



## United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) Office of Electoral Assistance (OEA)

### Report:

Promoting Inclusive Participation in the Kurdistan Region Parliamentary Elections among women, youth, people with disabilities and minorities



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## SECTION 1: BACKGROUND

Civil society organizations and United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), have a longstanding partnership to promote inclusive elections. During the 2021 federal Iraqi Council of Representatives (CoR) elections, UNAMI through its Office of Electoral Assistance (OEA) supported CSOs through a small grants project to promote participation throughout Iraq. On 22 May 2022, United Nations Security Council also renewed UNAMI's mandate to advise, support, and assist the Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC) and other Iraqi institutions with efforts to strengthen electoral preparations and processes.

Beyond providing relevant institutions with electoral assistance, the support to Civil Society Organizations and networks working in the field of elections is one of the fundamental elements to enhance conducive environment for free and fair elections. Therefore, OEA decided to implement an initiative to lay the foundation for support towards the upcoming Kurdistan regions parliamentary elections, expected to be held in late 2023. The focus of the initiative is on how CSOs can promote inclusive participation in those elections, in particular that of women, youth, people with disabilities, and minorities through public outreach activities.

In line with its mandate and the United Nations global commitment to promote effective civil society partnerships as part of the broad sustainable development agenda, OEA decided to partner with three key CSOs to implement this initiative. The three selected CSOs were the Kurdish Institute for Elections (KIE), Shams Network, and Step Organization for Democracy and Elections (SODE). With their extensive experience in the field of elections and well-established networks of organizations in communities, two 3-day workshops were jointly planned and organized under the leadership of OEA following a 1-day preparatory workshop.

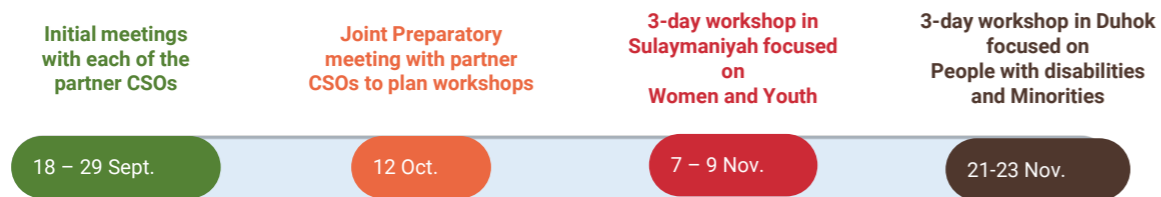


Figure 1: Timeline of the activities leading up to the drafting of this report

## SECTION 2: Rationale, objectives, the role of participating organizations, and methodology

### RATIONALE:

Civil society organizations can, and should, play a pivotal role in promoting inclusive and participatory elections where all eligible citizens have equal opportunities to elect their representatives freely and fairly. Such elections are integral in all democracies. UNAMI Office of Electoral Assistance and Civil Society Organizations are in agreement that inclusive elections requires that all segments of society are actively encouraged and included in all aspects of elections, in particular as voters and candidates. For OEA, this involves providing CSOs with an opportunity to share experiences and knowledge transparently on how to effectively promote participation among social groups that have historically faced electoral barriers.

Women, youth, people with disabilities, and minorities are such social groups. Data on women's participation in KR elections is moderately available. But, for PWDs, minorities, and youth, the official information published is scarce. The Kurdistan Independent High Election and Referendum Commission (KHEC) has not recorded or shared any data on their electoral participation. However, the overall voter turnout has declined over the years in KR parliamentary elections, and turnout in the most recent 2018 election marked an all-time low at 59.8%. It is expected that since the overall participation declines, it is likely that this is also the case among social groups that are underrepresented in the economic, social, and political life.

Since 1992, five electoral contests have been held to elect members of the Kurdistan Region Parliament. Originally slated for early October 2022, the sixth parliamentary election was postponed after political stakeholders' inability to reach an agreement on a number of contentious issues related to the elections, including the renewal of KHEC's mandate. Instead, KR parliamentarians agreed on an extension of the parliaments mandate by a year in a bill with the provision that elections are held at least a month before the end of the extended parliamentary term. This postponement of the parliamentary elections presents CSOs and other interlocutors more time for coordination and to strategically plan efforts aimed at promoting inclusive participation among excluded and marginalized social groups in the upcoming elections.



