



In this issue:

IOM Iraq staff received Women of Courage Award	1
PHSS Improves Lives of Iraq Women	2
Training 535 Traditional Birth Attendants	2
Interview with IOM female staff in Baghdad	3
Promoting protection of vulnerable women in Baghdad	4

IOM & Women in Iraq

Special publication for Women's Day March 8th 2009

IOM & Gender Issues

The International Organization for Migration promotes positive awareness of gender sensitivity. Issues on this are handled by Gender Coordination Unit, which is responsible for developing and implementing programme policy strategies on gender issues within the organization, while supporting the advancement of initiatives to address migrants' specific gender-related needs. IOM has 112 Gender Focal Points in more than 100 countries and areas worldwide. Gender Focal Points come from various backgrounds including Counter-trafficking, Human Resources, Capacity building, Migration health, Return assistance, Policy and Research, Migration and Development and other fields of expertise.

IOM Iraq continues to assist women in Iraq especially among the Internally Displaced community of which women make more than half of the internally displaced population and are more vulnerable. Assisting women in Iraq has been a challenge due to security and cultural constraints. But IOM is trying to empower Iraqi women through activities such as an income generation project or a legal or psychosocial consultation where local codes and customs are put into consideration. During the implementation of the Iraqis Rebuilding Iraq programme, which ended in 2007, IOM sought to bring back highly skilled Iraqi expatriates for short term assignments in vital work areas in Iraq in needs of experts. Women only made 11% of experts recruited. IOM hopes to re-launch this programme and hopes that with security improving in Iraq more female candidates will be deployed. Under the Programme for Human Security and Stabilization in Iraq (PHSS) management staff mentioned how challenging they found it to propose new and less stereotypical ideas for women's income generation grants. Yet we are constantly inspired by the bravery of Iraqi women, including some of our national staff working in Iraq. One of which is Dr. Luma Al Bayatti who's husband was abducted and killed by a terrorist group. Dr. Al Bayatti continues to work with IOM. Some of these women's inspirational stories are included in this publication.

Women of Courage Award

Dr. Al-Gobory, IOM's National Medical Officer, in charge of migration health in Iraq, has received the Women of Courage Award on March 10th 2008. US Secretary of State



Al-Gobory & US Secretary of State during award ceremony.

Condoleezza Rice presented the second annual Award for International Women of Courage to eight women from around the world including Dr. Al-Gobory and Cynthia Bendlin, manager of the IOM counter-trafficking information campaign in the tri-border area (Argentina, Brazil and Paraguay).

Al-Gobory and Bendlin were selected from more than 90 exceptional women nominated by US embassies worldwide for their extraordinary work in advancing women's rights.

Dr. Al-Gobory, stationed in Baghdad, has been involved in IOM's medical evacuation program which assisted several hundred people with support from Kuwait, the European Union and various other countries. At the request of the Iraqi Ministry of Health, IOM implemented a medical evacuation program for Iraqis who cannot be treated for their conditions inside the country. The program matches Iraqi patients who require urgent medical attention with pro-bono medical assistance provided by hospitals in the region and abroad.

Dr. Al-Gobory, a recipient of the IOM Director General's Award for Outstanding Staff in 2005, is also involved in helping to rebuild the Iraq healthcare system by providing medical training and education. She works closely with IOM partners including the Iraqi Red Crescent, Project Hope, Operation Smile, the National Spinal Cord Injury Association and Operation Give.

PHSS Improves Lives of Iraq Women

The first phase of the Programme for Human Security and Stabilization in Iraq (PHSS), funded by the Government of Japan is completed. PHSS which started its activities January 2008, has met its target in terms of assisting unemployed and under-employed Iraqis establish income-generating activities, rehabilitate local community infrastructures and organize capacity-building activities for the staff of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (MoLSA) to guarantee the sustainability of PHSS achievements.

PHSS has assisted nearly 11,000 direct beneficiaries through in-kind grants, training and other forms of support for micro-enterprises and quick impact community assistance projects. Nearly 50,000 indirect beneficiaries have also benefited from these activities including family members and the local community. More than 1760 women benefited from income generation projects, implemented directly by IOM or via partners on the ground. Women made 28% of beneficiaries in total. Also 34% of those who benefited from capacity building activities including trainings and workshops were women.

PHSS staff members are in the process of conducting an assessment for lessons learned and which areas still need assistance. PHSS is expected to extend to a new phase and under new funding, especially with the new movement of returnees who will need reintegration assistance. IOM is consulting with some women activities in Iraq to bring some innovative ideas to better assist women. IOM also hopes to attract a larger number of female beneficiaries during the next phase of the programme.



Iraq woman assisted by PHSS to start a small

Training 535 Traditional Birth Attendants



Some of the course graduates

The IDP Programme and implementing partners have trained 535 traditional birth attendants in Baghdad, Najaf, Wassit, Babylon, Diyala and Thi-Qar during 2008. The training was done in coordinating with Ministry of Health Focal Point for Midwifery Services, the College of Nursing under the Ministry of Higher Education and the Technical Medical Institute.

The training was a one month intensive Clinical Practice course carried out at teaching hospitals. Each participant carried out ten safe deliveries under supervision at designated hospitals. The course stressed the standard practice, following World Health Organization (WHO) and United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) guidelines in midwifery care.

