattle breeders and hunters	18.5	21.6	18.8
Production workers and subordinates	19.9	5.4	18.4
With no profession (unemployed who never had a job)	14.9	2	13.5
Total	100	100	100

A study of data on the structural development of professions shows a decline in the rate of females in some professions.

¹⁰⁸ "Human Development Report 2000", chapter entitled "Women and Human Development".

¹⁰⁹ 1997 Census.

According to this data, the percentage of females in the legislative profession as well as supervisors, administrators and directors was 0.4% of the total female workforce in 1997. This is only 12.3% of the total high caliber workforce. In the field of electricity, women's participation was nonexistent. As for skilled supervisory jobs, the percentage was 3.2% of the workforce. Only 18.1% of all women workers worked as technicians, and in the 1990's, there was not a single female minister or undersecretary.

As for National Council membership, women's presence was relatively good. Between 1980 and 1995, the average membership rate was 9.2 female members. In 1990, the percentage was the highest, at 13.2% of the total number of members. In the Council's fifth session in 2000, 20 women were members (8%). As for local people's councils, the number of women taking part in voting was 4,158,375, and the number of candidates was 146 (57%) of the total number of candidates in 2000.

Women's participation in parties active at the time was limited, and their membership in the ruling party did not exceed 5.4%. Women's membership in non-governmental organizations also varies, as seen in the following table:

Table 45

Women's Participation in Organizations and Unions ¹¹⁰

Association or Union	No. of Members	% of Participants	No. of Women in Leading Positions	% of Participation
Youth Union	26,792	9.2	9	20
General Cooperative Union	40,000	2	750	23
Doctors' Association	12	9	1	10
Dentists' Association	3100	55	1	10
Pharmacists' Association	2275	61.74	---	12.5
Chemical Workers' Association	2760	35	1	10
Engineers' Association	15	18.4	1	5.9
Geologists' Association	480	14.45	2	22
Accountants' and Auditors' Association	89	30	1	11
Total	75,523			

Data from the former General Union of Iraqi Women, the sole organization where women's work was permissible, shows that membership expanded and reached 1,569,924 in 1996, which was 68% of women in the 15-45 age group. But the union has frozen 40% of its membership due to lack of resources, despite the expansion of its organizational network from 25 branches in 1992 to 41 in 1999 (with 1,027,514 members). The former Union faced a serious problem, which was that it was not fully independent, but dependent on state funding. Its ideology also was that of the ruling party, which also led many women to shy away from joining it.

Chapter 9

¹¹⁰ The General Federation of Iraqi Women, *Beijing-5*, pp. 28-29.

Iraqi Women and Lack of Development Mechanisms: Whose Responsibility is it?

There is no doubt that institutionalization, instead of conducting provisional activities, is of paramount importance in order to ensure Iraqi women's development. Institutionalization entails the establishment of a stable and continuous type of effort based on clear-cut planning with regard to methodology and objectives. As a matter of course, it can be said that any institutionalization process that is expected to achieve effective results should have an authority that puts into consideration the effects of social and cultural standards in addition to available resources. When the Beijing Conference was held in 1995, there was only one legal women's union which shouldered the responsibility of achieving Iraqi women's rapid development.*

Irrespective of what the General Union of Iraqi Women achieved during its 33 years, it has been the sole institution concerned with women's issues, along with its other interests in youth, students, trade unions and others.

Objectively, it can be said that the Union made achievements in certain fields, foremost among them its comprehensive national campaign against illiteracy, training offerings and vaccination/immunization campaigns. But since it was part of the regime, it gained the rivalry of those opposed to the regime. In addition, many conservative groups in Iraqi society viewed it as encouraging women to adopt attitudes and behavior not in line with the customary culture.

The Women's Union was mainly active among housewives, and it attracted membership from all over Iraq (particularly in urban areas following a decline in its rural activities in the 1990's). Housewives formed 61% of its members, followed by female students (25%), professional women (13%) and female farmers (1%). Figures released by the Union's 16th conference in 1999 showed that 13.8% of its members were retired, 12.6% were women who had resigned from their jobs and 73.6% unemployed.¹¹¹

We believe that among the host of impediments to the Union's activity and ambitions to achieve its objectives was its inability to interact constructively and effectively with both the higher and lower levels of the

* The Union was established in 1969.

¹¹¹ Al-Nuwab, Dr. Nabil, "Report on Consultancy Professions", earlier source, page 40.

system. It is worth mentioning the Union's interest in establishing a branch for professional women with 22 sub-branches and 11 liaison committees in departments where membership strength was not less than 100, in addition to setting up the cultural forum. The cultural forum became one of its branches with the same powers and responsibilities of conventional branches but with the aim of widening the scope of activity. This plan did not take into consideration the fact that the highest percentage of members were housewives, that 29.3% of the members had no educational certificate and that 21.6% had only finished elementary education. Moreover, the Women's Union was much more involved in political work than in social work and what it would have meant for impacting the life of Iraqi women. As the same time, it is not our intention to belittle the results achieved by Iraqi women over the years.¹¹²

National Strategy for the Development of Iraqi Women:

After Beijing 1995, the National Strategy for the Advancement of Iraqi Women was formulated, and in 1997 the National Committee for the Advancement of Iraqi Women was formed, with its headquarters at the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs.

The Committee was headed by the Minister and, in addition to the General Union of Iraqi Women, its members included representatives of concerned Ministries, such as the Ministries of Health, Higher Education, Justice and others.

The Committee sought to achieve a number of important goals:

- Women's participation in decision-making and holding of administrative posts
- Equality in education and training opportunities, while stressing that education does not conflict with woman's maternal role (the last clause shows a stark discrimination against women)
- Alleviation of poverty and the establishment of income-generating projects for women
- A decision on women's benefits from health services
- Women's participation in the management of natural resources and environmental protection
- A decision on women's participation in the ladder of authority

¹¹² Refer to similar remarks in the previous source (several pages) which revise the Union's report on its role after the Nairobi Conference in 1985.

- Support and care for working mothers
- Women's participation in formulating female-related legislation and laws.

It is clear that the Strategy was drawn up under the complicated circumstances witnessed by Iraq for years before it came into existence. A reading of that Strategy illustrates its brevity and lack of a clear-cut concept. This is in addition to the fact that the Women's Union's vice-chairmanship of the National Committee was a limited role, since the Ministry of Justice played a dominant role.