**Description of photo:** A group photo of OEA staff and 9 CSO participants attending the Preparatory Meeting in Erbil on 12 October 2022.. Photo was taken by Shams Network.

Following the separate consultative meetings with the three key CSO Networks working on elections in the KR region, it was agreed that UNAMI OEA support was needed to promote inclusive participation. In response, OEA decided to initiate a short-term project with three components that enabled a transparent discussion among CSOs on barriers impeding electoral participation and to find solutions that would promote participation by the identified social groups. Those three components, and their key areas were as follows:

*The preparatory Meeting:*

In a consolidated effort together with the Civil Society Organization partners; Kurdish Institute for Elections (KIE), Shams Network, and Step Organization for Democracy and Elections (SODE), OEA held a preparatory meeting with the objective to jointly discuss and plan the subsequent two 3-day workshops scheduled for 7 to 9 November and 21 to 24 November in Sulaymaniyah and Dohuk respectively. A total of 9 staff from the partner organizations attended the meeting held in Erbil on 12 October 2022.



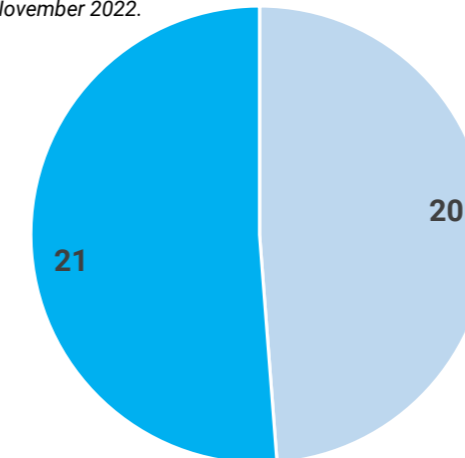
**Description of photo:** Participants discussing thematic areas in advance of the Sulaymaniyah and Dohuk workshops at the preparatory meeting in Erbil on 12 October 2022.

*3-day workshop in Sulaymaniyah: Women and Youth*

This 3-day workshop was held in Sulaymaniyah between 7-9 of November for a total of 41 participants from 37 unique civil society organization. The objective of the workshop was to provide participants with a platform to discuss how to promote inclusive participation among women and youth in the upcoming KR parliamentary elections. Topics for discussion was the social, political, economic, and legislative

barriers that directly or indirect discourage and impede women and youth participation. Moreover, participants also discussed how those barriers can be broken by promoting participation through public outreach activities and awareness-raising.

*Figure 2: The graph indicates the number of women and men participants in the workshop in Sulaymaniyah 7- 9 November 2022.*



- Total number of female participants
- Total number of male participants

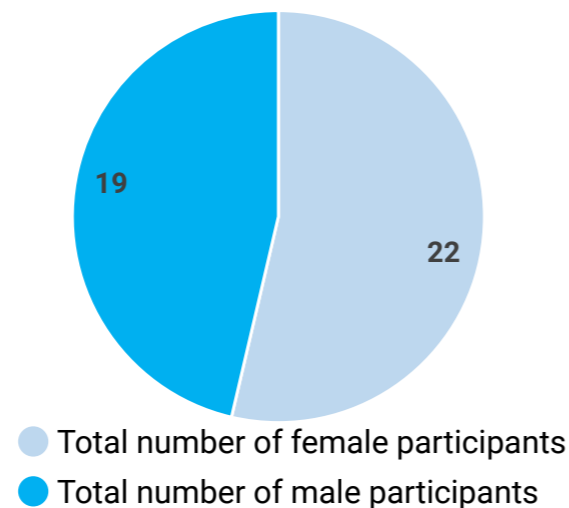


**Description of photo:** The directors of the three partner CSO Networks together with participants from the Sulaymaniyah Workshop.

### 3-day workshop in Duhok: PWDs and Minorities

A total of 41 participants from 38 unique CSOs attended the 3-day workshop held in Duhok between 21-23 November. Facilitated and coordinate by OEA, together with KIE, STEP and Shams Network, the workshop aimed to provide a platform for transparent discussions on the barriers to minorities and people with disabilities' participation in KR parliamentary elections. The topics discussed included socio-cultural, political, legislative, and economic barriers to PWD and minorities participation in KR parliamentary elections. Beyond this, it particularly addressed how CSOs could utilize various social media channels to promote inclusive participation, and recommendations that could contribute to breaking the barriers.

