Gender Analysis of Iraq's Electoral and Political Process

October 2019

INTERNATIONAL FOUNDATION FOR ELECTORAL SYSTEMS
IFES
30 Years

Gender Analysis of Iraq's Electoral and Political Process

October 2019

Lead Author:
Gina Chirillo

Contributing Author:
Caroline Roddey

The authors wish to thank Zeinab Abdelkarim, Gabrielle Bardall, Elizabeth Reiter Dettmer, Anna Wiktorowska, and Ambar Zobairi for their reviews and inputs on this paper.

Gender Analysis of Iraq's Electoral and Political Process
Copyright © 2019 International Foundation for Electoral Systems. All rights reserved.

Permission Statement: No part of this publication may be reproduced in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by any information storage and retrieval system without the written permission of IFES.

Requests for permission should include the following information:

- A description of the material for which permission to copy is desired.
- The purpose for which the copied material will be used and the manner in which it will be used.
- Your name, title, company or organization name, telephone number, fax number, email address, and mailing address.

Please send all requests for permission to:

International Foundation for Electoral Systems
2011 Crystal Drive, 10th Floor
Arlington, VA 22202
Email: editor@ifes.org
Fax: 202.350.6701

Contents

Executive Summary 1

Background 4

Methodology 6

Assessment Report 8

- Legal Framework 8
- Election Administration 12
- Women's Political Participation 16
- Voter Registration 21
- Voter Information and Education 25
- Political Parties/Coalitions 28

Recommendations 33

Annex 1: Gender Breakdown of IHEC Staff 35

Annex 2: IHEC Organizational Chart 38

Annex 3: Gender Breakdown of Voters 39

References 41

Executive Summary

While progress has been achieved since the fall of Saddam Hussein's regime, women in Iraq remain on the margins of political life and are excluded from decision-making processes that affect them. Decisions made and policies implemented by government institutions help shape perceptions of the roles that women and men play in Iraqi society and determine their access to rights and resources. Delivering an inclusive election is an important entry point to ensuring that all Iraqis are able to build a more developed democracy that is responsive and accountable to women and men alike. Ahead of the provincial elections, now scheduled for April 2020, it is critical to consider how Iraq's elections can be inclusive to all citizens.

Despite the impressive history of Iraq's women's movement, to date there is no area of the electoral process in which women and men enjoy equal access and opportunity. While the Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC) has recognized the importance of women's inclusion, a lack of resources for gender equality programming and the gender working group means that many initiatives to increase women's political participation are under-resourced. The legal gender quota is also a positive step, but a lack of clarity in how it is properly applied and to which elections is a source of confusion and distrust. In the past, some voter education campaigns began too late and did not adequately target those farthest on the margins, especially women who also belong to other marginalized groups, like women from ethnic and religious minorities and women who are displaced. Political parties also have a history of not providing sufficient financial support, networks or resources to women candidates or women in elected office, and there is a lack of women in political party leadership. Finally, women who participate in politics – especially women candidates – are often targets of disinformation and hate speech on social media, meant to pressure them into silence and to withdraw from political life.

The purpose of this report is to identify gender gaps and opportunities to promote political inclusion and mitigate obstacles to participation faced by Iraqi women. Findings and recommendations from this report can serve to further gender equality in political and electoral processes, and it is recommended that identified stakeholders implement these recommendations to increase women's political participation throughout Iraq. Information was collected through desk review and semistructured interviews with key stakeholders.

There are significant opportunities and ongoing vulnerabilities related to fostering women's equal and meaningful participation in political and electoral processes. The chart on the following page highlights some of the most important ones identified in this study. They are further described in the "Assessment Findings" section of this report.

Gender Analysis Summary of Findings		
Category	**Opportunities**	**Vulnerabilities**
Legal Framework	• Iraq has ratified international agreements and signed onto some regional frameworks that support women's equal participation. • Iraq's Constitution guarantees women's rights to equally participate in public life. • There is a 25 percent gender quota for elected offices.	• Substitution rules leave an opportunity for parties to replace a woman parliamentarian with a man. • Seat allocation regulations supporting the gender quota law do not include guidance for women candidates who win independent of the quota.
Election Administration	• A gender working group exists and has implemented meaningful programming. • The IHEC is equipped to collect or has collected gender-disaggregated data during multiple phases of the electoral process.	• Women make up only 14 percent of IHEC staff. • There are no women on the Board of Commissioners. • IHEC departments do not designate any funds for gender-specific interventions and programs. • There is no budget allocated to IHEC gender working group nor any full-time dedicated staff.
Women's Political Participation	• Seventy-seven percent of survey respondents supported women's rights.[1] • Women's civil society organizations are positioned to provide support on increasing women's political participation as voters and as candidates. • Iraq has a higher proportion of women in Parliament than the global and regional average.[2]	• There is a lack of women in political leadership positions – such as in government – to act as role models or prominent women leaders. • There are rampant online attacks and harassment against women participating in the political process as candidates, voters and election officials. • There are no women in Cabinet positions. • There are some instances of family voting.
Voter Registration	• For the 2018 parliamentary elections, there were women staff members on all registration teams. • During the 2018 elections, there were mobile registration units that went to internally displaced person camps. • Regulations protecting privacy help women feel more comfortable about registering.	• Voters must go to registration centers twice to obtain biometric voter cards. Given conflict in certain regions and child care responsibilities, visiting twice may be difficult for women. • Voter information on voter registration is limited. • Areas with higher level of insecurity and more conservative cultural beliefs have lower levels of women registering to vote.

[2] Iraq ranks 67th in the world on proportion of women in Parliament out of 192 countries for which there is data, putting it slightly above the world average of 24.3 percent and the Middle East and North Africa average of 19 percent. Source: "Women in Parliaments: World and Regional Averages," Inter-Parliamentary Union, n.d., http://archive.ipu.org/wmn-e/world.htm.; "Percentage of Women in National Parliaments," Inter-Parliamentary Union, n.d., https://data.ipu.org/women-ranking.

Voter Information and Education	• Some IHEC-led voter education campaigns specifically targeted women voters. • Voter education materials were produced in multiple languages, making them more accessible.	• Lack of coordination between the IHEC and civil society organizations represents a missed opportunity to ensure that women are reached by voter education. • Disinformation and misinformation disproportionately affect women's participation in the electoral process. • Voter education and information campaigns began too late for the 2018 parliamentary elections.
Political Parties and Coalitions	• The Political Parties Law requires the state to provide funding for parties, which has the potential to increase the pool of funding available for women, if earmarks, allocation provisions or voluntary party guidelines are applied to this provision.	• Men are provided with more resources than women for campaigns. • In the most recent elections, all political parties and party coalitions were led by men. • In the most recent elections, most party lists were headed by men. • Parties do not have internal structures that facilitate women's participation in the party and lack transparency in decision-making.

Background

Women's influence on politics in Iraq has not followed a linear course, but has been shaped by the ebbs and flows of Iraq's political landscape through various regimes, conflicts and civil unrest. During the oil boom of the 1970s, Iraq invested in its own population – rather than importing foreign labor as in Kuwait and Saudi Arabia – and made a very strong push for women's education. By the time Saddam Hussein assumed power in 1979, systems had been put in place that enabled women to be active in the workforce, such as free child care and transportation to work and school. However, political opposition was silenced and only women who were members of the Baath-affiliated General Federation of Iraqi Women were able to publicly organize.[3] During the war with Iran in the 1980s, Iraqi state expenditures moved from social programs to the war effort, with more women moving into the labor force to take the place of male fighters. There was also eventually a shift in state ideology from viewing women as educated, modern participants in society to viewing women as the mothers of future soldiers. Policy incentives were put in place to enable women to have large numbers of children, which reinforced traditional gender roles. One departure from this trend, however, was all women gaining the same right as men to vote and run for office in 1980.[4] During the parliamentary elections that year, women won 6.4 percent of the seats on the National Council and 13.2 percent in 1985.[5]

After the Iran-Iraq war ended, the international sanctions imposed following Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait crushed the country's economy and led to high rates of unemployment. Available jobs generally went to men, and women who had joined the labor force were sent home since the state could no longer pay salaries, cover child care costs or transportation. Given the political repression, many of the most highly educated, secular and middle-class Iraqis left the country, resulting in a rise in conservatism that had a dramatic impact on women. The dress code became more constrained and a rise in prostitution supported by war profiteers made male family members very protective of wives, sisters and daughters.[6]

After the United States (U.S.)-allied intervention in Iraq in 2003, women's groups began to re-emerge and successfully lobbied to include a 25 percent quota for Iraq's parliamentary seats in the 2005 Iraqi Constitution. However, ongoing conflict related to the U.S. invasion of Iraq and the spread of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) has reduced women's freedom of movement, consequently impeding women parliamentarians' ability to work in their constituencies and women's ability to freely participate in political activities. It has also perpetuated traditional gender roles, with more secular-minded populations having migrated out of the country, and more conservative populations limiting women's

[3] Nadje Al-Ali and Nicola Pratt, "Women's Organizing and the Conflict in Iraq since 2003," Feminist Review, no. 88 (2008): 74–85, https://www.jstor.org/stable/30140876.

[4] "Background on Women's Status in Iraq Prior to the Fall of the Saddam Hussein Government" (Human Rights Watch, November 2003, https://www.hrw.org/legacy/backgrounder/wrd/iraq-women.htm#P42_12857.

[5] Valeria Vilardo and Sarah Bittar, "Gender Profile – Iraq: A Situation Analysis on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in Iraq" (Oxfam, United Nations Women, December 2018), https://doi.org/10.21201/2018.3460.

[6] Joel Wing, "Iraqi Women Before And After The 2003 Invasion, Interview With Prof Nadje Al-Ali Univ of London," *MUSINGS ON IRAQ* (blog), December 23, 2013, http://musingsoniraq.blogspot.com/2013/12/iraqi-women-before-and-after-2003.html.

participation and leadership in line with their social constructs. Therefore, despite gains in recent years, women remain on the margins of civic and political life.

Methodology

The goal of this gender analysis was to identify gender gaps and opportunities to promote political inclusion and mitigate obstacles to participation faced by Iraqi women. Findings and recommendations from this report can serve to further gender equality in political and electoral processes, and it is recommended that identified stakeholders implement these recommendations to increase women's political participation throughout Iraq. The Consortium for Elections and Political Process Strengthening (CEPPS), including the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) and the International Republican Institute (IRI), will incorporate these recommendations into current programming in Iraq to ensure that it is gender inclusive and reaches a gender balance of beneficiaries.

In addition to a thorough desk review, CEPPS/IFES led the field research mission for the gender analysis, which took place from February 24-March 6, 2019, in Baghdad, Iraq. Interviews were conducted with a range of stakeholders including members of civil society, political parties, Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC) staff, parliamentarians and international implementers. CEPPS/IRI assisted in organizing the assessment and meetings, data analysis and providing context on electoral issues in Iraq. All interviews were semistructured and took place with the assistance of an Arabic-language translator. To allow interviewees to be candid and truthful – and to ensure they do not face retribution for their comments – this report does not include a meeting list of interviewees. Interviewees were notified of these measures to protect their anonymity before interviews began. This gender analysis focuses on Federal Iraq and thus does not go into detail about the autonomous region of Iraqi Kurdistan, which has its own election management body, Parliament and Constitution.

It is critical to remember that not all women have the same experiences and thus, the analysis was conducted with an intersectional lens. The analysis took into account the different experiences of women from different marginalized identities, including, but not limited to: women with disabilities, rural women, women of different ages, women from ethnic or religious minorities and women who are internally displaced.

This gender analysis was funded by the United States Agency for International Development through its Global Elections and Political Transitions program implemented by CEPPS. CEPPS' current program in Iraq has three main objectives: to strengthen the IHEC to effectively and efficiently plan, budget and implement the first post-ISIS provincial elections; to strengthen Iraqi civil society organizations (CSOs) to conduct civic and voter education and outreach both ahead of and after the provincial elections; and to empower Iraqi civil society and the IHEC to implement targeted electoral cycle planning and reform measures to strengthen electoral processes following provincial elections.

