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National Report Republic of Iraq

- Federal Government
- Kurdistan Region

SCORING RESULTS 2024 REGIONAL INDEX ON VAWG

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1. Introduction

This report presents the outcome of a comprehensive and systematic assessment carried out within the framework of the 2024 Regional Index on Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG). The updated edition of the Index was adopted during the Regional Experts Roundtable held on 27–28 November 2024 in Baghdad, with experts from concerned ministries, government institutions and civil society from the Index countries. All indicators and sub-indicators were reviewed and revised to accommodate the inclusion of new countries and to reflect emerging forms of VAWG.

The indicators were scored in Iraq, and the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KR-I) during a national workshop held on 30 April in Erbil and on 4 May 2025 in Baghdad. The results were shared during the Regional Conference held on 22–23 September 2025 in Baghdad, with the participation of representatives from ministries, government institutions and civil society from all the Index countries.

This process was led by the Department of Women's Affairs in the Presidency of Republic of Iraq in partnership with EuroMed Feminist Initiative and the Regional Observatory on VAWG and supported by the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) as part of the programme "Strengthening Participation, Peaceful Coexistence and Equality in Iraq" (SPACE), funded by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ). In the KR-I the scoring process was led by the General Directorate for Combating Violence against Women and the Family, Ministry of Interior, under the umbrella of the High Council of Women and Development (HCWD), Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG).

This report presents the findings of Iraq, and the KR-I. It provides assessment of the status of laws, policies and procedures, services, and preventive measures addressing VAWG in Iraq and the KR-I, organized according to the Index seven thematic categories. It reflects progress made, underlines achievements and highlights critical gaps and shortcomings. The findings provide a basis for informed evidence-based advocacy, policy reform, and improved institutional responses to combat VAWG in Iraq and the KR-I.

2. Scoring Results Iraq

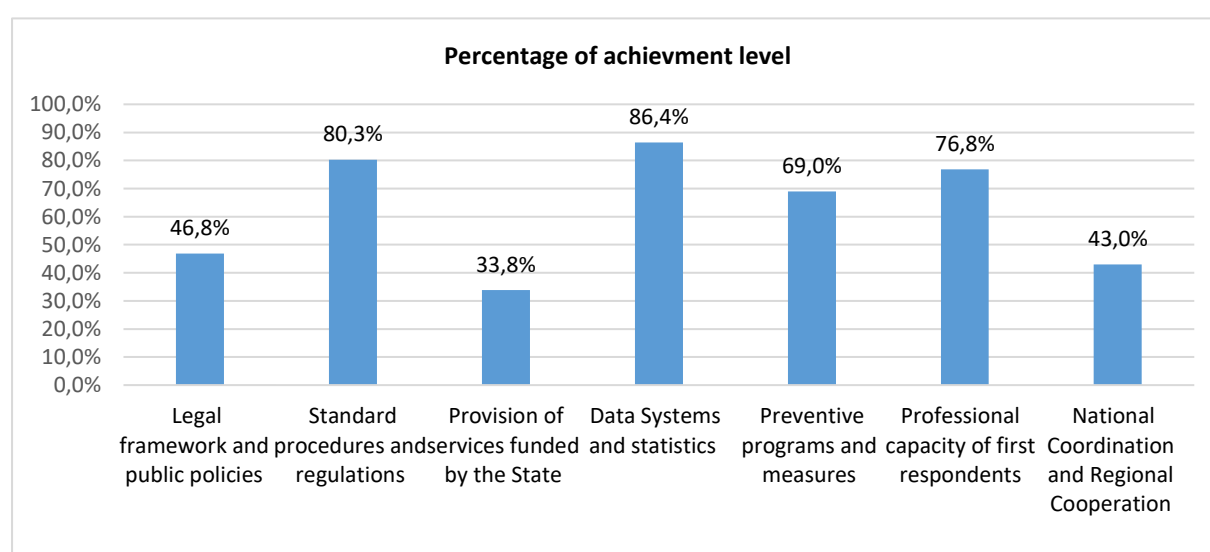
At the comparative level, results show wide variation across categories. Iraq scored highest in data systems and statistics (86.4%) and standard procedures and guidelines (80.3%), reflecting relative progress in establishing reporting channels, judicial mechanisms, and national databases. The category of professional capacity of first responders (76.8%) reached a high percentage of achievement. Although training programs of first respondents have not been fully institutionalised, a gradual increase of training activities has been witnessed.

The weakest performance was recorded in the categories of State-funded services (33.8%) and national coordination and regional cooperation (43%), where the absence of government-run shelters, insufficient budgets, and lack of regional mechanisms remain major gaps.

The category of legal framework and public policies (46.8%) and preventive programs and measures (69%), reached weak to average level, reflecting some progress at the policy level, with the continuation of legislative contradictions, the existence of discriminatory legal texts towards women and girls, and the weak integration of issues of combating VAWG in education and awareness programs.

While Iraq has made advanced steps in adopting strategies and establishing formal procedures to address VAWG, and the cooperation between the policy makers with CSOs have improved, significant gaps remain in harmonizing legislation with international obligations, ensuring comprehensive protection for survivors, allocating sustainable resources and shelters, as well as strengthening regional cooperation.

The Index methodology is available on Regional Observatory ([Regional Observatory](#)).



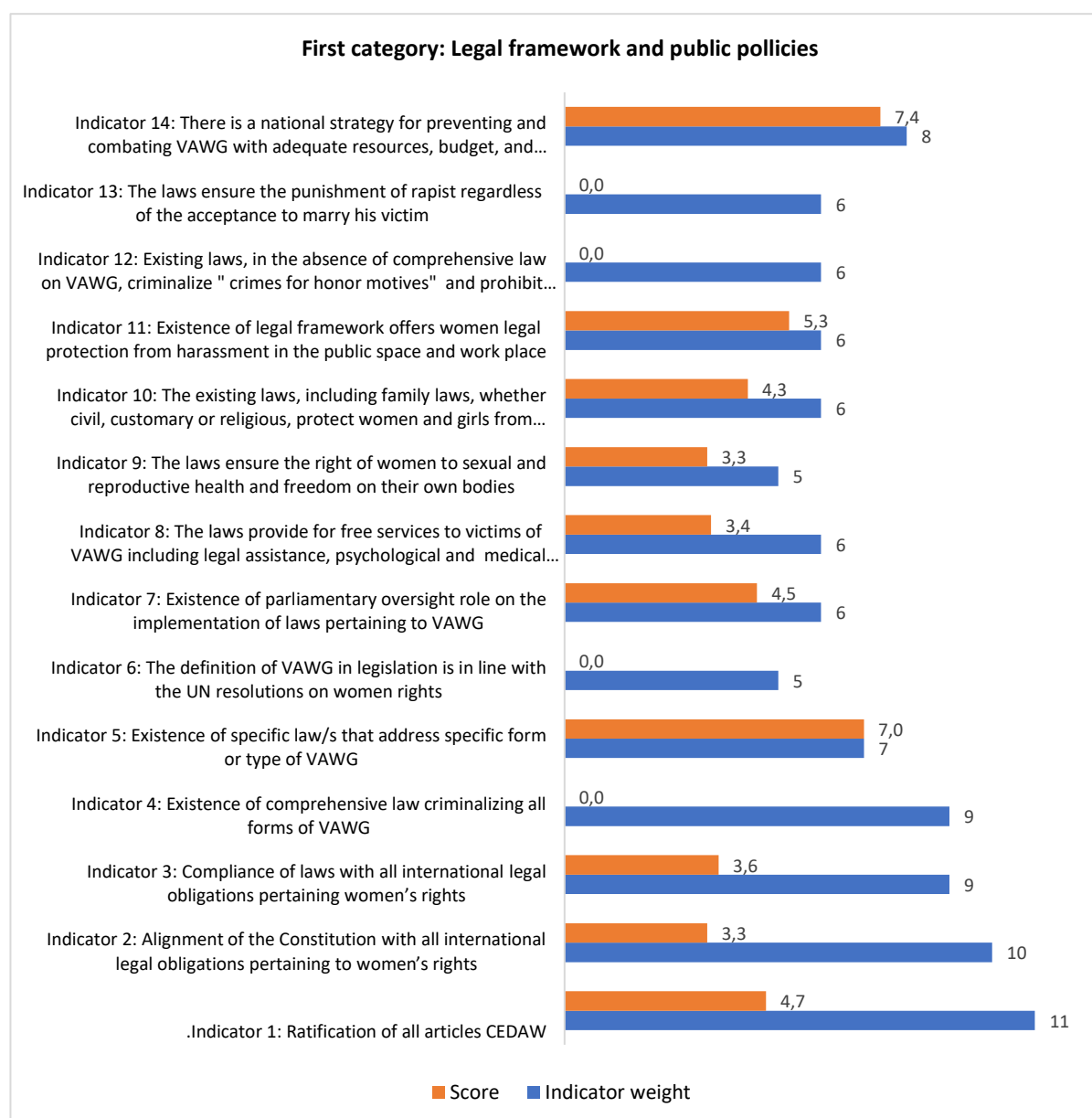
2.1. Score analysis

This section provides analysis for the scores under each category. The scores achieved for each indicator in relation to the weights assigned are shown in the diagrams.

The section also highlights the main gaps and provides recommendations to tackle these gaps and improve the protection of women from VAWG.

❖ *First Category: Legal Framework and Public Policies*

This category includes 14 indicators and 96 sub-indicators. In Iraq it scored only 46.8%, reflecting gaps in compliance with international conventions and the alignment of national legislation with international standards on women's rights.



While the category shows progress in certain constitutional provisions and national strategies, it also exposes persistent legislative gaps that hinder equality and protection for women. category underscores the need for substantial legal reforms to align national legislation with international conventions and to ensure comprehensive and effective protection for women and girls.

At the level of international conventions: Although Iraq ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), it expressed substantial reservations to Article 2 (prohibition of discrimination in constitutions and national legislation), Article 16 (equality in marriage and family relations), and Article 29 (international arbitration). This explains why *Indicator 1 (Ratification of all CEDAW provisions)* scored low at 4.7 out of 11. Moreover, Iraq has not ratified the Optional Protocol to CEDAW, limiting women's access to the individual complaint mechanism.

At the constitutional level, *Indicator 2 (Alignment of the constitution with international agreements)* scored relatively low at 3.3 out of 10. The Iraqi Constitution:

- a) The Iraqi constitution referred to international agreements but did not explicitly and directly stipulate their place in the legal hierarchy. However, article (8) of the Constitution indicates that the state respects international obligations. Although the Iraqi Treaty Law No. (35) of 2015 was issued, it is considered part of Iraqi domestic legislation and is applied within Iraq to regulate the manner in which treaties and agreements are concluded. However, it does not completely replace substantive laws. Rather, it is applied in some decisions issued by Iraqi courts. Article 2 of the Constitution states that no law may be enacted that contradicts the established provisions of Islam, the principles of democracy, or the basic rights and freedoms outlined in the Constitution, despite the enactment of the Treaty-Making Law No. 35 of 2015.
- b) Prohibits discrimination between men and women. Article 14 of the Constitution prohibits all forms of discrimination, including on the basis of sex.
- c) Contains provisions on women's rights and equality between women and men. Article 14 states that Iraqis are equal before the law without discrimination on the basis of sex, race, ethnicity, origin, colour, religion, sect, belief, opinion, or economic or social status. However, this right is restricted by Article 41, which provides that "Iraqis are free to adhere to their personal status according to their religions, sects, beliefs, or choices, and this shall be regulated by law."
- d) Adopts affirmative measures for women's participation. However, parity is not achieved, as Article 49 sets a quota of not less than 25% representation of women in parliament.

At the level of national laws, *Indicator 3 (Compliance of national laws with international obligations)* scored only 3.6 out of 9. The following key laws remain inconsistent with international commitments on women's rights:

1. The Penal Code does not criminalize marital rape.

2. The law provides mitigated sentence in case what is called “honour crime”. Article 409 of the Penal Code, concerning so-called “honour crimes,” states: “Whoever surprises his wife or a female relative in the act of adultery or in bed with her partner and kills her immediately, or kills one or both of them, or assaults them causing death or serious injury, shall be punished with imprisonment not exceeding three years. The defence of justification shall not apply, and aggravated circumstances shall not be invoked against him.”

3. Abortion is prohibited under Article 417 of the Penal Code, including in cases of rape.

4. The law differentiates between the husband and the wife in terms of penalties under Article (377) relating to “marital adultery”.