Furthermore, the Union's and the National Committee's relations with international organizations have receded to a great extent, despite the fact that on December 16th, 1998, the Union won the United Nation's Consultancy Advisory Status in accordance with the Economic and Social Council's Decision No. 32/1996.

Thus, the two most important events after Beijing 1995 were the announcement of the National Strategy for the Advancement of Women and the formation of the National Committee; the third most important was obtaining the Consultancy Advisory Status at the UN. At the organizational level, the membership network narrowed (in terms of the number of members), but the organization expanded in terms of branches. This, in turn, represented an unnecessary disparity. The expansion at department and ministry levels of the Union and the National Committee was not necessarily productive, for it quickly became a routine activity as part or an extension of the state's political activities.

Legislation:

At the legal level, the official line towards women and their grouping asserted the principle of equality, justice and respect for women, based on the concept that a woman's backwardness would be part of society's. In reality, however, this principle did not exist.*

Many instances give indicators of discrimination against women, some forms of which were given a semi-legal status by the regime, such as honor crimes or favoring males in educational opportunities. Moreover, the

* The Iraqi Constitution stipulates in Article 19 that all citizens are equal before the law with no discrimination on the basis of gender, and we find full equality in labor and social security laws and others. But some forms of discrimination are also clear, such as preferential treatment of male students in university admissions or the adoption of non-academic criteria in favoring male students in activities like participation in political and military activities.

practices of some officials openly illustrated this contradiction. For example, while the state prohibited second marriages for married men unless heavy economic conditions were met, many key officials were married several times and thus represented a model contrary to the legal position. Also, state institutions and departments were not in agreement with the Women's Union's line of thinking. A very high percentage of Iraqi society was also opposed to the Union's agenda for political, religious, cultural and other reasons. As a result, the type of legislation the Union sought to enforce, consolidate and implement remained merely ink on paper.

Mechanisms for Assistance:

In the light of the pressures of the international blockade and sanctions imposed on Iraq, and after the second Gulf War, Social Security Law No. 126 of 1980 nearly stopped due to lack of funds. In fact, it was suspended for several months after the war. Moreover, it is important to mention that the conditions of Iraqi women after 1995—and even before that—required a special type of policy that attempts to offer genuine assistance for women by using new, creative methods. The alms and social solidarity funds were never effective as far as women were concerned due to the limitations of their assistance as well as bureaucratic factors and administrative corruption. As for the Women's Union, the decline of state funding for its activities led it to suspend most of its programs and then attempt to charge for its services.

Those mechanisms introduced after 1991 and developed during the 1990's were meant to face the burden of sanctions rather than develop women. The Union's vaccination and awareness raising campaigns on infant mortality as well as its taking part in memorial prayers during children's funerals were part of the regime's daily political statement in the face of the blockade's terrible scourge and machinations. As a result, the aim of advancing women was not accorded the attention it deserves.

Chapter 10

Iraqi Women and Human Rights

Revisiting reports issued by the General Union of Iraqi Women and studies and reports submitted during its conferences and seminars shows an intentional neglect of the relationship between Iraqi women and human rights. This is based on the idea that these rights are guaranteed in the fields of education, health and labor, among others, and that as long as laws and decisions do not adopt or advocate any declared type or level of discrimination against women, women's rights as human beings are not harmed.

Article 9 of the Iraqi Constitution established a solid constitutional base when it stipulated that citizens are not to be discriminated against on grounds of gender, language or religion. This constitutional text paved the way for Iraq to join the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), implement its provisions and be allowed to raise its clauses before the national judiciary.

On the other hand, Iraqi legislation regarded the need for citizens to enjoy economic and social rights without discrimination on grounds of gender as a basic condition to enforce implementation of civil and political rights. International human rights agreements include clauses relating to non-discrimination between men and women (for example, Article 3 of the International Covenant for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; Article 2 of the International Agreement on Civil and Political Rights; and Article 2 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child). Iraq joined the International Agreement on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights on January 1, 1971, and it came into effect on January 23rd, 1976. On January 25, 1971, Iraq also announced it was joining the International Agreement on Civil and Political Rights, and this came into effect on March 23, 1976. Iraq announced its membership in the International Agreement on the Elimination of All Forms of Social Discrimination on January 14, 1970, and it joined the Convention on the Rights of the Child on June 15, 1994 (it came into effect on July 15, 1994). Additionally, a human rights conference was held in Baghdad during April 20-22, 1994.

Iraqi laws guarantee women the right to choose a husband and file for divorce in case of injury, labor rights and the right to health and education. Indicators on the ground, however, reveal that there is a gap and disparity between legislation and reality.

Legislation is an expression of the state's will, while a society's day-to-day reality is an expression of the circumstances and will of society. It is not

necessary that both should always agree. This is a disparity that exists in many states.

Iraqi women have always had

1. The right to vote and run as candidates for the National Council and other councils in addition to organizations, professional institutions and trade unions.
2. The right to education. In fact, education was compulsory and free in accordance with the law. Women also had the right to benefit from health services.
3. At least theoretically, the right to choose their husbands, request separation for any damage done and to have custody of their children in case of divorce. In addition, it was their right to receive matrimonial furniture and alimony.
4. The right to establish industrial and commercial projects and others and also to own movable and immovable money and property.

These rights are important and illustrate women's rights on paper. However, there is evidence of violations of women's human rights, and those violations have been condoned by traditional culture. This is manifest in the following examples:

- a. The man's right to kill an unmarriageable female relative to wash away disgrace, dishonor and shame. In such cases, the law was lax, with even society finding this behavior justifiable and respectful.
- b. Banning women from traveling except with an unmarriageable person.
- c. The facts that a woman's right to choose a husband hinged, in most cases, on the family's acceptance, and that inter-family marriage, despite its negative health effects, was preferable in Iraqi society.
- d. The lack of monitoring of women's human rights and absence of a database to further follow-up, research and study.
- e. The absence of official or voluntary agencies or institutions to protect women against human rights violations such as beating and insult.
- f. The reality that in cases involving polygamy, alimony and matrimonial furniture, laws are often twisted for reasons related to administrative corruption, bribes, judiciary officials' lack of integrity and women's ignorance of their rights.

