

## V. Needs to qualify for election and enhance candidate's proficiency for political participation

The present section provides the outcome of the needs assessed during the interviews. The first part sets out the needs expressed by the members of the PCs in the five governorates, and the second part presents the needs of parliamentarians.

### A. Needs of PC members

The findings of the desk review of literature relating to Iraqi women parliamentarians have revealed that there are many needs expressed for future training opportunities and areas where they need to improve and enrich their skills. The identified needs are

classified into four different categories, namely needs for skills, needs for knowledge, need to expand communication and learn from others, and needs for management and support mechanisms. Tables 7-10 present the findings of the assessment, and list the needs as prioritized by the PC members interviewed.

The tables reveal that in three out of four categories, the highest priority themes are primarily concerned with communication, whether in training, negotiation or interaction with the public, thus pointing to its important function in their lives. The above-mentioned needs can help in counter the stereotypes and promote the credibility of PC candidates in the public arena, and thus help shift public perceptions.

**Table 7. Skills needed**

Themes for skills	Priority	Suggested actors
Negotiation and communication	High	Training institutions, civil society organizations
Formulation of policies and implementation of practical strategies	High	Iraq Higher Election Commission
Use of media to facilitate the work of the Council	Medium	Media Agencies
Mobilization and Advocacy	Medium	Training institutions, civil society organizations
Perseverance, self-confidence, commitment, affirmation, presence and prominence, and exploitation of opportunities	Medium	Training institutions, civil society organizations
Building multi leadership skills and self-confidence to assume leadership roles in their families, communities and public life	Medium	Training institutions, civil society organizations
Mobilization, alliance-building and strategic planning	Medium	Training institutions, civil society organizations
Conflict management and resolution	Low	Civil society organizations
Fund-raising and strategic management of campaign resources	Low	Parties, training institutions, civil society organizations

**Table 8.** Knowledge and information needed

Needs of knowledge and information	Priority	Suggested actors
Iraqi Constitution, internal regulations, parliamentary procedures and constitutional guarantees for women	High	Independent Higher Election Commission
Background on pending legislation	High	Independent Higher Election Commission
Relationships/communication with voters	Medium	Civil society organizations
Regional constitutions and international laws on women's issues and human rights	Medium	International agencies
International Conventions: CEDAW Agreement, Security Council Resolution 1325	Medium	International agencies
Background on Iraq's relationship with neighbouring countries and international treaties	Medium	International agencies
Activities and roles of committees	Low	Independent Higher Election Commission

**Table 9.** Mechanisms needed for encouragement and support

Mechanisms	Priority	Suggested actors
Continuous training in communication and ongoing practice to gain confidence in public speaking, participating in political parties and meetings, and speaking convincingly in their families	High	Civil society organizations, training institutions
Provide a campaign guide to help understand the political environment, (improve the formulation of the personal profile, support women psychologically, increase self-confidence improve time management, target voters, and recruit volunteers)	High	International organizations Civil society organizations
Exchange of International information by reaching out to international organizations	Medium	International organizations
Discuss prominent issues in the media	Low	Media channels

**Table 10.** Actions needed to expand communication and learn from others

Themes	Priority	Suggested actors
Increase contact with the grass roots and ensure communication with civil society and non-governmental organizations	High	Civil society organizations
Form alliances and build relationships with government officials	High	Government institutions
Inclusion of men and women in working groups to train them in implementation of campaign financing	High	Political parties
Encourage women to share their experiences and advice with each other and with voters to keep them informed about the valuable contribution they can make to politics	Medium	Civil society organizations
Work with parties on their internal reform and encourage forming partnerships between parties, parliaments, blocs or women's organizations	Medium	Political parties, coalitions
Document models of successful female parliamentarians to help other candidates build confidence	Low	Civil society organizations
Develop a regional electronic network	Low	International agencies

## B. Additional needs expressed by PC members

Several candidates added needs they wanted included. Relating those needs to the research framework of the constraints discussed earlier reveals that those needs address four challenges, namely: political, economic, structural, and personal technical constraints. Those needs were further classified according to skill, communication improvement, or mechanisms needed.

### 1. Needs to support female candidates to overcome some political constraints

#### a. Skill needs

- Skills for confidence building in parties;
- Conduct courses and trainings in the field of political work and women's rights, especially the CEDAW Convention;
- Organize political awareness courses outside Iraq about legal terms to develop women's abilities to demand their rights and the rights of marginalized people;
- Organize courses on leadership, strategic planning and how candidates can reach their desired goal.

#### b. Communication needs

- Facilitate meetings with Arab women elected representatives to gather information about the electoral culture in other countries.

#### c. Mechanism needs

- Encourage political blocs to actively support the role of women, trust in their capacity and advocate for their rights in tangible ways, and not only theoretically;
- Introduce politics in the school curriculum and at university so that people gain awareness and face no difficulty in running or participating politically.

