

## Evaluation



Through the multi-level approach, which combines the development and qualification of local, state and civil society counselling structures with social work and education, the project significantly improved the counselling services for women affected by GBV.

## Enhanced individual and structural agency to overcome (S)GBV in IDP camps and host communities in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq

The present project “Enhanced individual and structural agency to overcome (S)GBV<sup>1</sup> in IDP<sup>2</sup> camps and host communities in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq” was implemented as a joint project by HAUKARI e.V. and *medica mondiale* e.V. and funded by the German Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ (ÜH)). It aims at qualifying, strengthening, and supporting networks of local governmental and civil society structures in order to create strengthened referral systems and preventive networks for the support of women affected by gender-based violence in IDP camps and host communities in the project regions (Duhok, Erbil, and Sulaimania/Garmian provinces). The final evaluation shows that the highly relevant project was able to reach even more women affected by (S)GBV than planned, despite the challenges posed by the Covid-19 pandemic and the subsequent decrease in government cooperation. Collaboration and mutual referrals between civil society and state actors increased thanks to the project.

**Project duration:** 09/2018 – 03/2022

**Funded by:** German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)

**Project budget:** 1,88 Mio. EUR

**Type of evaluation:** Final evaluation

**Consultant team:** Dr. Luqman Saleh Karim, University of Sulaimani, Social work department; Samya Saeed Khalid Amedi, University of Duhok, The Gender Equality Center

**Evaluation period:** 03/2021 – 09/2021

<sup>1</sup> (Sexualised) Gender Based Violence <sup>2</sup> Internally Displaced Person

## CONTEXT

Large-scale conflict and violence in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI) has resulted in a long history of internal displacement. With the advance of the so-called „Islamic State“ in large parts of Iraq in 2014 around 2.6 million internal Iraqi refugees as well as hundreds of thousands of people from Syria were on the run inside Iraq. Nearly one-third of the refugees have found refuge in camps and towns in KRI, where they live in makeshift conditions. Many women in IDP and refugee camps, as well as in host communities, are and have been subjected not only to gender-based violence during and after the war, but also continue to be affected or threatened by political, social, and also gender-based domestic violence. This situation continues or is even exacerbated by the ongoing political, humanitarian and economic crisis in KRI, in the context of which the destabilization of family life, but also the confinement in the camps, is progressing. Existing state and civil society structures for the protection and counseling of women in situations of violence are overstretched.

The Ministry of Migration and Displacement (MoMD) decided to close all the IDP camps at the end of 2020, and many of these camps have already been closed, with immense pressure being placed on people in the remaining camps to return to their homes or to find a home in a host community. This has caused further destabilization of their lives, especially for women and children who had found stability and support in the camps. Those who have moved into the host communities have struggled to find work because of the economic pressure faced by the region and have poor access to health and livelihood services.

Compounding these difficulties are the severe impacts of Covid-19. Movement restrictions and periods of lockdown during 2020–2021 have led to the cancellation of many development activities and services, especially regarding schools and hospitals. Many people have become sick, and some have lost friends and family members to the pandemic. For the *medica mondiale* and HAUKARI project in particular, the following impacts resulted from the Covid-19 pandemic:

- » the necessity to change the financial infrastructure of the project, from funding for face-to-face activities to provision of personal protective equipment, education on public health regarding Covid-19, etc.
- » the shift to online formats for conducting workshops, seminars, and trainings.
- » the health impact on employees of partner organisations, some of whom became seriously ill, with – at times – the need to close the organisations’ offices and centres.
- » the discontinuity in the awareness and educational courses meant that many of the adult and youth participants forgot much of what they learned from the courses.
- » worsening social relations and social exchanges between IDPs and host communities, together with increased isolation and stigmatisation of IDPs.
- » a lack of general health services, with most of the health sector’s energy being steered towards combating Covid-19.
- » restricted movement and lockdowns have meant that women and children in abusive homes have been held captive even more than usual, adding to their vulnerability and helplessness.
- » the negative economic impact, which has affected all levels of society – in particular, the economic constraints of government employees have resulted in a lower level of cooperation and support for the projects.

These challenges have necessitated changes in the funding and implementation of the project and have changed what has been possible under the difficult social and economic circumstances.



*Through job-related educational measures, women and girls in the target regions are strengthened in their self-efficacy.*

## THE PROJECT EVALUATED

The following are the overall goals of the project that was evaluated:

- » **Outcome A:** Women and girls in the project areas who are affected by (S)GBV are strengthened through improved access to safe places, qualified holistic counselling, and work-related educational measures.
- » **Outcome B:** Multi-disciplinary and inter-institutional cooperation and networking for prevention of and protection against (S)GBV is strengthened.
- » **Outcome C:** The action strategy on prevention of and protection against (S)GBV developed in the frame of the project are taken up and discussed by relevant decision makers (KRG (Kurdish Regional Government)).

## EVALUATION SCOPE AND PURPOSE

The evaluation assessed the success of the project regarding its stated objectives, generating practical hands-on recommendations that can be implemented by the project actors. It was planned as a participatory learning process for all stakeholders involved in the project. Lessons learned

from the project implementation were derived to inform and improve the development of future programming, management and organizational structure and strategy. The evaluation was conducted in line with the DeGEval Evaluation Standards: Utility, Feasibility, Propriety and Accuracy.