IFES believes that democracy is rooted in the equal and empowered inclusion of women and men in the governance of their countries. To achieve our mission of building democracies that deliver for all, IFES works to ensure the equal and meaningful participation of women and men in elections and in political life. CEPPS takes into account the barriers that inhibit equal participation, including conflict, transitional institutional developments, socio-economics and cultural context. This approach assumes that women and men are affected differently by these constraints and that the success of CEPPS' work around the

world depends on understanding and addressing gender dynamics. CEPPS believes a lack of inclusivity in the electoral processes not only impedes women's rights, but also leads to elections that lack integrity and greatly hinder the democratic process.

Assessment Report

Below are the findings of the report, organized into six sections: legal framework, election administration, women's political participation, voter registration, voter information and education, and political parties and coalitions. Each section is followed by detailed recommendations based on the findings in that section. The end of the report includes a recommendations table with each recommendation, the responsible actors and the priority level.

Legal Framework

Adopted in 2005, Iraq's Constitution stipulates that all Iraqis are equal before the law and prohibits discrimination based on sex (Article 14).[7] The preamble states that "we, the people of Iraq, … have resolved with the determination of our men, women, elderly, and youth … to pay attention to women and their rights." Article 20 specifically says that "Iraqi citizens, men and women, shall have the right to participate in public affairs and to enjoy political rights including the right to vote, elect, and run for office." However, by stipulating that "no law may be enacted that contradicts the established provisions of Islam," the Constitution opens the door for more conservative interpretations that could limit women's rights.[8] As a result, the status of women in Iraq can greatly depend on the implementation of Islamic law and on the priorities, interpretations and preferences of male religious authorities.

Iraq ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in 1986 but has yet to sign or ratify its optional protocol, which establishes complaint and inquiry mechanisms for CEDAW. Iraq maintains reservations to Article 2 (f) and (g), which call on states to modify or abolish existing laws and penal codes that discriminate against women; Article 16, which concerns the elimination of discrimination in marriage and family relations; and Article 29, Paragraph 1, with regard to the principle of international arbitration on the interpretation or application of the convention.[9]

Iraq also ratified the Arab Charter on Human Rights, which was drafted in 2004 and contains several articles referencing the right of women and men to participate equally in politics.[10] The Arab Committee of Human Rights was established to monitor implementation of the charter, and although the committee does not have any enforcement mechanisms, two of seven committee members are

[7] "Iraq's Constitution of 2005" (Constitute Project, 2005), https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Iraq_2005.pdf?lang=en.
[8] Ibid, Section 1, Article 2.
[9] "Status of Treaties: Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women," United Nations Treaty Collection, n.d., https://treaties.un.org/Pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=IND&mtdsg_no=IV-8&chapter=4&lang=en#EndDec.
[10] "Arab Charter on Human Rights," University of Minnesota Human Rights Library, May 22, 2004, http://hrlibrary.umn.edu/instree/loas2005.html.

women."[11, 12] Iraq submitted its first periodic report to the committee in 2018. Iraq is also a member state of the League of Arab States, which published the *Cairo Declaration for Arab Women: The Post-2015 Agenda* in 2014.[13] The Cairo Declaration contains specific recommendations to increase women's political participation – including setting up temporary special measures, like gender quotas – but the declaration is not legally binding, and there is "no mechanism for compelling member states to comply with League of Arab States resolutions."[14]

Gender Quota: Council of Representatives

The system for parliamentary elections in Iraq is an open-list proportional representation system, where a voter can select a political entity and a specific candidate on a list. Iraq's Constitution requires at least one-quarter of the Council of Representatives' members to be women.[15] This provision translated into a gender quota requiring 25 percent of the 329 seats – or 83 seats – go to women candidates, though women's organizations advocated for a 40 percent quota. Political entities must submit candidate lists that include at least 25 percent women candidates. The IHEC rejects lists that do not meet this requirement.

The seats for women in the Council of Representatives are allotted according to the seat allocation stipulations in the IHEC regulations, based on a modified Sainte-Laguë method,[16] issued by the Board of Commissioners (BoC) and endorsed on March 23, 2018.[17] According to the regulation, first, all seats are distributed regardless of the candidates' gender. Then, if women do not receive 25 percent of the seats, for each governorate, one of the seats won on the party list will be allocated to a woman after every

[11] "Commission on Human Rights Committee Members," League of Arab States, n.d., http://www.lasportal.org/ar/humanrights/Committee/Pages/CommitteeMembers.aspx?RID=1.
[12] Stephanie Chaban and Safia Trabelsi, "The Role of the League of Arab States," Regional Organizations, Gender Equality and the Political Empowerment of Women (International IDEA, 2017), https://www.idea.int/sites/default/files/publications/chapters/regional-organizations-gender-equality-and-the-political-empowerment-of-women/regional-organizations-gender-equality-and-the-political-empowerment-of-women-chapter-3.pdf.
[13] "Cairo Declaration: High Level Meeting on 'Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) for Women and Girls, Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women in the Arab Region': The Post-2015 Development Agenda for Women 'Opportunities and Challenges,'" February 23, 2014, http://www.unwomen.org/~/media/Headquarters/Attachments/Sections/CSW/58/CSW58-declaration-cairo-en%20pdf.pdf.
[14] Chaban and Trabelsi, "The Role of the League of Arab States."
[15] "Iraq's Constitution of 2005," Section 3, Chapter 1, Article 49, Fourth (2005).
[16] The use of the Sainte-Laguë method means that seats will be distributed among the candidates on the open list. The seats are first allocated to participating political entities based on the number of valid votes received. The candidates within each open list will then be re-ranked based on the number of votes obtained by each. The candidate who secures the highest number of votes within the open list shall be deemed the winner and so on for the rest of the candidates. The counting system has been changed slightly from the previously used largest remainder method due to a ruling by the Supreme Court that stated the previous method discriminated against smaller parties.
[17] "The System of Distribution the Seats of the Council of Representative No. (12) for the Year 2018" (IHEC), http://www.ihec.iq/ihecftp/2018/en/sys12en.pdf, Section 3, Step 3.

three male winners. If this still does not achieve the quota of 25 percent of the seats, there are six additional steps set out by the regulation to ensure women obtain at least 83 seats.

Although most women were elected to Parliament under this quota rule, some are also directly elected, independent of the quota law. Because Iraq's parliamentary elections are an open-list system, voters select a party and also have the option of selecting specific candidates, which in some cases results in the direct election of women. In 2018, there were 22 women candidates who won seats through this system without the assistance of the quota. To fill the rest of the seats to reach 25 percent, the IHEC used the system outlined in the seat allocation regulations. In this way, the quota has been met and there are currently 83 women representatives in the Council of Representatives, or 25.2 percent. It is also worth noting that although the 25 percent quota is a positive step for women's representation, women make up half the population, approximately 49.4 percent.[18] Thus, the gender quota falls far short of descriptive representation. In fact, initially, the gender quota proposed by Iraqi women's organizations was 40 percent.[19]

One loophole in the existing gender quota is that if a woman vacates her seat in the Council of Representatives, she can be replaced by a man. This can allow parties to run women candidates, and then when these women win, pressure them to resign and appoint a man to replace them.

There are also nine reserved seats for religious minority groups, with five of the nine seats going to Christians.[20]

Gender Quota: Provincial Councils

Although the Constitution stipulates a quota for the Council of Representatives, there is no provision in the Constitution related to provincial council elections. In Law No. 12 (2018) on Governorates, Districts and Sub-district Council Elections, Article 12 states:

> *"The seats shall be distributed to the candidates of the open list and the candidates shall be re-ranked based on the number of the votes obtained by a candidate. The candidate who secures the highest number of votes within the open list shall be deemed the winner and so on for the rest of candidates and to have a woman candidate following each three winners regardless of the number of men winners."*

Past provincial council elections have shown that the actual application of this law has been a challenge. Less than two weeks before the 2009 provincial council elections, the published version of the electoral

[18] "Population, Female (% of Total Population): Iraq," The World Bank | Data, 2018, https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.TOTL.FE.ZS?locations=IQ.
[19] Zainab Salbi, "Foreign Policy: Iraq's Forgotten Women," NPR, March 15, 2010, https://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=124687123.
[20] "The System of Distribution the Seats of the Council of Representative No. (12) for the Year 2018," (IHEC), http://www.ihec.iq/ihecftp/2018/en/sys12en.pdf, Section 2.

law did not include a firm commitment to a 25 percent gender quota.[21] It was left up to the electoral commission to interpret the vague language in the law – which is similar to the 2018 version of the law, cited above – stipulating "a woman at the end of every three winners." In the 2009 elections, the election commission announced it would award the third seat any party wins to a female candidate. This, of course, means that it would only come into effect for larger, more successful parties that won multiple seats.[22] In the 2013 provincial council elections, the language in the electoral law remained the same, but the IHEC passed a decree ensuring that 25 percent of the representatives on each provincial council would be women.[23]

On July 29, 2019, the Council of Representatives approved amendments to the existing provincial council elections law but did not include any amendments regarding implementation of a gender quota. The amendments have yet to be signed into law by the president and not all are available publicly, but the most prominent amendments were published by the IHEC on July 25.

Recommendations

1. *Amend gender quota application guidelines to clarify rules about seat allocations for women candidates – including those elected outside the quota – to ensure a synchronized interpretation of the regulations.*

Although the gender quota law has guaranteed that women make up 25 percent of representatives in the Council of Representatives, it is open to misinterpretation and potential manipulation because regulations fails to clearly specify how the presence of women who win enough votes for a seat independent of the quota can distort the application of the quota formula. Specifically, if the 25 percent is not achieved through the votes cast, the law requires a woman candidate to be allocated a seat after a *man* who wins a seat; were a woman to win a seat directly (for example, in first or third place), however, the law does not specify whether the quota woman's seat would still follow the first three elected candidates regardless of sex. The law can be interpreted in multiple ways, which could result in women being placed much further down a list, reducing overall representation. It is recommended that the law specify that quota seats be held for every fourth position, regardless of the sex of the previous three elected positions.

2. *Introduce regulations on the gender quota application during provincial council elections.*

Ahead of the upcoming provincial council elections, the IHEC should pass clear regulations on the application of the gender quota for these elections to forestall any confusion as was experienced in the past. As the current law stipulates that the electoral system for the provincial council elections will be an

[21] Alissa J. Rubin and Sam Dagher, "Changes in Iraq Election Law Weaken Quota for Women," New York Times, January 13, 2009, https://www.nytimes.com/2009/01/14/world/middleeast/14iraq.html.
[22] Ibid.
[23] "With Some Electoral Gains in Iraq, Women Candidates Work towards Change," United Nations Women, May 16, 2013, http://www.unwomen.org/news/stories/2013/5/with-some-electoral-gains-in-iraq-women-candidates-work-towards-change.

open-party list, the IHEC could apply the same methodology used in the parliamentary elections, also taking into consideration the changes suggested in the first recommendation above.

3. *Amend the electoral law to require the replacement for a resigned representative to be from the same gender.*

Currently, if a woman representative resigns her post, she can be replaced by a man unless such a replacement results in a violation to the 25 percent gender quota law. To ensure that parties do not run women candidates, pressure them to resign and replace them with male candidates, the electoral law should be amended to close this loophole.

Election Administration

The IHEC is responsible for conducting all elections and referendums in Iraq and implements these in accordance with policies and procedures defined by the IHEC BoC. Established by the Council of Representatives in May 2007, the IHEC is an independent electoral authority consisting of nine members appointed by and under the supervision of the Council of Representatives. The IHEC has 19 Governorate Electoral Offices – one in each governorate except Baghdad, which has two, a regional office in Kurdistan and a headquarters office in Baghdad with permanent staff. The IHEC also recruits ad-hoc poll worker staff for elections events. The IHEC's roles and responsibilities are further defined by Law 11 (2007) of the Council of Representatives of Iraq.

Although previous iterations of the IHEC included women commissioners, currently no IHEC commissioners are women, nor is there a gender quota for IHEC commissioners or staff members to ensure women's representation in this important body. One subject noted that when there was a woman commissioner, she was more involved and supportive of gender equality and inclusion programming during the electoral process. Without a strong advocate on the current BoC, it can be challenging to gather the necessary resources and political will to implement gender equality programming.

In addition to the absence of women on the BoC, only 14 percent (578 out of 4,203) of IHEC permanent staff members are women. IHEC headquarters has the largest proportion of women staff members, with 19 percent (141 out of 736), while offices in the governorates have only 11 percent women (149 out of 1,355) and regional centers have just 14 percent women (288 out of 2,112). At headquarters, the control and internal audit department has the largest proportion of women staff at 36 percent (10 out of 28). The offices of the two deputy CEOs (technical, financial and administrative) do not have any women staff (but only have two and three staff members respectively) and the electoral management department has only 11 percent women (14 out of 129). At headquarters, no directors are women, and women represent only 9.8 percent of management-level positions. Table 1 below includes the full gender breakdown of management-level positions at IHEC headquarters.

