

## **POLICIES TO REDUCE THE FEMINIZATION OF POVERTY AND COPING MECHANISMS IN IRAQ FOR THE PERIOD (2014-2021)**

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### **Abstract:**

This research aims to advocate for the adoption of new policies and strategies based on strengthening the role of women and empowering them economically, after women faced many difficulties and challenges that limited their access to economic resources, in addition to the high level of discriminatory gaps between the sexes and inequality due to customs and traditions that affected their participation rate. The research assumes that "the deterioration of the economic and social reality affected by the political and economic instability and the diversity of crises and their repercussions has contributed to the deepening and rooting of the phenomenon of feminization of poverty in Iraq." Most of the national and international commitments related to women's rights on the ground, and perhaps the absence of executive action plans, financial budgets, and timetables for implementation are reasons for delaying the advancement of Iraqi women and their lack of access to their economic, social and environmental rights. Iraq, which is concerned with the poverty of women with the aim of t Achieving sustainable growth and empowering poor women through education, training and employment.

**Keywords:** feminization of poverty, policies and strategies

### **An introduction:**

The world is witnessing a number of environmental and health changes, crises, and disasters that imposed a new thorny reality full of problems and challenges that impede the achievement of sustainable development goals and raise the level of their achievements. And the diversity of the discriminatory gap against women and their departure from the right approach, which generated a state of separation between the absence of rights and equality, which deepened the phenomenon of the feminization of poverty in Iraq and made it a phenomenon of depth. This requires reform efforts through plans, programs and strategies with responsive mechanisms to limit the exacerbation of the repercussions of this phenomenon among The women of Iraq in light of the state of renewed uncertainty in which the world in general and Iraq in particular live.

### **Research importance:**

- 1- Introducing the causes of the feminization of poverty in Iraq.
- 2- Identifying and naming mechanisms for confronting and repelling women's poverty in Iraq and ways of their economic empowerment.

### **Research problem:**

The research problem is due to the association of Iraqi women's poverty with a group of reasons that led to their exacerbation and emergence as a phenomenon in Iraqi society. And the fall of women in the bottom of poverty.

### **Research hypothesis:**

The deterioration of the economic and social reality affected by the political and economic instability and the diversity of crises and their repercussions have contributed to the deepening and rooting of the phenomenon of the feminization of poverty in Iraq.

### **Search target:**

- 1- Theoretical framing of the phenomenon of the feminization of poverty.
- 2- Pointing out the repercussions of the reasons explaining the poverty of Iraqi women.
- 3- Introducing policies, legislation and laws that can contribute to the empowerment of women.

### **Research Methodology:**

The inductive-analytical method was relied upon to reach the goal of the research and prove its hypothesis.

Spatial and temporal boundaries Spatial boundaries: Iraq / Temporal boundaries: 2014-2021

### **Research Structure:**

In order to achieve the methodology and objectives of the study, it was divided into three sections, in addition to the conclusion that included the most important conclusions and recommendations. The first section dealt with the phenomenon of the feminization of poverty..... conceptual indications and theoretical frameworks. The third topic is the empowerment path for Iraqi women to reduce the phenomenon of feminization of poverty.

#### **The first topic**

#### **The phenomenon of poverty..... Conceptual indications and theoretical frameworks**

#### **The first requirement: poverty... preliminary concepts**

#### **First: the concept of poverty:**

The concept of poverty is one of the abstract and relative concepts, which attempts to describe an extremely complex and intertwined economic and social phenomenon that has been formed and rooted throughout history and times and in multiple and diverse societies and for different reasons. (Al-Faris, 2001, p. 16)

Accordingly, the concept of poverty is a dynamic and relative multi-dimensional concept, and its quality is related to time and place. We will try to define the meaning of the word poverty (poverty) linguistically and idiomatically.

#### **Linguistically poor**

Poverty is the opposite of wealth: in it a person becomes needy, and he has no sufficiency, as it also means need and want: and the poor are the faces of poverty, where it can be said that God has filled his poverty: that is, in the sense of his richness. (Ibn Mandur, 1414, p. 60)

#### **Poverty, idiomatically**

The scientific meanings of the term poverty have multiplied and varied, and this multiplicity results from the multiplicity and diversity of the dimensions of poverty, as well as the diversity of poverty itself and its causes that led to its increase and development, in addition to its association with the effects resulting from it, and among the following definitions:

- The definition of the economist (Adam Smith), the author of the book *The Wealth of Nations*, poverty as "the inability to purchase the necessities required by nature or custom." Because Smith mentioned custom, then he is talking about relative in concept and not the absolute formula. Customs and traditions, as it is known, differ between societies and times. (Martine, Davis 2014,p7)
- As for the definition launched by the Indian philosopher and economist (Amartya Sen) about poverty, it is based on ability. In his opinion, a person's life can be defined as a set of works or jobs that range from basic issues such as good nutrition to more complex concepts, such as enjoying self-respect, Or the ability to participate in civil and public life and deal with the general ability of the individual from a variety of jobs, and his book *Poverty and Famine* in 1981 can be considered the basic building block for this definition, and thus he developed the concept of poverty in a broader framework than mere lack of income to the lack of capabilities and capabilities of the poor and their access to public services (Al-Tanir, 2009, p. 46).
- As defined by the United Nations in 2019, it is more than a mere lack of resources and income or ensuring a sustainable source of income, as its manifestations include malnutrition, hunger, lack of access to education and basic services, in addition to gender, exclusion from society, and lack of opportunities to participate in decision-making. decisions.”