## EVALUATION METHODS

The approach of the evaluation was participatory, including collaboration with and inclusion of all project implementers and stakeholders at all levels. The evaluation was a mixed-methods evaluation, with the collection and analysis of both qualitative and quantitative data. A combination of individual interviews, focus group discussions and questionnaires was used. Representative samples of participants from all project implementation areas and activities were included. The closing of certain IDP camps and the reaction of respondents to Covid-19 meant that extensive follow-up was needed to encourage participation and hence a combination of purposive, availability and snowball sampling was used. Data collection was carried out by members of a local evaluation team, in sub-teams consisting of a data collection supervisor and student fieldworkers. Transcribed qualitative data was analysed using thematic analysis. Quantitative data was analysed using descriptive statistics in Excel.

## RESPONDENTS OF THE EVALUATION

The following table summarises the respondents of this evaluation:

| Evaluation sample (All)                                   | Male      | Female     | Total      |
|---|-----------|------------|------------|
| Individual Interview                                      | 25        | 82         | 107        |
| Knowledge Questionnaire                                   | 30        | 151        | 181        |
| Focus Group Discussion (11 FGD (Focus Group Discussions)) | 10        | 52         | 62         |
| <b>Total</b>  | <b>65</b> | <b>285</b> | <b>350</b> |

## FINDINGS OF THE EVALUATION

### Planned and Reached Programme Targets

Many more people were able to access counselling services than the planned number, because of the hotline initiated by the Directorate on Combating Violence Against Women (DCVAW), and the additional mobile teams set in place by the local partner women's centre EMMA.

Fewer people were able to be reached through in-person awareness events, as well as literacy and work-related educational activities, due to the impact of Covid-19 in 2020.

The following table summarises the planned direct participants of the programme 2018-2020.

| Outcome & Measures  | Project Target | Reached 2018-2020 |
|---|----------------|-------------------|
| Trained staff of governmental and civil society counselling structures (target exceeded)  | 102            | 329               |
| Women and men who made use of counselling services (target exceeded)  | 2700           | 13229             |
| Women and girls who participated in work-related educational activities (target could not be achieved due to Covid-19 restrictions) | 3460           | 1771              |
| Women who participated in literacy courses with awareness sessions (target could not be achieved due to Covid-19 restrictions)      | 560            | 231               |
| Women and men who participated in awareness-raising events (target could not be achieved due to Covid-19 restrictions)              | 13239          | 8031              |
| Trained staff members of gov. services (schools, police, judiciary) (target exceeded)   | 1160           | 1162              |

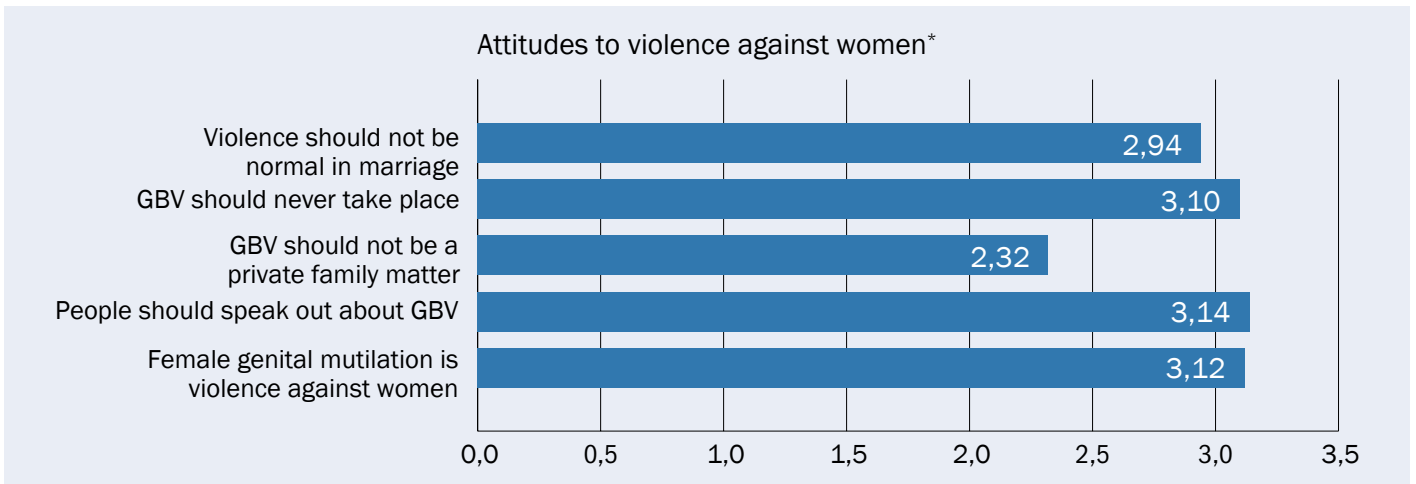
## Findings Outcome A: Women and Girls

The literacy courses were found to be highly effective in attracting women to the project and empowering women. The vocational educational courses led to income-generating activities and even employment opportunities for the women. All courses were helpful in linking women affected by violence to additional services. In each course,