5. The Penal Code does not consider prostitution as sexual exploitation and an extreme form of violence against women and girls. Therefore, it prohibits prostitution but criminalises both the women who are victims of this violence and the pimps, and clients. Thus, women in prostitution are deprived of the protection of this violence and sexual exploitation. (Articles 3, 4, and 6 of the Anti-Prostitution Law No. 8 of 1988). Article 399 further stipulates: “Anyone who incites a male or female under 18 years of age to engage in debauchery or prostitution, or facilitates this, shall be punished with imprisonment.”

6. The Personal Status Law does not guarantee equality between men and women in marriage and divorce regarding:

- Polygamy: allowed with the consent of the first wife.
- Guardianship: fathers are the sole guardians of children.
- Inheritance: women’s share is less than men’s.
- Divorce: men can divorce without resorting to court, while women’s access to divorce is limited and subject to judicial approval.

7. The Iraqi Labor Law No. 37 (2015), chapter 4, prohibits women from working in “physically arduous or harmful jobs”. Women are also prohibited from night work except in special cases.

There is no comprehensive law criminalizing all forms of VAWG. This explains why *Indicator 4 (Existence of comprehensive law criminalising all forms of VAWG)* got 0 score. Some forms are criminalized under the Penal Code, such as sexual harassment and rape. Sexual harassment in the workplace is prohibited under the Labor Law. Female genital mutilation (FGM) is not explicitly prohibited but is believed not to be practiced in Iraq. The law does not include any explicit provision criminalizing FGM, but Article 412 of Penal Code No. 111 (1969) could be invoked, as it punishes acts of assault causing injury.

Furthermore, the Penal Code does not explicitly define sexual harassment; it is addressed under “indecent acts” in Penal Code No. 111 of 1969 (Articles 400, 401, 402), punishable by three to six months, or up to one year imprisonment, or a small fine in the case of verbal assault.

There is no comprehensive legal definition of VAWG in Iraqi legislation. Some forms are defined in the Penal Code.

At the parliamentary level, there is oversight on awareness-raising activities related to laws combating VAWG, but not at the required level. A parliamentary Women and Child Committee exists and holds meetings and conferences, raises awareness on women's issues, and advocates for a draft law on domestic violence.

The law guarantees the right to legal aid for certain groups, including women, but not specifically for women survivors of violence. The Yazidi Survivors Law provides support to Yazidi women.

In terms of reproductive health, laws guarantee the right to sexual and reproductive health, but abortion remains illegal. This explains the moderate score for *Indicator 9 (The laws ensure the right of women to sexual and reproductive health)* 3.3 out of 5.

By contrast, the Labor Law prohibits sexual harassment since 2015. Article 10 defines sexual harassment in the workplace as: "Any physical or verbal conduct of a sexual nature, or any other conduct based on sex, which violates the dignity of women or men, is unwanted, unreasonable, and offensive to the recipient; and the refusal or submission of a person to such conduct, explicitly or implicitly, shall not be used as a basis for decisions affecting their employment."

The Iraqi Personal Status Law sets the legal age of marriage at 18, but Article 8 allows marriage at 15 with court and guardian approval. A judge may authorize marriage at 15 if deemed necessary, provided the individual has reached puberty and is physically capable.

The law does not provide for punishment for the rapist if he marries the victim. Under Article 398 of the Iraqi Penal Code, if a valid marriage contract is concluded between the perpetrator of the rape crime referred to in Articles 393, 394, 395, 396, and 397 of the Penal Code and the victim, the prosecution, investigation, and other procedures shall be suspended. Even if a judgment has been issued in the case, the execution of the judgment shall be suspended.

"Proceedings of the lawsuit or execution shall resume, as the case may be, if the marriage ends in a divorce issued by the husband without a legitimate reason or a divorce ruled by the court for reasons related to the husband's fault or misconduct, within three years from the suspension of proceedings."

National Strategies: The main positive development lies in the existence of a National Strategy to Combat Violence against Women (2018–2030) and the National Strategy for Iraqi Women (2023–2030). This was reflected in *Indicator 14 (Existence of a National Strategy)*, which scored 7.4 out of 8, the highest indicator in this category.

The National Strategy to Combat Violence against Women and Girls (2018–2030) was developed by the Women's Empowerment Department of the General Secretariat of

the Council of Ministers, in cooperation with a specialized team. The strategy includes the following goals:

- Strategic Goal 1 (Prevention): Reduce all forms of violence against women and girls.
- Strategic Goal 2 (Protection): Review and develop relevant laws, legislations, and procedures.
- Strategic Goal 3 (Care).

The strategy also sets out clear and precise mechanisms for monitoring and evaluation.

Additionally, the National Strategy for Iraqi Women (2023–2030) was launched by the Women's Empowerment Department of the General Secretariat of the Council of Ministers. Within its strategic framework, it included a fourth pillar focused on protecting women and addressing violence against them. However, these strategies lack resources, mechanisms, and evaluation frameworks.

Main Gaps

- Existence some reservations on CEDAW (articles 2, 16, 29) and Optional Protocol not ratified.
- Penal Code retains discriminatory provisions (marital rape not criminalized, abortion banned, "honour crimes" mitigated).
- Personal status and inheritance laws still unequal; marriage allowed under 18 with exceptions.
- Lack of comprehensive law defining and criminalizing all forms of VAWG.
- The national strategy exists but lacks resources, implementation and strong monitoring mechanisms.

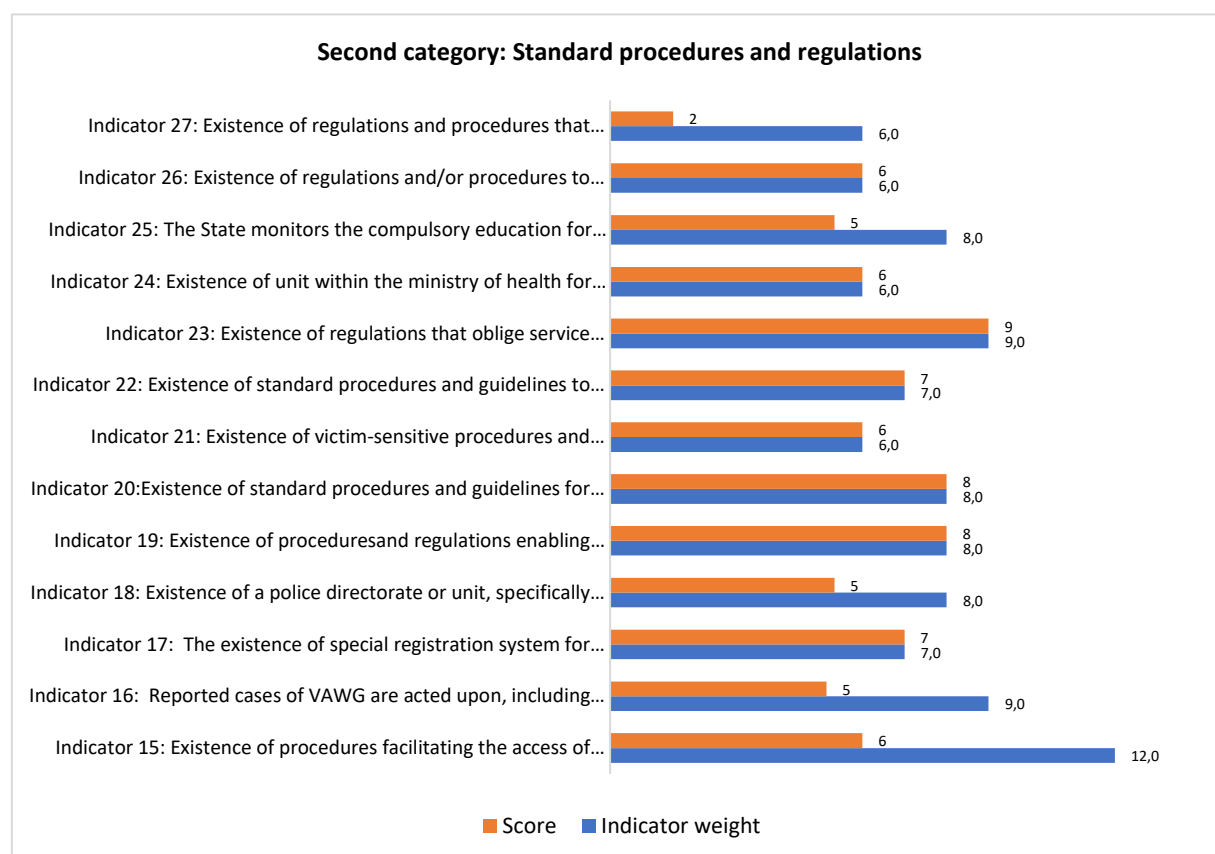
Recommendations

- Lift CEDAW reservations and ratify the Optional Protocol.
- Adopt a comprehensive law on VAWG that provides for clear definitions of VAWG, penalizes perpetrators and provides protection for victims.
- Repeal discriminatory Penal Code provisions; explicitly criminalize marital rape, FGM, and all forms of VAWG.
- Reform personal status and inheritance laws to ensure full equality.
- Allocate dedicated budgets and enforce monitoring of the national strategy.

❖ *Second Category: Standard Procedures and Guidelines*

The achievement level in this category, which consists of 13 indicators, and 56 sub-indicators, reached 80.3%, one of the highest compared to other categories.

This reflects the existence of relatively good formal structures and procedures to address VAWG, although significant gaps remain in terms of application and outreach.



Justice

Official reporting channels include police stations, courts, investigative judges, judicial investigators in government hospitals, and offices of the Family and Child Protection Directorate under the Ministry of Interior, as well as hotlines of the Family and Child Protection Directorate. Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for preventing and responding to VAWG have also been established in central and southern Iraq. However, these SOPs cover a wide range of beneficiaries, including internally displaced persons, refugees, returnees, host communities, and those who remained in their homes during and after military operations.

Indicator 15 (Facilitation of women's access to justice through clear procedures) scored 6 out of 12, reflecting the existence of basic procedures, but women still face practical barriers in accessing justice. There is no data available on how many VAWG cases adjudicated compared to those reported. However, statistics exist on the number and

type of VAWG cases, disaggregated by governorates, as well as figures on the cases adjudicated by Iraqi courts, the Supreme Judicial Council, and the Family and Child Protection Directorate under the Ministry of Interior.

Police

The Family and Child Protection Directorate from Domestic Violence has become one of the formations of the Ministry of Interior, with 16 branches across Iraq (one per governorate). This directorate handles cases of domestic violence, including physical, sexual, psychological, intellectual, or economic abuse committed or threatened within families. Its main functions include:

1. Protecting family members, particularly women and children, from all forms of domestic violence.
2. Coordinating with ministries and civil Society Organizations (CSOs) to address domestic violence.
3. Establishing a central database for domestic violence cases.
4. Creating a communications network with government institutions and CSOs to exchange expertise and produce studies and research.
5. Engaging with advanced countries through field visits, workshops, and training to acquire expertise.

The Directorate provides services to survivors of domestic violence—women, children, and men alike. It is mandated to receive complaints, reports, and requests for help or protection from violence, take appropriate measures, and refer cases to courts and the supporting Community Police division.

Regulation No. 7 of 2017 on Shelters for survivors of Human Trafficking established one or more shelters in Baghdad linked to the Ministry of Labor's Social Protection Department and authorized the Minister of Labor to establish shelters in other governorates. These shelters accommodate survivors of trafficking (children and adults of both sexes).

According to the Anti-Human Trafficking Law No. 28 of 2012, Article 11 obliges relevant State agencies to assist trafficking victims, especially children, through eleven provisions. These include: medical examinations, linguistic assistance for non-Iraqis, legal and advisory support, access to family contacts (in Iraq or abroad), ensuring protection for survivors and witnesses, maintaining confidentiality, providing temporary housing, social/psychological/physical rehabilitation, establishing specialized shelters, facilitating temporary residence permits in Iraq, and providing diplomatic support to help non-Iraqi survivors return to their countries.

These measures positively impacted *Indicator 18 (Existence of specialized police directorate)*, which scored 5 out of 8, even if these directorates are not specifically supporting women and girls survivors. Similarly, *Indicator 19 (Police procedures/regulations)* scored 8 out of 8, showing relative progress in the police sector compared to others.

Health

Emergency hospital regulations require doctors to report suspected cases of violence and refer them to the police for investigation. Every emergency case, including cases of VAWG, must be investigated. Survivors' statements are taken upon arrival, and a detailed medical report is prepared, ensuring cases of violence are legally documented.

Women's Empowerment Units exist in all ministries, including the Ministry of Health. However, staff in these units are not specialized in dealing with cases of VAWG, as this is not included in their job descriptions.