It is clear from the foregoing that the concept of poverty has evolved to become more than just a minimum income or a certain level of consumption, but rather it has come to represent severe deprivation of a satisfactory life, material deprivation of income, health, education and housing, and suffering from exposure to risks such as disease, violence, crime, disasters, dropping out of education, loss of freedom of expression and marginalization Social exclusion and the loss of rights and freedoms, all of which fall under the umbrella of the concept of (multidimensional poverty), and as defined by the United Nations, "is depriving a person of the ability to live in freedom and dignity like any human being with full capabilities to achieve the desired goals in his life. Poverty has many manifestations, as it is represented in lack To sufficient income and productive resources to ensure sustainable means of earning a livelihood, and it also includes various other types of deprivation such as food insecurity and lack of health care, education and other basic services. (ESCWA, 2017, p. 4)

### **The second requirement: the concept of the phenomenon of feminization of poverty**

#### **First: the concept of feminization of poverty**

The issue of women's poverty is one of the issues that have increased global and regional attention due to the social weight that women represent, as the progress of societies is linked to the progress of women and their participation in the events of social and economic development. Women. (Hassanin, 2020, p. 848), and the phenomenon of the feminization of poverty has been defined by more than one definition as a result of the different narratives, ideologies, and concerned parties that dealt with the study of the phenomenon, as shown in the following:

- The International Labor Organization defined the term feminization of poverty as: “The percentage of poverty among women is more than that of men, and the severity of poverty among women is greater compared to men”, due to the preoccupation of women in unpaid roles (motherhood and family care) and in return men are engaged in work Paid wages, which led to

the concentration of money in the hands of men in exchange for the poverty of women. (Obeidat, available on the following website)

● As for the Human Development Report issued by the United Nations in 1997, it defined it as: “Lack of equal opportunities in education, employment and ownership of assets means providing fewer opportunities for women, just as poverty deepens gender gaps” (Fayoud, 2010, p 84).

The United Nations has paid attention to the issue of women and their poverty and came to separate the issue of women from men and their families on the basis that the suffering of women resulting from family disintegration differs from the suffering of men.

The phenomenon of feminization of poverty in many regions of the Third World countries has been associated with multiple and various reasons, including the high percentage of the burdens of supporting the family, as a result of the increase in the number of its members, which is considered one of the reasons explaining this phenomenon, which prompted the United Nations to take some means to reduce the population increase represented by encouraging women To reduce the levels of childbearing and pregnancy for fear of exacerbating the phenomenon of poverty. (Al-Katirji, 2006, p. 314), and accordingly, the general concept of the feminization of the poor refers to three facts:

- 1- Women are more vulnerable to poverty than men.
- 2- The impact and impact of poverty on women is greater than on men.
- 3- The high poverty rates among women is attributed to the high burden of economic support resulting from the increase in the number of single family members, especially families headed by a woman. (Al-Ashry, 2017, p. 13)

The procedural definition of the concept of women's poverty: It is the change in poverty rates that is biased against women or families headed by a woman, as the percentage of the latter varies, up and down, according to the reasons that led to the exacerbation of this phenomenon. The phenomenon of feminization of poverty in many regions of the Third World countries has been associated with multiple and various reasons, including the high percentage of the burdens of supporting the family, as a result of the increase in the number of its members, which is considered one of the reasons explaining this phenomenon, which prompted the United Nations to take some means to reduce the population increase represented by encouraging women To reduce the levels of childbearing and pregnancy for fear of exacerbating the phenomenon of poverty. (Al-Katirji, 2006, p. 314), and accordingly, the general concept of the feminization of the poor refers to three facts:

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**The procedural definition of the concept of women's poverty:** It is the change in poverty rates that is biased against women or families headed by a woman, as the percentage of the latter varies, up and down, according to the reasons that led to the exacerbation of this phenomenon.

**Second: the historical roots of the phenomenon of feminization of poverty**

The difficult living constraints experienced by a large and growing number of poor families, especially those headed by women worldwide, whether in developing or developed countries, have prompted the emergence of the term feminization of poverty, which gives a new meaning to poverty related to women more than to men, because women are more exposed to poverty and more affected by it. In addition to the most suffering from it, and the reason for this phenomenon lies in the sexual division of labor that made paid work the responsibility of men, while women perform unpaid tasks (Al-Kafaween, 2015, p 1229), as well as the type of work that is practiced outside the home, which is characterized by a low level of wage. In it, the poor woman was exposed to harm from three aspects:

- The first: the difficult economic conditions in which you live.
- The second: their suffering from cases of economic, social, political and cultural discrimination, which limited their status and the level of their economic participation and development work.
- Third: High rates of unpaid family support, as the head of the family is primarily responsible for childcare.

There are other dimensions that explain the reasons for women's entry into the cycle of poverty in greater proportions than men, including the division of social work on the basis of gender, which made there jobs that are exclusively available to men based on strength and muscular energy, and therefore this idea made men control the most valuable types of work, as well On the distribution of sources of domination over the family and local communities, whether in a direct material way or in a symbolic way, which established a kind of subordination of women to men, and this dependence intentionally weakened women. Therefore, it can be said that the weakening of women is a composite image resulting from the accumulations of the results of the distribution of sources of power at the community level. between women and men. (Zaher, 2015, p185), and as a result of the importance of the subject for researchers in the field of women and poverty, many studies and researches appeared that sought to find plans and policies in order to alleviate poverty for women. As a result, the term feminization of poverty appeared, and the first to use this term (Diana Pierce) in 1976 when she noticed that poverty had become a women's problem in the United States of America, and she indicated that about 2/3 of the poor over the age of 16 were women And that almost half of the poor families are headed by women. (Bukhari and Hariri, 2020, p 116)

Global interest in the social effects of poverty has increased and the concept of sustainable development is linked to the issues of participation, which does not mean only that poor women have access to resources, but rather that they play an active role in overcoming the conditions that perpetuate poverty. CEDAW in 1979, the Nairobi Conference in 1989, and the Copenhagen World Summit for Social Development in March 1995, in addition to the Women's Conference in Beijing in 1995, when poverty eradication was considered a moral, social, political, and economic requirement. In this regard, 1996 was declared the year of poverty eradication (Zaher, A previously mentioned source, p. 185-186), and despite that, the term feminization of poverty was launched worldwide in 1995 during the Fourth United Nations Conference on Women, which aroused unprecedented interest towards women in international forums. The cornerstone of poverty alleviation speeches and policies and also embodied in long-term strategies and the promotion of its broader participation in income-

generating activities through paid work or other activities Self-employed, in which financing small projects plays a vital and important role. (Al-Ramekh, 2011, p. 4)