- g. Women's lack of knowledge about their rights and subsequent disinclination to defend them. This further entrenches the patriarchal nature of society and public opinion.
- h. Women's deprivation of their right to work in any field they desire. Rather, certain professions, such as nursing, are seen as "women's fields."
- i. Traditional culture prevents women from exercising some of their rights. For example, many women tolerate abuse from their husbands, including severe beating, withholding food and other practices, but feel too ashamed and refrain from complaining about it. It can even be said that traditional culture urges women (on the basis of social upbringing and its various mechanisms) to be submissive to their men and families and not protest. This type of behavior is representative of an ideal woman—one who does not complain, is ashamed to go to court and regards her man as her safe protector irrespective of the negative effects involved. The prevailing culture represents a paradox where human rights are concerned.
- j. The common meaning of human rights in the minds of many people is confined to food and clothing and probably education and health, but not the concepts of identity, self-expression and self-determination. These aspects are not thought of, and they should be clearly defined and explained as essential elements of human rights. The former Women's Union persevered in holding training courses and workshops and making field visits to educate women on their basic rights such as alimony, children's custody, damage and other rights, but these workshops were short and of limited impact. Also, the Human Rights Society in Iraq had no tangible activity in this area, not a single MA or PhD thesis was written on women's human rights and no objective monitoring mechanism in Iraq existed to follow up and diagnose the exercise of those rights.

The post-1995 period was one in which there was a relative alleviation of women's suffering following the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding with the United Nations. No new legal or administrative measure addressing the true situation in Iraq regarding women's human rights was taken. Military training for women continued without their consent; polygamy, out of court marriage and divorce persisted; and alimony was a sword on women's necks.

A child continued to be a great responsibility that a mother had to bear in full. However, despite all the obstacles they have encountered, Iraqi women have made great achievements, including:

- The right to education and health services has become common and widely accepted.
- Many women know how to find their way to police stations and courts (or at least to Women's Union family counseling centers) to win their legitimate and legal rights.
- The media, especially through space and time assigned to women's issues in the press and some radio and TV programs, began to stress women's rights. This, in turn, helped raise awareness among women of their rights and ways to champion and defend them.

However, the lack of resources has been a key challenge to securing women's rights. The UN Secretary General's Report to the Third Session of the Preparatory Committee of the General Assembly's Extraordinary Session on Implementing the International Action Plan issued in document 2/PC/2000/6 CN/E on January 19, 2000, stated that lack of resources represented one of the most important challenges and serious impediments to the Beijing Action Plan. The scarcity of resources in Iraq was attributed to increased interest in armament, military conflicts and the embargo.¹¹³

In fact, the blockade/embargo not only led to a cut in available resources, but it also halted international cooperation in the area of achieving and respecting women's human rights in Iraq.

On the other hand, erroneous policies adopted in Iraq over decades, especially during the two Gulf wars, inflicted great injustice on Kurdish and Turkmen women and those from other ethnic groups. This was particularly relevant with regard to the right to identity and relevant cultural and language rights, along with the right to housing, residence and work. The mass displacements and killing which occurred were a flagrant violation of Iraqi women's and children's rights.

Chapter 11

Iraqi Women and the Media

¹¹³ The Economic, Social and Cultural Rights Committee in General Comment No. 8 of 1997 and the rapporteur of the Anti-Discrimination Sub-Committee on Protection of Ethnic Groups No. 114/1998 referred to the fact that the blockade imposed on Iraq negatively and adversely affected the economy and many other fields as well as Iraqi citizens' daily life and that it impeded their exercise of their rights.

In the past few decades, Iraq has witnessed serious events that, despite their catastrophic effects, have helped develop media activities carried out by women or served women's issues and causes.

The Beijing Conference stressed both issues, namely women's increased participation and the improvement in their chances to express their opinions in decision-making. Secondly, changing women's stereotyping was also singled out, and it is definitely intertwined with the above advancements.

Women's Participation in Media Activities:

Iraqi legislation, including the Press Association Law and admission regulations at university faculties of information and media do not discriminate against women. In fact, the 1990's witnessed clear and important indicators of the development of women's roles in media activities in their capacity as newsmakers and promoters. Similarly, the presentation of women's themes in the media also became more developed.

Media indicators cannot be separated from the overall general cultural situation in Iraqi society or from women's educational opportunities. The percentage of women working in the media has increased, and the number of female journalists registered with the Iraqi Press Association was 200 out of a total of 7150 (around 2.8%). These women worked as editors, designers, editorial secretaries and draughtswomen, all of which reflect a high degree of professional and specialized diversity, in addition to the fact that there were three female editors-in-chief. Moreover, the Information Section at Baghdad University's Faculty of Arts became an independent college in 2002 with 750 students, of whom 50% were females. A similar percentage could be found in post-graduate studies in the same college.¹¹⁴

Journalism had generally been a man's profession in Iraq, and the post-1995 period witnessed many positive indicators regarding women in journalism, the most important of which were:

1. The increased number of women working in the field of journalism and the media, including radio, television and educational TV.
2. The diversity of the professions of females in the media (program producers, announcers, reporters, designers and others).

¹¹⁴ The first Iraqi women's magazine was issued in Iraq in the early twenties.

3. The publication of a number of weekly newspapers by organizations and unions. They improved women's chances of working in the field of journalism, especially after journalistic activities were confined to a limited number of state-owned and -directed newspapers.

At the sametime, there was some regression in other areas. For example, only five issues of *Woman's Magazine* were issued by the former General Union of Iraqi Women since 1980, which translated into just 5000 copies between 1991 and 1999. Iraqi newspapers, in general, experienced a decline due to paper and printing material scarcity in addition to outdated machines and equipment, inadequate backup tools and the complex political situation.

For example, the number of pages in daily newspapers dropped from 16 and 12 pages to 8, and then to only 4 after July 7, 1994. The number of copies went down from 150,000 to 30,000. Similarly, the number of pages in periodicals dropped, and 130 periodical and monthly general newsletters (cultural, economic and intellectual) were discontinued. Such measures had a decisive impact on journalism as a whole and the space devoted to women's issues.