Education

There is no specific mechanism for monitoring compulsory education for girls. However, the General Directorate of Supervision at the Ministry of Education, in coordination with school principals and supervisors, maintains compulsory education records to identify dropouts. Law No. 118 of 1976 on Compulsory Education penalizes guardians who prevent children under their care from attending school. *Indicator 25 (Monitoring of compulsory education for girls)* scored 5.3 out of 8, also relatively high given the legal framework.

Indicator 26 (Anti-harassment regulations in schools) scored 6 out of 6. There are no specific regulations or procedures to prevent sexual harassment in education. However, schools employ social workers to monitor harassment of girls and investigate suspected cases of violence or harassment. Additionally, certain Penal Code articles impose harsher penalties for sexual assault against minors. No regulations or procedures exist to address VAWG in youth centres, sports clubs, or stadiums.

Main Gaps

- SOPs for preventing and responding to VAWG exist but implementation is weak and fragmented.
- Police directorates are specialized, but their resources are limited and insufficient, and police personnel and women's empowerment units lack adequate training in handling cases of violence against women and girls.
- There are no systematic programs linking justice with psychological, social, and economic support.
- Education system lacks dedicated monitoring of compulsory schooling for girls.
- Lack of regulations for combating harassment in youth centres and schools.

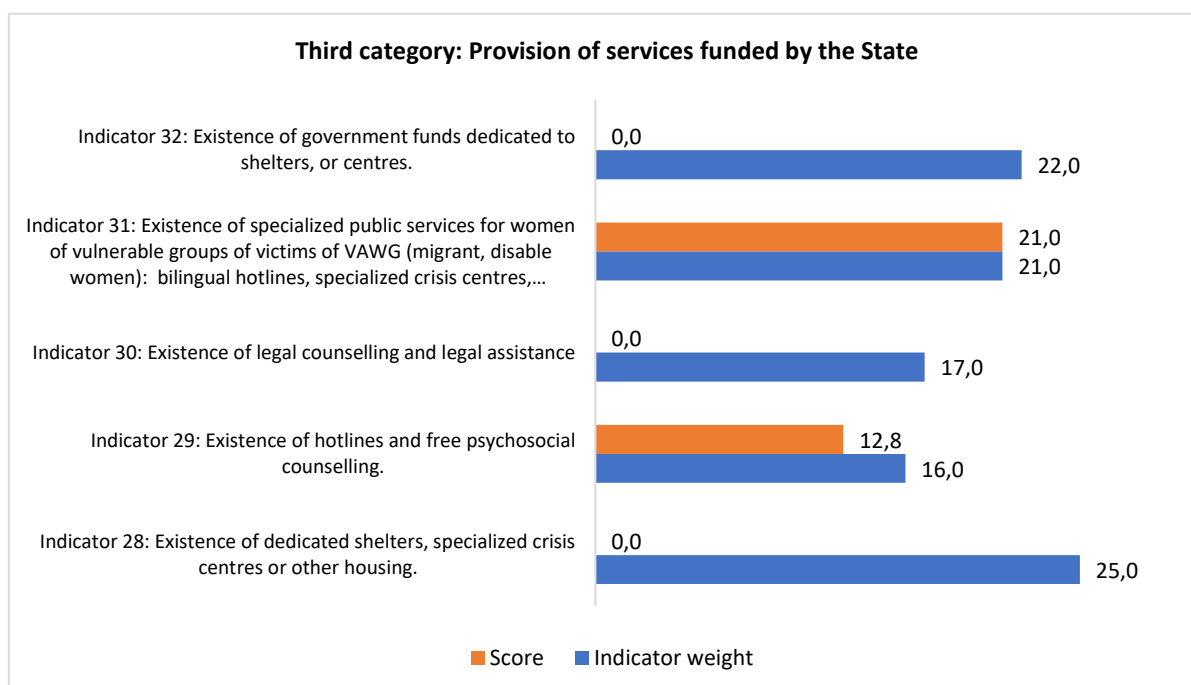
Recommendations

- Fully implement SOPs and ensure nationwide application.
- Strengthen justice procedures with survivor-centred approaches and systematic follow-up.
- Expand the scope of integrated protection services for survivors, in addition to rehabilitation and economic empowerment programs for survivors within the comprehensive justice system.
- Establish monitoring of girls' education and adopt anti-harassment regulations in all schools and youth institutions.

❖ *Third Category: Provision of Services Funded by the State*

This category includes 5 indicators and 26 sub-indicators that address both the survivors' physical and psychological care, and the capacity of the caregivers to apply a survivor-centred approach.

This category recorded an achievement rate of only 33.8%, reflecting the weakness of government infrastructure in providing essential and necessary services for women survivors of violence.



Indicator 28 (Existence of government-run shelters or crisis centres for women survivors of violence) scored 0 out of 25. There are no government-run shelters for women survivors of violence at the federal level, due to the absence of a law on combating

VAWG. Some shelters have been established with the support of UNFPA, but without legal authorization. In addition, there is no government funding allocated for shelters for survivors, as there is no legislation to establish or support them. That is why indicator 32 scored 0 out of 22.

A unified, toll-free hotline operated by the Ministry of Interior, number (911), is available for general emergency situations and operates 24 hours a day. Posters and awareness cards have been distributed, and workshops have been organized for awareness-raising. The Family and Child Protection Directorate has also set up a dedicated webpage, with specialized staff responding to legal inquiries free of charge.

The government provides legal counselling to women survivors of violence through security or legal entities.

Main Gaps

- The absence of a legal and financial framework for the establishment and management of government-run shelters, leading to limited reliance on unlicensed shelters supported by international organizations.
- Existing shelters lack legal basis and funding.
- Hotlines exist but are limited in outreach and capacity.

Recommendations

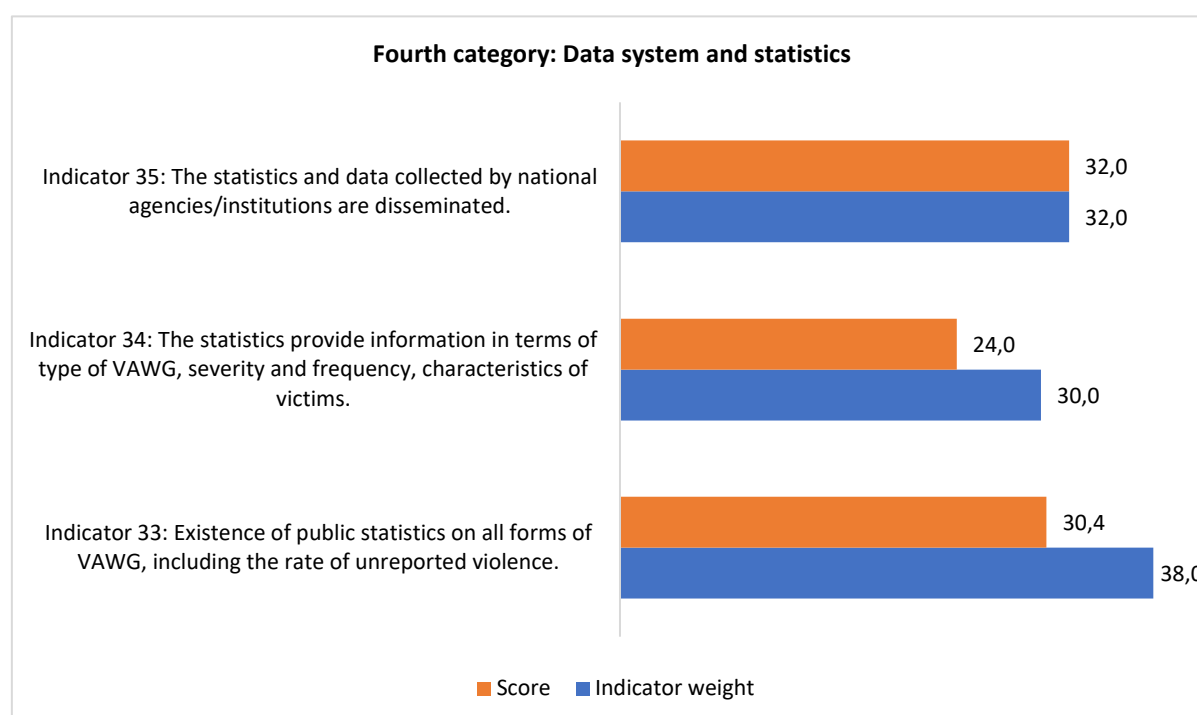
- Pressuring for the passage of legislation specifically addressing violence against women and girls, including the establishment and funding of licensed government shelters in cities and rural areas.
- Establish government-run shelters with legal authorization and sustainable funding, not only in urban but also in rural areas.
- Expand and strengthen hotlines with trained staff and national coverage.

❖ *Fourth Category: Data System and Statistics*

The fourth category consists of 3 indicators and 14 sub-indicators and is linked to measuring prevalence and incidence of VAWG.

This category achieved an 86.4% completion rate, reflecting notable progress in the collection of official data.

However, the data remains incomplete and does not provide a comprehensive picture of all forms of VAWG.



Indicator 33 (Existence of general statistics on all forms of VAWG, including unreported violence) scored 30.4 out of 38. Partial statistics are issued by the Central Bureau of Statistics and the Ministry of Interior, often disaggregated by sex and governorate.

However, these statistics do not cover all forms of violence, nor do they provide sufficient information on unreported cases, limiting their effectiveness in shaping comprehensive policies.

There are also international reports and some statistics published in Iraq's Voluntary National Review on the Sustainable Development Goals, available online. In addition, some surveys are published periodically, but they are not specialized in VAWG.

Data is occasionally published on the official websites of relevant institutions, as well as statistics from the Central Bureau of Statistics, which remains the officially recognized source of data and information.

Main Gaps

- Statistics collected but incomplete as there are no regular national surveys on prevalence and unreported violence.
- Dissemination remains fragmented and inconsistent.
- There are still some restrictions on accessing data and statistics related to violence against women.

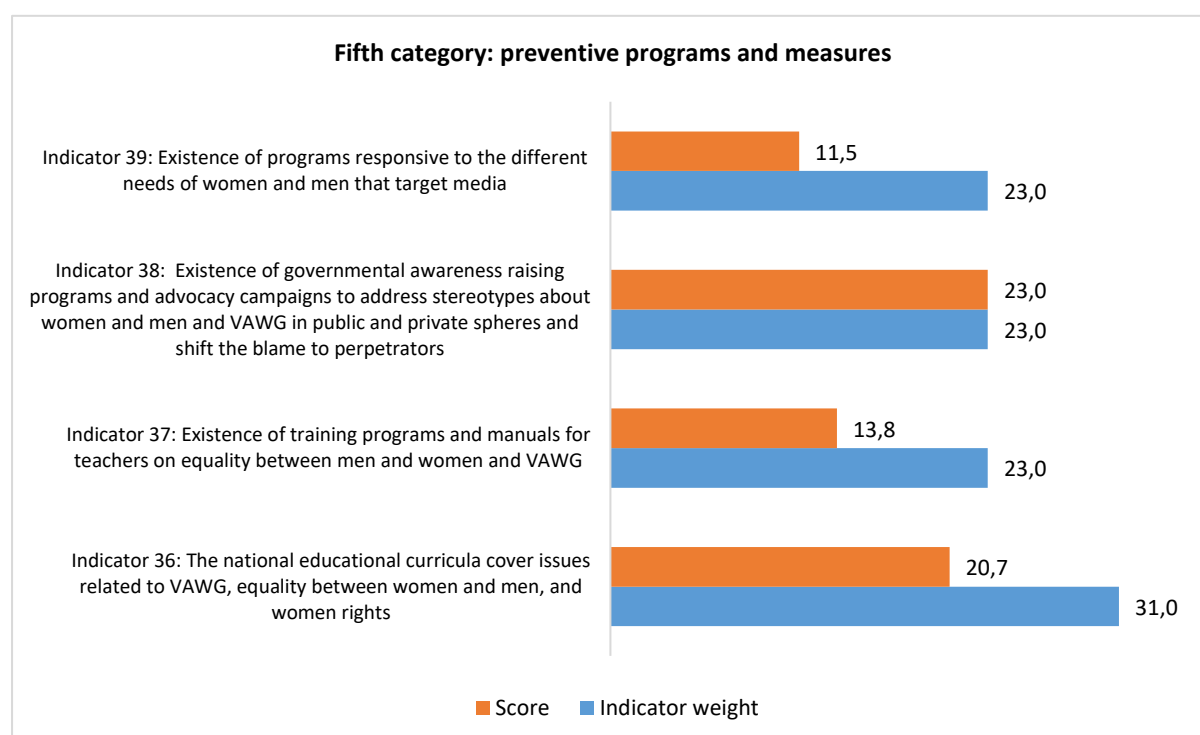
Recommendations

- Conduct periodic national surveys covering all forms of VAWG and their prevalence.
- Ensure regular, transparent publication of statistics accessible to public and stakeholder.