In 2009, the phenomenon of women's poverty witnessed a new expression that gives a picture of a syndrome between poverty and women through the findings of the Economic Crisis Conference in the same year, in terms of the fact that poverty has a (female face), and considering it an existing fact, and that the economic crisis has great effects and consequences, especially on girls. It reduces individual incomes and limits family budgets, which has exacerbated poverty. (Bukhari and Hariri, a previously mentioned source, p. 115)

With the development of interest in women's poverty issues, the World Bank stressed in 2011 the right of women to obtain a sustainable income, through the report that was issued entitled (The International Development Report on Equality on the Basis of Gender and Development), and based on the process of equality and the empowerment of women in order to reduce poverty, the announcement was made On the Sustainable Development Goals (2015-2030) as part of the United Nations SDGS program) These goals included a stand-alone goal represented in equality on the basis of gender and the empowerment of women and girls. It is possible to infer the extent of the importance of the term or concept of the feminization of poverty and its universality through a report statement United Nations of 2016, which indicated that (sustainable development can never be achieved if the phenomenon of feminization of poverty continues), which means that the term feminization of poverty is a global concept inferred by the type of poverty that afflicts women. (UN Women, 2016, p. 4 )

### **The second topic**

#### **The causes of the phenomenon of feminization of poverty in Iraq after 2014**

Iraq, like other developing and low-income countries, is characterized by an increase in marginalized groups as a result of crises and uncontrolled and faltering conditions that targeted society in all its categories, but women took the largest percentage of these groups compared to men. Discrimination is to make men the first priority according to the visions of some national policies, plans and strategies, followed by women. Therefore, this feminization of poverty will generate multi-faceted effects, which are embodied in weakening the capabilities of its response to educational, health and economic empowerment, which leads to making it a burden on the second half of society. This The reality prompted the federal and local authorities to take measures and plans aimed at advancing the conditions of women and removing the largest number of Iraqi women from the poverty line. However, according to the available indicators, we notice an increase in poverty rates among women.

#### **First: the educational status of women**

The process of empowering women through the educational aspect is a basic and important factor that qualifies them to enjoy the benefits of human rights because increasing the level of education gives them the opportunity to enjoy other rights and freedoms and enhances opportunities to participate in economic work on their part, and despite the campaigns to combat illiteracy that were adopted in Iraq to address this problem, it is The level of illiteracy is still high among the population, both men and women, for several reasons, some of which are related to the individual himself, including the wars, the economic blockade in the nineties, and the individuals' pursuit of providing a living, in addition to the events that followed in 2003 in Iraq, including terrorism and the entry of terrorist groups and fighting them, which led

to the deterioration of the economic situation For the Iraqi family in particular and for the country in general, as well as the displacement of families to places of shelter and their interruption from studies, and these reasons combined and helped to increase the rates of illiteracy in Iraq and also to the dropout of students from Iraqi schools and non-enrolment in schools in their various stages, despite the efforts of the Iraqi government To raise the level of education through the proposed strategies, including (the national strategy for the eradication of illiteracy for the period (2016-2024). ), related to education, but it did not achieve the fourth goal of the sustainable development goals embodied in (quality and equitable education for all segments of society). (Al-Kinani, 2020, p 5)

And it is possible to monitor the level of groups that did not have access to educational opportunities and put them in the category of uneducated, through the indicator (illiteracy rate in Iraq) for both (males and females) and according to the data shown in Table (1) and my agencies:

**Table (1) Percentage Distribution of the Population 12 Years and Over by Educational Level and Sex for the Year (2020-2021)**

The details	Attended %			Countryside %			The total %		
	males	females	total	males	females	total	males	females	total
illiteracy	6.7	15.3	11.0	12.7	28.5	20.5	8.2	18.5	13.4

**Source: - Ministry of Planning, Central Agency, Results of the Integrated Survey of the Social and Health Conditions of Iraqi Women (I-WISH) for the year 2021, p45.**

From table (1), we note that the level of illiteracy among women is higher than that of men, and this is indicated by the indicator of the level of illiteracy in which the percentage of women reached (18.5%) of the total

The number of illiterates is (13.4%), compared to the percentage of males (8.2%). The geographical distribution of these percentages varies according to the environment (urban and rural areas), where the illiteracy rate was higher among females in the countryside, amounting to (28.5%), while the percentage of males reached (12.7%). ) of the total illiteracy rate in rural areas amounting to (20.5%) for the year (202-2021), while the illiteracy rates for females in urban areas for the same year were recorded (15.3%), while for males it amounted to (6.7%) due to the deterioration of the political and economic conditions, which indicates that The illiteracy rates for both sexes in rural areas are higher compared to urban areas, in addition to the fact that illiteracy rates among rural women are twice as high as those among urban women. It is worth mentioning that there are reasons (institutional and social) behind the increase in illiteracy rates among women. (United Nations to help Iraq, 2021, p. 9)

**Social reasons:** embodied in the presence of stronger traditional beliefs in rural areas, which see that girls do not need education because they play a caring role and participate in household chores.