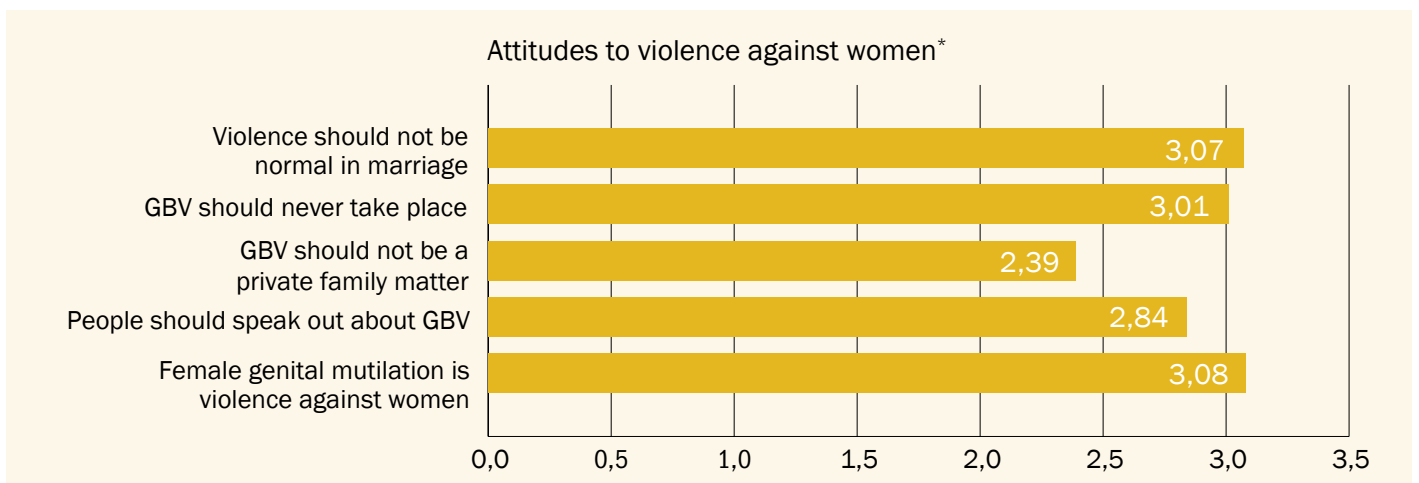
awareness-raising on SGBV and women's rights was offered, leading to the following outcomes:

The women who had attended the educational and awareness courses showed a fairly thorough understanding that any forms of violence against women are inappropriate. The lowest score was about violence being a private family matter.

### Duhok and Erbil:



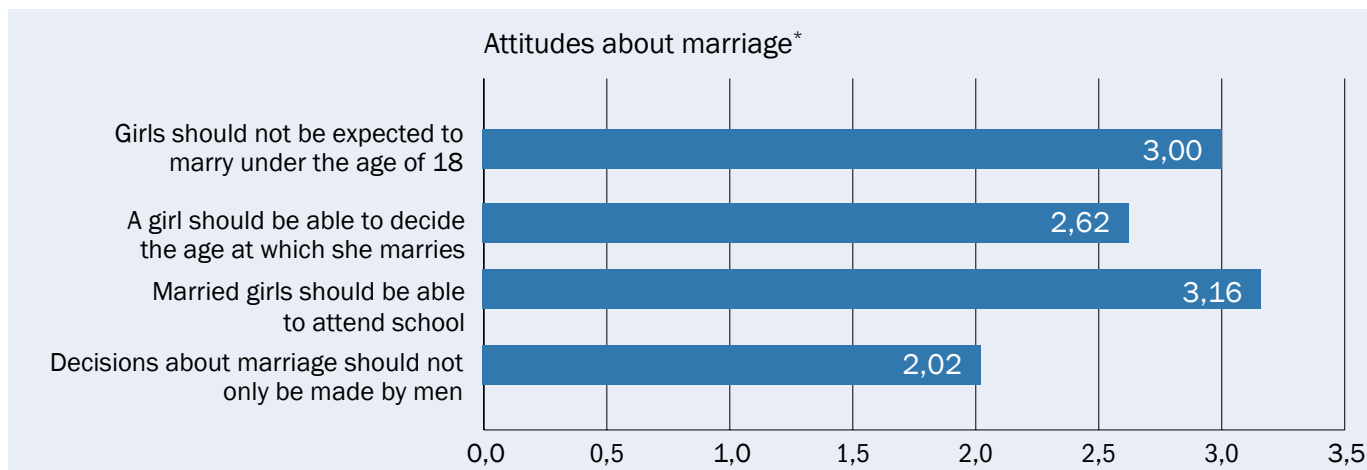
### Garmian/Sulaimania:



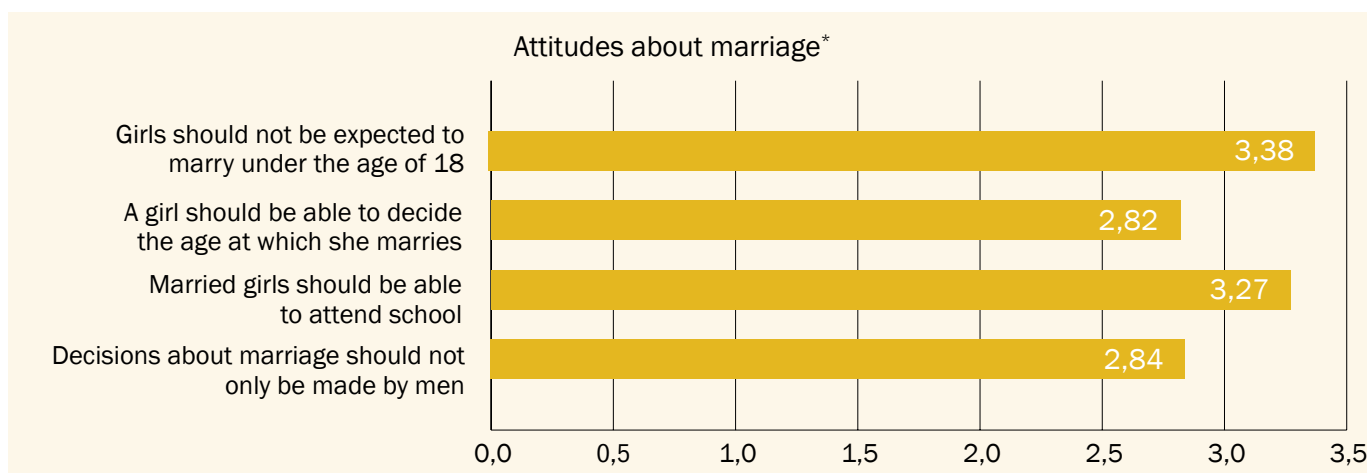
\*Respondents were given five statements and were asked to indicate if they "strongly agree" (4), "agree" (3), "disagree" (2) or "strongly disagree" (1) with each statement.

Similarly, the women attending these courses showed a good understanding of women’s marriage rights:

**Duhok and Erbil:**



**Garmian/Sulaimania:**



**Project staff in view**

An extensive supervision programme for project staff was implemented in this programme, with ongoing training of supervisors and regular provision of individual and group supervision for all psychosocial counsellors, lawyers and relevant government service providers assisting women affected by SGBV through this programme. This component of the programme was highly appreciated, with sophisticated reflections on the value of supervision. It led to project service providers feeling calm, appreciated and more effective in their work.

**Winning initiatives**

Two new initiatives were introduced into this phase of the programme: peer support groups and mobile teams to undertake outreach services to women affected by violence. Both activities were highly appreciated by the women and project implementers, leading to greater reach and referrals of women for holistic services.

\* Respondents were asked to indicate if they “strongly agree” (4), “agree” (3), “disagree” (2) or “strongly disagree” (1) with each statement.

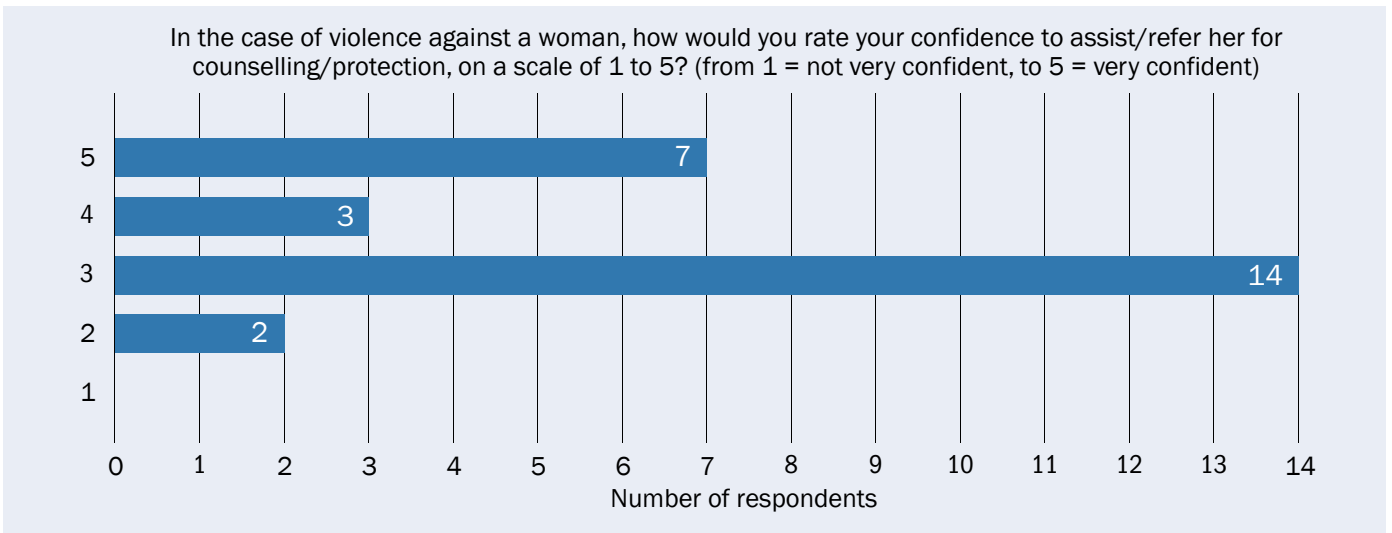
## Findings Outcome B: Networking for Prevention and Protection

The program design emphasised the importance of developing the capacity of government service providers to provide more trauma-sensitive and appropriate services to women affected by SGBV. This included training and logistical support of