Table 1: Gender Breakdown of IHEC Headquarters Management Staff				
Job Title	**Percentage of Women**	**Women**	**Men**	**Total**
Commissioner	0.0%	0	9	9
Director	0.0%	0	27	27
Deputy Director	12.1%	4	29	33
Section Head	9.6%	8	75	83
Unit Head	10.6%	40	336	376
Total	**9.8%**	**52**	**476**	**528**

In the provinces, the governorate office in Sulaymaniyah has the largest proportion of female staff at 26 percent (15 out of 58), whereas the office in Salaheddin has no women staff members (zero out of 44). No heads of the governorate offices are women. Sulaymaniyah also has the regional center with the largest proportion of women – in fact, there are more women (13) than men (12) who work in the office (52 percent). Neither the regional office in Anbar nor the regional office in Erbil have any women, though the Erbil office only has two staff members total, while Anbar has 44 staff members. Annex 1 includes a full breakdown of IHEC staff by gender, office and department.

Across the organization, women – who make up about half the Iraqi population – make up less than half of the IHEC staff. There is also a lack of women in more senior, decision-making positions, limiting their influence to control resources and change policies.

IHEC headquarters is made up of seven departments with various units under each department (see Annex 2 for a full organizational chart). While there is no formal gender department or gender unit, there is a *gender working group*, made up of employees from various departments. In 2011, a group of women employees at the IHEC started to hold informal meetings to reflect on gender issues related to the institution and to electoral processes. The initiative was formalized by establishing the gender working group on June 28, 2012, under the supervision of the technical deputy CEO to integrate the gender perspective into the electoral processes, but formal activities did not begin until 2015. One interlocuter noted that one reason the IHEC formalized the gender working group was based on direction from the Council of Ministers, who asked each government ministry to form a gender section. Today, the gender working group is made up of 21 staff members (three of whom are men, or 14 percent), with Hawra R. Ameen – who is also the head of the International Training Section – as the technical lead and Commissioner Motamad Nema as the commissioner charged with leading the group. Not all departments are represented with members in the gender working group. No IHEC staff members are solely dedicated to gender equity in electoral processes. The gender working group does not have a budget and relies on other departments or international organizations to provide funding to realize its goals, which has proven challenging. There is no overall line item in the overall IHEC budget for specific gender activities. While members of the gender working group are interested in gender inclusion, it will be important to provide them additional training on gender and elections topics.

In addition, the gender working group currently depends on staff from across the organization to further its goals and priorities; no staff member has gender inclusion as his or her sole portfolio.

The IHEC does not have a gender policy and has not conducted its own gender audit or assessment, but the gender working group developed a gender action plan for 2019, the second of its kind (the first was completed in 2018). According to its action plan, the main goals of this working group are to foster equal opportunities for women and men inside the IHEC and among electoral stakeholders and to integrate gender considerations into the IHEC's strategic plan. Its specific objectives include: building the capacity and knowledge of the gender working group; building partnerships and connections between IHEC headquarters and field staff working on gender equity issues; reducing internal gender gaps to allow more opportunities for women at the IHEC; integrating gender issues into overall IHEC planning; and working with electoral partners on integrating gender considerations into their elections work. The working group has laid out the specifics steps necessary to achieve each objective, along with the department responsible for doing so. But without a budget or a full-time person dedicated to these tasks, they will be difficult to achieve.

In addition to an action plan, the gender working group put together an annual report on its activities in 2018. The report highlights different events and trainings in which the gender working group participated as well as gender-disaggregated data on the 2018 elections. Data was reported for: candidates for the Council of Representatives (disaggregated by gender and governorate), the number of women in political parties and who head political parties, voters (disaggregated by gender and governorate), voters who registered biometrically and received their election card (disaggregated by gender and governorate), the woman candidate who received the highest number of votes in each governorate, voter complaints (disaggregated by gender and type of complaint) and the women candidates who received enough votes to win independent of the quota. While this data is available in the gender working group annual report, it is not available to the public and there is no gender-disaggregated voter turnout data.

Recommendations

1. *Include women representatives on the IHEC BoC.*

Currently, the BoC has no women members. When appointing new commissioners, the Council of Representatives – as stated in Law No. 11 (2007), the Law of the IHEC, Section 3 – should take women's representation into account. One possibility for ensuring women's representation is through a gender quota for the IHEC. The IHEC could work with the Council of Representatives to amend the current IHEC law to include a mandatory 25 percent gender quota, i.e., women must make up 25 percent of the BoC (with nine current members, two of them must be women). The quota should also have a strong enforcement measure; that is, if any appointments to the BoC result in the board having fewer than 25 percent women, that appointment will be rejected.

2. *Institute a gender quota for IHEC permanent and temporary staff at headquarters and in the field offices.*

Currently, IHEC permanent staff members are only 14 percent women, far below the percentage of women in the population or the proportion of women representatives in the Council of Representatives. The introduction of this gender quota will help IHEC be more intentional while recruiting for new

positions to ensure a diverse candidate pool. To increase the number of women applying to IHEC positions, the IHEC could partner with women's civil society groups or universities to advertise positions. The IHEC could also ensure that recruitment interview panels include women staff members for both women and men interviewees. The IHEC could introduce a 25 percent gender quota – i.e., 25 percent of the IHEC staff must be women – to mirror the gender quota in the Council of Representatives.

1. *Dedicate 5 percent of the overall budget to programming that increases women's political participation and have a strong monitoring mechanism for this.*

Because the gender working group has no budget, it is recommended that the IHEC dedicate 5 percent of its overall budget to programming that increases women's political participation and implement a strong monitoring mechanism for this. If a portion of the overall budget is set aside for gender equality programming, it will ensure dedicated financial resources for programs that work toward equal participation in the electoral process. A strong monitoring mechanism will ensure that the funding that is set aside is actually spent on meaningful programming. The finance department should work with the gender working group to set standards on what constitutes gender equality programming and then ensure that the money provided for these purposes is actually used for this work.

2. *Train gender working group members, and overall IHEC staff, on promoting gender equality principles.*

Understanding the importance of promoting gender equality and how to implement these values in practice is critical to all aspects of the EMB and the electoral process. New IHEC employees should receive applied training on the importance of gender equality and existing staff should understand that ensuring women's equal access to the electoral process is part of their responsibility in their departments and understand practical ways to realize this. This includes training for poll workers on how to handle issues women are likely to face at the polling station, including how to protect their right to vote directly and secretly.

3. *Formalize the gender working group by establishing it as a separate unit with dedicated staff and a budget.*

The IHEC should develop a separate unit for gender directly under the BoC Secretariat, like the Legal Advice and Complaints section, to allow gender issues to be mainstreamed throughout the IHEC's work and appoint or hire a staff member who works *only* on gender inclusion. This unit should also be given a budget and its own resources to implement programming, both internally at the IHEC and as part of the electoral process.

4. *Collect gender-disaggregated voter turnout data.*

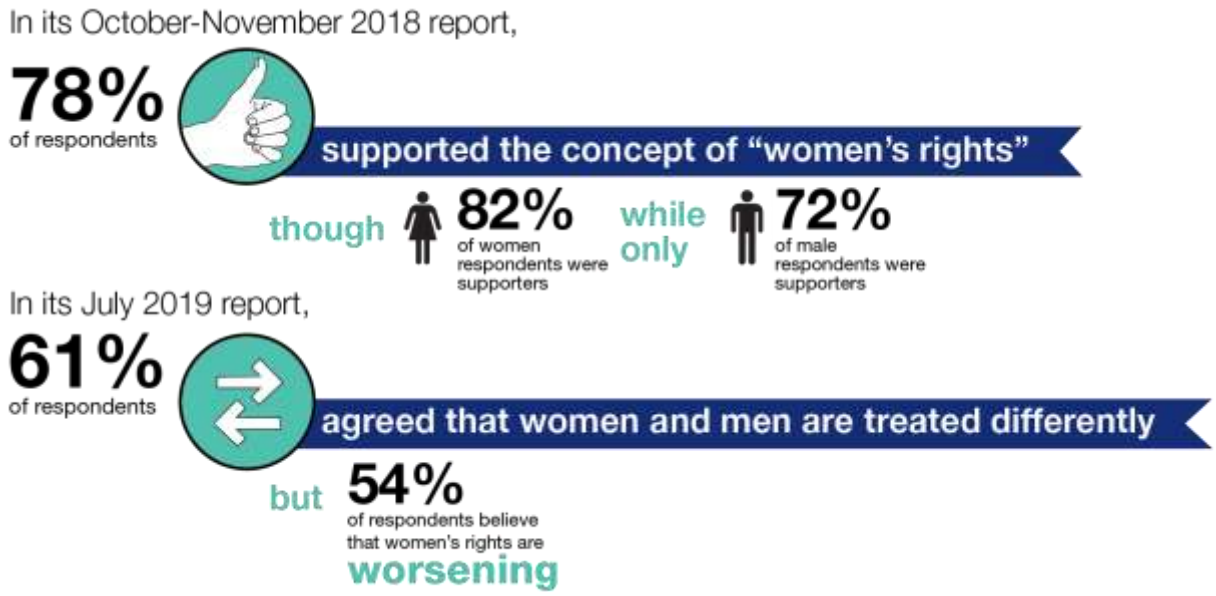
The IHEC collects gender-disaggregated data on a variety of measures but did not collect gender-disaggregated voter turnout data for the 2018 elections, even though – as one interlocuter noted – the IHEC had collected gender-disaggregated voter turnout data in the past. Gender-disaggregated turnout data is critical to understand how many women are participating on Election Day and can help inform

future IHEC programming and resource allocation. Given that biometric voter cards contain information on the voter's gender, it should not be too difficult or costly for the IHEC to use this data to determine the number of women and men who voted on Election Day and to publish this result, disaggregated by polling station, in an accessible format on its website.

Women's Political Participation

Women can play a variety of roles as part of the political process, including as candidates, elected officials, voters and civil society activists. Challenges remain, however, for Iraqi women attempting to overcome individual, structural and cultural barriers to participate equally and meaningfully in political life. Public opinion polling from the National Democratic Institute (NDI) provides some insight on the overall environment related to women's political participation and involvement in public life in Iraq.

Image 1: Public opinion polling from the National Democratic Institute (NDI)[24]



Despite most survey respondents supporting women's rights, gender biases are pervasive in Iraq's institutions and society. For example, women continue to be disadvantaged in inheritance laws, prosecution for rape can be avoided by the perpetrator marrying the woman he raped, and domestic violence is widespread and rarely prosecuted.[25] In fact, according to NDI's July 2019 survey, 58 percent

[24] "Iraqis Call on the New Government for Jobs, Services, and Reconstruction: August – October 2018 Survey Findings" (National Democratic Institute, November 2018), https://www.ndi.org/sites/default/files/Iraq%20Survey%20Aug-Oct%202018%20Public%20Report.pdf; "Iraq Post-Daesh: Improved Social Cohesion, but Iraqis Remain Dissatisfied with Government: National Survey Findings" (National Democratic Institute, July 2019), https://www.ndi.org/sites/default/files/NDI%20Iraq%20Survey%202019_EN.pdf.

[25] "Freedom in the World 2019: Iraq Country Report," Freedom House, 2019, https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2019/iraq.

of respondents think that "women are often to blame for harassment."[26] Furthermore, women who decide to engage in political and public affairs frequently fear for their safety, being subjected to personal attacks and harassment on "their person, their family, and their 'honor,'" attacks that sometimes become physical.[27]

Women Candidates

Just over 2,000 women – 28 percent of the nearly 7,000 candidates – ran for Parliament in the 2018 elections (the gender quota law requires political entities to include at least 25 percent women candidates on their lists).[28] When a woman wants to run for office, interlocuters noted that she must often gain either the support of a political party or the blessing of tribal leaders (or sometimes both), who might ask her to make political promises that will benefit the tribe once she is elected. Women can also run as independent candidates, though this route can be challenging, as they often have less access to funding and political networks. Being active in civil society and media are also avenues for women to enter politics and elected office. For example, Insijam al-Gharawi is a woman member of Parliament who transitioned into politics after gaining widespread recognition as a successful journalist.