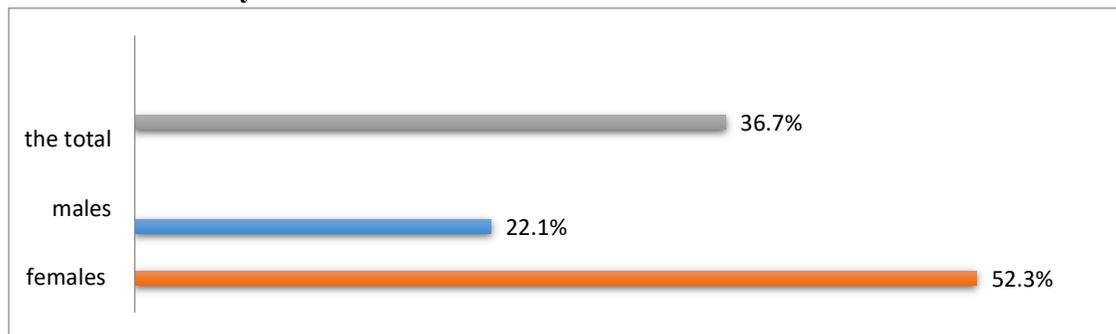
**Institutional reasons:** It goes back to the fact that most of the females study in schools that are still mostly built of mud and far from their places of residence, which burdens the family financially, leading to a lack of enrollment in schools.

There is no doubt that the high rates of illiteracy among women in this way leads to a decrease in the possibility of women entering the labor market, especially in light of the

successive developments towards the transition to the digital economy, which makes them almost non-existent opportunities for entering the labor market, and this is what contradicts the principles of the sustainable development plan.

In addition to the foregoing, the indicator of the youth enrollment rate in education, work and training is also one of the indicators of the sustainable development goals. Among females, the rate of male youth is higher at 52.3% and 22.1%, respectively, which explains to us the weak qualifications that allow women to compete positively and access equal opportunities with men. With the absence of learning through training, which deepens the phenomenon of the feminization of poverty, and this is what we notice from Figure (1), which shows the percentage of male and female youth who are not enrolled in training and education, as follows:

**Figure (1) Percentage of Youth (Males and Females) Not Enrolled in Training and Education for the year 2021**



**The source was prepared by the researcher based on: - Data of the Ministry of Planning, Central Bureau of Statistics, Labor Force Survey 2021, p 54.**

### **Second: Women's conditions in the labor market**

The low levels of education have had a direct impact on the conditions of women in the labor market, until they are characterized by a low level of productivity due to the lack of levels of education and vocational training and the increase in the employment of juveniles, especially in rural areas. (Al-Ani, 2015, p. 144), and perhaps the high percentage of women working in The unorganized sector, which exceeds 60% of the total female labor force, is the best evidence and indicator of gender discrimination in the Iraqi labor market.

The modest participation of women in the labor market is due to the view of some that the marginal product of women is less than the marginal cost of their work. There is no doubt that the economic participation of women is affected by a set of determinants (economic and social), represented by the poor educational and financing levels of women according to the indicators contained in the explanations for the feminization of poverty in Iraq, namely As follows: (Al-Mahdawi, 2021, p. 12)

#### **1- The rate of women's participation in economic activity**

Through this indicator, it is possible to infer the extent of the actual entry into the official economic activity registered within the country's gross domestic product, which was mentioned previously. The entry into this activity is determined by factors (social, health and educational), and based on the available data for the years (2014-2021), we will review the percentages Contribution to the economic activity of both males and females in Iraq through the following table (2)

**Table (2) Percentage of Women's Participation in Economic Activity and at the Urban and Rural Level for the Period (2014-2021)**

Years	Attended %		Countryside %		The total %	
	males	females	males	females	males	females
2014	72.0	14.0	73.7	12.0	72.4	13.5
2016	71.9	14.8	72.5	13.7	72.0	14.5
2018	72.3	13.9	74.1	8.6	72.7	12.6
2021	71.1	13.0	72.2	8.1	68.1	10.6

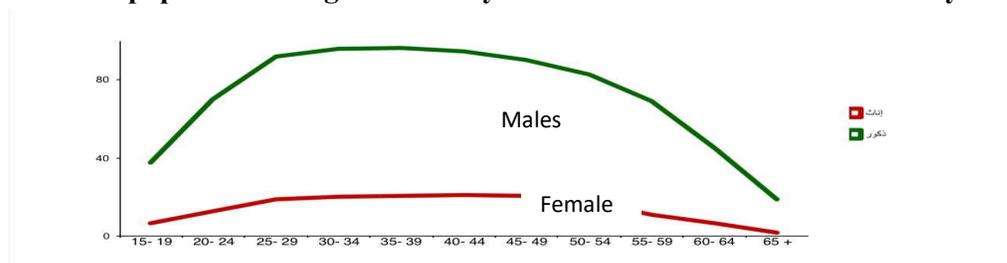
The table is prepared by the researcher based on: -

1- Ministry of Planning, Population Statistical Compendium 2018-2019.

2- Ministry of Planning, Human Development Statistics Section, Women and Men Report 2021, p. 40.

3- Ministry of Planning - Central Bureau of Statistics, Labour Force Survey in Iraq 2021, p. 17. Table (2) shows that the rate of male participation in economic activity is relatively high compared to the female participation rate, as we notice the relative gap between males and females is increasing. (13.5%). As for the rate of women's participation in the labor force, which is an indicator of the level of women's activity in the labor market, the national rate of female participation did not exceed 20%, according to the results of the Labor Force Survey for the year 2021. (Labor Force Survey, 2021, p. 16) This decline is explained by factors, the most important of which are:

- Academic achievement and maternity care.
- Limited social care services.
- The shocks that Iraq was exposed to, which were greatly reflected in the movement of economic activity.
- The jobs available in the local labor markets do not provide decent work for women as a result of technological backwardness.
- The social norms that determine the role of women in the public sphere, and Figure (2) illustrates this fact.