Iraq used to print at least one million newspapers to ensure that one copy reached 10 readers. In 1999-2000, a total of only 150,000-200,000 copies were printed. This translates to a drop of 700%, or one copy for every 100 individuals who could read and write.

On the other hand, the number of news and feature articles about women published in Iraqi daily newspapers reached 5415 between 1996 and 1999. Of this number, 2570 (47.4%) dealt with the activities of the General Union of Iraqi Women. Between January 27, 1999 and May 10, 2000, daily newspapers carried articles and features written by women. The total number of articles was 910 written by women and 661 written by journalists, and they tackled a variety of areas of the life of Iraqi women and families.

Since March 1997, one of the official papers devoted half a page every two weeks to women's issues and activities. The Information Secretariat at the Women's Union used to prepare material for these articles. The official *Al-Thawra* daily also used to produce a weekly issue entitled "Women's Causes" as a result of its interest in women's issues.

In the post-1995 period, the space devoted to women's issues declined. Most of what was published regarding women was due to the work of the Women's Union, which also played a role in organizing specialized training courses in journalism, filmmaking and directing, and news photography, among other subjects.

Writing about women's issues focused on a host of basic topics, including:

- a. Urging home economics and avoiding ostentatious consumption
- b. Highlighting the impact of sanctions on women and families
- c. Paying attention to health issues and urging education, social solidarity and respect for family life
- d. Childcare and education, as well as urging special attention to girls' education
- e. Topics on the need to demonstrate allegiance to the regime and justify its positions and measures

The drop in both public and Union-specific print media due to the sharp decrease in material, prompted the Women's Union to focus on radio and TV programs targeting women.

Table 46
Radio and TV Programs of the General Union of Iraqi Women, 1996-1999¹¹⁵

Program Title	Type	Duration in Minutes	Cycle	Total Transmission in Minutes
Lady's Corner	Radio	15	Daily	13,500
Health	Radio	15	Daily	13,500
<i>Eshtar</i>	Radio	15	Weekly	2160
Variety Shows	Radio	2	Daily	1800
Women's Horizon	TV	20	Fortnightly	1200
TV Messages	TV	15	Fortnightly	120
Women's Documentaries	TV	1	Fortnightly	120
Union News	TV	1	Daily	405
Total	8	-----	-----	33,235

¹¹⁵ The General Union of Iraqi Women, *Beijing-5*, previous source, page 20.

The *Woman's Magazine* reappeared in 2001. Another daily newspaper entitled "Gender" was published by the Union, and there were also plans to publish a scientific magazine dealing with women's issues in depth. However, it can be said that media coverage of women's issues was below expectations in both form and content, and stereotyping was a feature of its information. It is true, though, that some of the coverage analyzed between 1999 and 2000 reflected the image of women as accomplished and included women writers, creative women, home economists and women participating in social issues.¹¹⁶

However, conventional images of women were also present throughout the media, such as the stereotypes of the jealous woman and the woman who is totally dependent on men. The traditional image of women wives and mothers was still prominent, as well.

¹¹⁶ This includes, for example, highlighting the works of Iraqi writers, painters and playwrights.

Chapter 12

Iraqi Women and Resource and Environmental Management

It is no exaggeration to say that the Iraqi environment witnessed a plethora of dangers due to wars, negligence and deterioration of environmental/ecological awareness. The response to these dangers, however, was not commensurate with the level of challenge.

Due to the enormity of the damage that befell the Iraqi environment, the National Strategy for the Advancement of Iraqi Women defined measures aimed at preserving the environment and halting its deterioration as well as enhancing women's participation in managing natural resources and protecting the environment as a strategic objective.

Legislative Framework:

In 1997, six years after the Second Gulf War, Law Number 3 on protecting and improving the environment was issued to replace Law 76 of 1986. The new law contained many technical aspects such as building databases, providing pollution measurement systems and including a report on environmental effects in economic feasibility studies.

The Law also contained penal provisions to deal with environmental violations. In addition to the above-mentioned law, Public Health Law No. 89 of 1981 contains a special chapter on drinking water, and Law No. 25 of 1967 defines a system to maintain rivers and avoid pollution. The Environmental Protection and Improvement Council, which was formed in 1975 was the authority responsible for all environmental policymaking.

The Council had an executive authority which represented its technical body, and it enjoyed financial and administrative independence. It also had branches at the governorate/provincial level. Its Five-Year Plan for 2001-2005 stressed the need to foster the principle of sustainable development and find solutions to existing environmental problems as well as deepen the role of local authorities and communities in the development planning process, environmental administration, protection of the human environment from pollution, prioritizing environmental reform projects and providing drinking water.

Forms of Environmental Deterioration:

The Second Gulf War, along with environmental mismanagement and the lack of means to address existing problems led to real environmental damage which negatively affected Iraqis and society in general. For example, dust volume in Baghdad tripled between 1996 and 1998, and the water deficit was 30% at the end of 1999. Even water quality deteriorated, with the percentage of un-potable water in some provinces as high as 50%. Moreover, in 2000, more than half the population did not have access to the sanitation network. Desertification threatened 92% of Iraq's total area, and the shelling of oil installations in 1991 destroyed nearly 1163 hectares of agricultural land. Also, the war itself and the arms used in it increased the cases of cancer, sterility, renal failure, alonkeratonosis, hypothyrosis, miscarriage, and embryological deformity, among others..

The number of miscarriages in 1989 in the southern provinces was 27,770, which rose to 41,716. The highest percentages were in the provinces of Najaf, Karbala and Qadisiyah. The number of genetic deformity cases in 1989 was 674, which rose to 2386 in 1994. Cancer cases increased from 6563 to 10,212 cases for the same period.¹¹⁷

The Position on Environmental Issues:

In the face of all the above difficulties, there was no effective environmental policy. For example, no specialized program on the environment existed, and press coverage on the environment was limited and tended to focus on topics in other societies. The focus on the use of banned weapons stemmed from political objectives and did not lead to any effective measures due to the inefficacy of the health system and lack of equipment for measurement and treatment.