(Figure 3: The graph indicates the number of women and men participants in the workshop in Duhok on 21-23 November.)



Description of photo: A group photo of all participants, including staff from UNAMI OEA, in Duhok on the final day of the workshop (23 Nov. 2022)

### Participating organizations and Coordination

In order to successfully implement this short-term project, OEA sought to establish partnerships with the three CSO Networks to coordinate the planning of the workshops. Based on the initial consultations with



each CSO, and the subsequent preparatory meeting, it was decided that two 3-day workshops would be held for some 40 participants each. The outcomes from the preparatory meeting guided the selection of thematical areas that was discussed during the workshops.

OEA's selection of the three CSO networks to partner with was based on the number of CSOs included in each network and their geographical coverage within the region. The participating organizations were the Kurdish Institute for Elections (KIE) from Sulaymaniyah governorate, Step Organization for Democracy and Elections (SODE) from Duhok, and Shams Network from Erbil. The capacity and technical experience of these organizations also contributed to a constituency in high-level quality of presentations and facilitation of sessions.

Although the project activities were managed and supervised by UNAMI OEA, the three CSO networks played a major role in identifying participants and thematical areas, as well as in facilitating sessions during the workshops.



Description of photo: Mr. Benjamin Osei-Bugyei, Regional Electoral Advisor in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, extends the gratitude of UNAMI and OEA to the three partner organizations for their commitment and partnership at the last day of the workshop in Duhok, 23 November 2022.

## Methodology

Through consultations with the 3 CSO networks, methods and structure of the workshops were agreed upon to optimize the interaction and discussion among participants. Each session consisted of a 30-minute thematical presentation during which key concepts and a framework of questions were introduced, followed by 30-60 minutes semi-led group discussions with some 13-15 participants in each group to address those issues. Outcomes from the discussions were then presented to the full group. This allowed for peer-to-peer brainstorming to find solutions and recommendations on how to break the barriers to electoral participation among women, youth, minorities, and people with disabilities. CSO Participants also benefited from these opportunities by networking and building bridges within and outside the governorate they originated from.



Description of photo: Dr. Aamir Arain, UN Principal Electoral Advisor, gives opening remarks at the workshop in Sulaymaniyah on 7 November 2022.

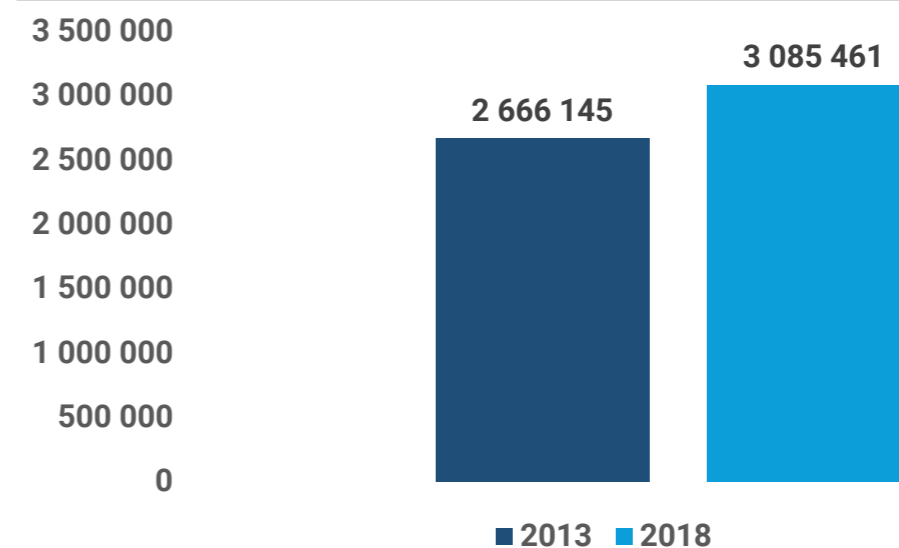
## SECTION 4: Outcomes from desk review and workshops

Based on the desk review conducted by OEA and discussions among the participating CSOs, the following chapter will be outlining outcomes, recommendations, and suggested follow up activities. Initially, the participation and representation of women, youth, minorities and PWDs will be presented to the extent possible, taking into account data limitations. The ensuing subchapters will highlight the results from the discussions with CSO participants during the workshops.