**Figure (2) The amount of gap between males and females for the rate of economic activity of the population aged 15 years and over for the year 2021**

**Source:- Ministry of Planning - Central Bureau of Statistics, Labour Force Survey in Iraq 2021, p. 16** Although the gender structure of the population confirms the convergence and rise of the percentage of females to the percentage of males in the size of the population, as well as its convergence in the proportion of the population of working age, the size of the gap is constantly increasing, as the percentage of male participation in economic activity reached (72.7%) in 2018, While the female participation rate was (12.6%) for the same year. (Women

and Men Report, 40, 2021), in addition to the fact that the relative differences between males and females increase with increasing age, as the gap between them reached (76%) at the age of 30 years. Then it begins to decline after the age of 45, as shown in figure (2). However, this increase in the female participation rate decreased again in 2021, reaching (10.6%) compared to the male participation rate (68.1%). The Covid-19 crisis played a role in explaining this decline.

On the other hand, we note that the percentage of women's participation in economic activity in urban areas constituted 13.0% in 2021 compared to 71.1% for men, while that percentage for women in rural areas did not exceed only 8.1% compared to 72.2% for the same year. (Labour Force Survey in Iraq, 2021 p. 17)

The foregoing explains the fact that the labor market is a male market in Iraq, although women make up more than half of the population of working age, which indicates that job opportunities tend in favor of men at the expense of women, and the poor participation of rural women is a result of their exposure to conditions of oppression ( health, educational and community) imposed by society due to factors including inherited customs and traditions, which is an indication of the reality of the comprehensive poverty of women.

## 2- Unemployment rate

We learned from the indicator of the low rates of economic participation of women of working age, which reflected the high rates of unemployment among women. The justifications for this phenomenon can be summarized by a number of factors, the most important of which are:

A- Security disorder.

B- Increased cases of violence.

C - The nature of the employment policy applied in Iraq after 2003 and what it included of a relative freeze on appointments, except in specific areas related to security and defense, which are job opportunities for males.

H - Cancellation of some ministries and institutions affiliated with the state.

D - the spread of economic recession and the low level of investment spending by the state.

E - In addition to the foregoing, the influence of values, traditions, and the culture of shame on women's participation and access to the labor market.

This led to an increase in the unemployment rate, which was confirmed by the labor force survey for the year 2021 shown in the following table (3)

**Table (3) Unemployment rate at the urban and rural level in Iraq for selected years (%)**

Years	Attended %		Countryside %		The total %	
	men	Females	men	Females	men	Females
2014	10.47	28.18	8.40	8.48	9.87	22.59
2016	8.76	24.60	7.71	14.30	8.49	22.21
2018	10.5	32.3	11.9	24.5	10.9	31.0
2021	-	-	-	-	14.7	28.2

The table prepared by the researcher based on:

-1Ministry of Planning, Population Statistical Compendium 2018-2019

-2Ministry of Planning, Human Development Statistics Section, Women and Men Report 2021, p. 40.

**-3Ministry of Planning - Central Bureau of Statistics, Labour Force Survey in Iraq 2021, p. 38**

As the total unemployment rate in Iraq for the year (2014) amounted to (16.2%), that is, for every five working people there is an unemployed person, distributed between the percentage of unemployed males (9.8%) compared to (22.5%) for unemployed females. Work, the total percentage of the unemployed among young people increased to reach (21.4%) in the year 2021, i.e. for every seven working people there is an unemployed person, and the female unemployment rate reached 28.2%, which is double the male unemployment rate of 14.7%, i.e. more than Three times the adult unemployment rate, 11.2%.

These percentages and figures clearly reflect the impact left by the distressed reality of women, which indicates their lack of levers to enter into the national economic activity.

**Third: Social Protection Systems (2017-2020)**

Social protection systems aim to meet the needs of vulnerable and poor groups in various economic, health and educational aspects to make them live a decent life, which prompted many international and regional human rights documents as well as national legislation to stipulate them, which is an acknowledgment that social protection is a human need and an effective tool to provide a safe income and avoid Poverty, and the aim of the social protection network programs was to achieve equality so that the protection systems cover all those covered because of their impact on reducing any setbacks that occur to the poor segments, and the groups most vulnerable to these shocks such as orphans, the unemployed and the disabled, and also contribute to reducing social exclusion, It works to enhance social cohesion, stability and civil peace. (ESCWA, 2015, p. 1)

At the level of Iraq, social protection was organized by Law No. (11) of 2014, indicating the importance of providing social protection, and despite that concern, it still suffers from the negative impact of the economic, political and security conditions that the country went through, affecting its nature and the roles it plays. Social security at the national level about facing threats and difficulties, as well as the manifestations of disintegration and imbalance in the security system itself, the lack of flexibility and the ability to secure adequate coverage for the weak and fragile groups in times of war and the loss of security, which led to an increase in the need for social protection as a result of the previous reasons. (Kazem, 2017, pp. 15-16), and a large proportion of the population, especially women, is still outside the coverage of protection programmes, and this matter still represents an institutional, economic and social challenge at the local and national levels, as the available data shows through the following table (4)

**Table (4) Number and Percentage of Covered by Social Protection Systems in Iraq for Both Sexes for the Period (2017-2020)**

The years	Males(breeze) (1)	Females(breeze) (2)	Total covered (3)	Males (%) $1 \div 3 \times 100$	Females (%) $2 \div 3 \times 100$
2017	492,202	413,571	905,773	54.3	45.7
2018	690,120	414,454	1,104,574	62.5	37.5
2019	703,102	438,281	1,141,383	61.6	38.4

2020	899,563	436,943	1,336,506	67.3	32.7
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**Source:- Ministry of Planning - Central Bureau of Statistics Women and Men Report 2021, Human Development Statistics Section, p. 22**

We note from table (4) that the total number of beneficiaries for the year (2017) from the salaries of the social protection network amounted to (905,773) people, distributed among males at a rate of (54.3%) and among females, with a relatively slight difference, as their percentage amounted to (45.7%), but through follow-up In the years that followed (2017), we find that the percentages tended towards a relative increase in favor of males, in contrast to the gradual decrease in the percentages for females until the males included in the social protection systems for the year (2020) reached a rate of (67.3%), and the percentages of female beneficiaries from these systems corresponded to their percentage. (32.7%) in favor of females, with sums of money spent for the social protection network amounting to (2,191,000,000) two billion, one hundred and ninety-one million Iraqi dinars, and the share of females was only (27.7%), and the justification for this decrease is attributed to the digital illiteracy of women, and that Because the promotion of the request for inclusion in these systems began to depend on electronic submission via websites, which impeded their access to social protection services. From the foregoing, it appears that social protection systems are weak in achieving full coverage and inclusiveness of the population (men and women) with social protection salaries and only social security. Social, subsidies and assistance in achieving income security, and enhancing human resilience in the face of crises and shocks in a changing world and a responsive work environment. Therefore, this aspect is another of the factors justifying the phenomenon of the feminization of poverty in Iraq.