The subject of environment protection does not solely rely on official circles. Effective popular participation in which women play a principal role is a must, whether it is at a housing level or a local community level. A UNICEF study showed that women's awareness of environmental issues such as water and use of health facilities is relatively high, with varying degrees in rural and urban areas. It appeared, for example, that 58% of women in urban areas and 30% of rural women knew the causes of water pollution. That knowledge was greater among older women and highest

¹¹⁷ For more details, see *Social Factors and Consequences of Environmental Pollution in the Arab World*, Baghdad, 2002; also see "Discussions of the International Scientific Seminar on the use of Banned Weapons," Baghdad, December 1998.

among women who had obtained preparatory certificates (70%). It was 37.7% among uneducated women.

The study also showed that mothers knew that children under five sustained more damage and harm from un-potable water compared to other ages (62.1% in urban areas and 81% in rural areas). Education level did not make much difference in their responses. The survey also showed that 99.4% of the urban families used sanitation facilities, compared to 89.8% in rural areas, and that 95.8% of those surveyed had sanitation in their homes (compared to 67.7% in rural areas, for which sanitation was located outside housing units). There was no great disparity regarding educational level and age in this category.

Additionally, 68.5% of urban women believe that boiling water before drinking it makes it potable compared to 58.3% of rural women. A woman's education appears to have a relative effect on her response to this question. Similarly, it was found that 85.9% of rural women knew that polluted water causes disease, and 65.8% of urban women and 59.9% of rural women knew that improper garbage and waste disposal can cause water contamination.¹¹⁸

A 1999 study of 236 men and women showed that 89.8% of them had knowledge of the environment and its elements (soil, water, air and others). However, 43.2% did not consider humans as one of the environmental elements. Regarding the effect of a clean house on the environment, 79.2% said lack of cleanliness affected the environment, and 48.3% thought that noise had a harmful effect on the environment.

Iraqi families are weak in providing environmental awareness and education to their members. Data shows that 26.7% of those surveyed do not explain to their children the nature and components of the environment, and 19.1% affirmed that they do not hold their children accountable or punish them if they cause damage to the environment. Detailed data shows that females pay more attention to explaining the nature and components of the environment to their children than males. However, there are no moral differences of statistical significance between the mothers and fathers with regard to holding their children to account for causing damage to the environment. Educational differences demonstrate significant moral disparities, though.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁸ UNICEF and Iraqi partners, " Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices (KAP)", page 42 and beyond.

¹¹⁹ A group of researchers, *Social Factors and Consequences of Environmental Pollution in the Arab World*, previous source, page 72 and beyond.

A study on environmental education in a number of Arab countries, including Iraq, shows that most objectives stress the transfer of knowledge and rote learning instead of actual participatory activities. Positive participation is almost nil in students' education on preserving and protecting the environment. This can be seen in Iraq, as educational curricula solely emphasize scientific and academic aspects of environmental education without paying any attention to participatory aspects.

Several international organizations, such as UNESCO, have stressed the importance of environmental education in school curricula, but it has been notably absent in Iraqi curricula.¹²⁰

Iraq has lacked effective programs and mechanisms for dealing and addressing environmental issues. The General Union of Iraqi Women has tried to fill the gap, but it has limited technical and financial capabilities. The Union published thousands of booklets for the Ministry of Health and the Family Planning Society. It also released posters, organized hundreds of courses and discussions and made 161 household visits between 1996 and 1999. Seminar topics included personal cleanliness, food preservation methods, the importance of garbage disposal methods, conservation of natural resources, and others.

Perhaps one of the most important projects the Union attempted to carry out in the field of the environment was the social participation project, which depended on the cooperation and participation of local groups and educational, health and municipal institutions along with local leaderships.

Table 47
Relative Distribution of Seminar Themes Held by the Union between 1996 and Mid-1999

Seminar Themes	%
Awareness-Raising of Personal Cleanliness	28.4
Awareness-Raising of Food Preservation Methods	35
Garbage Disposal Methods	24.3
Preservation of Natural Resources	12.3
Total	100

¹²⁰ Ibid., page 177 and beyond.

The total number of activities and events that took place under the social participation project was 10,244, with 340,000 women taking part, according to Union figures. The Union conducted a pilot experiment for the project in a Baghdad district before spreading it to 17 branches throughout all Iraqi provinces.

Access to Resources:

Iraqi laws permit women to own, contract and lease land as long as they work in agriculture by profession. Women in the Basra and Muthanna provinces made up 20% of the agricultural credit facility beneficiaries for the purpose of establishing agricultural projects, expanding existing ones or buying production supplies and equipment.¹²¹ In fact, some women in rural areas are owners in name only, because even if a woman inherits land, she cannot act freely due to family regulations which deprive her of this right. As seen before, the conflict and disparity between laws and reality remains.

¹²¹ Human Development Report 2000, chapter on Women and Development.

Chapter 13

The Iraqi Girl Child

The percentage of females under 15 was 44.8% of the total number of children from both sexes from this category. Their percentage was higher in rural areas, though, where it reached 47.7%.

Iraq signed the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) on June 15, 1994. CRC was endorsed by the United Nations on November 20, 1989 and came into effect on September 2, 1990.

Thus, Iraq joined the Convention at the worst days of the embargo and sanctions imposed against it. It has been regrettable that the subject of the girl child has not received enough attention as an aspect of female development as discussed at the Beijing Conference in 1995.

Data on the girl child was not consolidated, but it was compiled from general data on children of both sexes. Traditional Iraqi culture along with the typical ways of raising children and socializing them stress the fact that girl children do not have the same entitlement and care enjoyed by boys.

Legislation:

There is no reference in legislation to the disparity and discrimination between boys and girls. In stipulating free and compulsory education or in introducing legislation on labor laws, legislators did not distinguish between males and females, and this also applies to child custody. The problem does not rest with laws and official decisions, though, but rather on how traditional culture views both males and females and draws distinctions between them. This can easily be seen in Iraqi families. From birth, baby girls are typically faced with rejection that might not be open or declared, particularly by the father, but parents are typically disappointed by the birth of a baby girl. In the opinion of many fathers, a male carries the father's and family's name, while a female later carries her husband's name and his family's legacy.

A popular proverb heard in Iraq is "your son's son is yours but your daughter's is not." Moreover, those affected by this cultural bias pay little attention to the fact that from a statistical viewpoint girls form half of the child population.