### 4.1 Overall participation and representation

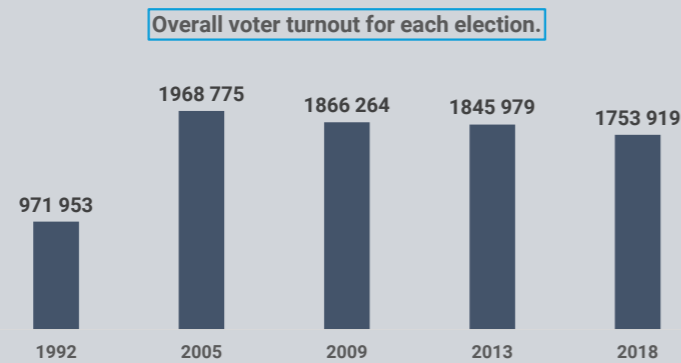
Although it took until 2005 for the Iraqi Constitution to first grant the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) a bundle of legislative and executive powers, the first election was held in 1992. Periodical elections, according to the electoral legal framework regulating KR parliamentary elections, should be held every fourth year. The first election which elected the parliament, at the time called National Council, was only supposed to have a 3-year term and end in 1995. The term was extended by a year and then, due to disagreements among the ruling parties, the Kurdistan Region in Iraq was divided into two administrations. Subsequently, parliamentary elections were not held again until 2005. The volatile situation in the country and the Kurdistan region has resulted in a delay of all elections between 1992 – 2018, either by a few months but also up to 10 years between 1995-2005.

Election for the parliament in the Kurdistan region was first held in 1992, and since then four parliamentary elections has been organized.

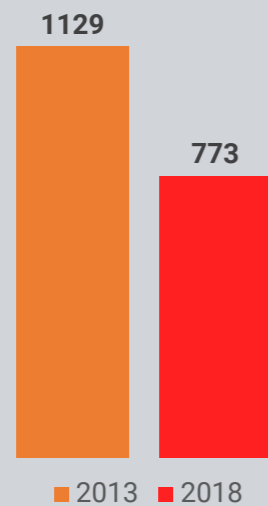


(Figure 4: Number of registered voters in the Kurdistan Parliamentary Elections in 2013 and 2018.)

Eligible voters in the Kurdistan region turned out at a spectacular 87 % in the first 1992 election. However, voter turnout since then has never reached the same levels. In the second election in 2005, after years of civil war between political factions in the Kurdistan region, some 75 % of the registered voters cast their ballots. The following election in 2009 witnessed a slight increase to 78.5 % . However, in the 2013 election there was a drop in the turnout to 74 % of the eligible voters. Although the number of voters who voted did not radically decline between 2013 and 2018, the voter turnout among registered voters plunged to 59 % . One explanation for the decline could be attributable to the increase in registered voters between 2013 to 2018.



(Figure 5: Overall turnout in total number for each election, the data is consolidated from different sources.)



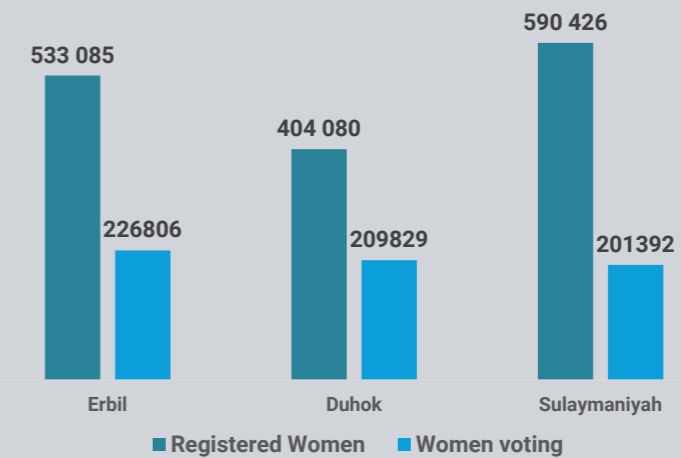
(Figure 6: Total number of candidates that ran in the Kurdistan Parliamentary Elections in 2013 and 2018.)