**Fourth: crises**

Iraq lives a unique reality, as it was exposed to many crises, which affected its political, economic and social conditions, and complex crises. These crises had negative repercussions on the Iraqi economy, which reflected on its performance and capabilities, and hindered its ability to repel these repercussions, which deepened the severity of the structural imbalances of the system. In order to understand the historical trajectory of these shocks, these crises will be addressed as follows:

**1- The double crisis (security and economic) of 2014**

The crisis of terrorist organizations that Iraq faced in 2014 is considered one of the most severe and detrimental crises on Iraqi society, due to the accompanying economic and social consequences, represented by the control of terrorist groups over a third of the Iraqi lands with their economic and social capabilities, which made the Iraqi economy vulnerable to a complex crisis with various repercussions. This crisis is of a security nature. Economic, the first was the occupation of some Iraqi lands by terrorist groups and organizations, which led to the destruction of a large part of the infrastructure. (Mustafa, 2018, p. 19), and the results of this crisis were significantly reflected in the degree of security, social and economic stability, and this reality had its repercussions on the condition of women empowerment and economic participation, as we note:

- High rates of underage marriage, as the percentage of married women aged (13) years and over reached (53.9%).

- The number of women who were subjected to kidnapping and rape reached about (4000) women in 2015, and the consequent social, economic and psychological damages.
- The strongest impact on the elements of women's empowerment, which is health, as they lost health care, especially reproductive health, because they were prevented from going to hospitals, which gave birth to weak groups of women. (Touma, 2021, p. 49)
- An increase in the number of displaced families headed by women who played an income-earning role in light of the high levels of poverty and illiteracy among the displaced by 14.3% in 2014, as the female illiteracy rate reached 20% and male illiteracy reached 8.3%. These figures confirm educational deprivation among the displaced. (Mustafa, 2016, p5)
- And the increase in the number of widows, as the number of families headed by women reached 11% of the total families for the year 2015. (Al-Mashhadani, 2015, p 28)

It was also accompanied by the crisis of the collapse of world oil prices as a result of OPEC increasing its production quantities from 29.2 million barrels to about 30.7 million barrels per day in 2014, which led to a sharp decline in Iraq's financial revenues, an increase in the poverty rate by about 22.5% and the occurrence of a major humanitarian crisis, as well as 5,965,860 people have been displaced, according to data from the Iraqi Ministry of Migration and Displacement. (First Voluntary Report, 2019, p. 25)

## **2- The complex crisis during the period 2019-2020**

This crisis was represented by two double crises (the Covid-19 pandemic, and the decline in crude oil prices), as there were many and varied forms of epidemics and viruses that spread globally, which always lead to human losses and economic and social repercussions due to the unwillingness of most countries to confront them or to the stumbling and slowness of the response of the necessary policies to confront them, in an expansion The magnitude of its precipitation impact on the economy and people, and the cost of risk management rose with it in all countries of the world.

The government did not grant financial support to the poor and vulnerable groups except for simple cash assistance amounting to 30,000 Iraqi dinars (\$25) per person, which was also not sensitive to gender.( ), This crisis had repercussions on women, as follows:

- The decrease in the economic participation rate to 10.6% in 2021, after it was 12.6% in 2018, due to the limited handling of the digital labor market due to the weak digital skills among women and girls that limit information technology.
- The poverty rate increased to 31.7% from 20.5% in 2018, due to the precautionary health measures represented by the curfew and closure policies for all economic sectors.
- High unemployment rates among women to 28.2%, especially among women working in the unorganized sector. If we know that 6 out of 10 women work in the unprotected sector, they are more likely to lose their income and reduce the number of working hours, which led to an increase in poverty.
- An increase in the rate of violence as a result of ban and closure measures in its typical and atypical forms, such as suicide and murder, in light of the difficulty in accessing means of protection and reporting. (Al-Mahdawi, 2021, without a page)

The spread of the pandemic coincided with a noticeable decline in crude oil prices. The price of Basra Light Crude was about \$54.5 a barrel when the first infection was recorded. However, it began to decline gradually, reaching \$732 on the ninth of March, to rise slightly to

\$25.43 on March 9. The thirteenth of March, then declined sharply on the twenty-first of April, reaching \$59.20 a barrel to reach \$29.34 on the twenty-fifth. Women, in addition to disrupting markets, exacerbating the problem of unemployment, and threatening the food security of poor and fragile families, especially families headed by women, which led to an exacerbation of the financial deficit in the federal budget and increased pressure on the health system, which is already suffering as a result of the financial crisis and the decline in its resources and investments. (Latif, 2020, p.13)

The complex (economic - health) crisis that Iraq is going through has produced economic and social conditions that are very costly for Iraqi women and girls. Rather, it has deepened the quantitative and qualitative gaps with a gender dimension. The national policy for the empowerment of Iraqi women pointed out these gaps and revealed the suffering of Iraqi women in marginalization, exclusion and discrimination on the. Despite the fact that they represent 49.5% of the total population of Iraq, disabling them and not participating means disabling half of society.