Some Forms of Discrimination:

A UNICEF survey shows that in urban areas, the percentage of boys enrolled in school in the academic year 2000-2001 was 91.9%, compared to 83.1% of all girls—23.1% of whom dropped out due to reasons related to housework.

When we look at data for the age group of 5-15, we find that 65.7% of the boys perform family-related work compared to 72.9% of the girls.

Data derived from mothers shows that 79.5% of urban women wholeheartedly agree on the importance of girl's education, with 15.2% agreeing to some extent. These percentages are lower in rural areas. The study also shows that 65.1% of urban mothers wish to see their daughters enroll in university as opposed to 32.1% of mothers in rural areas.

As for urban mothers who prefer for their daughters to stop their education at the elementary level, this figure was 9.3%, compared to 34.1% in rural areas. Additionally, 41% of urban mothers believe that boys' education is more important than that of girls, and this percentage is over 63% among rural women.¹²² Accordingly, we find that discrimination exists in rural and urban areas alike, but it is more visible in rural districts than in urban areas.

Parents' attitudes on girls' and boys' education also greatly impacts children working on the streets of both sexes. A study on these children in several Baghdad districts covering 156 children of both sexes showed that 47.5% of the boys continued their studies compared with only 7.69% of the girls and that 46.15% of the girls received no education in the first place, compared with 17.48% of the boys.¹²³

Another phenomenon that illustrates the situation of many Iraqi girls is that in the past, most poor families who pushed their male children into begging did not do so to their female children. But in recent years, however, this has changed, and the number of girl beggars on Iraqi streets has increased.

The above-mentioned research reveals that 23% of the girls in the study are beggars, compared to 2.8% of the boys. However, the girls' relationships with their families are much stronger than those of boys. It also shows that

¹²² UNICEF and Iraqi partners, "Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices (KAP)", page 54 and beyond.

¹²³ Hamza, Karim M. and Dr. Adnan Y. Mustafa, *Children Working in Baghdad's Streets*, Terredes Hommes Italia, Baghdad, 2003, page 12.

69% of the girls prefer not to have to work on the streets and would rather stay home, as compared with 12.5% of the boys. Moreover, it is also noticed that all the girls working on the street who have also received an education expressed fatigue, against 84% of the boys.¹²⁴

On the other hand, the 1997 census showed that the percentage of married females in the 12-14 age range was only 1.5% of all females in this group, and 0.5% of the males. Despite the small percentages, the fact that this practice exists speaks of the extent of family pressure on young girls. There is not much difference between rural areas and the rest of the country, since in rural areas this percentage is 1.1% for females and 0.4% for males.¹²⁵ In some cases, these very young girls also have children up to the age of three.¹²⁶

Iraqi families require greater discipline among their girl members than among the boys, and quite often girls are trained at an early age in housework while boys are allowed to spend their time in play and recreation. Iraqi families also do not hide their apprehension of mixing among girls and boys—even at an early age. As a result, girls are not afforded the same opportunities as boys to go on school trips and participate in the activities of children's and youth centers. Stereotyping of women emerges in the family's treatment of the girl child and reflects the discriminatory nature of Iraqi society's traditional culture.

The future of mothers who have only given birth to females is threatened, as well, because in most cases their husbands believe that re-marriage could give them a better chance of having a boy. It is also a common belief among Iraqi families that raising a boy is easier than raising a girl, despite their knowing that girls are often more affectionate and closer to their parents.

Iraqi children have faced great problems resulting from their fathers' long, or permanent, absence due to participation in wars. Safety nets benefiting orphaned children have also been limited. In 1990, there were 22 orphanages with 1203 beneficiaries, including 480 girls (or about 40%), and in 1998, the number of orphanages dropped to 19, while the number of beneficiaries went down to 542 (including 320 girls, or 59%). In 2002, the number of orphanages was 21 and the beneficiaries were 773, 30% of whom were females.

¹²⁴ Ibid., page 24.

¹²⁵ Ibid., page 32.

¹²⁶ Annual Statistical Data, 1997, pp. 70-74.

A study on these institutions showed that the children living in there lag behind educationally. Of the 13-15 age group, 52%-62% were in the elementary stage when they should have been in the preparatory stage. Children from poor families made up 65% of the total number of residents, and 33% came from families broken up by divorce, abandonment or the fathers' long absence. Female children in Iraq share with male children the suffering that has resulted from the crises which befell the country. For example, a study on elementary students covering 2000 girls and boys in 40 schools in Baghdad showed that 36.2% of the children go to school without having breakfast due to food scarcity at home, 30.2% of those attending school in the afternoon session did not have lunch and 10.1% did not have two successive meals (particularly lunch and breakfast).¹²⁷

The most serious harm to young girls is their early marriage, not only because of its poor effects on their health and bodies but also because it subjects them to great psychological and social hazards. Similarly, forcing little girls to beg poses risks to them that exceed those faced by boys. Some families, whether for reasons of poverty or otherwise, force their little girls under the age of 15 into prostitution. Due to the lack of centers or societies to welcome and protect girls forced into prostitution or compelled to run away from their families because of bad conditions or mistakes they have made, these girls are often subjected to blackmail and sexual abuse. When girls like this are killed by their families, their murder is socially welcome and it falls within the realm of criminal acts that are given easy sentences.

Conclusion

¹²⁷ Al Chalabi, Dr. Sawsan and Dr. Sadeq Al-Tamimi, *Impact of the Economic Sanctions on the Psychological, Social, Educational and Health Aspects of Iraqi Children in Light of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)*, Baghdad, Ministry of Culture and Information, page 8.

Vision for the Present and the Future

Summary:

Once can briefly say that the Iraqi women who have made important achievements over the years were also the victims of wars, conflict and economic sanctions. The general crises in Iraq had a negative impact on women and doubled their burdens. This has been demonstrated by the poverty indicators, which have shown increasing number of widows, divorcées, female-supported families and dwindling family income. All of these factors have led many families to drop from the middle class income bracket to the lower class income bracket.

On the other hand, the Iraqi educational system encountered a real dilemma due to the poor quality of education, teacher's competency and the damage sustained by schools because of wars and sanctions. This is despite the indicators of its expansion, particularly in higher education.