❖ *Fifth Category: Preventive Programs and Measures*

This category includes 4 indicators and 14 sub-indicators and looks at preventive programs and measures addressing VAWG.

The achievement level in this category reached 69%, highlighting the limited scope of preventive programs and the weak integration of issues of equality and VAWG into education, media, and institutional training.



National curricula do not explicitly cover topics related to VAWG, equality, or women's rights. However, a subject on human rights has been introduced into university curricula and into primary school curricula starting from the fifth grade. The Iraqi government also adopted the National Strategy for Education (2022–2031), which is considered more ambitious than its predecessor, aiming to provide broader and more comprehensive solutions, plans, and programs to enhance the quality, efficiency, and inclusiveness of the education system, while equipping youth with skills and knowledge that enable them to contribute to sustainable economic and social development.

Despite the existence of some guidance manuals issued by the Ministry of Education and the General Directorate for Teacher Training, there are no formal training courses for teachers on equality and VAWG. As a result, *Indicator 37 (Existence of teacher training programs)* scored only 13.8 out of 23, making it one of the weakest indicators in this category.

The government, through the Iraqi National Women's Directorate under the General Secretariat of the Council of Ministers and other government institutions concerned with women, launches an annual 16 Days of Activism campaign against Violence against Women.

Main Gaps

- Human rights education introduced but weak coverage of equality between women and men and on VAWG issues.
- Limited teacher training on equality between women and men and VAWG issues.
- Awareness campaigns exist but remain not comprehensive and short-term.

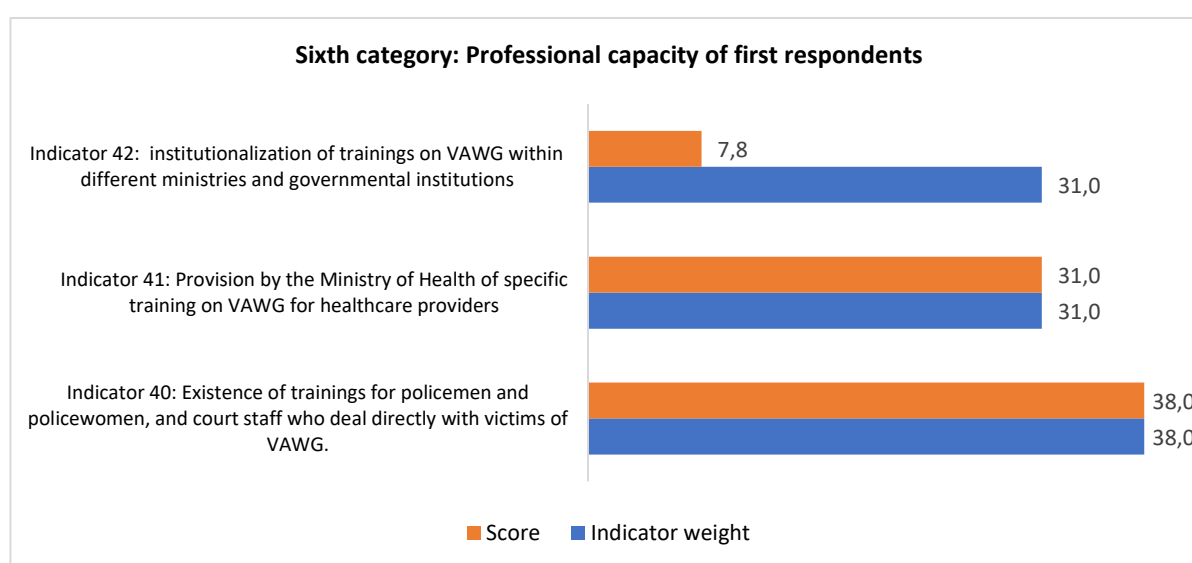
Recommendations

- Integrate VAWG and equality topics in all school curricula.
- Institutionalize teacher training on VAWG and equality between women and men.
- Transform awareness campaigns into regular sustained programs.

❖ *Sixth Category: Professional Capacity of First Respondents*

This category consists of 3 indicators, and 13 sub-indicators and covers institutional training for policemen and policewomen and court staff who deal directly with survivors of VAWG.

The achievement level in this category reached 76.8%, one of the highest compared to other categories. This reflects the existence of training activities and tangible efforts but also highlights the lack of institutionalization and sustainability.



There are no institutionalized training programs. However, training is provided to court staff (judicial investigators, social workers, and psychologists under the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs), police officers, community police units of the Ministry of Interior, and police personnel working in anti-trafficking offices who deal with survivors of VAWG. These trainings are delivered through courses organized by UN agencies, international organizations, and CSOs in cooperation with relevant government institutions.

The Ministry of Health provides training for nurses and doctors, but not on a continuous or systematic basis.

The Iraqi Ministry of Health prepared the Strategic Plan on Violence (2022–2026), which serves as the foundation for delivering medical, preventive, and psychosocial services to survivors of violence. In 2021, model centres specialized in combating violence were opened in the Health Directorates of Kirkuk and Nineveh. Efforts are ongoing to open two additional centres in Anbar and Basra in 2022. The Ministry also continues to follow up on all anti-trafficking legislation through the relevant committees and provides psychosocial support services to survivors of violence.

Indicator 42 (Existence of institutionalized training programs in ministries and government agencies) scored 7.8 out of 31, reflecting an almost complete absence of structured, institutional training programs within government institutions. Current training initiatives are temporary, often donor-supported, and lack a formal, permanent training pathway within ministries.

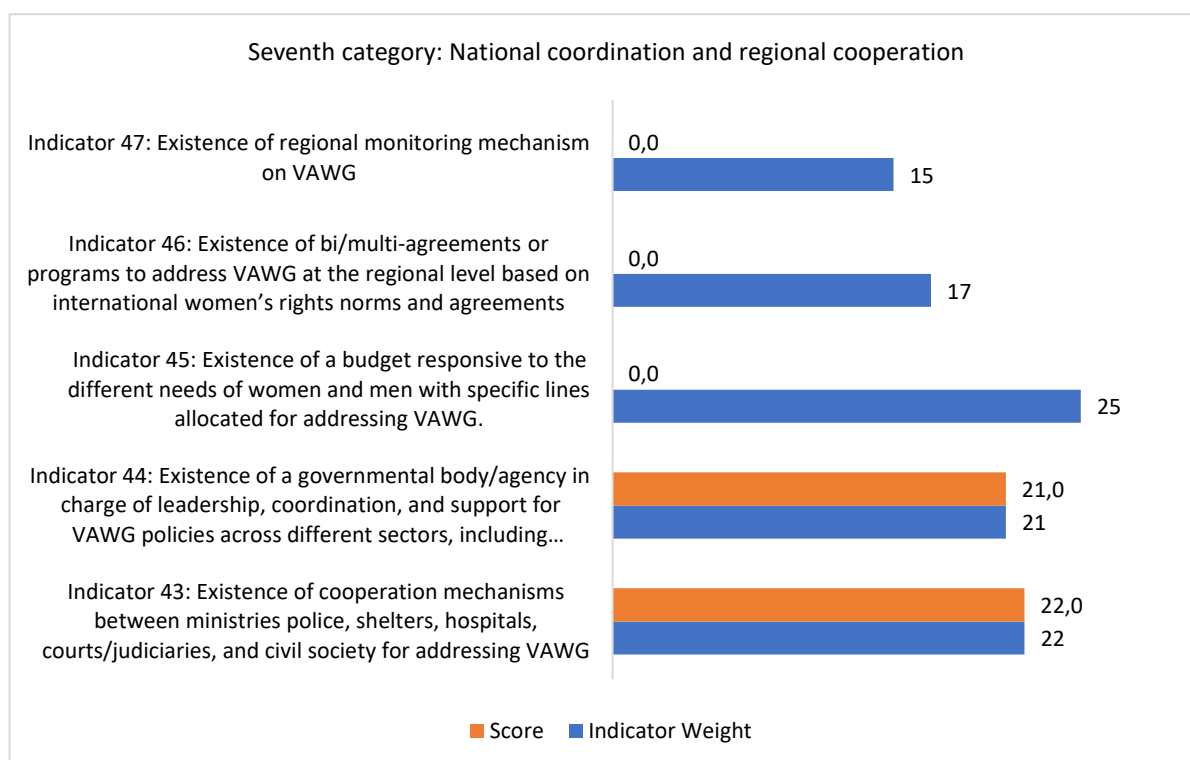
Main Gaps

- Trainings for judiciary, police, or healthcare staff exist but remain ad-hoc, not institutionalized.
- Weak coordination among institutions in designing and implementing training programs, leading to duplication or inconsistency in standards and curricula.
- Most training is concentrated in major cities, neglecting remote provinces.

Recommendations:

- Develop training manuals on VAWG tailored to the needs of the survivors.
- Institutionalizing mandatory training for all relevant personnel within ministries and at the governorate level.
- Institutionalise training into all sectors dealing with women survivors of VAWG.

❖ *Seventh Category: National Coordination and Regional Cooperation*



This category includes 3 indicators for cooperation mechanisms on national level, and 2 indicators for regional or international cooperation mechanisms. It consists of 13 sub-indicators. The achievement level in this category reached 43%, reflecting the existence of some national coordination structures, but with the absence of inclusive budgets responsive to the needs of both women and men, and weak regional mechanisms for monitoring VAWG.

Indicator 43 (Existence of cooperation mechanisms between relevant ministries and civil society organizations) scored 22 out of 22, showing that cooperation exists between the Ministries of Justice, Interior, Health, Labor and Social Affairs, and CSOs. However, this cooperation is ad hoc and not based on clear institutional mechanisms or binding protocols.

The Iraqi National Women's Directorate under the General Secretariat of the Council of Ministers oversees coordination among ministries in VAWG. The Women's Empowerment Directorate, also under the General Secretariat, is the official body responsible for protecting women's rights and monitoring policies and strategies adopted by the federal government regarding women's issues. In addition, the Supreme Council for Women was ratified at the end of 2023.

Regarding the budgets, the Iraqi Federal General Budget Law of 2021, in Article 28 (Sixth), obligated the government to allocate budgets for programs and issues related

to women. However, the Ministry of Finance overlooked this provision when issuing instructions for implementing the 2021 Budget Law, despite the Council of Ministers issuing several instructions to ensure compliance, including those requiring relevant entities to develop programs responsive to the concerns of women to meet the needs of both women and men and empower women.

Indicator 46 (Existence of multilateral agreements or programs to address VAWG) scored 0 out of 17. Nevertheless, the Iraqi government signed a joint communiqué with the United Nations in 2016 on the prevention of conflict-related sexual violence, which identified six priority areas: accountability, provision of services and support for survivors, engagement of community and religious leaders, strengthening women's role in combating terrorism, and raising community awareness. A joint implementation plan was also prepared in 2018 to ensure fulfilment of commitments under the communiqué.

Indicator 47 (Existence of a regional mechanism for monitoring VAWG) scored 0 out of 15, as no such governmental regional mechanism currently exists for monitoring and coordinating efforts in this area.

Main Gaps

- Coordination between institutions and ministries exists but remains ad hoc, with no binding protocols.
- Budgets for women's programs are weak and often overlooked.
- No regional agreements or monitoring mechanisms, inclusive of Iraq.

Recommendations

- Strengthen institutional coordination with binding protocols and accountability.
- Introduce budgeting responsive to the needs of women and men with dedicated allocations for VAWG programs.
- Engage in regional agreements and establish monitoring mechanisms in line with international standards.
- Establish an online national platform for women's issues and VAWG that supports coordination among all stakeholders, unifies methodologies for data collection and measuring progress, and promotes the exchange of experiences.