In the 2018 parliamentary elections, women candidates were targeted with online threats and abuse, often focused on shaming them through making false claims about their personal and sexual lives. In some instances, fake videos were created to shame women candidates and encourage them to drop out of the race. For example, Intidhar Ahmed Jassim, a candidate from Haider al-Abadi's "Victory Coalition," withdrew from the race after a false video was circulated that showed her having sexual relations with a Saudi man.[29] This tactic, called "deepfaking," uses easily accessible technology to manipulate video images and replace faces with those of the targeted individual. These videos look very realistic and are very effective in slandering their targets, especially women in religiously conservative societies like Iraq. Hala Qassim al-Yaseri, from the "Civilized Alliance" led by Faiq al-Sheikh Ali, was also the victim of a smear campaign as a result of a post showing her dancing at a private party with her husband.[30] She remained in the race. These are only two examples of a much larger problematic phenomenon of

[26] National Democratic Institute, "Iraq Post-Daesh: Improved Social Cohesion, but Iraqis Remain Dissatisfied with Government: National Survey Findings."
[27] Vilardo and Bittar, "Gender Profile – Iraq."
[28] Arwa Ibrahim, "Iraq Elections: All You Need to Know," Al Jazeera, May 12, 2018, https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/05/iraq-parliamentary-elections-2018-180503164932964.html. Sources vary over the number of women that ran in 2018 for parliamentary seats. Al Jazeera, citing IHEC, came to this number, as did several other sources (Kurdistan 24, France 24). However, other sources cited numbers closer to 2,600 (Arab News, Christian Science Monitor, Jerusalem Post). Al Jazeera was the only to cite IHEC. In reviewing the list that IHEC released of approved candidates on May 10, 2018, a search of the "sex" column for "female" came up with 2,008 results.
[29] Mohammed Tawfeeq and Joe Sterling, "Candidate Steps aside after Sex Tape Allegation in Iraq," CNN, April 20, 2018, https://www.cnn.com/2018/04/20/middleeast/iraq-parliament-candidate-withdraws/index.html.
[30] Marta Bellingreri, "Challenges and Hopes: The Women Standing for Iraq," The New Arab, May 11, 2018, https://www.alaraby.co.uk/english/indepth/2018/5/11/challenges-and-hope-for-female-parliamentary-candidates-in-iraq.

suppressing women's right to participate in elections by creating fake photos and videos that aim to ruin a woman's reputation, attempting to intimidate women into not being part of the political process.

In some cases, certain candidates have used tribal structures to seek justice. For example, in the conservative, southern city of Najaf, the tribe and family of one woman candidate, Habna al-Hasnawi, sought justice from another tribe. One of their members, a young man, had posted a video of himself kissing and caressing an election poster of al-Hasnawi. Her family felt that the young man had attacked al-Hasnawi's honor. The two tribes agreed that the perpetrator should pay 100 million IQD (approximately 84,000 USD) to al-Hasnawi and issue a public apology.[31] In some countries, relying on a tribal justice system that operates without the support of or a link to a formal judicial recourse in cases of harassment and violence against women candidates can preserve existing gender roles that stymie women's equal access to the electoral process.

Women in Elected and Appointed Office

During the 2018 parliamentary elections, 22 women received enough votes to earn a seat in the Parliament without the help of the gender quota.[32] An additional 65 women were allotted seats based on the quota for a total of 83 women parliamentarians out of 329 seats, or 25.2 percent. Iraq ranks 67th in the world on proportion of women in parliament out of 192 countries for which there is data, putting it slightly above the world average of 24.3 percent and the Middle East and North Africa average of 19 percent.[33] In 2009, 25 percent of local councilors were women, a number that slightly increased to 26 percent after the 2013 elections.[34]

Once women are elected to political office, they face additional challenges due partly to the fact that decision-making is still consolidated with male political elites. Many voters did not have a positive view of women parliamentarians' performance after the 2010 and 2014 elections. Findings from the United Nations Development Programme 2014 Human Development Report indicated that women "failed to fulfill voters' expectations, did not stand up to women's rights, did not use their platform to tackle key issues, and failed to present initiatives to enhance their potentially visionary role."[35] This negative review could be due to a variety of factors, many outside of women parliamentarians' control. Despite increases in the number of women in Parliament, women members of Parliament (MPs) have never been represented on the Security and Defense Committee, the National Reconciliations and Impunity Committee, or the Labor and Social Affairs Committee, committees that provide key opportunities for meaningful reform. This limits the role that women are able to play in Parliament, thereby reflecting

[31] John J. Catherine, "Video of Youth Kissing Iraqi Election Poster Nearly Causes Tribal Feud," Kurdistan 24, April 21, 2018, https://www.kurdistan24.net/en/news/7068f4a6-8c70-46cd-9f26-c60c9c01d3f2.
[32] "Gender Working Group Annual Report." IHEC, 2018. (unpublished)
[33] "Women in Parliaments: World and Regional Averages," Inter-Parliamentary Union, n.d., http://archive.ipu.org/wmn-e/world.htm.; "Percentage of Women in National Parliaments," Inter-Parliamentary Union, n.d., https://data.ipu.org/women-ranking.
[34] "With Some Electoral Gains in Iraq, Women Candidates Work towards Change," United Nations Women.
[35] "Iraq Human Development Report 2014: Iraqi Youth Challenges and Opportunities" (United Nations Development Programme, 2014), http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/undp-iq_iraqnhdr2014-english.pdf.

poorly on voters' perceptions of women in politics and undermining the committees' effectiveness.[36] These critiques also could be due to the fact that voters may hold women MPs to a higher standard than their male counterparts and might *expect* women MPs to fight for women's rights, even though there is not the same expectation for male parliamentarians. Entrenched sexist attitudes and the persistence of patriarchal control of institutions and decision-making structures limit women parliamentarians' effectiveness in the current environment.

Additionally, despite high numbers of women running for Parliament in 2018 and the gender quota in place for women's representation, this representation did not carry over to high-level positions in the Cabinet. The post-2018 election Cabinet has no female ministers.[37]

Women Voters

There is no publicly available gender-disaggregated data available for voter turnout, so it is not possible to know whether there was a gender gap in voter turnout for the 2018 parliamentary elections, though general turnout was relatively low at 44 percent. Previously, no election since 2003 has had a voter turnout below 60 percent.[38] There was no available gender-disaggregated data for other elections, except for the 2013 provincial council elections, where United Nations Women noted that 40 percent of voters were women.[39] Though the security situation in Iraq has become more stable, security concerns and conflict has impacted women's movement and could affect women's ability to go to the polls on Election Day. Fear of potential violence could also keep women from traveling to polling stations. For example, attacks against women candidates, such as those described above, can intimidate women voters and make them feel they are not welcome in politics.

According to NDI's survey, women respondents were twice as likely to vote based on family suggestions as their male counterparts in the May 2018 parliamentary elections (46 percent of women identified "suggestions from family" as a main factor that determined how they voted compared to 22 percent of men).[40] Traditionally, male family members, particularly in rural areas, have traveled to polling places with the identifications of women from their families and voted on their behalf.[41] However, with the introduction of electronic voting systems and biometric voting cards, fingerprints are now checked for every vote cast, which is expected to help facilitate private voting by women. Thus, while the problem of direct family voting is improving, the influence of male family members on the voting choices of women family members persists.

---

[36] Ibid. Vilardo and Bittar, "Gender Profile – Iraq."
[37] Seth Frantzman, "Iraq's New Government Lacks Female Ministers," The Jerusalem Post, October 27, 2018, https://www.jpost.com/Middle-East/Iraqs-new-government-lacks-female-ministers-570457.
[38] "Iraq: Election Results within Two Days, Turnout at Record Low," Al-Jazeera, May 13, 2018, https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/05/iraq-election-results-days-turnout-record-180513061807758.html.
[39] "With Some Electoral Gains in Iraq, Women Candidates Work towards Change," United Nations Women.
[40] "Iraqis Call on the New Government for Jobs, Services, and Reconstruction: August – October 2018 Survey Findings," National Democratic Institute.
[41] Ghazwan Hassan-al-Jibouri, "In Conservative Tribal Societies, Iraqi Men Still Vote On Behalf Of Female Relatives," Niqash, March 1, 2018, http://www.niqash.org/en/articles/politics/5847/.

Only 42 percent of respondents thought women should be able to travel alone wherever and whenever they want. If women are not able to travel when and where they want, this can impede their ability to participate in political activities or travel to the polling station on Election Day.

Women's Activism, Civil Society and the Women's Movement

Though women's engagement in civil society is relatively strong, the current women's movement in Iraq is not without challenges. Women's activism, like participation in elections, can be dangerous for women. Under ISIS, restrictions were placed on women that made it dangerous for women human rights defenders to engage publicly. Despite the fact that the Iraqi government has gained control of areas formerly dominated by ISIS, many women still face lasting effects of the conflict.[42] Recently, a series of killings in 2018 of female human rights activists brought up fears of "a coordinated campaign to silence successful and outspoken women in Iraq."[43] Yanar Mohammed, the president of Organization of Women's Freedom in Iraq (OWFI), a prominent Iraqi women's organization, said that this recent violence was due to the social stigmas and discriminatory practices against women in rural and urban cities after the rise to power of Islamist parties.[44] OWFI activists were targeted in Iraq's Tahrir Square protests by pro-government protesters who sexually assaulted them, beat them with wooden sticks and destroyed their banners.[45] Physical threats and attacks are not the only source of violence either; some groups run disinformation social media campaigns meant to destroy the reputations of prominent women. For example, Nibras Al-Maamouri, the head of the Iraqi Women Journalists Forum, received death threats in 2016 after being accused of terrorism and ties to extremist groups.[46]

Despite facing such violence, women's activism has made notable impacts and effected changes in policies that promote women's rights. OWFI successfully campaigned to block the Jaafari law, which would have allowed – as part of a larger package of "reforms" – the marriage of nine-year-old girls to adult men. Women's activism also led to the end of Clause 409 of the Iraqi penal code, which ensured light sentences for men in cases of honor killings.[47]

Recommendations

1. *Support women to run for political office.*

Women candidates face a multitude of barriers when running for office at the individual, institutional and cultural levels. This support should include training to build women's confidence, help them fundraise for their campaigns and teach them how to communicate effectively with voters and the media. Special emphasis should be placed on working with women candidates for local elected bodies.

[42] Mays Al-Juboori and Mark Lattimer, "Civilian Activists under Threat in Iraq" (Ceasefire Centre for Civilian Rights and Minority Rights Group International, December 2018), https://minorityrights.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/MRG_CFRep_IraqCiv_EN_Dec18_FINAL2.pdf.
[43] Oumayma Omar, "The Dangerous Lives of Iraqi Women Activists," The Arab Weekly, January 6, 2019, https://thearabweekly.com/dangerous-lives-iraqi-women-activists.
[44] Ibid.
[45] Al-Juboori and Lattimer, "Civilian Activists under Threat in Iraq."
[46] Ibid.
[47] Omar, "The Dangerous Lives of Iraqi Women Activists."

Mentorship programs linking women elected officials with women who are running or interested in running for office can also be helpful. Local civil society groups, political parties and coalitions, international actors and the IHEC can all contribute to supporting women in running for office.

2. *Cultivate and engage male allies in key elected bodies and state institutions.*

Working with political institutions – like the Council of Representatives and political parties (see more details in the "Political Parties and Coalitions" section below) – and their generally male leaders, interventions that focus on men and women's perspectives can provide opportunities to promote change from within and can gradually alter traditional attitudes about the role of women and men in public and political life. Engaging male allies can sensitize men on the importance of working together with women to lead political processes and democratic development, including how to share power and how to create opportunities for alliances and coalitions between women and men.

3. *Provide training for journalists on gender-sensitive media coverage.*

Sexism in the media can shape how society views women, particularly women participating in political life. Training for journalists can support media outlets to cover women and women's issues in a more gender-sensitive way. For example, media outlets should focus on a woman candidate's platform and policies, not how she looks, what she is wearing or her personal life.

4. *Support women candidates to combat disinformation and misinformation.*

This training should include information on how to handle online harassment and violence, as women candidates are likely to experience this during their campaigns.

5. *Ensure poll worker training includes specific instructions on how to handle family voting.*

As noted above, there have been instances of male family members voting on behalf of women in their family or pressuring women to vote a certain way. Poll worker training should include information about how these practices violate free choice and participation and include instructions on how poll workers should handle situations like these when they arise.