The female illiteracy rate is still high compared to that of males. Also, the number of illiteracy programs and complementary and juvenile schools declined significantly. Female enrollment rates in primary education increased, but outcomes were far below expectations.

Despite the rise in expenditure on education following the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding with the United Nations, dropout rates were still high. Women's health and food situations have also deteriorated—to the point of collapse in the mid-nineties. However, the situation improved following an increase in the funding of this sector through the Oil for Food program, but the under 5 and infant mortality rates, as well as maternal mortality rates, remained high. The food ration program, which prevented a large-scale famine in Iraq, catered only for 35% of an individual family's food needs, and this forced families to spend large amounts of their income to make up for the shortfall. Many poor families even went as far as selling part of their rations, such as tea, to buy necessary food supplies.

Other factors, such as compact housing, unemployment and lack of proper health awareness, have also contributed to women's poor health conditions.

Although we do not have direct and clear data on violence against women, indicators show that violence is rampant and its forms multifarious and of different degrees. There is also evidence that such phenomena as poverty,

unemployment and deteriorating health conditions make violence within the family more likely. Indicators also show that Iraqi society, influenced by the culture of discrimination, views violence against females in their own families as justified and acceptable and regards it as a mechanism for protection against deviant behavior. When a woman is subjected to violence at home or in the street, she does not always find useful and effective mechanisms for protection.

On the other hand, the harshest forms of violence against women were related to or resulted from wars and armed conflict in Iraq over the years. Thousands of homes were destroyed and hundreds of women paid for the shelling of cities, service institutions and housing complexes. Hundreds of women also suffered from psychological shock resulting from shelling and witnessing scenes of death and destruction. It can be said that many forms of tension resulting from armed conflict and sanctions impacted heavily on women. These included reactions to severe violence, sadness for the loss of loved ones and relatives and long periods of waiting for a fiancé or a relative, among others. In addition, state compensation for families of martyrs, prisoners of war and those missing in action was limited to the extent that it deprived them of their own means and increased women's responsibility towards them.

Although, demographically speaking, women form more than half of society, their contribution to Iraq's various economic activities was limited compared to men's. Nevertheless, they outmatched men in education in particular and services in general. The percentage of women with economic projects of their own was limited compared to men. For that reason, their loans from agricultural and industrial banks were limited as well. Data shows that Iraqi women have always favored working for the public sector over the private sector, but meager public sector salaries and the low rate of the national currency led many women, especially those without technical, scientific or administrative skills, to resort to working for the marginal sector. These was despite the fact that conditions in this sector lack job security and are characterized by long working hours and lower salaries. However, these drawbacks also had their merits, since sanctions, and particularly the absence of the head of the family, led women to depend more on themselves. This directed more Iraqi women to work in Iraq's markets throughout the provinces selling all types of goods, such as fruits and vegetables. Mastar, in northern Baghdad, even witnessed nearly hundreds of women gathered since the early morning to await a job opportunity in a farm, a house or a construction project.

Regarding women's participation in senior governmental positions, such as ministers or under-secretaries, no woman has held a ministerial position or that of an under-secretary. Their participation in senior administrative and legislative jobs has also been very limited. It is true that women participated in the National Assembly and the People's Council, but this participation was symbolic most of the time, as those institutions were state apparatuses. Women members in these councils would typically receive orders and not have the chance to reject or protest them.

Many creative women and initiative-taking women face impediments and disappointments and, as a result, their ability is often held in doubt. Moreover, attitudes and views prompted by traditional culture typically make it difficult for a woman to occupy senior administrative positions, since it is not easy for a man to accept orders from a woman. The manner in which women are brought up may also deprive them of the courage to run their own economic projects, unlike large numbers of men who do so.

As for institutional mechanisms to develop women, the former General Federation of Iraqi Women took upon itself the task of improving the conditions of Iraqi women. While, theoretically speaking, it was a non-governmental organization, it was supported, financed and guided by the state. There is no doubt that the Federation succeeded in achieving progress provided useful experience for those women with the potential and ability to utilize it and enhanced women's role in social work in Iraq. There was also the National Strategy for the Advancement of Iraqi Women and the National Committee, headed by the Minister of Labor and Social Affairs, to follow up on the implementation of the Strategy. Unfortunately, though, there was no solid database with clear categories and indicators about women, nor any specialized center or institution for women's studies.

Regarding women and human rights, Iraqi women, as all Iraqis, have suffered from all forms of human rights violations, whether in the field of education, work, self-expression or choice of academic majors, among others. Families are the source of rights—not the women themselves. An individual family is equivalent to a small society whose culture is traditional and who bases its dealings with people on gender discrimination.

Iraqi women also suffered from displacement, ethnic strife, cultural discrimination and the effects of wars and sanctions, while all the while the stereotype of them in Iraqi society did not change much. Their participation in the media and the press was very limited compared to that of men, and the broadcast time allotted to them to air their views was limited.

They were also victims of environmental pollution resulting from wars and sanctions. This is clearly seen in the high rate of cancer cases among women; the deterioration of their housing and local community; and the lack of basic services, such as fresh water, electricity and sanitation. The effects of environmental damage that befell Iraqis negatively impacted women due to their direct responsibility for their homes and children.

Finally, a young woman—the girl child—faces the same burdens and difficult circumstances that all Iraqi children face along with the additional burden of being a female. Females suffer from extra family pressures, limited means of recreation and lack of leisure time outside of the household confines. Early marriage forced on females and the ambiguity surrounding their ability to join school or continue their studies are all matters decided by the family. The prevailing culture of upbringing in Iraqi families consolidates gender discrimination and is justified by the deeply rooted traditional culture.

Proposals for the Present and Future:

After 35 years, the regime has been toppled. Irrespective of the details and dimensions of Iraqi society's course during the time the regime was in power, it is acceptable to state that the regime made important achievements for women during the 1970's and 1980's. Wars, armed conflict and sanctions have taken a heavy toll on the growth rates, however, and women have been among their casualties.

The fall of Baghdad on April 9, 2003, followed by the American occupation of Iraq, has brought with it new problems but at the same time opened new horizons. The war left thousands of Iraqis killed (the number was estimated at 10,000, and an international organization has estimated the number of those killed by un-detonated bombs and missiles at 2,000). Hundreds of houses, institutions, schools and other buildings have been destroyed. Perhaps it is a natural outcome of any war, but tens of Iraqi women have been kidnapped, while others have been raped or mugged in the street, had the sanctity of their homes violated, had their children kidnapped or had their husbands killed, among many other incidents.*

* Some have suggested that the number of female kidnap victims is 400, which is an exaggerated figure.