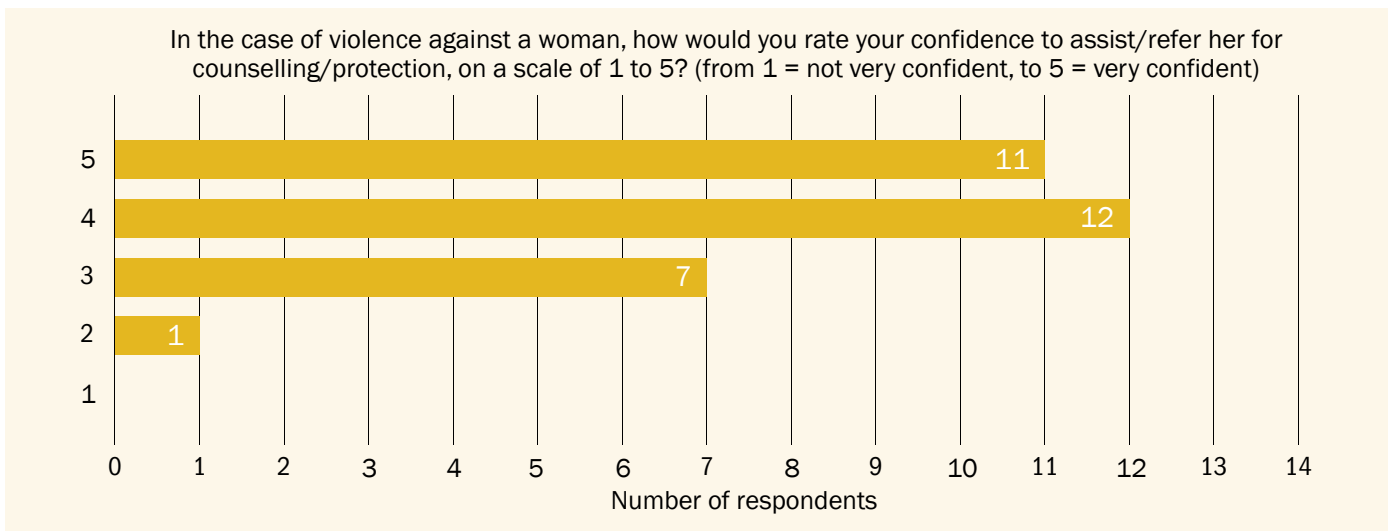
key departments, including police, the DCVAW, women's shelters and civil society counsellors of other NGOs (Non-Governmental Organisations).

The results from the survey questionnaire with all trainees are summarised below, showing a high level of confidence in responding to violence against women:

### Duhok and Erbil:



### Garmian/Sulaimania:



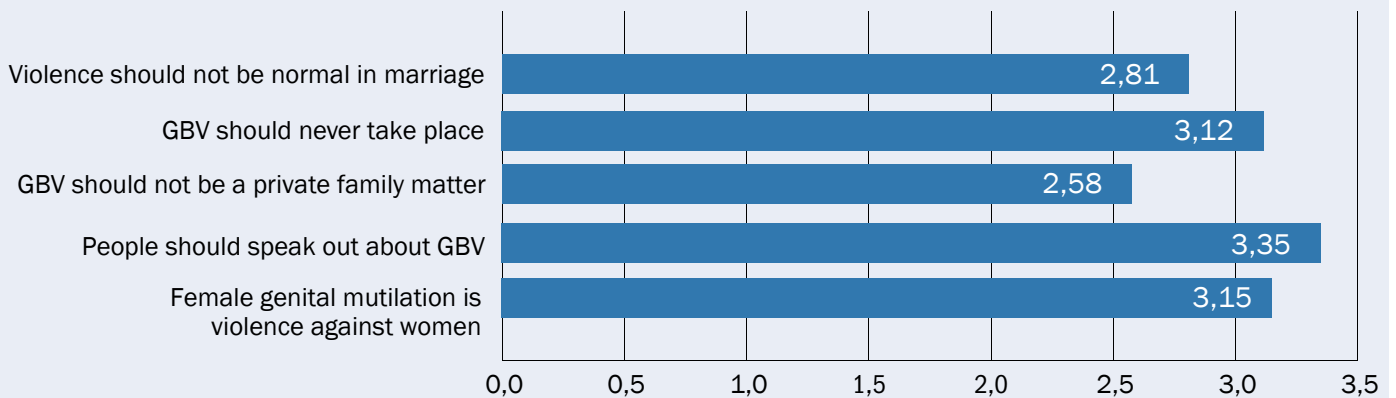


Regular training and supervision for staff of governmental and civil society project partners supports improving knowledge on the stress and trauma sensitive approach as well as on family mediation and (S)GBV.