### 2. Needs to support women to face economic and financial challenges

#### Mechanism needs

- Work with youth volunteer teams as the main supporters of the candidate in the election;
- Provide financial support for campaign;
- Assign a guide or mentor to provide support in leading campaigns;
- Organize public debates with different groups so that the candidate can highlight her ability, culture, potential and development plans.

### 3. Needs to support women to face structural challenges

#### Mechanism needs

- Establish a platform by civil society organizations and voluntary groups to support women candidates.

### 4. Needs to support female candidates to face personal technical constraints

#### Communication needs

- Learn about election cultures in Middle Eastern countries through the exchange of visits and real experience on the ground. This practical experience is likely to increase both understanding and information- sharing.

## C. Needs of parliamentarians

Good practices and strategies to support women candidates and create enabling environment:

During the desk review of the International and regional literature, several good practices to create an enabling environment were identified and presented to the parliamentarians in the individual interviews, in order to discuss with

them their needs for these strategies and their priorities. The strategies presented to the parliamentarians were as follows:

- Create online platforms on Facebook;
- Document experiences on your web site;
- Provide a database on who does what;
- Support institutionalization of a unit within women's organizations with a structure to provide political capacity building;
- Encourage a peer-to-peer approach among female parliamentarians;
- Encourage initiation of a parliamentarian non-governmental organization;

- Promote "global south" experience or Arab-Arab dialogue or international parliaments, and support participation by female parliamentarians;
- Support an observatory for the status of women in women's institutions;
- Initiate platforms between United Nations agencies that support women.

Table 11 demonstrates the outcome of their assessment. It displays the good practice, the priority given by the group of parliamentarians and the actors suggested by the consultant for participation.

**Table 11. Good practice and strategy**

Good practice and strategy	Priority	Suggested actors
Initiate platforms between United Nations agencies	High	International agencies
Build women's political capacities by integrating them into political parties and strengthen their positions within the senior party structures	High	Political parties, Independent Higher Election Commission
Support the institutionalization of an independent body, such as the Human Rights Commission based on Article 108, and with a structure and budget to build women's political capacities	High	Local authorities
Promote the establishment of a special non-governmental organization for women parliamentarians	High	International agencies, Government
Support an observatory for women's status at women's institutions	Medium	Local authorities
Promote Global South experience or Arab-Arab dialogue or international parliaments	Medium	International agencies, Government
Create online platform on Facebook	Low	Civil society organizations
Provide a data base on who does what	Low	Civil society organizations

Initiate platforms between United Nations agencies:

- The experience of Iraq is very meagre and is in need of refinement;
- Platforms between agencies are very important to ensure and increase women's entry in political arena and their sustainability;
- The platform can also strengthen relationships among constituents.

Build women's political capacities by integrating them into political party and organization programmes, and strengthen their positions within the upper party structures:

- Adopt political, institutional and financial guarantees for women in order to ensure equal participation of female candidates in election campaigns;
- Since the public is against the parties, women candidates can be trained by independent civil society groups;
- It is important to qualify and support women candidates to have experience for the next political phase.

Support the institutionalization of an independent body such as the Human Rights Commission based on Article 108, with a structure and budget to build women's political capacities:

- It is important to have a structure to build political capacity and support women;
- It is best to choose the optimal institutions according to the current circumstance.

Promote the establishment of a special non-governmental organization for women parliamentarians:

- Initiate a non-governmental organization to sustain the communication and document the barriers they face and support their work;
- It can be established in the Human Rights Commission because it is independent;

- The non-governmental organization can facilitate the integration of women parliamentarians with their colleagues so they can work collectively and cooperate better together.

Support an observatory for the status of women:

- It is important to support an observatory for women's status;
- Integrate the observatory in government institutions.

Promote "South" experience or Arab-Arab dialogue or international Parliaments and support female participation:

- It is important to communicate and benefit from the experiences of the Global South and establish Arab dialogue to support and encourage women;
- It is important for sharing experiences, provided that its administration is with an international entity outside Iraq and not a regional one.

Create an online platform on Facebook:

- Create an online platform to communicate with each other and assign a leader for this community;
- Document experiences through online platforms;
- Almost all the segments of the society are active on social media and will benefit from online communication.

It is interesting to note that the highest priority was given to the need for the initiation of a platform among United Nations agencies. It is the only good practice that was unanimously selected as such by all the parliamentarians interviewed. An explanation for this might be due to the parliamentarians longing for impartiality and away from tribalism, favouritism or nepotism which they, as shown, suffer from.

## D. Additional needs of parliamentarians

Several parliamentarians from Najaf and Baghdad added needs that address five of the constraints, as follows:

- Financial: provide financial support that facilitates the electoral process;
- Socio-cultural: disseminate culture and awareness that promote the true role of women;
- Political: either abolish the quota or raise the quota to 50 per cent;
- Personal technical: establish measurements for women's competence and ability to communicate with the public and their acceptance for her; organize continuous courses for candidates; provide media support during elections;
- Personal psychological provide moral support, organize meetings with parties outside Iraq to enhance the candidate's confidence in her own abilities and capabilities.