3. Scoring Results Kurdistan Region of Iraq

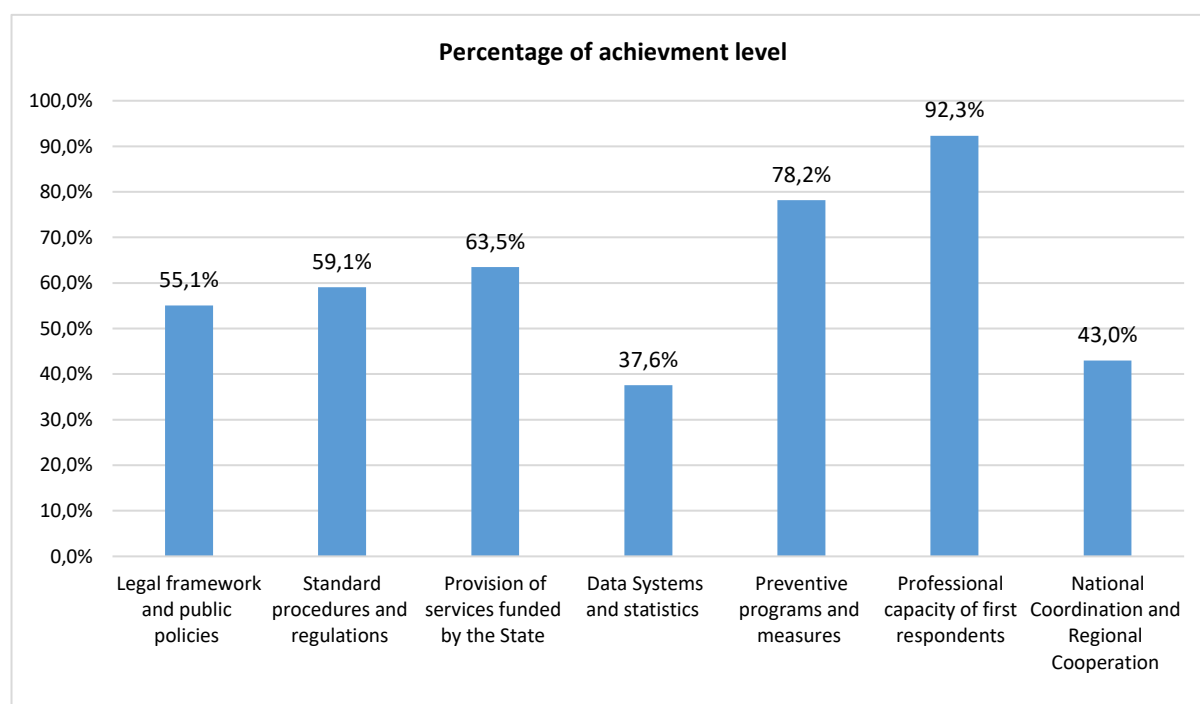
This report presents the findings of KR-I performance in the 2024 Regional Index on VAWG. It provides assessment of the status of laws, policies and procedures, services, and preventive measures combating VAWG in KR-I, organized according to the Index seven thematic categories. It reflects progress made, underlines achievements and highlights critical gaps and shortcomings. The findings provide a basis for informed evidence-based advocacy, policy reform, and improved institutional responses to combat VAWG in KR-I.

KR-I recorded its highest achievement in professional capacity of first responders (92.3%), followed by relatively strong performance in preventive programs and measures (78.2%) and standard procedures and guidelines (59.1%), showing progress in institutional structures, teacher training, and police response mechanisms.

The category legal framework and public policies (55.1%) show partial alignment with international standards, despite some important legislative reforms such as the Strategy to Combat VAWG (2017–2027) and Anti-Domestic Violence Law No. 8 of 2011. On the other hand, the provision of State-funded services (63.5%) demonstrates progress in establishing shelters and hotlines.

The lowest performance was recorded in data systems and statistics (37.6%) and national coordination and regional cooperation (43.0%), reflecting the lack of comprehensive data and the absence of regional cooperation mechanisms.

While the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) has advanced in building institutional capacity and preventive programs, legislative shortcomings, and weak data systems continue to pose significant barriers to ensuring full protection and equality for women and girls.



3.1. Score analysis

This section provides analysis for the scores under each category. The scores achieved for each indicator in relation to the weights assigned are shown in the diagrams.

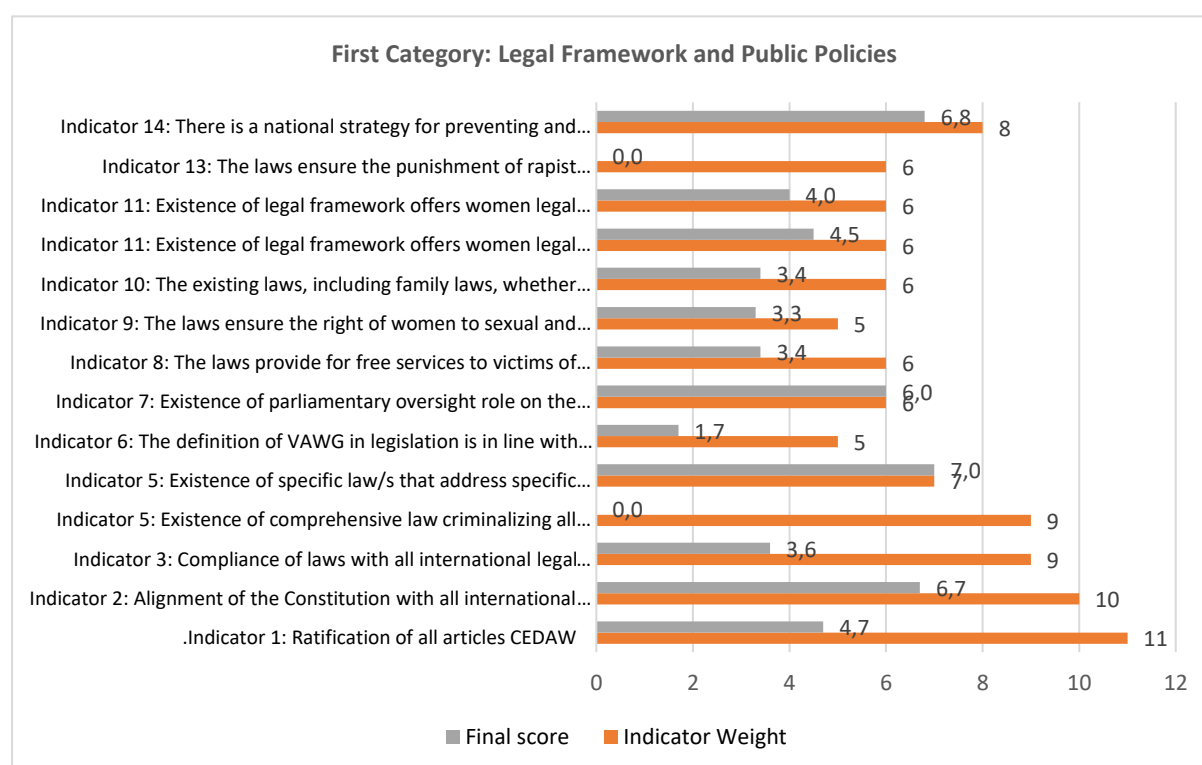
The section also highlights the main gaps and provides recommendations to tackle these gaps and improve the protection of women from VAWG.

The Index methodology is available on Regional Observatory ([Regional Observatory](#)).

❖ *First Category: Legal Framework and Public Policies*

This category includes 14 indicators and 96 sub-indicators. The achievement level in this category reached 55.1%, reflecting significant steps in legislation and policies.

However, these remain limited and insufficient to ensure comprehensive protection for women and girls from violence and discrimination.



With regard to international agreements, Iraq ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), but maintained its reservations on several substantive articles, including Article (2) regarding the prohibition of discrimination in national constitutions and legislation, Article (16) regarding equality in marriage and family relations, and Article (29) regarding international arbitration. The government has also not ratified the Optional Protocol to

the Convention. Therefore, the score for *Indicator 1 (Ratification of all CEDAW provisions)* was average at 4.7 out of 11.

Regarding the constitution and compatibility with international treaties, *Indicator 2 (Alignment of the constitution with international agreements)* received a score of (6.7 out of 10). The Iraqi constitution:

- a) The Iraqi constitution referred to international agreements but did not explicitly and directly stipulate their place in the legal hierarchy. However, article (8) of the Constitution indicates that the State respects international obligations. Although the Iraqi Treaty Law No. (35) of 2015 was issued, it is considered part of Iraqi domestic legislation and is applied within Iraq to regulate the manner in which treaties and agreements are concluded. However, it does not completely replace substantive laws. Rather, it is applied in some decisions issued by Iraqi courts. Article 2 of the Iraqi Constitution states that no law may be enacted that contradicts the immutable principles of Islamic Sharia, the principles of democracy, or the basic rights and freedoms outlined in the Constitution, despite the enactment of the Treaty-Making Law No. 35 of 2015.
- b) Prohibits discrimination between men and women. Article 14 of the Constitution prohibits all forms of discrimination, including based on sex.
- c) Contains provisions on women's rights and equality between women and men. Article 14 states that Iraqis are equal before the law without discrimination based on sex, race, ethnicity, origin, colour, religion, sect, belief, opinion, or economic or social status. However, this right is restricted by Article 41, which provides that "Iraqis are free to adhere to their personal status according to their religions, sects, beliefs, or choices, and this shall be regulated by law."
- d) Adopts affirmative measures for women's participation. However, parity is not achieved, as Article 49 sets a quota of not less than 25% representation of women in parliament. However, the women's quota in the KR-I has been set at 30% under Article 4 of Law No. 2 of 2009.

The deference in results from Federal Iraq and KR-I come from the difference of understanding between what is stipulated in the Iraqi constitution and its implementation in reality.

At the level of national laws, *Indicator 3 (Compliance of national laws with international obligations)* received a score of 3.6 out of 9. The following laws remain inconsistent with international treaties:

1. Paragraph 13 of Article 2 of the Anti-Domestic Violence Law No. 8 of 2011 considers forced marital intercourse to be domestic violence. The article states, "The following acts are considered domestic violence, for example: insults, cursing, verbal abuse of family members, and demonstrating condescending views."
2. Abortion is prohibited under Article 417 of the Penal Code, including abortions for women who have been raped. However, Article 7/First of the Patient's Rights and

Duties Law in the KR-I No. 4 of 2020 exempts the abortion of a foetus of a pregnant woman suffering from a serious illness that poses a real and serious threat to her life, provided that the patient and her husband consent and a decision from a specialized medical committee are obtained.

3. In accordance with the Iraqi Penal Code (applicable in KR-I):

Consensual sexual intercourse with an adult (over 18 years of age) is not explicitly criminalized if it is consensual and extramarital sex, as there is no explicit text criminalizing "consensual adultery" between adults.

However, article (394) criminalizes sexual intercourse with someone under 18, even if it is consensual:

- o If the victim is between 15 and 18 years of age, the penalty is imprisonment for up to 7 years or imprisonment.
- o If the victim is under 15 years of age, the penalty is imprisonment for up to 10 years.
- o If the victim is a virgin, the court must award appropriate compensation.
- o If the act occurred under aggravating circumstances (such as abuse of power, use of a weapon, or kidnapping, as stipulated in Paragraph (A) of Article 393 of the Iraqi Penal Code), the penalty is increased.

4. The Penal Code does not consider prostitution as sexual exploitation and an extreme form of violence against women and girls. Therefore, it prohibits prostitution but criminalises both the women who are victims of this violence and the pimps, and clients (articles 3, 4, and 6 of Anti-Prostitution Law No. 8 of 1988). Thus, women in prostitution are deprived of the protection of this violence and sexual exploitation. (Articles 3, 4, and 6 of the Anti-Prostitution Law No. 8 of 1988). Article 399 also stipulates, "Anyone who incites a male or female under 18 years of age to engage in debauchery or prostitution, or facilitates this, shall be punished with imprisonment."

5. The Personal Status Law does not guarantee equal rights between women and men during divorce regarding the following:

- o Polygamy is not permitted under Law No. 15 of 2008, amending the Implementation of the Personal Status Law in the KR-I. However, there are exceptions specified by the law that permit polygamy (a) the consent of the first wife to the marriage before a court; b) a proven chronic illness that prevents marital relations and from which there is no hope of recovery, or the wife's sterility proven by a report from a specialized medical committee; c) the person seeking a second marriage must have sufficient financial means to support more than one wife, provided that this is proven with official documents; d) the husband must submit a written pledge before the court before the marriage contract to ensure justice between the spouses in the division of marital obligations (material and moral); e) the wife must not have stipulated in the marriage contract that she not marry another wife).
- o Guardianship: Parents are responsible. They are the sole guardians of their children. However, under Article 5 of the Personal Status Law Amendment No. 15 of 2008, a paragraph was added granting guardianship to the mother,

subject to conditions. It states, "The mother is considered the guardian if the father is deceased or absent, and if she has custody."

- o Inheritance: A woman's share of inheritance is less than that of a man.
- o Divorce: Men have the right to divorce without resorting to court, while women have access to limited types of divorce that can only be obtained through the court. Under the amendment to the Personal Status Law in the KR-I, Law No. 15 of 2008 (definition of divorce), a woman has the right to divorce her husband if she has been granted authorization (tafwīd) by him, provided that this authorization is recorded in the marriage contract.