The trainees showed fairly positive attitudes to the statements against all forms of GBV:

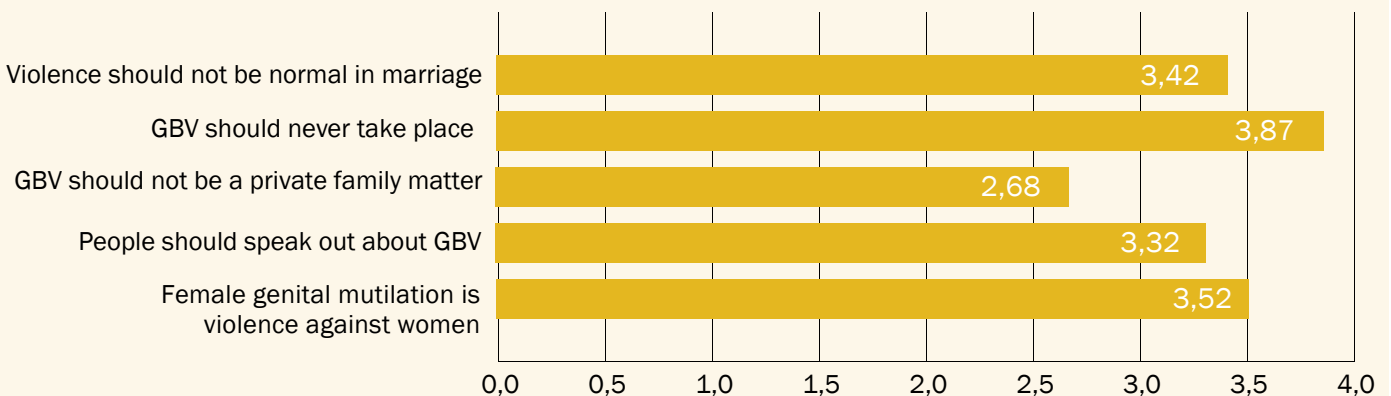
**Duhok and Erbil:**

Attitudes to violence against women\*



**Garmian/Sulaimania:**

Attitudes to violence against women\*

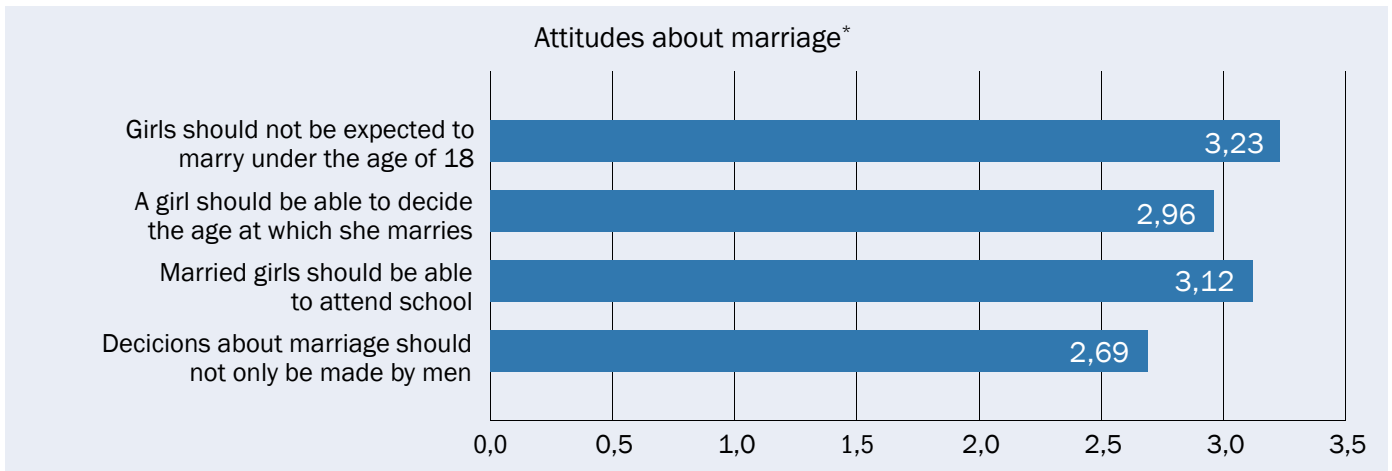


\* Respondents were asked to indicate if they "strongly agree" (4), "agree" (3), "disagree" (2) or "strongly disagree" (1) with each statement.