Many families have refrained from sending their daughters to schools or universities, and many women do not go to work and prefer to stay home for fear of danger, hooliganism and firearms from every direction. The

health system has also deteriorated; medicines have nearly run out, hospitals are in shambles from being destroyed and robbed and relief aid has been openly sold on the black market.

A quick review of any hospital, especially children's hospitals, shows that death became more visible than doctors and medicines in hospitals and that the stench of death was everywhere, along with tens of children and their mothers who slept on the floors. Moreover, tens and even hundreds of women who have lost their jobs, along with others who refuse to work, are helping to exacerbate poverty among women and their families and to subject their children to new dangers.

In such a climate, one would expect that the several women's organizations and authorities in Iraq will interpret and analyze women's issues and draft plans and proposals to improve the condition of Iraqi women. This, by itself, is a healthy exercise as long as diversity serves the objective. One also notices that new concepts, such as civil community, non-governmental organizations, democracy and power sharing, among others, do presently exist in Iraq. Moreover, all parties, irrespective of their leaning, are currently supporting women's issues and stressing their keenness to empower women to occupy appropriate positions in society and participate in rebuilding the country.

Based on these concepts and attitudes, we suggest the following measures:

1. Formulate a new strategy for the advancement of Iraqi women's development that takes into consideration the new changes; benefits from international experiences; and stresses support for the enhancement of a culture of equality, principles of solidarity and promoting awareness about participation on the basis of development responsibilities.
2. Come up with an effective national mechanism on decision-making, enhance the implementation of the strategy and follow up on impediments. For doing this, it is recommended that a national committee, grouping the relevant line ministries (such as Labor, Health, Education and Human Rights) as well as concerned civil society organizations, be formed.
3. Make every effort to establish a comprehensive information system about Iraqi women in cooperation with the Central Statistics Department and concerned international organizations like UNIFEM.

4. Hold a national conference involving all women's organizations to establish a national women's grouping that fosters diversity and sets up a unified organizational mechanism, recognized at the national level, to be called the Iraqi Union of Women's Organizations.
5. Consolidate existing mechanisms such as social welfare and security pay and find new mechanisms to support poor families, especially for once the ration system is discontinued. Such mechanisms may include the creation of a national fund for social solidarity; urging various institutions to establish such funds; and providing opportunities for civil society organizations to help orphans, the elderly and the handicapped.
6. Establish a national center for women's studies at the Ministry of Human Rights to facilitate studies on women and follow up on their conditions and development.
7. Establish a national information monitoring center to follow up on media articles.
8. Work out suitable protection mechanisms for women victims of all forms of violence. Such mechanisms should be set up to facilitate female victims' contact with official and voluntary protection centers, revise applicable laws with the aim of protecting women, conduct studies and surveys on the various forms of violence and its effects and raise awareness about its dangers.
9. Conduct economic, social and psychological studies on women's conditions in the marginal job market and work towards finding disciplinary tools and mechanisms for the protection of women's rights. This includes providing guarantees for them through joint measures by the Ministry of Labor, women's organizations and the Ministry of Planning.
10. Enhance women's participation in positions of high authority and in decision-making circles through a revision of applicable laws, with a view to eliminating all obstacles standing in the way of such participation. It is important to ensure equitable access to job opportunities, highlight and promote women's achievements and creativity and empower women to occupy leading positions in associations, unions and societies by removing all obstacles preventing them from running as candidates and/or voting.
11. Establish a national registration center for women's human rights. The center will monitor and document the most serious violations, along with ways and means to address them. It will also publish regular

progress reports and invite the public to contribute to its activities as part of its effort to make society aware of gender culture.

12. Work towards changing the stereotypical image of women in the media through the enhancement of women's visibility and participation in media programs and activities, encouragement of women's media and utilization of the media as a vehicle for changing the stereotypical image rather than being a tool to foster that image. This can be achieved through seminars and training on gender concepts.
13. Raise women's awareness of their role towards environmental issues and disseminate information about the importance of cleanliness at home and at the local community level. Also, foster the spirit of group participation in environmental protection, facilitate women's access to agricultural and industrial loans and encourage the exercise of their right to invest in land ownership and run private projects.
14. Work out protection mechanisms for girls—especially in such areas as education, early marriage and labor—and provide institutional services for orphaned and handicapped girls. Also, provide alternative families for girl victims of violence and oppression caused by their families.
15. Enhance activities and programs of health institutions targeting women, with the aim of alleviating the negative consequences of the deterioration of the health system during the past years. Among the most important institutions are reproductive health clinics, family planning centers, breast cancer early detection centers, gynecology centers, maternal hospitals and mother and childcare centers, among others.
16. Improve access to free and compulsory education for all children without any gender-based discrimination, especially at the elementary stage; enhance gender culture in school curricula; strengthen the experiment of mixed and juvenile schools; and establish illiteracy centers and women's cultural forums.
17. Direct special care to all aspects of women's security, especially with regard to banning trade in women, forcing women to perform jobs detrimental to their dignity, abusing or exploiting them sexually, exposing them to the risk of being killed or exposing them to severe punishment outside the legitimate framework of the law.
18. Pay attention to women's punitive institutions and monitor and prevent human rights violations. Also, enhance the reform elements and components in their programs, study the cases and conditions of

their residents and diagnose the causes of their crimes and their impact on the family and society. These include women's involvement on the boards of these institutions and allowing women's organizations to visit them and extend help to released women.

19. Encourage women's participation in municipal councils so that they can play a role in formulating development policies for local communities, enhancing social ties, following up on problems and contributing to finding solutions to them.
20. Issue a Human Development Report for Iraq 2005 on women on the 10th anniversary of the Beijing Conference to monitor the achievement of its goals and specify what needs to be done to improve the conditions of Iraqi women within a specific future framework.

Finally, we earnestly hope that these proposals will help Iraqi women to embark on a new stage of constructive work and fruitful achievements for a better future.

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