Voter Registration

According to Article 20 of the Iraqi Constitution, "Iraqi citizens, men and women, shall have the right to participate in public affairs and to enjoy political rights including the right to vote, elect, and run for office." To qualify to vote, a voter needs to prove that he or she is:

- An Iraqi citizen, at least 18 years of age in the year of the elections;
- Legally qualified to register to vote. The legal criterion requires that a person be legally competent, though there is no law specifying what "legal competence" means, and not be convicted of a crime. A crime is categorized as an action punishable by more than five years of imprisonment;
- Listed in the voter register; and

- In possession of an electronic card and a photo ID, or a biometric voter card.

In every governorate, the number of registered voters who are men outnumbered the number of registered voters who are women, except in Diyala, Wasit and Maysan. All of these governorates are located in the east of the country. The governorates with the lowest proportion of women registered voters out of all registered voters are all located in the autonomous region of Kurdistan, Sulaymaniyah (42.7 percent), Erbil (45.7 percent) and Dohuk (47.3 percent). Further study is needed to understand these gender differences. See full gender breakdown by governorate as Annex 3.[48]

While the proportion of women on the voter list generally reflects the population at large, there were some questions about the accuracy of the final voter list:

> *"According to IHEC, the final voter list for the May 2018 elections included 24,349,375 Iraqis, including almost 300,000 IDPs. In comparison, the final voter list for previous parliamentary elections in 2014 contained 21.5 million voters. The UN estimates the total population of Iraq to be 40 million, with about 21 to 22 million Iraqis over 18 years old. If these figures are accurate, the voter list may be inflated by roughly two million voters. This is possibly the result of several factors, including an inflated Public Distribution System [the food ratio registry on which the voter list is based] and lack of appropriate mechanisms for maintaining the voter registry. Large numbers of uncollected cards also negatively impacted turnout data."*[49]

There were three types of voter cards issued for the general population ahead of the 2018 parliamentary elections:

- **New electronic biometric voter card,** printed for voters who visited voter registration centers before November 9, 2017, and registered biometrically. The card contains the voter's personal and biometric data and assigned polling location information.
- **New electronic, nonbiometric voter card,** printed for "first-time" voters, i.e., those who had turned 18 since the last elections but did not register biometrically. The card contains the voter's personal data and assigned polling location information, but no biometric data.
- **"Old" electronic voter card,** distributed for the 2014 elections. The card contains the voter's personal data and assigned polling location information.

For the first time, Iraq used biometric voter cards to verify voter identity at polling stations during the 2018 parliamentary elections. Voters were required to appear in person at a registration center to apply for the new biometric card, but since the processing of data and printing of the cards took time, voters had to return to the center a second time to pick up their new biometric card. Though new voters are automatically registered and given an electronic card, they still are required to go to a registration center to pick up their voter cards. In addition, changes for life events (such as marriage, change of

[48] While this gender-disaggregated data is available as part of this report, it is not publicly available.
[49] "Iraq Post-Election Technical Assessment: 2018 Council of Representatives Elections - Assessment Report," Consortium for Elections and Political Process Strengthening, July 2018. (unpublished)

name and change of residence) are not automatically updated. Voters who used an electronic card and not a biometric card were required to present an additional piece of identification before voting.

The IHEC opened about 1,000 centers to distribute the new cards, open from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. daily (except on Friday) ahead of the 2018 parliamentary elections. These centers were to distribute the new biometric voter cards, electronic voter cards for new voters and electronic cards from the previous electoral period. Though the IHEC extended the period when voters could collect their voter cards, about 7.7 million biometric and electronic cards were not collected. There were only two governorates where more women than men picked up their biometric cards – Dahuk and Erbil – both of which are in Kurdistan. The higher proportion of women in these governorates might be because women tend to have increased opportunities to be independently mobile, and because the security situation is much better in these two governorates. Ninewa had the lowest proportion of women who picked up their new biometric cards at 33.5 percent, much lower than the proportion of women throughout the entire country who picked up their cards at 48.5 percent. This is likely due to the risks posed by the security situation in the northwest of the country; Anbar had the second lowest proportion of women who picked up their new biometric voter cards at 40.5 percent. See full gender breakdown by governorate in Annex 3.

The fact that voters had to visit registration centers twice – to provide biometric information and to pick up their cards – likely contributed to the fact that so many cards were not picked up. This might have also made it more difficult for women – who often have more domestic and child care responsibilities than men and in general more demands on their time – to pick up their cards. It also might be challenging for women to travel to registration centers in more conservative regions, as they might not be authorized to travel without a male chaperone. As noted in the "Women's Political Participation" section, 42 percent of respondents to an NDI survey in October-November 2018 thought women should be able to travel alone wherever and whenever they want.[50] The security situation could also make it especially challenging for women to travel to registration centers, especially more than once. One interlocuter noted that in some regions, one person from the family was allowed to pick up voter cards for the whole family, but allowing this could lead to a situation where the head of the household, who is almost always a man, could withhold voter cards from women in the household unless they voted a certain way.

Several measures were taken to ensure that women were able to get the voter cards they needed to vote on Election Day. First, all voter registration teams had women staff members. Registering to vote with biometrics involves the registration staff touching the voter's hand, so having women staff members available to register women was critical in making women feel comfortable. Second, one interlocuter noted that previously, women were hesitant to register to vote, because they did not feel comfortable with the registration staff keeping their photos that were taken for the voter cards on the computer at the registration center. The IHEC now uses a system where – once the voter's information is transmitted electronically to headquarters for the voter list and the printing of the card – the photo

[50] "Iraqis Call on the New Government for Jobs, Services, and Reconstruction: August – October 2018 Survey Findings," National Democratic Institute.

and information is deleted from the computer at the registration center. In addition, mobile registration units were sent to internally displaced person (IDP) camps, allowing women who were displaced to register to vote. As noted above, having women staff members as part of voter registration teams made women voters feel more comfortable registering to vote.

While both biometric cards and electronic cards were in use on Election Day, there were a couple of scenarios in which a voter could not use his or her electronic card. One scenario was when a voter had registered for a biometric card but then failed to pick up the new card. This scenario would mean that the voter would not have her biometric card on Election Day, and her electronic card would be deactivated. Another scenario in which a voter could not use her electronic voter card is if she lived in an area that had been under ISIS control. The IHEC deactivated all electronic cards for voters from these areas, so voters were not able to use them on Election Day.

Interlocuters noted that the voter information campaign focused on voter registration was not organized in enough time to reach an adequate number of voters. The lack of timely voter information might have contributed to the IHEC's decision to extend the collection period for biometric voter cards for two extra days until May 10, during which more than 800,000 were distributed.

Recommendations

1. *Undertake more robust efforts to make new biometric cards available.*

While the IHEC did extend the period to collect biometric voter cards, there were still a large number of cards that were not collected, about 7.7 million, meaning those voters were likely not able to vote on Election Day, since their previous voter cards had been canceled. More robust efforts to make new biometric cards available could include: "additional options for retrieving new cards, such as mobile voter registration units and extended office hours, potentially in cooperation with other state agencies. If feasible, the IHEC should also move to a 'one-stop' solution to enable application and retrieval of cards at the same time."[51]

2. *Conduct targeted and timely voter information campaign about the voter registration process.*

In the past, voter information about the registration process was not sufficient or released in a timely manner. Moving forward, IHEC should allocate resources in advance for voter information campaigns to get off the ground quickly and efficiently. Campaigns should include targeted messaging for populations who might have less access to the political process, including, but not limited to: women, people with disabilities (including women with disabilities), rural populations (including rural women and illiterate women), and ethnic and religious minorities (including women from these groups). The IHEC should engage with civil society groups who can: provide feedback on voter education materials and messaging strategies for these targeted groups; help build the population's trust in the IHEC; provide access to

[51] "Iraq Post-Election Technical Assessment: 2018 Council of Representatives Elections - Assessment Report," Consortium for Elections and Political Process Strengthening, July 2018. (unpublished)

these groups through their membership and targeted audiences; and carry out their own voter information campaigns, in partnership with the IHEC.

3. *Continue to support mobile units for voter registration.*

Mobile units allowed women IDPs who were displaced due to conflict to register to vote, so the IHEC should continue to use mobile registration units as part of its voter registration campaign ahead of future elections.

4. *Continue to include women staff members as part of all registration teams.*

As noted above, having women staff members as part of voter registration teams made women voters feel more comfortable registering to vote. The IHEC should continue to have women staff members as part of *all* registration teams and should endeavor to increase the number of women staff members working on voter registration in future electoral processes.

Voter Information and Education

Public outreach and information on key electoral processes and events are critical to both the reputation of the IHEC as an impartial and professional election management body, and to ensure that all Iraqis of voting age have the information they need to participate. Iraq had the lowest level of voter participation in 2018 since its first parliamentary elections in 2004, with 44.8 percent of the voting age population turning out to vote in 2018, versus 79.6 percent in 2005 (gender-disaggregated data is not available).[52] According to an IFES survey conducted in 15 of Iraq's 18 provinces from October 11-November 8, there was a gender gap of 7 percentage points in voter turnout.[53] The survey data also shows that significantly more women than men said they need more information about the elections compared with men. Awareness of the IHEC was also much higher among men (63 percent) than women (42 percent). Though the survey data in from 2014, findings are reflective of a gender gap that likely still persists in women's access to election information.

During the 2018 parliamentary elections, the voter education campaigns started too late to have the necessary reach and lacked important information on new voting technologies. It is especially critical to ensure women have access to information about new election technologies, because women might have less familiarity with technology in their daily life and thus might require additional outreach on technology issues.

[52] "Iraq Voter Turnout," International IDEA Voter Turnout Election Database, n.d., https://www.idea.int/data-tools/country-view/148/40.
[53] Rola Abdul-Latif and Matthew Emery, "Opinions on the Electoral Process and Democracy in Iraq" (International Foundation for Electoral Systems, March 2015), https://www.ifes.org/sites/default/files/iraq_survey_report_march_2015_0.pdf.

Image 2: IHEC voter education images from the 2018 parliamentary elections

The IHEC Law No. 11 of 2007 does not specify voter education as one of the functions of the electoral commission, but the IHEC still takes responsibility for producing and disseminating voter information.[54] Though the IHEC did conduct voter information and education campaigns, it did not have a strategic public outreach plan or schedule of voter education activities. The public outreach department developed a simple list of activities and topics to be covered, rather than a comprehensive public outreach plan that identified target audiences, prioritized communication channels, and followed a detailed timeline.[55] There were some specific voter education or information messages or dissemination strategies that targeted women and other marginalized populations, but there was no comprehensive strategy to target women voters. Voter education images did include both women and men in active roles in the process (see Image 1). Voter information materials were also produced in multiple languages to give greater access to voters from different ethnic groups.

Some voter information was disseminated via social media channels in the 2018 elections, which had both positive and negative effects. While social media can provide greater access to information for young people and people with certain disabilities, false news and hate speech was a serious concern, causing confusion and spreading unsubstantiated rumors that hurt certain candidates, particularly women. Misinformation was also spread extensively via social media that called into question the reliability of the new voting technology.

In addition to the IHEC, there were a limited number of CSOs that engaged in election-related voter education and those that did began their campaigns late in the electoral cycle.[56] CSO campaigns tended to focus on encouragement to participate rather than technical aspects of elections, like how to register to vote and how to find a voter's polling place. Some CSOs did have voter education campaigns that targeted specific populations but did not have an overall strategy for engagement with these populations.

[54] "Independent High Electoral Commission Law No. 11 of 2007 Articles 1-8" (Independent High Electoral Commission of Iraq, 2007), http://gjpi.org/wp-content/uploads/2009/01/ihec-law.pdf.; "Elections in Iraq: 2018 Council of Representatives Elections - Frequently Asked Questions" (International Foundation for Electoral Systems, May 7, 2018), https://www.ifes.org/sites/default/files/2018_ifes_iraq_council_of_representatives_elections_faqs_final.pdf.

[55] "Iraq Post-Election Technical Assessment: 2018 Council of Representatives Elections - Assessment Report," Consortium for Elections and Political Process Strengthening, July 2018. (unpublished)

[56] Ibid.