6. Iraqi Labor Law No. 71 of 1987, applicable in the KR-I, prohibits the employment of women in labour that is arduous or harmful to health. Women may also be employed in night work only in special circumstances.

There is no comprehensive law criminalizing all forms of VAWG. This explains why *Indicator 4 (Existence of comprehensive law criminalising all forms of VAWG)* got 0 score. Some forms are criminalized under the Penal Code, such as sexual harassment and rape. The labour law in force in the KR-I does not include any reference to protecting working women from harassment. The **Labor Law No. 71 of 1987** (which is still the main labour law applied in the KR-I, (with some regional amendments) does **not explicitly mention sexual harassment** or provide protective measures for women in the workplace. Female genital mutilation is prohibited by law, according to Article 2, Paragraph 7 of the Anti-Violence Act. Article (6) of the same law defines the perpetrators and sets out in detail the penalties prescribed for the crime. There is no specific definition of VAWG. The Anti-Domestic Violence Law only defines domestic violence for the purposes of this law in Article 1, Paragraph 3, as "any act, statement, or threat against women within the framework of family relationships based on marriage and kinship up to the fourth degree that may cause physical, sexual, or psychological harm and deprive a woman of her rights and freedoms." In addition, some forms of VAWG are defined in the Penal Code.

The **Kurdistan Regional Parliament** exercises its oversight role on issues of VAWG through the Parliamentary Committee for Defending Women's Rights. This role involves submitting legislative proposals in partnership with parliamentary blocs, monitoring the implementation of laws addressing violence against women, participating in fact-finding committees, and highlighting laws enacted by Parliament regarding women or VAWG.

There is no specific law in the KR-I providing free legal assistance and support to women survivors of violence, with the exception of what is stated in Civil Procedure Law No. 83 of 1969, Articles 293 to 297, regarding legal aid provisions. A divorced woman is also exempted from paying fees when filing a divorce certification lawsuit, pursuant to Article 24/Fourth of the Judicial Fees Law No. 114 of 1981, as part of the provision of legal services and facilitation of procedures. The law guarantees the right to sexual and reproductive health.

Public Health Law No. 89 of 1981, in force in the region, guarantees women's right to access services related to sexual and reproductive health. However, abortion is illegal. It is allowed only in case that the pregnancy poses a threat to her life, according to

Articles 417 and 418 of the Iraqi Penal Code. This explains the moderate score for *Indicator 9* (3.3 out of 5).

A positive development is that crimes committed against women on the pretext of "honourable motives" have been exempted from legal mitigating excuses under Law No. 14 of 2002, which stipulates that "committing a crime against a woman on the pretext of honourable motives shall not be considered a legal mitigating excuse for the penalty stipulated in Articles 128 and 130 of the Penal Code." Likewise, Law No. 3 of 2015 amending the Iraqi Penal Code, which suspended Article 409 of the Penal Code, which provided for reduced sentences for a murder suspect if his wife or a female relative was caught committing "adultery".

Law No. 8 of 2011 against Domestic Violence also explicitly criminalized female genital mutilation.

The legal age of marriage for both sexes is 18. However, an exception is made, subject to the approval of a personal status judge, for girls aged 16 or over, or for girls aged 15 in cases of extreme necessity. Conversely, *Indicator 13* (The laws ensure the punishment of rapists) scored 0 out of 6.

The law does not provide for punishment for the rapist if he marries the victim. Under Article 398 of the Iraqi Penal Code, if a valid marriage contract is concluded between the perpetrator of the rape crime referred to in Articles 393, 394, 395, 396, and 397 of the Penal Code and the victim, the prosecution, investigation, and other procedures shall be suspended. Even if a judgment has been issued in the case, the execution of the judgment shall be suspended. "Proceedings of the lawsuit or execution shall resume, as the case may be, if the marriage ends in a divorce issued by the husband without a legitimate reason or a divorce ruled by the court for reasons related to the husband's fault or misconduct, within three years from the suspension of proceedings."

At the national strategy level, *Indicator 14* (The existence of a national strategy to prevent violence against women) achieved the highest level of achievement (6.8 out of 8) as a result of the adoption in KR-I of the Strategy to Combat Violence against Women in 2012 by the High Council for Women and ratified by Resolution No. 8 of the KR-I Government Council of Ministers meeting on September 19, 2012. Its implementation period was five years, from 2012 to 2016, and it was updated in 2017 for a ten-year period, from 2017 to 2027. The strategy includes four main areas: legal, protection, prevention, and care. Each area is divided into a set of strategic objectives to achieve the priorities stipulated in the strategy, including the priority of eliminating all forms of discrimination against women and providing legal protection for them, in addition to supporting survivors and preventing VAWG by raising community awareness of the causes and effects of violence against women, the family, and society. The strategy also includes mechanisms for implementation, monitoring, and evaluation. However, insufficient resources have been allocated to the strategy within the budgets of the ministries and agencies involved in implementing the strategy.

Main Gaps

- Existence of reservations on CEDAW articles (2, 16, 29) and Optional Protocol not ratified.
- In national laws no explicit criminalization of marital rape, abortion is restricted, discriminatory rules in inheritance, divorce, and guardianship remain.
- Existing laws combating VAWG are fragmented. Lack of a comprehensive law criminalizing all forms of VAWG.
- The national strategy exists but lacks resources and strong monitoring.

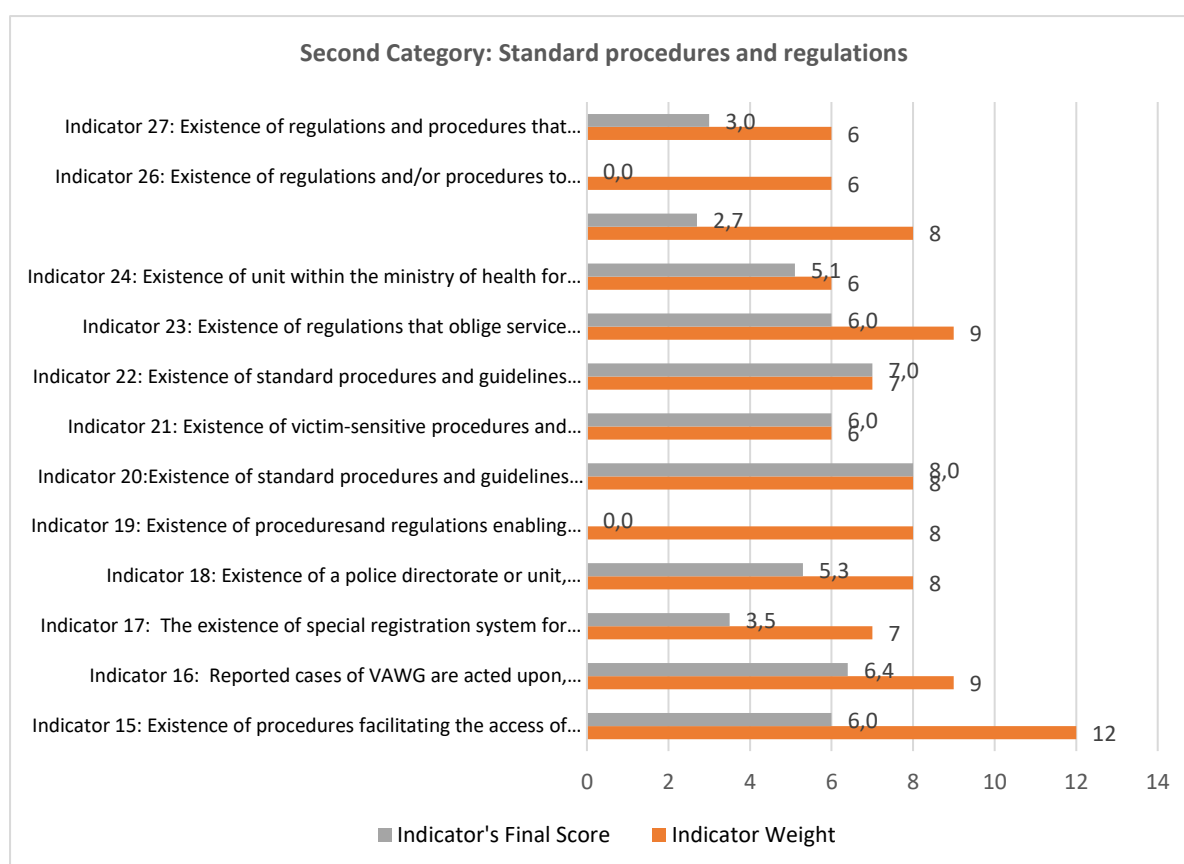
Recommendations

- Remove CEDAW reservations and ratify the Optional Protocol.
- Reform personal status laws to guarantee equal rights in marriage, divorce, guardianship, and inheritance.
- Adopt a comprehensive law on VAWG that provides for clear definitions of VAWG, penalizes perpetrators and provides protection for survivors.
- Allocate dedicated budgets and enforce monitoring of the national strategy.

❖ *Second Category: Standard Procedures and Guidelines*

This category consists of 13 indicators, and 56 sub-indicators and reached 59.1%, level of achievement, reflecting the existence of important legal and institutional structures to address VAWG.

However, implementation still faces challenges linked to limited resources, absence of some executive measures, and lack of comprehensive data to measure effectiveness.



Justice

Indicator 16 (Reported cases of VAWG are acted upon) scored 6.4 out of 9. Official reporting channels include courts, investigative judges, judicial investigators, police officers, forensic investigators in emergency hospitals, and offices of the Directorates for Combating Violence against Women and Family under the Ministry of Interior.

According to Article 3 of the Domestic Violence Law No. 8 of 2011, cases of domestic violence are initiated by the victim or their legal representative through a report submitted to the court, investigator, police officer, or the Public Prosecution. Paragraph 3 of the same article obliges workers in the health and education sectors and official institutions to report in order to assist survivors of domestic violence.

The Directorates and Offices for Combating Domestic Violence in KR-I-Iraq, as well as police stations in areas without such offices, receive complaints submitted by the victim or their legal representative within the family framework. Article 2(3) of the Domestic Violence Law No. 8 of 2011 specifies:

"1. A domestic violence case may be initiated by the victim or their legal representative through a report to the court, investigator, police officer, or the Public Prosecution. 2. Workers in the health, education, and official centres are obliged to report to assist victims of domestic violence." This explains the score of *Indicator 15* (Existence of

procedures facilitating the access of women to justice) 6 out of 12, reflecting the existence of basic procedures, but women still face practical barriers in accessing justice.

In contrast, there is no data on the number of cases that have been acted on compared to those reported. However, the Judicial Council of the KR-I issues periodic and annual reports that include the number of complaints submitted to the Domestic Violence Investigation Court and the number of cases resolved by the Misdemeanour Court for Domestic Violence. In addition, the General Directorate for Combating Violence against Women and the Family, affiliated with the Ministry of Interior, has comprehensive information on cases of VAW including their type, severity, and frequency but the statistics are not publicly available and cannot be accessed. Nevertheless, the data can be requested and provided with statistics if necessary.

Police

The Directorate for Combating Violence against Women was established by the Ministry of Interior in 2007 to address cases of violence against women and domestic violence. Following the adoption of Domestic Violence Law No. 8 of 2011, its scope of work expanded. Article 3(5) of the law mandates the General Directorate for combating violence against Woman and family in the Ministry of Interior to handle domestic violence cases. This Directorate has nine departments across the region's governorates and 28 affiliated offices in districts and sub-districts, and two branches in the sub-districts

The law explicitly states in Article 3 that investigations and trials in domestic violence cases must be confidential. The General Directorate for Combating Violence against Women and the Family in the Ministry of Interior is tasked with following up on such cases. The Ministry of Interior is also required to establish special police units composed primarily of female officers to handle domestic violence cases. In addition, the law obliges the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs to provide shelters for domestic violence survivors and integrate their cases into the social protection network. All police directorates and offices are obliged to receive any complaint related to violence and take legal action accordingly, while forensic investigators are assigned in emergency hospitals to investigate such cases. All this was reflected positively Indicator 18 (Existence of specialized police directorate), which scored 5.3 out of 8.

Human Trafficking

Law No. 6 of 2018 enforces the Federal Anti-Trafficking in Persons Law No. 28 of 2012 in KR-I without amendments. This law prohibits all forms of human trafficking, particularly cases involving sexual exploitation, prostitution, forced labour, slavery, or servitude. A Central Committee for Combating Human Trafficking was formed in Kurdistan in 2018 under the Ministry of Interior, comprising representatives from 13 ministries, alongside sub-committees in each governorate. Nine offices were opened across KR-I investigate trafficking crimes. Currently, the Central Committee has become the Directorate of Organized Crime under the Ministry of Interior, and the subcommittees have been transformed into Anti-Human Trafficking Offices. Article 11 of the law obliges relevant

State institutions to assist trafficking victims, especially children, by providing medical examinations, linguistic assistance, legal aid, guidance, family contact, security protection, confidentiality of victim information, financial assistance, temporary shelter suited to victims' age, and rehabilitation (social, psychological, and physical) through specialized shelters or care institutions under the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs.