Another fundamental component in holding genuine, free, and fair elections is to ensure that citizens can exercise the right to run as candidates. Running as a candidate in any election necessitates that an individual and/or entity meets a set of requirements outlined in the legal framework. From a holistic point of view, the level of participation can therefore also be understood by looking at how many people are running in the elections. In the Kurdistan region of Iraq, the total number of candidates between 2013 and 2018 decreased by 31.5 % (from 1129 to 773).

#### 4.2 Women's participation and representation in elections

Available and verified sources on women's participation in Kurdistan region parliamentary elections is alarmingly limited. It's unknown how many women were registered as voters in the region during the 2018 election, how many of the registered women voters voted, and even less so on a granular district level. Geographical distribution is also less known.

However, an indication of the level of participation by women in elections can be found by looking at participation rates from the federal Iraq parliamentary elections. A total of 1 527 591 women were registered in the three governorates of Kurdistan region out of which 638 027 (41.8 %) cast their ballots in the 2021 CoR election. Voter turnout among registered women voters were particularly low in Sulaymaniyah where it only reached 34.1 % . Nevertheless, it is difficult to say if this would be reflected in the upcoming Kurdistan region parliamentary elections. But it is a good enough indication which ought to warrant prompt and appropriate response.

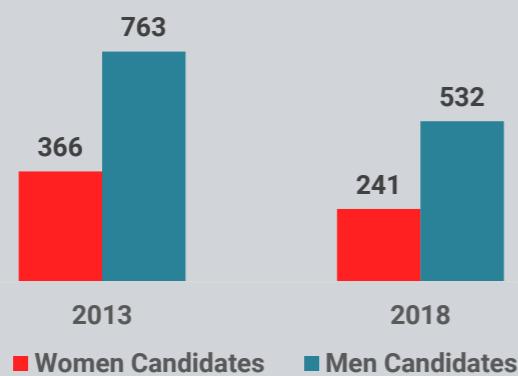


(Figure 7: Number of women registered as voters, and number of women registered voters who voted per governorate in the 2021 federal Iraq parliamentary election.)

Women always had the right to stand as candidates in the Kurdistan region parliament elections, also during the first election where candidate ran for one of the 105 seats. At the time, there was no quota for women. Notwithstanding, 6 women managed to win seats in the KR parliament. As a consequence of amendments to the Iraqi constitution in 2005, a 25 % quota was also added to the electoral

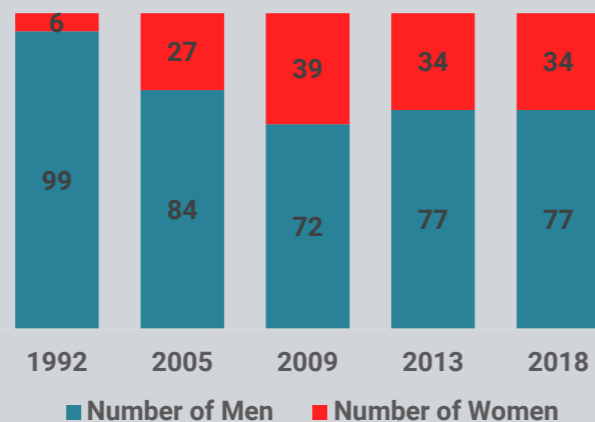
law in the Kurdistan region. This facilitated 27 women to enter the KR parliament as a result of the outcome from the 2005 elections. Another amendment was introduced to the election law in February 2009 that was aimed at promoting inclusive participation. For women, this meant that the quota was increased from 25 to 30 % ahead of the 2009 KR elections. This led to a steady increase of 33 women winning reserved seats. In addition, 6 women won seats outside of the quota. The number of women running for KR parliament decreased drastically between 2013 and 2018, from 366 to 241 (a 34.1 % decrease). Indeed, the total number of candidates plummeted but it is particularly true for women compared to their men counterparts.

It is not clear how many women ran for elections in 1992, but the 6 women that did win seats clearly took a major leap for women's representation. Unfortunately, with the exception of the 6 women that won outside the quota in 2009, few women have won outside of the quota since then. As can be seen from figures 8 and 9, women's representation hardly exceeds the predetermined number of seats reserved through the quota.