### **The third topic**

#### **The empowerment path for Iraqi women to reduce the phenomenon of feminization of poverty**

Women have received clear attention from the government through laws and legislation responsive to the gender perspective, especially after the multiple and successive crises that the country has gone through, especially the crisis of the entry of terrorist groups and the repercussions that had a profound impact on women. This government interest indicates that the national development path in Iraq is sensitive. It is concerned with the roles of women and men, equal opportunities, and reducing the causes of negative discrimination against women and the problems that impede the provision of an enabling environment for women and raising the rate of their participation in economic activity.

#### **The first requirement: legislation and laws**

In this quest, the most important laws and legislations regulating women's rights in social, economic and political life will be identified, and the Iraqi constitution of 2005, as it is the ruler regulating these rights and affirming that Iraqis are equal before the law without discrimination, which results in better parity.

#### **First: the Iraqi constitution of 2005**

The Iraqi constitution sought to enhance the dignity of women as the basis of society, and the state preserves its entity and its religious, moral and national values, providing decent work opportunities for them, eliminating discrimination between the sexes and the right to security, life and freedom through the following articles:- (Republic of Iraq, Iraqi Constitution 2005)

Article 14: The Iraqi constitution stipulates that Iraqis are equal before the law without discrimination because of (gender, race, nationality, origin, color, religion, or opinion regarding social and economic status).

Article 15: Every individual has the right to life, security and liberty, and it is not permissible to deprive or restrict these rights except in accordance with the law and based on a decision issued by a competent judicial authority.

Article 20: The right of women to participate in public life and their enjoyment of political rights, including the right to vote, elections and candidacy.

Article (22): Work is a right for all Iraqis in a way that guarantees them a decent life.

Article (30) First: The state guarantees to the individual and the family, especially children and women, social and health security and the basic requirements for living a decent life.

Article 30: Second: The state guarantees social and health security for Iraqis in cases of old age, illness, inability to work, homelessness, orphanhood, or unemployment, and works to protect them from poverty, ignorance, and destitution.

Article (31, 32, 33): The right to obtain health services

Article (34): The right to access educational services.

Article (37) Third: Forced labor, slavery, and the slave trade are forbidden, and trafficking in women and children and sex trafficking are prohibited.

Article (49): Regulates (positive discrimination) procedures to enhance women's participation.

**Second: Iraqi Literacy Law No. 23 of (2011).**

One of the important laws that Iraq was keen to apply in order to raise the status of women and increase their level of awareness is the Literacy Law (23) of 2011, which aims to eradicate illiteracy through the implementation of the literacy project, whether for men or women, as called for in accordance with Article (1 / fourth) for every citizen Completed (15 years) of age and does not know how to read and write is considered to have not reached the civilized level, and sixth / the individual's possession of reading and writing skills so that these skills are a means to develop his profession and raise his standard of life culturally, socially and economically and to enable him to exercise the rights of good citizenship by participating in decision-making and performing public duties . (Republic of Iraq, 2011, p. 10)

**Third: Labor Law No. 37 of (2015)**

This law is considered a victory for the rights of workers and a guarantee of their rights. It is described as a developed and civilized law that takes into account the rights of women and prohibits all forms of gender discrimination, including the rights of retirees. Most of its articles are compatible with international labor standards, including

- The law included all workers in the private, mixed and cooperative sectors, in addition to contract workers and daily wages in the public sector, which opened wide horizons in covering large segments of workers that were not addressed by the previous law.

For the first time in Iraq, a law prohibits discrimination in employment and occupation, forced labor and sexual harassment at work, and punishes those who commit violations.

- The law allows for collective bargaining and the right to strike after confiscating this right since 1987

- The law prohibits child labor after it was approved by the previous law, which allowed the employment of children at the age of 12 years

- The law fully covered the rights of working women and granted pregnancy and maternity leave of 90 days with full pay, up from 72 days.

Article 86/Second has prohibited the employment of women at night, with the aim of not conflicting with the woman's work and her social function related to her family.

- Article 58/Second stipulates the prohibition of employing working women in work that is stressful or harmful to health and specified under Article 67/Third of Law No. 37 of 2015. (Republic of Iraq, 2015, <https://www.moj.gov.iq>)

**Fourth: Social Protection Law No. (11) of 2014**

This law came to replace Law No. 123 of 1980, which necessitated changing the social welfare system to achieve the greatest measure of justice and equal opportunities in inclusion and to exclude those below the poverty line among Iraqis:

People with disabilities and special needs

- The widow, the divorcee, the wife of the missing, the single, the unmarried adult
- impotent.
- the orphan.
- The family of the inmate or the depositor.

Convicted juveniles.

- The married student.
- Families with no income.

**Article (3) of the objectives of this law defines:**

A- Achieving a decent life for society.

B- Contribute to promoting the values of social solidarity.

C- Ensuring that the social protection umbrella reaches all groups covered by its provisions.

D- Providing psychological and material stability for individuals. (Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, 2020, p. 13)

**The second requirement: national strategies and development plans**

Iraq has sought in its national documents that are sensitive to crises and responses to achieve the goals of sustainable development, as it has made the issue of empowering and advancing women, reducing gender gaps and improving the enabling environment among the priorities of the selected goals, but rather among the basics of economic decision-makers, planners and those interested in women's empowerment and reducing discrimination and poverty gaps to Adopting procedures and taking decisions, and the most prominent of those steps identified by the National Path Plan for Women's Empowerment are the plans, policies and strategies that have been taken, represented in the following:

**First: The strategy for advancing the status of Iraqi women (2014-2018)**

The preparation of this strategy as a necessity required by the requirements of the current political and economic stage and imposed by the international and regional agreements that Iraq has signed. Growth is a source of economic development and a basis for societal cohesion and ensuring political and economic participation. The strategy also stressed the importance of dealing with the positive results of reform and change in a way that increases women's strength, achieves their economic independence, empowers them in the family and society, and keeps them away from situations of poverty, destitution and violence. (General Secretariat of the Council of Ministers, 2012, p. 6)