At the federal level, Regulation No. 7 of 2017 on shelters for survivors of trafficking was issued, later amended by Regulation No. 1 of 2019. In addition, the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) issued the National Human Rights Plan (2021–2025) in 2022, which includes a section on combating trafficking in persons. Important to note that there are four shelters for women survivors of violence in KR-I, which also could receive trafficked women. However, there is no shelter specifically for trafficked women.

Health

Indicator 24 (Existence of unit within the ministry of health for coordination of health sector response for survivors of VAWG.) scored one of the highest 5.1 out of 6, due to significant measures taken. Article 3(3/2) of the Domestic Violence Law No. 8 of 2011 requires health workers to report cases of domestic violence to assist survivors. The Ministry of Health has established programs for the medical and psychological treatment of survivors through 13 centres. It also provides programs for women and girls who survived ISIS captivity, including a counselling centre in Duhok, and ensures services for survivors in displacement camps through health centres inside camps.

According to Article 2 of the Regulation of the Supreme Council for Women and Development No. 14 of 2022, the Council is chaired by the Prime Minister, with membership from key ministries (Interior, Planning, Labor and Social Affairs, Education, Health, Higher Education, Religious Affairs, Culture and Youth, and the Secretary-General). Article 4(6) tasks the Council with monitoring government institutions on women's issues, identifying gaps, and proposing solutions. The Ministry of Health, as a member, is responsible for coordinating the health sector's response to survivors of VAWG, and all ministries have established units for coordination.

Education

In contrast, *Indicator 25 (the State monitors the compulsory education of girls)* scored only 2.7 out of 8. There is no specific mechanism to monitor compulsory education for girls from grade 1 to grade 9. The Education Directorate's Statistics Department tracks school dropouts with accurate data.

There are no systems to prevent sexual harassment in schools. However, schools employ female supervisors or social workers to follow up and investigate suspected cases of abuse or harassment. Penal Code provisions impose harsher penalties for sexual assaults against minors.

There are no specific mechanisms to address VAWG in youth centres, clubs, or sports stadiums.

Main Gaps

- Women still face practical barriers in accessing justice despite procedures in place.
- Specialized police units exist but remain under-resourced.
- Education sector lacks mechanisms to monitor compulsory schooling for girls.
- Lack of regulations for combating harassment in youth centres and schools.

Recommendation

- Strengthen justice and police mechanisms by ensuring follow-up on reported cases and providing sufficient resources to specialized units.
- Expand integrated protection services.
- Develop clear monitoring systems for girls' compulsory education and adopt policies to prevent harassment in schools and youth spaces.

❖ *Third Category: Provision of Services Funded by the State*

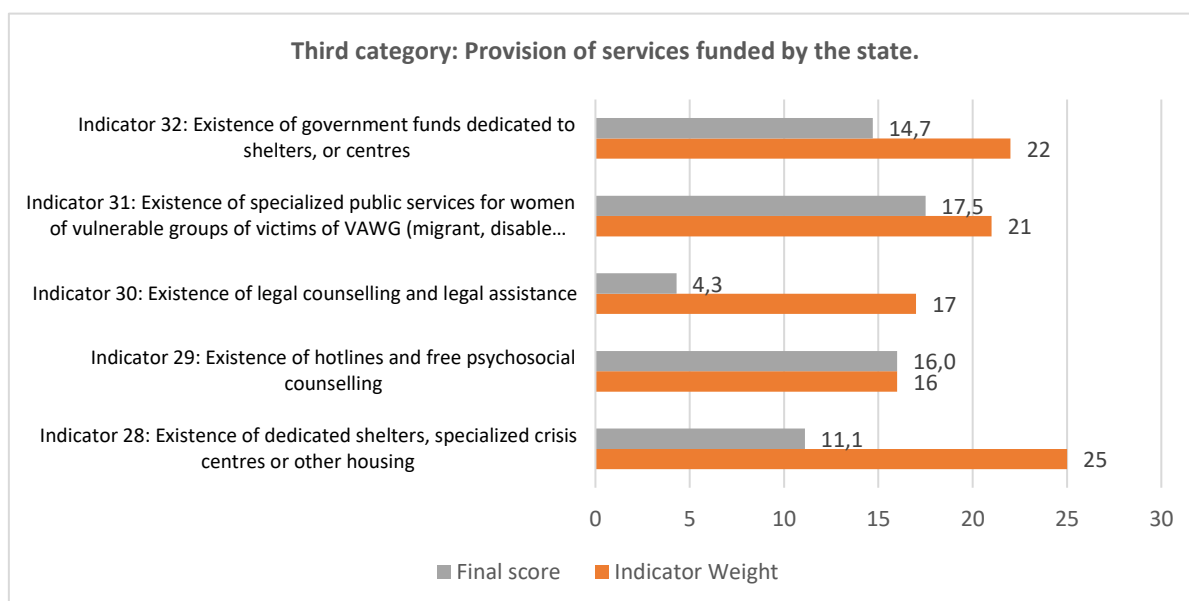
This category includes 5 indicators and 26 sub-indicators that address both the survivors and their physical and psychological care, and the capacity of the caregivers to apply a survivor-centred approach.

The level of achievement in this category is 63.5%, indicating the existence of basic services provided by the State to support women and girls survivors of violence.

Strengths include the presence of official shelters and a hotline, but challenges remain in terms of limited geographical coverage, quality of services, and financial sustainability.

In the KR-I, there are four shelters for women survivors of violence, in addition to a temporary shelter where survivors may stay for up to 72 hours. The shelters are managed by the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs in the KR-I.

There is also hotline 119, launched by UNFPA in cooperation with the General Directorate for Combating Violence against Women and the Family in the Ministry of Interior, with specialized staff responding to inquiries. For this reason, *Indicator 29 (Existence of hotlines and free psychosocial counselling)* scored a full mark (16 out of 16).



The government provides counselling and legal assistance to women survivors of violence through the shelters, as well as through the Directorates and Offices for Combating Violence against Women and the Family. These services are offered free of charge. The government allocates funding to the five shelters, which are managed by the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs.

Main Gaps

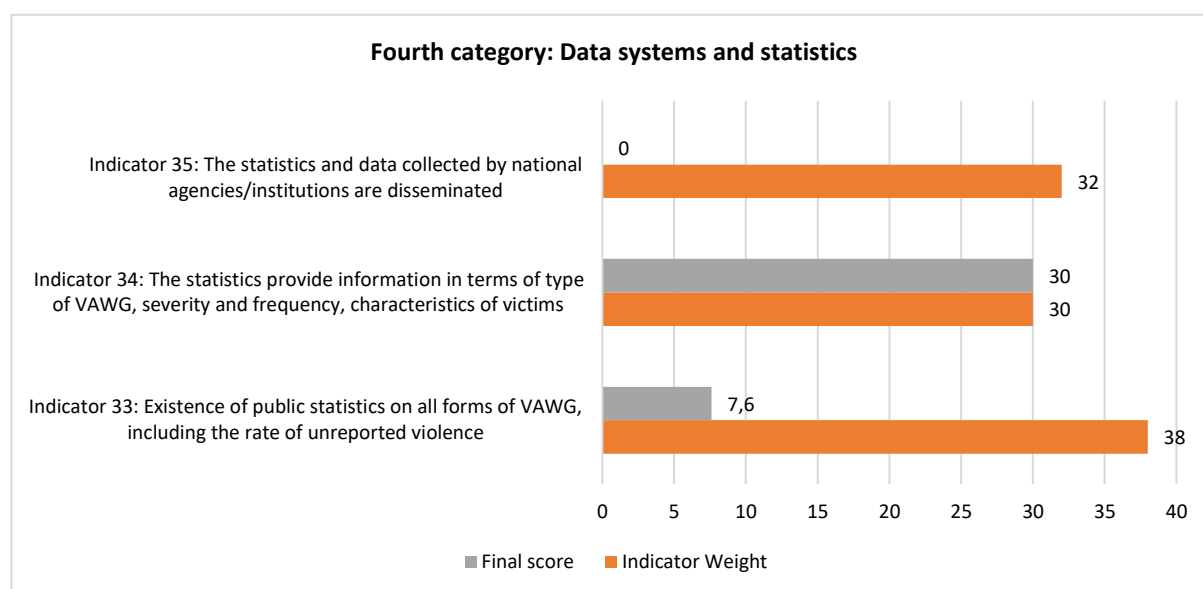
- Shelters exist but with limited geographical coverage and capacity.
- Services vary in quality with lack standardized survivor-centred approaches.
- Financial support is unstable, relying on limited allocations that risk sustainability.

Recommendations

- Expand the number and regional distribution of government-run shelters to ensure access.
- Standardize service quality in shelters and counselling centres, embedding survivor-centred protocols and regular monitoring.
- Secure sustainable funding streams for shelters and hotlines through dedicated budget lines and long-term partnerships.

❖ *Fourth Category: Data System and Statistics*

The fourth category consists of 3 indicators and 14 sub-indicators and is linked to measuring prevalence and incidence of VAWG. It scored 37.6%.



There are no regular, up-to-date national statistics measuring the rates of all forms of VAWG that are reported. Therefore, *Indicator 33 (Existence of general statistics on all forms of VAWG, including unreported violence)* scored a low mark of 7.6 out of 38.

Nevertheless, certain institutions do publish relevant data. The Judicial Council of the KR-I issues periodic and annual reports containing the number of complaints filed with the Domestic Violence Investigation Court and the number of cases resolved by the Misdemeanour Court for Domestic Violence. Similarly, the General Directorate for Combating Violence against Women and the Family (affiliated with the Ministry of Interior) maintains comprehensive data on VAW reported cases, including their type, severity, and frequency. However, these statistics are not available to the public except upon request by the competent authorities or for research purposes.

In most cases, data publication remains limited to the official websites of institutions. For instance, the General Directorate for Combating Violence against Women and the Family has published statistics on VAWG in KR-I covering the period 2010–2021. Additional statistics are occasionally published by the Statistics Directorate of the Ministry of Planning. The Office of the Coordinator for International Recommendations in the KRG also issues reports containing statistics on VAWG. Therefore, *Indicator 35 (The statistics and data collected by national agencies/institutions are disseminated)* scored 0.

Main Gaps

- No regular or comprehensive national surveys on the prevalence and incidence of VAWG.
- Dissemination of data is inconsistent and mostly restricted to institutional websites, limiting accessibility and transparency.

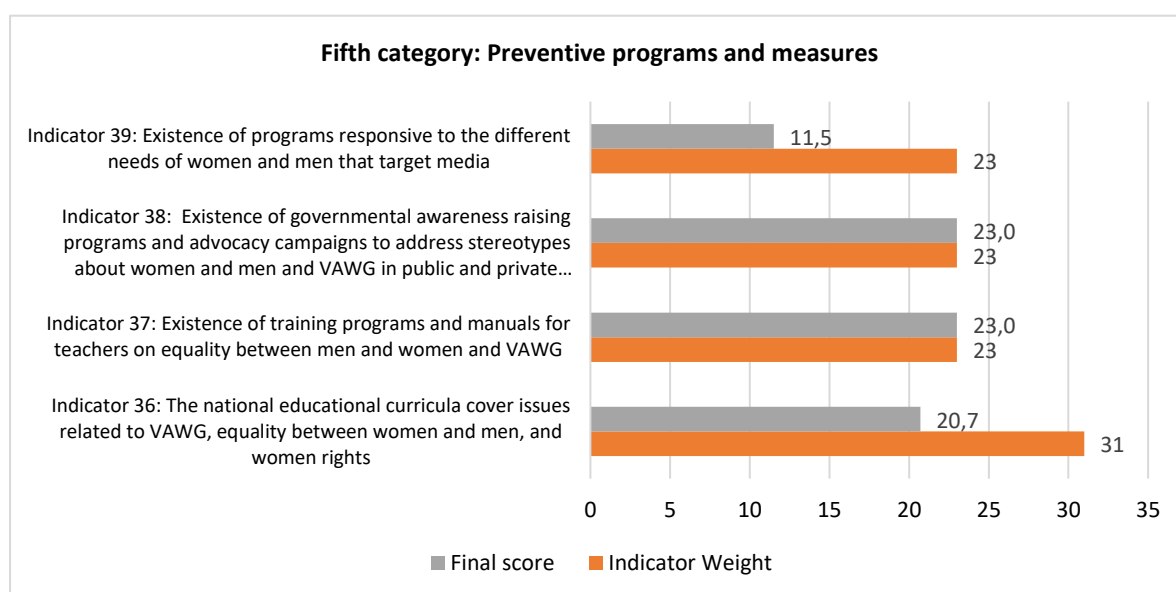
Recommendations

- Conduct periodic national surveys that capture of all forms of VAWG and their prevalence, including unreported cases.
- Institutionalize regular, transparent dissemination of VAWG data through official publications accessible to policymakers, CSOs, and the public.