(Figure 8: The number of candidates that ran in the Kurdistan Region Parliamentary elections in 2013 and 2018 divided by women and men. On the left are the numbers for 2013 and on the right for 2018.)

(Figure 9: The number of elected women after each election. In 1992 there were 105 seats and 2005-2018 there was 111 seats.)



### 4.3 Youth participation and representation in elections

According to the Kurdistan Region Statistics Office report, 62.9 % of the residents in the Kurdistan region of Iraq are estimated to be under the age of 30 as of 2021. There is a gap in up-to-date official statistics in this regard because of the absence of a recent census. Similarly, the exact levels of participation among young people in the KR parliamentary elections is unknown because of the lack of official information on how many voters are registered in each age cohort and how many voters in respective age cohort voted. However, researchers and CSO experts estimate that as many as 50 % of the eligible youth chose not to cast their ballot in the 2018 election.

Participation rates among young people as candidates, and their representation in the KR parliament, is also difficult to establish due to lack of information. Although candidates are required to provide specific personal information at the registration, including date of birth, any compiled information of candidates ages remain unavailable. Amendments to the election law in 2009, as previously mentioned, also reduced the age requirement related to candidacy in KR parliamentary elections from 30 to 25 years old. The youngest member of the current KR parliament is a female born in 1992, she was one of five Turkmen elected based on the minority quota. Nevertheless, very few of the current elected representatives in KR were under the age of 40, and even fewer under 35, when they entered the parliament in 2018.

### 4.4 People with Disabilities participation and representation in elections

In the report "No One Represents Us" Lack of Access to Political Participation for People with Disabilities in Iraq (2021) by Human Rights Watch (HRW), it is clear that people with disabilities are widely excluded from participating in public affairs, in particular that of elections. Very limited quantifiable information is available regarding people with disabilities in the Kurdistan region. In 2019, the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities stated that Iraq has one of the largest populations with people with disabilities in the world, mainly ascribed to the various armed conflicts. In the governorates of the Kurdistan Region, HRW estimated that 21 % of the households in Erbil includes someone with a disability, 26 % in Duhok, and 31 % in Sulaymaniyah. No information on PWDs registration



as voters nor their turnout is available. This is also the case when looking at whether any PWD have ever contested for a seat in the KR parliament. Nonetheless, it is known that no one with disabilities has ever been elected, leaving a vacuum in their representation

#### 4.5 Minorities participation and representation in elections

The Kurdistan Region of Iraq is well-known for its religious, ethnic and cultural diversity. This includes, but is not limited to, the Kurds, Turkmen, Armenians, Assyrian-Chaldean, and Arabs. On the religious side, there are also Sunni and Shia Muslims, Christians, Yazidis, and Kaka'is. As the religious and ethnic identities tend to overlap, i.e., Christian Assyrian-Chaldeans, the reserved seats through the quota system for minorities is based on ethnicity. Some minorities, such as the Assyrian-Chaldeans, had 5 reserved seats through a quota system at the inception of KR elections. In 2005, the number of reserved seats for minorities through quota was increased to 11 seats out of the 111 KR Parliament, and distributed to: (5) Turkmen, (5) for Chaldean Assyrians, and (1) for Armenians. The same number of reserved seats remains in place today and ensures representation for these three ethnic groups in the KR parliament. As in the case of youth, it's uncertain how many residents belong to each ethnic and religious minority due to lack of reliable census data. Information about the number of registered voters to each minority is also unknown, as is their voter turnout.



Description of photo: Participants discussing barriers to people with disabilities and minorities at the workshop in Sulaymaniyah (22 November 2022)

## SECTION 5: Outcomes from desk review and workshops

Based on the outcomes of the discussions among CSO representatives at the two workshops in Duhok and Sulaymaniyah, this chapter will outline the barriers to participation among women, youth, people with disabilities, and minorities. The first section will address overlapping barriers among the groups. Followed by segments that focus on specific challenges for the respective groups. The final part of this chapter will outline recommendations and suggested follow-up actions that were provided by the participants in the workshops.