**Second: The National Strategy to Combat Gender-Based Violence (2018-2030)**

This strategy has proven that violence in Iraq based on gender is not a contemporary issue, as the phenomenon has historical implications associated with the pressures of life and adherence to outdated values, and in light of a fragile, turbulent and insecure environment that extended for long periods. Iraq in June 2014 The fallout effect of the double shock represented by the control of terrorist organizations over more than a third of the area of Iraq and the drop in global oil prices, and since Iraq is determined to follow in the footsteps of implementing the

Sustainable Development Goals 2015-2030, and in order to reduce the phenomenon of violence against Iraqi women, this strategy came Updated to achieve the following goals: (General Secretariat of the Council of Ministers, 2018, p. 22)

- Provide a legal, legislative and executive framework to protect the human rights of women in Iraq.
- Providing a comprehensive program for building human capacities, with a focus on women, especially the poor among them.
- Highlighting the rights that support the economic empowerment of women in order to raise the level of their economic empowerment in order to reduce their level of poverty.

Spreading the culture of combating gender-based violence because of its repercussions on women.

- Strengthening and reforming the nucleus of social peace (the family) for the sake of community unity and preparing a generation that believes in citizenship.

### **Third: The National Strategy for Poverty Reduction (2018-2022)**

The poverty alleviation strategies launched by the Iraqi government are among the most important public policies in the social field, which aim to address the reality of the poor and vulnerable groups, rid them of marginalization and exclusion, increase their chances of economic integration into society, achieve political stability and invest the latent energies of those groups in order to achieve development, and as a result Due to the escalation of terrorism, population displacement, and political instability, and the resulting weak economic activity, high unemployment and poverty, the Iraqi government launched the first national strategy to reduce poverty for the period from 2010 to 2014. This strategy aimed to reduce poverty to 16%, but unfortunately, as a result of force majeure Which was represented by the double crisis (security and economic), which afflicted Iraq and the serious repercussions that resulted from it. Poverty rates rose again, due to the large waves of displacement and the cessation of thousands of investment projects. The percentage reached 22.5% in 2015, which prompted the Iraqi government to launch the second strategy. (2018-2022), as a governmental remedy for the escalation of poverty in Iraq, and among its most prominent goals are:

- Reducing the poverty rate by (25%) at the national level
- Higher and sustainable income, by providing job opportunities for poor women and not relying on the principle of dependency
- Improving the health level of poor women
- Reducing illiteracy rates among poor women
- Implementation of projects to build residential communities for women paragraphs
- Providing social protection for poor women through the establishment of an effective social protection network in which the private sector and civil society contribute. (Ministry of Planning and others, 2018, p. 47)

### **Third: The National Development Plan 2018-2022**

The Council of Ministers approved the National Development Plan (2018-2022) on the first of April 2018, inspired by the National Action Plan. The national development plan includes the axis of women's empowerment in the pillar of human and social development. It includes the areas of women's education, health, economic empowerment, and social contribution. The

principles of the reconstruction plan coincide For the liberated areas with the principles contained in the three pillars of Security Council Resolution 1325, protection, prevention, participation, and Goal 11 of the Sustainable Development Goals, to make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable. Urban and rural areas and increasing their enrollment in primary education. It also included economic empowerment by enhancing women's participation in the labor market and facilitating access for poor, displaced women and heads of households to financial resources. The plan also aims to improve health services for women and increase their awareness of the importance of early detection of breast cancer. Empowerment has also been identified. Women in areas liberated from terrorist organizations as a priority, including the provision of psychological and medical services For social and legal. (homeland development plan,2018,P139)

### **conclusions**

- 1- The decrease in the percentage of women benefiting from social protection systems by half the number of male beneficiaries. This decrease is due to social reasons and reasons related to the uses of digital technology, which prevented them from obtaining the services of those programs.
- 2- The high rates of violence and the number of battered women in Iraq, and the economic crises and the limited level of family income are among the reasons explaining this increase in the percentage of battered women and its impact on the phenomenon of the feminization of poverty.
- 3- The modest participation of women in the Iraqi economic activity was the result of the increasing numbers of illiteracy for females in a way that exceeds the level of illiteracy among males.
- 4- The lack of translation of most of the national and international commitments related to women's rights on the ground. Perhaps the absence of executive action plans, financial budgets, and timetables for implementation are reasons for delaying the advancement of Iraqi women and their lack of access to their economic, social and environmental rights.
- 5- The increase in the number of families headed by women in Iraq. Perhaps the entry and control of terrorist organizations over a third of the area of Iraq and the resulting increase in the number of displaced women, men and children is an explanatory reason for the high rates of poverty among women.

### **Recommendations**

- 1- Restructuring social protection programs and expanding their scope of work with the aim of accommodating poor women who are eligible and who do not benefit from the programs and reduce the proportions of those below the poverty line.
- 2- Calling for the speedy enactment of the Domestic Violence Law in the Iraqi Parliament in order to ensure prevention, protection, response services and legal measures to reduce all types of violence based on gender.
- 3- Training and rehabilitating all poor women on income-generating activities in order to ensure their empowerment and acquisition of new skills.

- 4- Raising the efficiency of implementing programs, projects and activities of the poverty reduction strategy in Iraq, which are concerned with the poverty of women in order to achieve sustainable growth and empower poor women through education, training and employment.
- 5- Raising social awareness and intensifying efforts to influence customs and traditions based on discrimination against women, especially rural women, which hinder their empowerment, through various media and educational institutions in order to restore their real economic role.
- 6- Ensuring financial and skill support for the poorest women by focusing on families headed by women in the areas of displacement and liberated areas through advanced programs for training, development and financing, which can be done with joint cooperation between state institutions in an integrated, coordinated and responsive manner.

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