Recommendations

1. *Develop and disseminate specific messages for women voters as part of a comprehensive voter education campaign.*

Specific messages should be developed that target women, the group that is most likely to be disenfranchised from voting process. Messages could focus on women's legal right to vote and hold elected office or on a voter's right to a secret ballot (i.e., there is no need to share who a voter selected). Once messaging is developed, dissemination should take place via the major sources through which women access election information. Polling or survey data can provide information on these sources. Voter education focused on women should include women delivering messages – in person, in images, videos, television commercials, radio spots and via other dissemination channels – on issues that are critical to participation in elections, should start early and should correspond to different stages of the electoral cycle. The delivery method of messaging for women depends on which provinces are being targeted. Keeping in mind that women are not a homogenous group and do not always face the same challenges, dissemination strategies should also consider to which other identity categories women belong: for example, there might be a different dissemination challenge for an educated woman living in Baghdad versus an illiterate woman living in the South. Mobile voter education programs can be considered to reach illiterate or rural voters.

2. *Include gender-sensitive messages and images as part of all voter education and information.*

All voter information and education campaigns should incorporate comprehensive, gender-sensitive messages into all voter and civic education and show women in active roles in the electoral processes, as voters, candidates and election officials. Even if campaigns do not specifically target women, it is still critical to be gender-inclusive and include women in campaigns.

3. *Begin voter information and education campaigns earlier in the electoral cycle.*

During the 2018 parliamentary elections, voter education and information campaigns began too late – some CSOs did not organize their first outreach events until March or April, with the elections in May – and did not reach many voters, contributing to relatively low voter turnout. When voter information and education campaigns begin earlier in the electoral process, there is a greater chance that campaigns reach a larger proportion of the population, particularly voters who might be harder to reach and are disproportionately likely to be women.

4. *Include a broad range of stakeholders in the crafting and dissemination of voter education and information.*

Women's CSOs and women voters should be involved in the conceptualization, design and planning of the public outreach and voter education activities to ensure that campaigns address women's needs and concerns. For example, voter education providers can hold focus groups or conduct surveys with diverse groups of women to understand what types of messages resonate with different women and to understand which dissemination strategies are most effective. Well in advance of elections, the IHEC

should establish partnerships with women's CSOs and seek their guidance to ensure that messaging successfully reaches women from marginalized communities, including religious minorities, women IDPs and rural women. Women's CSOs should regularly liaise with the IHEC to help ensure complementarity between CSOs and IHEC voter outreach efforts focused on women.

5. *Enhance monitoring and evaluation of the impact of voter outreach activities to ensure messages are effective.*

To understand the effectiveness of voter education messages and dissemination strategies, voter education providers should enhance their monitoring and evaluation capacity and regularly test and adjust messages and strategies to reach all voters.

6. *Develop strategy to find and address false news, disinformation and misinformation.*

Misinformation and disinformation can greatly affect public trust in electoral processes and may unfairly target women in the public eye, furthering the sentiment that women do not belong in political and electoral processes. To combat this phenomenon, the IHEC – in cooperation with the Communications and Media Commission and relevant civil society groups – should develop its media monitoring capacity and its capacity to identify and intercept false messages to encourage participation by all voters in the electoral process.

Political Parties and Coalitions

Strong political parties are an essential pillar in any democracy. Iraq's political parties have been primarily organized along ethnic or sectarian lines and, after 16 years of democracy in Iraq, have shown little interest or incentive to grow or formalize outside of election years and have not been motivated to integrate international best practices for political parties. While they have generally been able to maintain their initial base of support, they have not successfully influenced new constituents to become supporters, nor have they improved their consistently low reputation among the Iraqi electorate. Parties are often regarded as bastions of division, powerful patronage networks on which people depend for jobs, education and health care, and corruption.[57] The absence of institutionalism allows for the dominance of political elites, patronage and clientelism that traditionally benefits men and may favor individual women who promote the leaders' interests but is not likely to lead to an increase in the number of women in elected and leadership positions.

While several political parties established women's CSOs in the 1950s and '60s, these party organizations largely disappeared after the war in Kurdistan in the 1970s. It wasn't until the 1990s that women's networks and organizations began to reappear, assisted by international nongovernmental organizations. Party-affiliated women's organizations have reappeared as well, especially after the fall of

[57] "Change Must Begin with Iraq's Political Parties," *1001 Iraqi Thoughts* (blog), June 21, 2018, http://1001iraqithoughts.com/2018/06/21/change-must-begin-with-iraqs-political-parties/.

Saddam Hussein.[58] The progress that has been made for the inclusion of women in party leadership has come through the work of networks of women's leaders and women's organizations.[59] Despite some progress, promotion of women's inclusion in parties from grassroots networks and affiliated women's organizations has not led to significant permanent changes in parties' internal structures. The 2015 law that was adopted to regulate political parties didn't include any specific provisions on the participation of women in parties, calling for "equality of opportunity between all citizens" without specific mention of gender.[60] Political parties also do not support women elected to Parliament, who often "are excluded from party leaders' negotiations on political and security issues, and from chairing parliamentary committees, save those on family and social issues."[61]

There is limited data surrounding women's participation and leadership in Iraq's political parties.

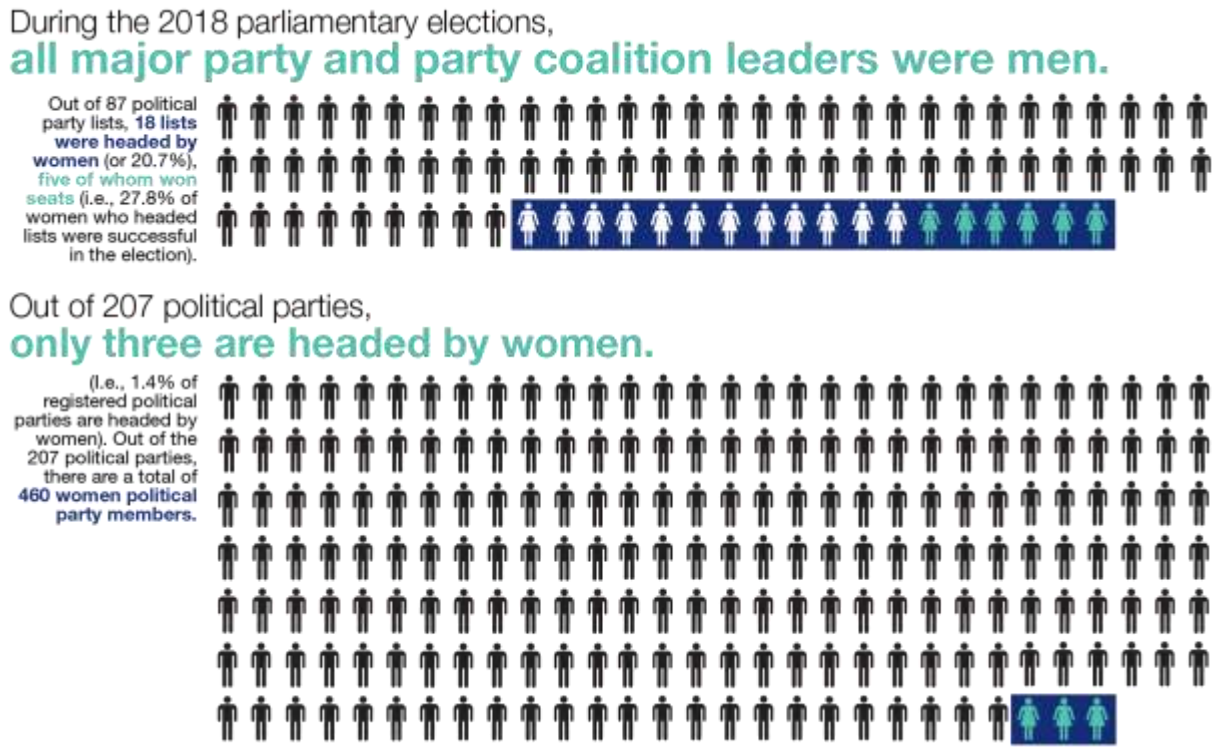
[58] Andrea Fischer-Tahir, "Competition, Cooperation and Resistance: Women in the Political Field in Iraq," *International Affairs (Royal Institute of International Affairs 1944-)* 86, no. 6 (2010): 1381–94, https://www.jstor.org/stable/40929768.

[59] The Women Peace Group in the Kurdistan region – made up of women from various political parties – was established in 2012 and includes around 20 women who identified common priorities in bringing the peace process forward in light of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325, focused on women, peace and security. Primary goals of this group include lobbying for a greater presence of women in decision-making roles (specifically, they lobbied to include at least one woman in the Cabinet). The Emma Organization for Human Development, another local nongovernmental organization in Kurdistan, is doing similar work. The group has held several forums in 2016 and 2017 that have brought together both men and women in a call for the greater involvement of women in decision-making and peace-building roles. Sources: Vilardo and Bittar, "Gender Profile – Iraq" and Celia Thompson, "Women Call for Greater Political Role in Decision-Making in Kurdistan Region of Iraq," United Nations Iraq, March 12, 2017, http://www.uniraq.org/index.php?option=com_k2&view=item&id=6967:women-call-for-greater-political-role-in-decision-making-in-kurdistan-region-of-iraq&Itemid=606&lang=en.

[60] Vilardo and Bittar, "Gender Profile – Iraq."

[61] "Iraq Human Development Report 2014: Iraqi Youth Challenges and Opportunities," United Nations Development Programme.

Image 3: Women's political party participation during Iraq's 2018 parliamentary elections[62]



Out of the 18 lists that were headed by women, five were in Kurdistan electoral districts.[63] Though Kurdistan seems to be more progressive than federal Iraq on gender equality issues – and has instituted more robust laws and policies that support women's equality – its gender equality efforts might reflect Kurdistan's interest in gaining international legitimacy rather than being rooted in strong beliefs of women's equality.[64]

Research suggests that women have greater influence in parties that are highly institutionalized and centralized and when top leaders support gender equity.[65] While women's rights were on the platforms of several parties and coalitions in the 2018 elections,[66] Iraq's political parties and coalitions lack strong internal structures and party leaders do not serve as gender equality champions. One example is that

[62] Ibrahim, "Iraq Elections: All You Need to Know."; "Gender Working Group Annual Report." IHEC, 2018. (unpublished)
[63] Nawzad Mahmoud, "Five Women Lead Iraqi Election Lists in Kurdistan," Rudaw, February 20, 2018, https://www.rudaw.net/english/middleeast/iraq/200220181.
[64] Zeynep Kaya, "Outperforming Baghdad? Explaining Women's Rights in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq," *LSE Women, Peace and Security Blog* (blog), February 8, 2017, https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/wps/2017/02/08/outperforming-baghdad-explaining-womens-rights-in-the-kurdistan-region-of-iraq/.
[65] Georgina Waylen, "Gender and Democratic Politics: A Comparative Analysis of Consolidation in Argentina and Chile," *Journal of Latin American Studies* 32, no. 3 (2000): 765–93, https://www.jstor.org/stable/158617.
[66] Audrey Bolus and Savannah Carter, "Factbox: Iraq's 2018 Parliamentary Elections," Atlantic Council, May 8, 2018, https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/menasource/factbox-iraq-s-2018-parliamentary-elections.

that despite rhetoric around gender equality, no political parties have adopted voluntary quotas for women's representation.[67] According to interlocuters, parties did not equally distribute campaign funds to women and men candidates, but instead favored male candidates.

According to a 2018 survey, 57 percent of respondents said that women should be able to join a political party, more than half of those surveyed, but given the basic nature of the question – whether or not women should be able to *join* a political party, not necessarily lead it or be a candidate – this proportion is disappointingly low. Another discouraging factor is that only 54 percent of young men and 62 percent of young women agreed with this statement, pushing against the commonly held belief that younger generations might be more progressive when it comes to gender equality.[68]

Recommendations

1. *Establish a gender quota for party leadership positions.*

Given that political parties significantly lack women's representation in their leadership roles, parties should adopt voluntary quotas for women in party leadership. Parties could adopt a 25 percent quota to mimic the gender quota set for parliamentary seats, or they could set higher targets, like 40 percent, to demonstrate progressive, inclusive values. Given the 25 percent gender quota for Parliament, it would be advantageous for parties to develop women leaders at this level in order to be better prepared to meet the quota for elected offices.