### 5.1 Overlapping Barriers

Overall, attendees at the workshop highlighted that limited, and constantly deteriorating, public trust in the elections and politics is one of the main reasons why people refrain from participating as voters and candidates. This is further amplified by a public perception of rampant corruption among political actors in the Kurdistan region, widespread poverty, low levels of employment opportunities, and unsatisfactory public services. CSO representatives focusing on women, youth, people with disabilities, and minorities emphasized that the following barriers prevent, impede, or reduce participation rates:



#### Registration fee for standing in the KR 2018 parliamentary election

**50 000 000 IQD** (Approximately: \$ 42 000) Registration fee for political parties/entities.

**25 000 000 IQD** (Approximately: \$ 21 000) Registration fee for minority groups from Assyrian-Chaldeans

**10 000 000 IQD** (Approximately \$ 8 400) Registration fee for Armenian political parties/entities

#### Social barriers:

- All four groups are faced with **discouragement** from the general public to participate in elections.
- All four groups are faced with different types of **violence** that contribute to their lower levels of participation.

#### Political barriers:

- All four groups believe that there is significant **lack of**

**support** from political parties to stand as candidates in elections.

- All four groups experience **difficulties in becoming active and respected members** in political parties.

**Financial barriers:**

- All four groups highlight that the **cost of standing for elections is too high**. This is augmented by low levels of employment, lack of financial support from political parties, and restricted access to financial resources within the family.

**5.2 Main barriers to women's participation in KR elections**

- Women are prevented from participating due to lack of independence to control what role they should have in the family. Women's role in the family is usually decided by a male family figure, such as the father, husband, or oldest brother.
- A woman's action is commonly linked to the honor of the family, as a result, when a woman decided to defy the decision of their family or the person that decided their social role, the local society could also defame her and her family.
- Women are commonly discouraged from participating in elections as candidates and voters by society and family based on religious or cultural contentions which expect women to be more family focused than participating in public affairs, i.e., politics and elections.
- Women also fear violence and retaliation, in the form of physical abuse or even murder, from the family if they decide to candidate in elections, against the will or decision of the family.
- Barriers that pose a risk to the wellbeing of women candidates, i.e., sexual harassment, stalking, defamation, undermines the willingness among women to stand for election and to cast their ballot.
- One barrier to women's successful participation as candidates is the misconstrued understanding that a quota seat is perceived by the public as a ceiling rather than a steppingstone. By extension, this contributes to the low public and political party support for women candidates due to a misinterpretation of the purpose of the quotas.

**5.3 Main barriers to youth participation in KR elections**

- Young people are perceived by the society as being too young and inexperienced.
- The majority of political parties do not support young people to run as candidates for the KR parliamentary elections.
- Low levels of awareness among young people and the potential impact of holding leadership positions in political parties.
- Young people are discouraged by their family, mainly parents, from participating in elections and public affairs due to the poor reputation of politicians.
- The age requirement set to 25 years old to stand as candidates in KR parliamentary elections poses a legislative barrier to young people running as candidates.
- Young women are faced with more intense public and media scrutiny, and faced with higher expectations from society than that of the men counterparts.
- Young people are perceived by the society as being too young to hold public office or even make their voices heard in elections.
- Widespread perception of electoral fraud among young people discourages them from casting their ballot.

**5.4 Main barriers to people with disabilities in KR elections**

- PWDs are faced with social stigmatization pertaining to their disabilities. It is widely described that disabilities are linked to intellectual capacity.
- Another barrier is the misguided protectionism by society and family which discourage PWDs from participating in elections as candidates and voters because doing so would be perceived as burdensome for the family and the individual.
- Inaccessibility to related election facilities and buildings, such as polling stations and ballot boxes, and voter registration centers, prevent PWDs from participating equally, freely,

and fairly to the same degree as people without disabilities.

- PWDs face difficulty in accessing election-related information and materials on websites, registration and polling spaces. This includes lack of information in braille, large print, easy-to-read formats, and language interpreters.
- PWDs are financially disadvantaged because of fewer employment opportunities which impedes their potential to organize a wider candidate campaign in the elections.