Participants included women with clinical skills and the desire to practice midwifery of which 70% were among the Internally Displaced and 30% of participants were from host communities. Participants were selected from disadvantaged communities who have initial education that would qualify them for advanced studies, if they choose to. Geographical distribution and the availability of services or lack of them was also put into consideration when selecting participants.

The training aimed to enable participants to earn a living and to promote health and hygiene practices, family planning, infant and new mother care through the participants in their local communities. The training also aimed to raise awareness among midwives regarding dangerous symptoms that would require advanced medical intervention, through a referral system to the nearest hospitals and Primary Health Care Centers, thus aiming to reduce maternal and infant mortality rates



Interview with IOM female staff in Iraq

Tell us about yourself.

I liaise on migration-management issues between IOM and the Government of Iraq (GoI) - including ten main ministries, the Prime Minister's Office and the Iraqi Parliament- as well as the US embassy in Baghdad and the Multi-National Forces (MNF). I am also the Baghdad Team Coordinator where I record staff activities and report to the Project Managers in Amman-Jordan. I am a wife and mother of three children, ages twelve, fifteen, and two. Multitasking between being a mother and IOM staff is difficult because I am always worried about my children with explosions and snipers around their schools.

What is it like, being a woman on the workforce in Baghdad?

Being a woman in Baghdad during times of tension until 2008 had its downside. Women had limited mobility in most cases. For example there are male-dominated places where I would need a male escort to avoid harassment. Women also needed to work harder on maintaining their respectable social status. The Iraqi society became more conservative between 2004 and 2008 than it was prior to 2003. I found myself obliged to follow a dress code against my taste, wearing garments that were wide, covering me from neck to ankle and in colors that didn't attract attention. If I looked attractive I would be disrespected.

However by early 2008 the situation in Baghdad improved. Today I don't need to cover my hair, I can dress according to my taste and I can wear clothes that are colorful. This was impossible a year ago.

But being a woman did work to my benefit when the security in Iraq was deteriorating. Government officials appreciated my effort to visit them because they were aware that the risk was graver for a woman than for a man in Baghdad those days. They felt obliged to make time to see me because I am a woman. Government officials were also impressed when they met me because there were very few women in their work environment.

In 2008 the number of women working at or with the GoI increased greatly. This is because more families are agreeing to send their daughters to work with security improving. Abductions and car bombs have now become rare. I am not saying the risk has completely subsided. Now there are suicide bombers and plastic explosives.

I recently lost four close friends who used to work at the Ministry of Interior when terrorists put an explosive plastic paste under their car seats. But all-in-all the number of attacks is significantly less.

Do you see yourself leaving Iraq?

I have been working with the IOM Iraq mission since its early days in 2003 and I have established my career here, so no I have no intention of leaving. I prefer to send my family abroad – which I did in the past – and stay in Baghdad.

In 2006 my husband and I, who also has a job in Baghdad, decided to send our children to Syria and we traveled back and forth taking turns to be with them. Recently my family moved back to Baghdad with security improving. But if we feel the necessity to send them abroad again we will.

Do you see a difference in the situation of women in Iraq today than a year ago?

Yes I do and to the better. The upcoming elections have many female candidates in several governorates in Iraq. There are more women in the workplace than a year ago. Iraq has become safer for women as there are less abductions and killings.

This interview was done by Muna Fadhil in February 2009.

Name of staff member interviewed is concealed for her safety.

Promoting protection of vulnerable women in Baghdad

IOM's Internally Displaced Persons Programme helped established a Women's Center in Baghdad, late 2008, which offers legal counseling and psycho-social support. More than 2000 women visited the center, run by local partners seeking legal counseling and psycho-social support since October 2008 until January 2009. 146 of these women are either widowed or divorced making them the breadwinners of their families. The number of women seeking assistance from the centre is rapidly increasing.

Collective sessions are organized once a week. Two awareness workshops were held during January; one was focused on personal law and the other one on elections that were scheduled on the 30th January. A number of activities were undertaken by the local partner to raise awareness about women's rights and support women to lobby for their rights in Iraq. Together with a delegation of activists for women's rights two members of Women for Peace took part in a meeting with the President of the Republic of Iraq in which the importance of setting a quota of women candidates at the next elections was stressed.

The response from beneficiaries and the local community continues to be encouraging and the number of beneficiaries has already exceeded the initial expectations. It is reported by

the local partner that numerous women are calling the informational numbers or visiting the centre to be informed about the services provided. Many of the new comers got to know about the centre through beneficiaries. In some cases beneficiaries also take family members to the center for more extensive support.

Content and design done by
Muna F. Fadhil
Communication Focal Point

International Organization for Migration - Iraq
Mission

Marriot & Asem Ajlouni Street -
Hamzeh Complex / Amman—Jordan

P.O.Box 930285
Amman 11193 Jordan
Phone: +962 6 56 59 660
Fax: +962 6 56 59 661

For more information please contact IOM Iraq
Gender Focal Points for 2009 Martin Ocaga
mocaga@iom.int and Muna F. Fadhil
mfadhil@iom.int

Related links

<http://www.iom-iraq.net/>
<http://www.iraq-iri.org/>
<http://www.iom.int/>
<http://www.iom.int/gender>