2. *Increase transparency of political party financing from both foreign and domestic sources and provide female and male candidates equal access to party financing for their campaigns.*

A lack of transparency in political party financing and tracking can disproportionately disadvantage women candidates. By strengthening existing political and campaign finance laws and regulations, decision-makers can better level the playing field for those vying for elected office. Reforms could include: making parties' annual finance reports – prepared by a licensed legal accountant's office and submitted to the Financial Control Bureau – public and enforcing the prohibition of receiving foreign funds and other stipulations in the 2015 Political Parties Law No. 36, including clarifying who is responsible for enforcement and empowering that body to be independent and fulfill its mandate.

3. *Establish women's wings that are properly funded and resourced to encourage women's participation in parties.*

Given the lack of women's representation in parties and of initiatives focused on gender equality, parties should establish women's wings to put additional focus on the importance of women's inclusion in party activities. These wings should be properly funded and resourced to allow them to be most

[67] "International IDEA Gender Quotas Database: Iraq," International IDEA Gender Quotas Database, n.d., https://www.idea.int/data-tools/data/gender-quotas/country-view/148/35.
[68] "Iraqis Call on the New Government for Jobs, Services, and Reconstruction: August – October 2018 Survey Findings," National Democratic Institute.

effective and should not exist in name only, but actually have a mechanism that allows them to both do activities focused on women and women's issues and to have input into party policies, platforms and more general party strategy and decision-making processes.

4. *Create financial incentives for political parties to nominate more women candidates.*

Financial incentives – like additional public funding – can encourage political parties to nominate more women to party lists, increasing the likelihood that more women will be elected to Parliament. A certain percentage of political party public funding (for example, 10 percent) could be reserved for the political parties that nominate at least 40 percent women to their party lists (or 15 percent more than the quota requires). Another strategy could be to provide parties with an additional 10 percent of public funding (10 percent more than they would usually get) for nominating at least 40 percent women to party lists. These regulations could be included as amendments to the Political Parties Law or to campaign finance measures.

Recommendations

The following list provides a summary of recommendations for each subcategory, based on the assessment findings. This list is not intended to be exhaustive; rather, it focuses on the most pressing concerns in the electoral process based on the gender analysis conducted by the assessment team.

Recommendations	Responsible Actor(s)	Priority Level
Legal Framework		
• Amend gender quota application guidelines to clarify rules about seat allocations for women candidates – including those elected outside the quota – to ensure a synchronized interpretation of the regulations.	Parliament, IHEC	High
• Introduce regulations on the gender quota application during provincial council elections.	IHEC	High
• Amend the electoral law to require the replacement for a resigned representative to be from the same gender.	Parliament	Low
Election Administration		
• Dedicate 5 percent of the overall budget to programming that increases women's political participation and have a strong monitoring mechanism for this.	IHEC	High
• Include women representatives on the IHEC BoC.	Council of Representatives, IHEC	High
• Collect gender-disaggregated voter turnout data.	IHEC	High
• Formalize the gender working group by establishing it as its own separate unit with dedicated staff and a budget.	IHEC	High
• Institute a gender quota for IHEC permanent and temporary staff at headquarters and in the field offices.	IHEC	Moderate
• Train the gender working group members, and overall IHEC staff, on promoting gender equality principles.	IHEC	Low
Women's Political Participation		
• Support women to run for political office.	Political parties, CSOs, international organizations	High

• Cultivate and engage male allies in key elected bodies and state institutions.	Parliament, political parties, CSOs	High
• Ensure poll worker training includes specific instructions on how to handle family voting.	IHEC	Moderate
• Support women candidates to combat disinformation and misinformation.	Political parties, CSOs, international organizations	Moderate
• Provide training for journalists on gender-sensitive media coverage.	CSOs, international organizations	Low
Voter Registration		
• Conduct more targeted and timely voter information campaign about the voter registration process.	IHEC, CSOs	High
• Undertake more robust efforts to make new biometric cards available.	IHEC	Moderate
• Continue to support mobile units for voter registration.	IHEC	Moderate
• Continue to include women staff members as part of all registration teams.	IHEC	Moderate
Voter Information and Education		
• Develop and disseminate specific messages for women voters as part of a comprehensive voter education campaign.	IHEC, CSOs, international organizations	High
• Include gender-sensitive messages and images as part of all voter education and information.	IHEC, CSOs, international organizations	High
• Begin voter information and education campaigns earlier in the electoral cycle.	IHEC, CSOs, international organizations	High
• Include a broad range of stakeholders in the crafting and dissemination of voter education and information.	IHEC, CSOs, international organizations	High
• Develop strategy to find and address false news, disinformation and misinformation.	IHEC, CSOs, international organizations	High

• Enhance monitoring and evaluation of the impact of voter outreach activities to ensure messages are effective.	IHEC, CSOs, international organizations	Moderate
Political Parties and Coalitions		
• Establish women's wings that are properly funded and resourced to encourage women's participation in parties.	Political parties	High
• Increase transparency of political party financing from both foreign and domestic sources and provide female and male candidates equal access to party financing for their campaigns.	Parliament, IHEC, political parties	High
• Establish a gender quota for party leadership positions.	Political parties	Moderate
• Create financial incentives for political parties to nominate more women candidates.	Parliament, IHEC	Low

Annex 1: Gender Breakdown of IHEC Staff

These tables provide a gender breakdown of IHEC staff, i.e., how many staff members are women and how many are men. Table 1 includes the gender breakdown of IHEC staff at headquarters by department; Table 2 includes the gender breakdown of IHEC staff at governorate offices by governorate; and Table 3 includes the gender breakdown of IHEC staff in regional centers by governorate. This data is from February 2019.

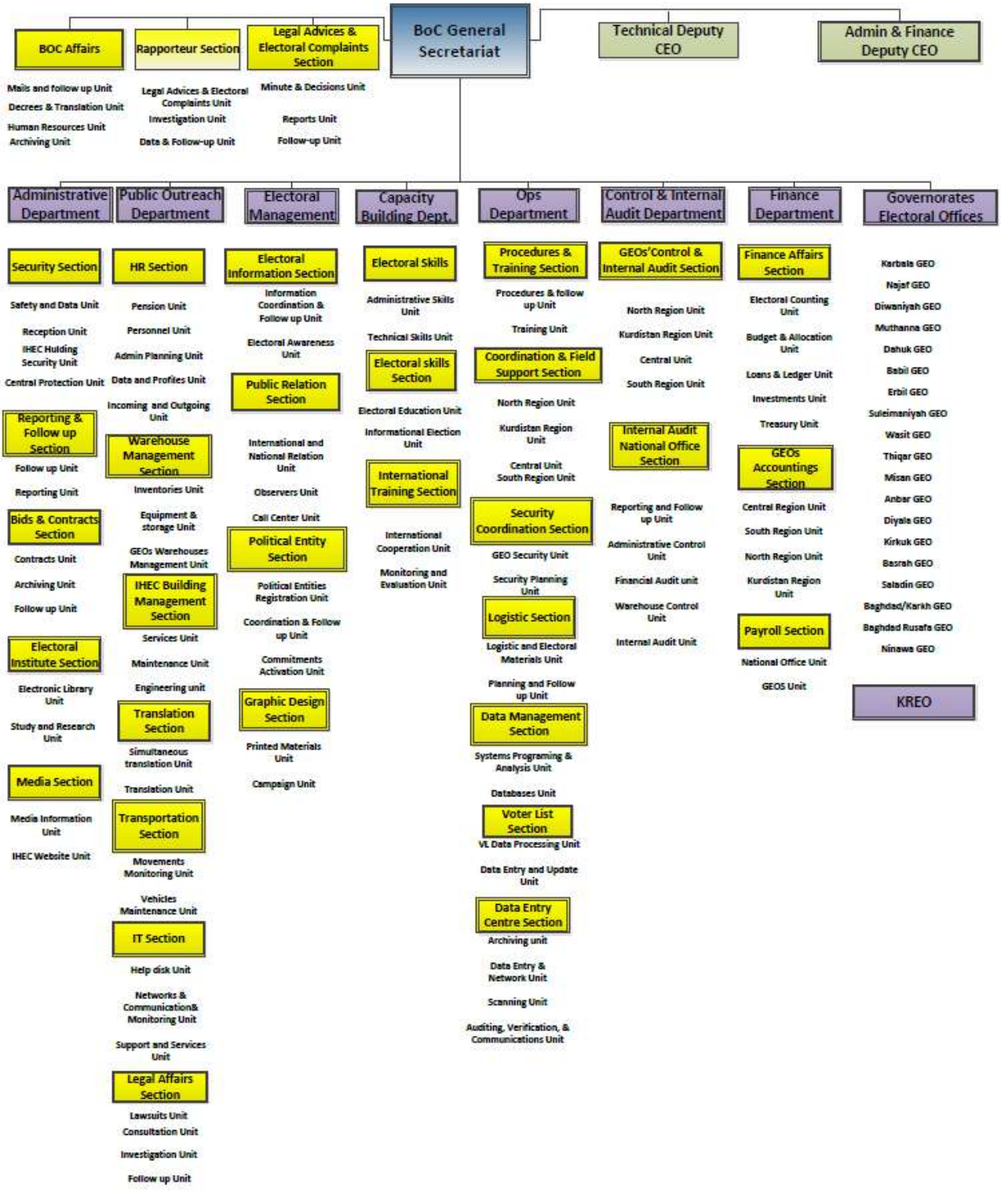
Table 1: IHEC Headquarters				
Directorate	**Percentage Women**	**Women**	**Men**	**Total**
Control and Internal Audit Department	36%	10	18	28
Public Outreach Department	32%	17	36	53
Capacity Building Department	29%	7	17	24
Board of Commissioners General Secretariat	26%	19	53	72
Finance Department	26%	15	43	58
Operations Department	19%	20	83	103
Board of Commissioner Affairs	16%	4	21	25
Political Entity Section	16%	7	37	44
Administrative Department	14%	28	167	195
Electoral Management	11%	14	115	129
Office of the Administration and Finance Deputy CEO	0%	0	3	3
Office of the Technical Deputy CEO	0%	0	2	2
Total	**19%**	**141**	**595**	**736**

Table 2: Governorate Offices				
Province	**Percentage Women**	**Women**	**Men**	**Total**
Sulaymaniyah	26%	15	43	58
Erbil	19%	10	43	53
Babil	17%	14	68	82
Dahuk	17%	10	50	60
Kirkuk	16%	11	57	68
Wasit	14%	10	60	70
Kurdistan	14%	7	44	51
Diyala	13%	8	52	60
Karbala	12%	9	64	73
Muthanna	11%	7	56	63
Qadisiya	10%	7	60	67
Baghdad (East)	10%	10	87	97
Ninewa	9%	6	59	65
Najaf	9%	7	71	78
Baghdad (West)	8%	7	78	85
Basrah	5%	4	69	73
Thiqar	4%	3	72	75
Anbar	3%	2	57	59
Maysan	3%	2	72	74
Saladin	0%	0	44	44
Total	**11%**	**149**	**1,206**	**1,355**

Table 3: Regional Centers				
Province	**Percentage Women**	**Women**	**Men**	**Total**
Sulaymaniyah	52%	13	12	25
Baghdad (West)	25%	45	134	179
Kirkuk	24%	18	58	76
Karbala	20%	14	57	71
Diyala	19%	24	100	124
Qadisiya	18%	22	97	119
Babil	17%	25	122	147
Baghdad (East)	16%	42	221	263
Thiqar	14%	19	120	139
Basrah	13%	21	139	160
Muthanna	11%	10	83	93
Dahuk	11%	3	25	28
Wasit	10%	14	129	143
Maysan	5%	5	97	102
Saladin	4%	4	92	96
Ninewa	4%	7	177	184
Najaf	2%	2	118	120
Erbil	0%	0	2	2
Anbar	0%	0	41	41
Total	**14%**	**288**	**1,824**	**2,112**

OVERALL TOTAL	**14%**	**578**	**3,625**	**4,203**

Annex 2: IHEC Organizational Chart



Annex 3: Gender Breakdown of Voters

Table 4 provides a gender breakdown of the number of women and men registered voters by governorate, i.e., how many women are registered voters in each governorate and how many men are registered voters in each governorate. The percentage of women represents the number of women voters in each province over the total number of voters in each province.