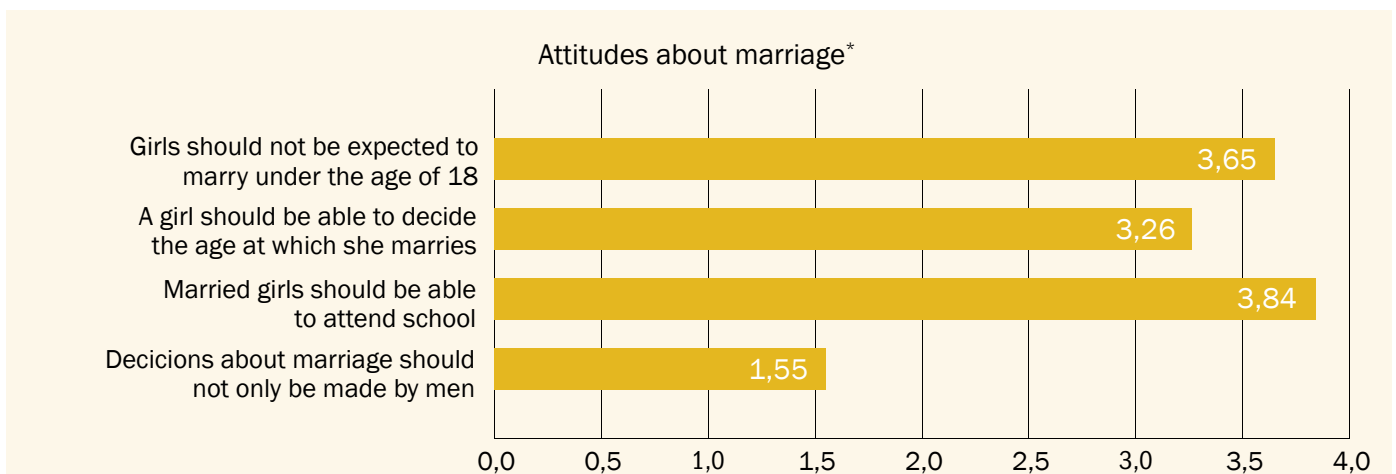


Similarly, trainees showed positive responses to statements revealing attitudes towards women’s rights in marriage:

**Duhok and Erbil:**



**Garmian/Sulaimania:**



The collaboration with state actors was a key aspect of the design of this programme, but one of the most challenging aspects. The extensive administrative requirements in gaining permission to work with government service providers was exhausting and extremely time-consuming for project staff. The financial pressure and budget

cuts of government service providers led to inappropriate and extensive requests for support, which were difficult to manage. Additional logistical support was given for travel, communication, infrastructural development, equipment, and furniture to ensure ongoing service provision to women affected by violence, but a limit was set on not

\*Respondents were asked to indicate if they “strongly agree” (4), “agree” (3), “disagree” (2) or “strongly disagree” (1) with each statement.



Vocational courses have income-generating effects and also offer a protected space for exchange and counselling.

giving financial support for salaries of government personnel.

### **Findings Outcome C: Decision Makers**

One of the successes of the programme was the recognition from the BMZ as a Best Practice example for the National Action Plan for the Implementation of Resolution 1325. All partners reported improved cooperation between project partners, especially between the *medica mondiale* and HAUKARI project managers. The cooperation between EMMA and Khanzad was less effective, mostly due to the different approaches to assisting women affected by violence and the impact of Covid-19, which cut short the exchange activities between the implementing partners.

### **Additional Measures due to the Covid-19 Pandemic**

Conducting an evaluation in the time of Covid-19, and in a context with economic setbacks and political divisions, was extremely challenging and a mirror of some of the challenges experienced in this programme. The programme has done exceptionally well to implement and achieve what it had set out to do and the ratings reflect the contextual challenges more than the model and efforts of this impressive programme.

The project amended its activities during the Covid-19 pandemic. Despite multiple challenges, the responses to the pandemic were fast, spontaneous, flexible, unbureaucratic and responsive to the needs on the ground. The additional services and supplies were relevant to maintain services for women affected by SGBV. The success of this support was in large part due to the effective networking and collaborative relationships already established at a community level, including by mobile teams.

Many of the project activities were continued online and telephonically, such as legal support, counselling, supervision, and training. In addition, the implementing partners provided and disseminated protective equipment such as masks and gloves, sanitisation, and disinfecting services, for example in IDP camps. They developed and distributed Covid-19 awareness materials and campaigns, including films and social media campaigns. The partners facilitated economic strengthening and protection activities such as organising young people in Garmian and women in Erbil to sew masks and protective clothes and organised the provision of food and medical supplies where the economic impact of Covid-19 affected especially women-led households.

## OECD-DAC CRITERIA ASSESSMENT

| Assessment Criterion  | Rating       | Justification   |
|-----------------------|--------------|---|
| <b>Relevance</b>      | Very good    | The project design and intended beneficiaries are highly relevant, progressive, and unique for this region. The combination of psychosocial support, addressing contextual concerns of project beneficiaries (such as material or economic needs, education, health etc.), the legal support and protection for women affected by SGBV, along with systemic family mediation and reconciliation, is highly appropriate to this context of multiple parallel challenges. The organisations focused their work in under-resourced areas, not already supported by government and other civil society services. The relevant provision of PPE (Personal Protective Equipment), sanitation, and other forms of support in relation to the Covid-19 pandemic was done in a focused and reflective way to continue supporting the objectives of the programme of strengthening services to women affected by violence.  |
| <b>Coherence</b>      | Good         | The programme contributes to and aligns with general SGBV international standards and initiatives in the region, bringing major areas of added value to avoid duplication, such as a specialised focus on a trauma sensitive approach, self-care, and supervision of service providers. The coordination with and strengthening of key services for women affected by SGBV, such as DCVAW and police make the programme very coherent in this region. The programme is internally coherent, and its components contribute towards one another's achievement, for example working in parallel with DCVAW, police, civil society to address the needs of women affected by SGBV.  |
| <b>Effectiveness</b>  | Good         | The decreasing cooperation of state actors during the second phase of this programme made the approach of strong involvement with state actors difficult to maintain and the implementers described increasingly taking over the state services to continue their provision. Despite these contextual challenges, the programme was effective in reaching its original outcomes in that it was highly focused on and reached even more women affected by SGBV than planned. It provided psychosocial, legal, and work-related educational measures. The mobile teams and hotlines were especially effective in reaching intended beneficiaries and making accessible a range of holistic services in under-resourced areas. Offering educational courses to attract women affected by violence for a holistic range of services is extremely effective. The supervision of key service providers strengthened their capacity to address complex cases of women and families affected by SGBV. |
| <b>Efficiency</b>     | Satisfactory | The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and the decreased state cooperation with increased administrative requirements and requests for resources from the government meant that the project was less efficient than was planned. Changes in the resources offered were necessary to deal with these challenges and these were done flexibly and rapidly.   |
| <b>Impact</b>         | Good         | There was a reported increase in the overall impact objective of increasing cooperation and mutual referrals between the civil society and state actors such as DCVAW and police, thanks to this programme. The programme was successful in providing safe spaces for women affected by SGBV to receive counselling, protection, and educational support, with tangible results in the women's wellbeing.   |
| <b>Sustainability</b> | Satisfactory | The project by design is sustainable with an intense focus on the capacity building of government services and civil society. However, the above-mentioned challenges in working with state actors (especially at higher or central levels of government) negatively affected sustainability, with a reliance on committed individuals working at local levels. The closing of some IDP camps means a need to remain responsive in following up the women returning to their home communities or integrating into host communities to sustain the gains achieved.   |