❖ *Fifth Category: Preventive Programs and Measures*

This category includes 4 indicators and 14 sub-indicators and looks at preventive programs and measures addressing VAWG.

The category achieved a score of 78.2%, underscoring a progress made in terms preventive programs and integration of issues of equality and VAWG into education, media, and institutional training.



Human rights education has been integrated into school and university curricula, including subjects on equality, child rights, civic education, and peaceful coexistence. Moreover, most universities in the KR-I have established Gender Equality Centres that address human rights and women's rights issues. A curriculum titled *Social Skills and Values* was prepared for grades 1–9, incorporating topics on domestic violence prevention, women's rights, and equality into the education system. As a result, *Indicator 36 (The national educational curricula cover issues related to VAWG, equality between women and men, and)* scored 20.7 out of 31.

The Ministry of Education, through the Directorate of Training and Development, conducts annual and continuous programs to train teachers to enhance their capacities. Article 22 of Regulation No. 2 of 2009 on secondary education requires teachers, principals, and their assistants to participate in training programs.

Every year, the KRG, through the High Council for Women and Development (HCWD), launches the 16 Days of Activism Campaign against violence and stereotypes in both public and private spheres, with participation of all relevant government institutions. In addition, campaigns to challenge stereotypes and shift blame to perpetrators have been launched since the ISIS conflict, commemorated annually on the International Day for the Elimination of Sexual Violence in Conflict. As a result, *Indicator 38 (Existence of governmental awareness raising programs and advocacy campaigns)* scored full marks.

Main Gaps

- Curriculum integration of equality and VAWG topics remains partial and does not fully cover all education levels.
- Teacher training programs exist but are not comprehensive or systematically monitored for impact.
- Awareness campaigns are frequent but often short-term.

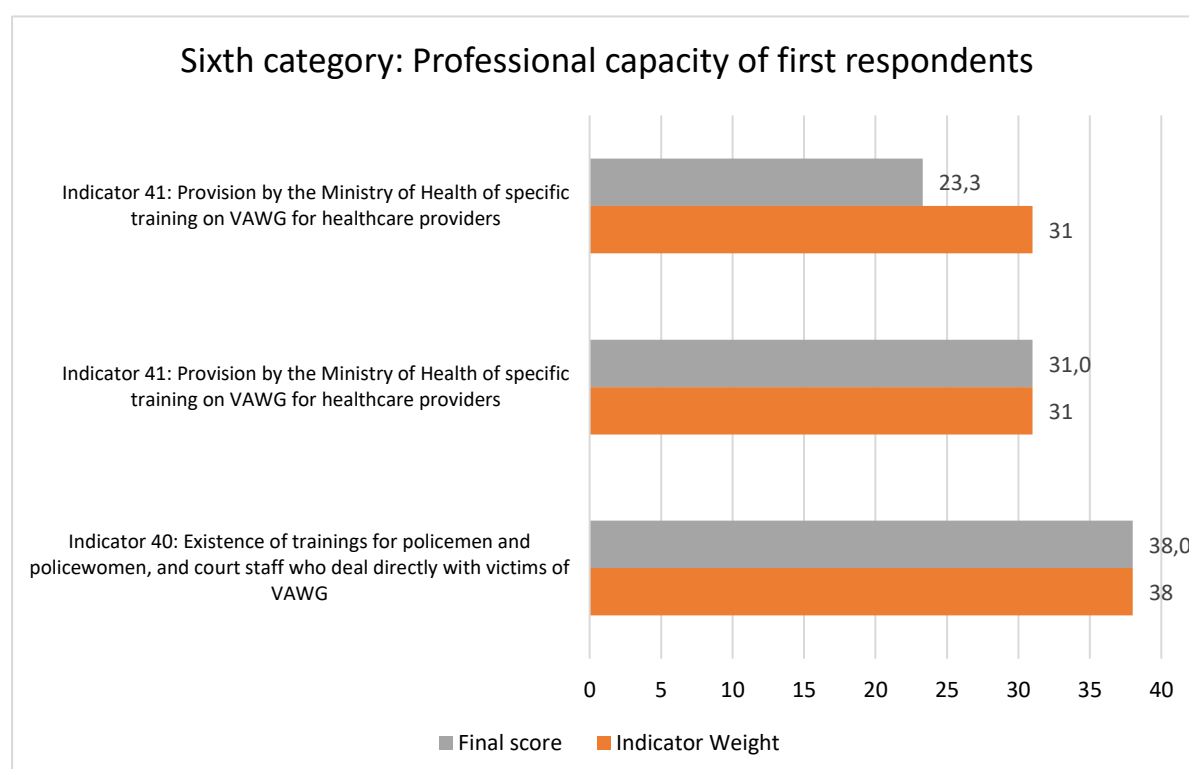
Recommendations

- Institutionalize teacher training on equality between men and women and VAWG, including monitoring frameworks to measure learning outcomes.
- Expand and standardize integration of equality topics and VAWG prevention into curricula across all education levels.

❖ Sixth Category: Professional Capacity of First Respondents

This category consists of 3 indicators, and 13 sub-indicators and covers institutional training for policemen and policewomen and court staff who deal directly with victims/survivors of VAWG. It achieved a score of 92.3%.

This reflects the existence of trainings and tangible efforts into their institutionalising, which still remains to be improved.



There are no institutionalized training programs, but court staff (judicial investigators), shelter staff (social and psychological workers from the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs), police, staff in domestic violence offices under the Ministry of Interior, and police officers working in anti-trafficking offices who deal with survivors of VAWG are trained through courses organized by UN agencies, international organizations, and civil society organizations in the KR-I, in cooperation with government institutions. Therefore, *Indicators 40 (Existence of training for policemen and policewomen and civil courts staff who deal directly with survivors of VAWG) and Indicator 41 (Provision by the Ministry of Health of specific training of VAWG for healthcare providers)* received full marks.

The national strategy to combat VAWG, issued by the Iraqi Ministry of Health, also applies in the KR-I. The Ministry of Health provides integrated health services according to the Multi-Sectoral Referral Pathway for Survivors of Violence issued by the Ministry. Nursing staff and doctors are trained under the Clinical Care Guidelines for Survivors of

Violence, and additional training is provided for doctors and staff in all hospitals, including the forensic medicine department, to address cases of violence. Specialized training is also provided to professionals in psychosocial support centres for survivors of violence, ensuring both staff and doctors receive training.

Main Gaps

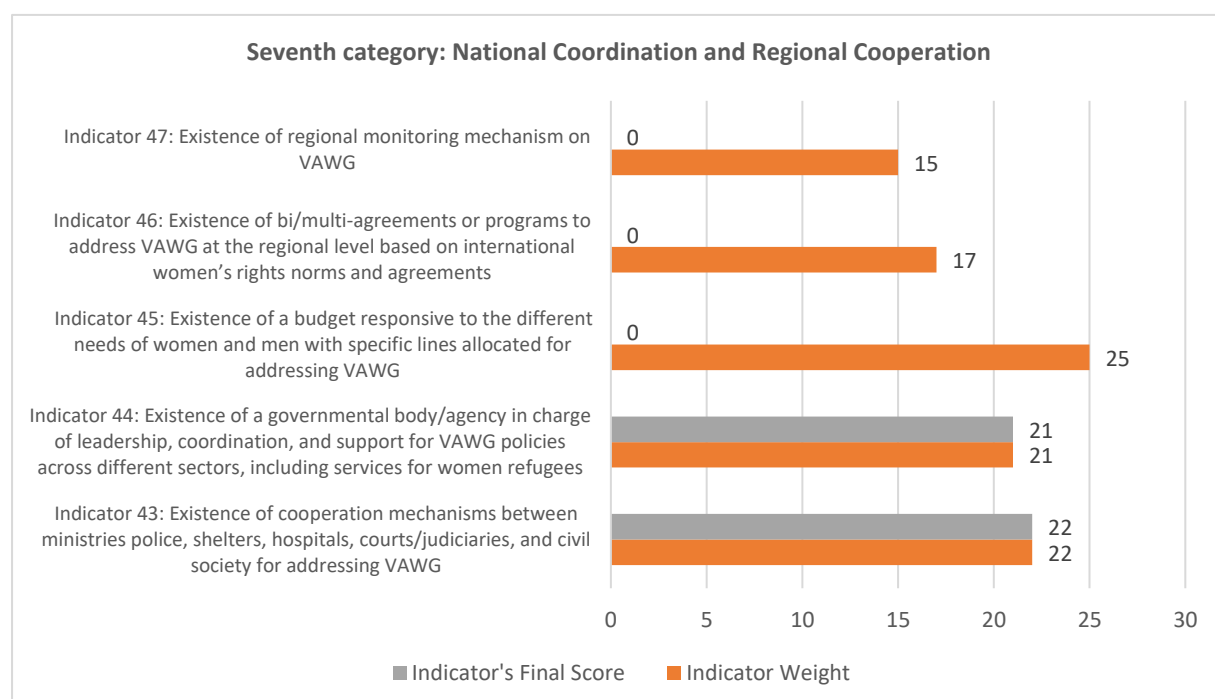
- Trainings are not institutionalized within ministries; they rely heavily on donor or NGO initiatives.
- No sustainable national training curriculum or certification exists for police, judiciary, or health professionals dealing with VAWG.

Recommendations

- Institutionalize mandatory training curricula within police, judicial institutes, and medical schools to ensure sustainability.

❖ *Seventh Category: National Coordination and Regional Cooperation*

This category includes 3 indicators for cooperation mechanisms on national level, and 2 indicators for regional or international cooperation mechanisms. It consists of 13 sub-indicators. It achieved a score of 43.0%, reflecting the existence of some national coordination structures, but with the absence of inclusive budgets responsive to the needs of both women and men, and weak regional mechanisms for monitoring VAWG.



There is cooperation among entities dealing with women's issues, including VAWG, such as the ministries of Justice, Interior, Health, Labor and Social Affairs, the Judiciary in the KR-I, and civil society. Article 3 of the Domestic Violence Law No. 8 of 2011 also sets out mechanisms for cooperation between courts, the ministries of Interior, Health, Labor and Social Affairs, and other relevant institutions and bodies on domestic violence issues. Therefore, *Indicator 43 (Existence of cooperation mechanisms between relevant ministries and civil society organizations)* scored 22 out of 22, showing the existence of inter-ministerial and cross sector cooperation.

Indicator 44 (Existence of governmental agency in charge of leadership, coordination and support for VAWG policies between ministries) also scored full marks. The HCWD oversees inter-ministerial coordination on combating VAWG. Article 4 of its internal regulation (Regulation No. 14 of 2022) states that one of its core tasks is to work and coordinate with regional institutions to strengthen women's capacities across the KR-I.

Regarding the budgets, the KRG does not adopt a budget responsive to the needs of women and men with dedicated allocations for combating VAWG. Since the KRG budget is incorporated into Iraq Federal Budget, Article 28(6) of the 2021 Federal Budget Law required the government to allocate funding for women-related programs and issues. However, the Ministry of Finance in the Federal Government omitted this clause when issuing the instructions for implementation of the 2021 budget law. Therefore, *Indicator 45 (Existence of budget responsive to the needs of women)* scored 0.

There are no bilateral or multilateral agreements at the regional level to combat VAWG based on international women's rights conventions. Therefore, *Indicator 46 (Existence of multilateral agreements or programs to address VAWG)* and *Indicator 47 (Existence of a regional mechanism for monitoring VAWG)* both scored 0.

Main Gaps

- Coordination mechanisms exist but remain fragmented, with cooperation mostly ad hoc and lacking binding institutional frameworks.
- No budget or dedicated financial allocations for combating VAWG within the KRG.
- Absence of regional or multilateral agreements and monitoring mechanisms for VAWG.

Recommendations

- Strengthen and formalize inter-ministerial and CSO cooperation through binding protocols, clear roles, and structured monitoring mechanisms.
- Adopt responsive budgeting to the needs of women and men and allocate specific budget lines for VAWG.
- Engage in regional agreements and establish monitoring mechanisms in line with international standards.



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