#### **5.5 Main barriers to minorities participation in KR elections**

- Minorities are divided by leading political parties, on the one side a group within minorities is supported by political parties and on the other side minorities are discouraged, in some cases deterred, from participating as both candidates and voters.
- The quota system only includes a limited number of minorities and does not secure fair representation.
- Because of the perceived manipulation of the reserved minority seats by the major political parties among minorities, few are likely to participate as voters due to a lack of real representation.
- Religious and cultural barriers are more common for potential candidates from minorities because of living in traditional and conservative societies.
- Minorities also face religious discrimination where some religious leaders discourage people of a particular religion from voting for people based on their religious background.
- Election-related information in minority languages is unavailable in communities predominantly occupied by minorities.



**Description of photo:** One of the participants giving a presentation following group discussions in Duhok on 22 November 2022.

## **SECTION 6: Recommendations**

### **During the two workshops supported by UNAMI - Office of Electoral Affairs, CSO participants recommended that KHEC should:**

1. Intensify coordination and efforts to monitor online harassment perpetrated on all social medias against candidates.
2. Reduce the registration fee significantly, in particular for women, youth, people with disabilities, and minority candidates.
3. Run targeted media campaigns to encourage women, youth, people with disabilities, and minorities to stand as candidates in the KR parliamentary elections.
4. Ensure that election-related materials on the KHEC website, and in registration and polling places, are easily accessible and accommodate the needs of persons with different types of disabilities. This includes printing candidate lists in Braille, large print, easy-to-read formats, and providing sign language interpreters when necessary.
5. Should implement region-wide and evidence-based public outreach activities, i.e., based on trends of voter participation in specific geographical areas over time.
- 5.2 Implement an inclusionary Age, Gender, and Diversity approach in all outreach efforts.
6. Establish CSO election working groups in the governorate offices prior to election period aimed at facilitating and coordinating the outreach efforts between KHEC and the CSOs.
7. Collect, consolidate, publish and make available official data on participation rates. This should include disaggregated information of voters and candidates (by gender, by age, by geographical area, by disability etc.).
8. Ensure that all election facilities, polling stations, ballot boxes, and voter registration centers are easily accessible for all people regardless of disabilities.

9. Organize information gatherings to share with people with disabilities how to vote and how to register to be a candidate.

**During the two workshops supported by UNAMI - Office of Electoral Affairs, CSO participants recommended that relevant CSOs should:**

1. Establish an inclusive election working group for CSOs covering all governorates in the Kurdistan region to coordinate activities, information sharing of election related materials, facilitate engagement with international community, and to set an action plan for the future KR election events.
2. Implement evidence-based approaches when planning geographical coverage of activities and preparing training materials.
3. Implement inclusive approaches by taking into account how to best reach and facilitate participation in activities by women, youth, people with disabilities, and minorities.
4. Move beyond Civic and Voter Education efforts by promoting candidate trainings for women, youth, people with disabilities, and minorities.
5. Encourage more CSOs to engage in Election Observation.
6. Jointly advocate for establishment of working group to review the electoral legal framework and how it could be improved to promote participation among the four groups.
7. CSOs should work closely with community and religious leaders to break the sociocultural barriers, including religious barriers.
8. Utilize social media by using #hashtags and live-streamed sessions to enable remote participation.
9. Ensure that all external communication with voter and candidates as target audience is distributed in minority languages.
10. Organize capacity building trainings on IT, campaigning, and elections for the four target groups.



**Description of photo:** Dr. Aamir Ara-in, UN Principal Electoral Advisor, gives an opening speech on the first day of the 3-day workshop in Sulaymaniyah.

**CSO participants recommended that Political Parties should:**

1. Provide party candidates with capacity building based on needs of people with disabilities, women, youth, and minorities.
2. Aim to promote participation among party members with disabilities, women, youth, and minorities
3. Actively engage with local communities before, during, and after the election period.
4. Ensure information related to the political party and elections is easily accessible for people with disabilities on the website, and that video advertisements for candidates shown on tv or online includes captions or sign language.
5. Provide financial support to candidates from underrepresented groups such as women, youth, people with disabilities, and minorities.
6. Conduct in-person meetings with people with disabilities, youth, women, and minorities.
7. Adopt party programmes in advance of the election that emphasizes policies that are relevant to women, youth, people with disabilities, and minorities.
8. Introduce voluntary quotas for lists supported by the party to promote participation of youth, people with disabilities, and minorities.



**Description of photo:** A participant is giving a presentation of results from the group discussions in Duhok.



**Description of photo:** A round of presentations of results from the group discussions in Sulaymaniyah.