## RECOMMENDATIONS

For the remainder of this project period, it is recommended to continue or strengthen activities in the following areas:

- » Continue responding flexibly to beneficiary practical and educational needs in times of Covid-19, including meeting in bigger spaces and provision of PPE, emergency, and material support
- » Further intensify the focus on SGBV awareness raising, especially honing in on the attitudes to violence against women as a private family matter rather than a point of public concern, marriage rights of females and gender roles, according to the specific results of this evaluation
- » Build the capacity of peer-led support where possible, especially amongst women who have left the IDP camps and are now living in host communities, as well as extending the reach into outlying areas requesting more support
- » Strengthen the capacity of the effective mobile teams to ensure their safety, sufficient specialised personnel resources, and sustainability in the light of the resulting high caseloads, complex and emotionally demanding cases
- » In Garmian, continue to try to track and support women and families who are integrating into host communities with holistic services
- » Continue to challenge and capacitate media in constructive representations of women affected by violence, including the proposed collective development of a media policy for the region
- » Continue the much-appreciated work done on self-care and organisational wellbeing, including this component in further planning and costing
- » Continue to increase and capacitate the supervision team in a thoughtful and self-reflective manner, to respond to the increasing requests for supervision
- » Focus on documentation and dissemination of the holistic models of intervention developed, for example, create video materials and other publications which may be used in KRI and other contexts
- » Continued strengthening and capacity building on the local organisations' monitoring and evaluation systems, which have notably improved since the previous evaluation. This can be done through:
  - » Summarising and documenting the key feedback from the evaluation forms for institutional memory and to be readily available for more formal internal review and evaluation processes
  - » Redesigning the pre- and post-tests to allow for better data collection and monitoring, and to align the test measures more closely to the outcomes and indicators of the programme matrix and international GBV standards, especially practise outcomes, not only knowledge- and attitudinal-related information
  - » Summarising and documenting (preferably in the form of a simple data base) the pre- and post-test results for institutional memory and formal internal review and external evaluation processes
  - » Where possible, increasing the M&E (Monitoring & Evaluation) personnel capacity of the implementing partners since this role seems to fall to busy project managers to undertake under the pressure of an external evaluation.



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Workshop for men about reflection on masculinity in Tazade Camp

Beyond this specific project, the following actions are recommended:

- » Follow up on the IDP camp residents who have left the region, for example, to return to central and southern Iraq, by networking actively with Iraqi women's organisations in those regions to ensure follow-up support
- » Develop clearer memoranda of understanding with government ministries to contain the administrative requests but continue strengthening their services to women affected by violence
- » In this regard, it has been recommended to consider offering some support to central government management even though the organisations remain focused on the under-resourced areas of KRI
- » Given the distance, discomfort, safety, and time spent travelling to outlying areas, it is recommended to discuss strengthening local offices or organisations in outlying areas
- » This local work should include bringing professional legal and psychosocial support to the under-resourced areas. Hotlines and outreach work may then be linked to these local service providers.
- » Peer-led action and outreach work are recommended for future strengthening, given the efficacy of these efforts even in the time of Covid-19 and the need to continue to explore ways of reaching women still 'imprisoned in their homes'.
- » Greater collective (regional) action to strengthen the work with judges, especially on the issue of appropriate referral to women's shelters and experimenting with finding appropriate people to address judges at their level (e.g., fellow judges).
- » Greater collective (regional) action to address structural challenges affecting the important work with shelters. It is notable that the programme has responded to several recommendations emerging from the evaluation of the previous phase, including improved monitoring and evaluation.

## CONCLUDING REFLECTIONS

The key successes of this phase of the programme design and implementation include:

- » The partners taking a needs-based approach that responded to their beneficiary needs:
  - » The mobiles teams, outreach work, peer support, working to strengthen government services to women affected by violence, and responding flexibly to Covid-19 needs
- » Integrating professional and personal (soft) skills into trainings and, modelling a respectful and trauma-sensitive approach to all training participants
  - » Following the trauma-sensitive and holistic approach, making safe spaces, connecting, and empowering women for meaningful participation and engagement in a wide range of topics
  - » Integrating local and international trainers and contextual, case-relevant approaches – thinking globally, acting locally.

### **Text:**

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