Table 4: Gender Breakdown of Voters by Governorate

Province	Percentage Women	Women	Men	Total
Mayan	50.7%	375,988	366,136	742,124
Wasit	50.4%	421,104	415,245	836,349
Diyala	50.2%	532,376	528,667	1,061,043
Muthanna	49.7%	256,757	259,437	516,194
Baghdad (West)	49.6%	1,227,264	1,248,208	2,475,472
Basrah	49.6%	910,807	926,488	1,837,295
Qadisiya	49.5%	392,723	400,307	793,030
Thiqar	49.5%	647,745	660,455	1,308,200
Saladin	49.5%	460,724	469,973	930,697
Babil	49.4%	615,798	631,926	1,247,724
Baghdad (East)	49.1%	1,579,940	1,636,542	3,216,482
Karbala	49.1%	371,008	385,171	756,179
Najaf	49.1%	456,290	473,955	930,245
Anbar	48.9%	525,143	549,140	1,074,283
Kirkuk	48.7%	482,748	508,514	991,262
Ninewa	47.3%	1,073,132	1,194,199	2,267,331
Dohuk	47.3%	373,611	416,646	790,257
Erbil	45.7%	545,824	648,554	1,194,378
Suleimaniyah	42.7%	588,927	791,885	1,380,812
Total	**49.5%**	**9,256,415**	**9,460,164**	**18,716,579**

Table 5 provides a gender breakdown of the number of women and men voters who registered biometrically *and also* received their biometric voter cards, broken down by province. The percentage of women represents the number of women who registered biometrically and also received their biometric voter cards over the total number of voters who registered biometrically and also received their biometric voter cards.

Table 5: Gender Breakdown of Voters Who Registered Biometrically and Received Election Card by Governorate

Province	Percentage Women	Women	Men	Total
Dohuk	51.4%	101,583	95,934	197,517
Erbil	51.2%	139,500	133,185	272,685
Kirkuk	49.1%	175,834	182,141	357,975
Diyala	48.7%	322,544	339,651	662,195
Wasit	48.0%	244,722	265,022	509,744
Babil	46.2%	292,233	339,673	631,906
Sulaymaniyah	46.2%	122,985	143,163	266,148
Najaf	46.0%	199,486	234,364	433,850
Baghdad (West)	45.9%	341,374	402,163	743,537

Muthanna	45.6%	120,075	143,282	263,357
Qadisiya	45.0%	169,969	207,734	377,703
Karbala	44.9%	129,049	158,588	287,637
Basrah	44.8%	341,587	420,298	761,885
Saladin	44.1%	143,788	182,559	326,347
Maysan	43.4%	129,648	168,955	298,603
Baghdad (East)	42.9%	354,656	471,298	825,954
Thiqar	42.8%	238,145	318,884	557,029
Anbar	40.5%	50,117	73,591	123,708
Ninewa	33.5%	40,755	80,957	121,712
Total	**48.5%**	**14,260,918**	**15,155,258**	**29,416,176**

References

Abdul-Latif, Rola, and Matthew Emery. "Opinions on the Electoral Process and Democracy in Iraq." International Foundation for Electoral Systems, March 2015. https://www.ifes.org/sites/default/files/iraq_survey_report_march_2015_0.pdf.

Al-Ali, Nadje, and Nicola Pratt. "Women's Organizing and the Conflict in Iraq since 2003." *Feminist Review*, no. 88 (2008): 74–85.

Al-Juboori, Mays, and Mark Lattimer. "Civilian Activists under Threat in Iraq." Ceasefire Centre for Civilian Rights and Minority Rights Group International, December 2018. https://minorityrights.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/MRG_CFRep_IraqCiv_EN_Dec18_FINAL2.pdf.

"Arab Charter on Human Rights." University of Minnesota Human Rights Library, May 22, 2004. http://hrlibrary.umn.edu/instree/loas2005.html.

"Background on Women's Status in Iraq Prior to the Fall of the Saddam Hussein Government." Human Rights Watch, November 2003. https://www.hrw.org/legacy/backgrounder/wrd/iraq-women.htm#P42_12857.

Bellingreri, Marta. "Challenges and Hopes: The Women Standing for Iraq." The New Arab, May 11, 2018. https://www.alaraby.co.uk/english/indepth/2018/5/11/challenges-and-hope-for-female-parliamentary-candidates-in-iraq.

Bolus, Audrey, and Savannah Carter. "Factbox: Iraq's 2018 Parliamentary Elections." Atlantic Council, May 8, 2018. https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/menasource/factbox-iraq-s-2018-parliamentary-elections.

"Cairo Declaration: High Level Meeting on 'Millenium Development Goals (MDGs) for Women and Girls, Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women in the Arab Region': The Post-2015 Development Agenda for Women 'Opportunities and Challenges,'" February 23, 2014. http://www.unwomen.org/~/media/Headquarters/Attachments/Sections/CSW/58/CSW58-declaration-cairo-en%20pdf.pdf.

Catherine, John J. "Video of Youth Kissing Iraqi Election Poster Nearly Causes Tribal Feud." Kurdistan 24, April 21, 2018. https://www.kurdistan24.net/en/news/7068f4a6-8c70-46cd-9f26-c60c9c01d3f2.

Chaban, Stephanie, and Safia Trabelsi. "The Role of the League of Arab States." Regional Organizations, Gender Equality and the Political Empowerment of Women. International IDEA, 2017. https://www.idea.int/sites/default/files/publications/chapters/regional-organizations-gender-equality-and-the-political-empowerment-of-women/regional-organizations-gender-equality-and-the-political-empowerment-of-women-chapter-3.pdf.

"Change Must Begin with Iraq's Political Parties." *1001 Iraqi Thoughts* (blog), June 21, 2018. http://1001iraqithoughts.com/2018/06/21/change-must-begin-with-iraqs-political-parties/.

"Commission on Human Rights Committee Members." League of Arab States, n.d. http://www.lasportal.org/ar/humanrights/Committee/Pages/CommitteeMembers.aspx?RID=1.

"Elections in Iraq: 2018 Council of Representatives Elections - Frequently Asked Questions." The International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES), May 7, 2018. https://www.ifes.org/sites/default/files/2018_ifes_iraq_council_of_representatives_elections_faqs_final.pdf.

Fischer-Tahir, Andrea. "Competition, Cooperation and Resistance: Women in the Political Field in Iraq." *International Affairs (Royal Institute of International Affairs 1944-)* 86, no. 6 (2010): 1381–94.

Frantzman, Seth. "Iraq's New Government Lacks Female Ministers." The Jerusalem Post, October 27, 2018. https://www.jpost.com/Middle-East/Iraqs-new-government-lacks-female-ministers-570457.

"Freedom in the World 2019: Iraq Country Report." Freedom House, 2019. https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2019/iraq.

"Gender Working Group Annual Report." IHEC, 2018. (unpublished)

Hassan-al-Jibouri, Ghazwan. "In Conservative Tribal Societies, Iraqi Men Still Vote On Behalf Of Female Relatives." Niqash, March 1, 2018. http://www.niqash.org/en/articles/politics/5847/.

Ibrahim, Arwa. "Iraq Elections: All You Need to Know." Al Jazeera, May 12, 2018. https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/05/iraq-parliamentary-elections-2018-180503164932964.html.

"Independent High Electoral Commission Law No. 11 of 2007 Articles 1-8." The Independent High Electoral Commission of Iraq, 2007. http://gjpi.org/wp-content/uploads/2009/01/ihec-law.pdf.

"International IDEA Gender Quotas Database: Iraq." International IDEA Gender Quotas Database, n.d. https://www.idea.int/data-tools/data/gender-quotas/country-view/148/35.

"Iraq Human Development Report 2014: Iraqi Youth Challenges and Opportunities." United Nations Development Programme, 2014. http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/undp-iq_iraqnhdr2014-english.pdf.

"Iraq Post-Daesh: Improved Social Cohesion, but Iraqis Remain Dissatisfied with Government: National Survey Findings." National Democratic Institute, July 2019. https://www.ndi.org/sites/default/files/NDI%20Iraq%20Survey%202019_EN.pdf.

"Iraq Post-Election Technical Assessment: 2018 Council of Representatives Elections - Assessment Report." Consortium for Elections and Political Process Strengthening, July 2018. (unpublished)

"Iraq: Election Results within Two Days, Turnout at Record Low." Al-Jazeera, May 13, 2018. https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/05/iraq-election-results-days-turnout-record-180513061807758.html.

"Iraq Voter Turnout." International IDEA Voter Turnout Election Database, n.d. https://www.idea.int/data-tools/country-view/148/40.

"Iraqis Call on the New Government for Jobs, Services, and Reconstruction: August – October 2018 Survey Findings." National Democratic Institute, November 2018. https://www.ndi.org/sites/default/files/Iraq%20Survey%20Aug-Oct%202018%20Public%20Report.pdf.

"Iraq's Constitution of 2005." Constitute Project, 2005. https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Iraq_2005.pdf?lang=en.

Kaya, Zeynep. "Outperforming Baghdad? Explaining Women's Rights in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq." *LSE Women, Peace and Security Blog* (blog), February 8, 2017. https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/wps/2017/02/08/outperforming-baghdad-explaining-womens-rights-in-the-kurdistan-region-of-iraq/.

Mahmoud, Nawzad. "Five Women Lead Iraqi Election Lists in Kurdistan." Rudaw, February 20, 2018. https://www.rudaw.net/english/middleeast/iraq/200220181.

Omar, Oumayma. "The Dangerous Lives of Iraqi Women Activists." The Arab Weekly, January 6, 2019. https://thearabweekly.com/dangerous-lives-iraqi-women-activists.

"Order 96: The Electoral Law." Wikisource, n.d. https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Order_96:_The_Electoral_Law.

"Percentage of Women in National Parliaments." Inter-Parliamentary Union, n.d. https://data.ipu.org/women-ranking.

"Population, Female (% of Total Population): Iraq." The World Bank | Data, 2018. https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.TOTL.FE.ZS?locations=IQ.

Rubin, Alissa J. and Sam Dagher. "Changes in Iraq Election Law Weaken Quota for Women." New York Times, January 13, 2009. https://www.nytimes.com/2009/01/14/world/middleeast/14iraq.html.

Salbi, Zainab. "Foreign Policy: Iraq's Forgotten Women." NPR, March 15, 2010. https://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=124687123.

"Status of Treaties: Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women." United Nations Treaty Collection, n.d. https://treaties.un.org/Pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=IND&mtdsg_no=IV-8&chapter=4&lang=en#EndDec.

Tawfeeq, Mohammed, and Joe Sterling. "Candidate Steps aside after Sex Tape Allegation in Iraq - CNN." CNN, April 20, 2018. https://www.cnn.com/2018/04/20/middleeast/iraq-parliament-candidate-withdraws/index.html.

"The System of Distribution the Seats of the Council of Representative No. (12) for the Year 2018." IHEC, n.d. http://www.ihec.iq/ihecftp/2018/en/sys12en.pdf.

Thompson, Celia. "Women Call for Greater Political Role in Decision-Making in Kurdistan Region of Iraq." United Nations Iraq, March 12, 2017. http://www.uniraq.org/index.php?option=com_k2&view=item&id=6967:women-call-for-greater-political-role-in-decision-making-in-kurdistan-region-of-iraq&Itemid=606&lang=en.

Vilardo, Valeria, and Sarah Bittar. "Gender Profile – Iraq: A Situation Analysis on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in Iraq." Oxfam, United Nations Women, December 2018. https://doi.org/10.21201/2018.3460.

Waylen, Georgina. "Gender and Democratic Politics: A Comparative Analysis of Consolidation in Argentina and Chile." *Journal of Latin American Studies* 32, no. 3 (2000): 765–93.

Wing, Joel. "Iraqi Women Before And After The 2003 Invasion, Interview With Prof Nadje Al-Ali Univ of London." *MUSINGS ON IRAQ* (blog), December 23, 2013. http://musingsoniraq.blogspot.com/2013/12/iraqi-women-before-and-after-2003.html.

"With Some Electoral Gains in Iraq, Women Candidates Work towards Change." United Nations Women, May 16, 2013. http://www.unwomen.org/news/stories/2013/5/with-some-electoral-gains-in-iraq-women-candidates-work-towards-change.

"Women in Parliaments: World and Regional Averages." Inter-Parliamentary Union, n.d. http://archive.ipu.org/wmn-e/world.htm.

Global Expertise. Local Solutions.
Sustainable Democracy.

IFES | 2011 Crystal Drive | 10th Floor | Arlington, VA 22202 | www.IFES.org