



MERCY CORPS' WOMEN'S PHILANTHROPY GROUP

WAVES Iraq

Women Advocate to Validate the Economic System for Climate-Resilient Opportunities

Context

As the fifth most climate vulnerable country worldwide, Iraq is experiencing devastating adverse impacts on agriculture. The southern governorate of Basra experienced an 80% decline in farmland between 2017-2021, and data suggests further loss of 40% to 70% of the remaining farmland in the next 12 to 24 months without immediate action.

While the challenges in agricultural livelihoods impact the wider community, women are particularly disadvantaged. Iraq ranks second-to-last globally in terms of women's economic participation and opportunity with only 12% of women engaged in the labor force. In this context of extreme gender disparities, women face disproportionate barriers in accessing resources, opportunities, inclusive market spaces, and networks due to gender norms that aggravate women's economic exclusion.

The need is clear, but the path forward is uncharted. And this is where the Women & Climate Fund comes in. By intentionally increasing women's meaningful participation in agriculture-based climate solutions and coordinating with the wider community to provide business grant support, mentoring, and advocacy, WAVES Iraq will move women to the forefront of innovative climate resilience efforts and into leadership roles within their community.

Making Waves

By the end of the WAVES program, we expect to achieve the following outcomes:

1. Women in agriculture will be able to access gender-inclusive spaces that facilitate market connections, expanded networks and shared learning around climate-resilient agriculture by establishing Community Market Hubs (CMHs).
2. Women will increase their climate-resilient agricultural production and will be more competitively positioned for existing small business financial opportunities. Mercy Corps Iraq will facilitate climate-resilient agribusiness trainings to help the women develop business plans and provide business grants and mentoring to the most competitive projects to ensure effective implementation for women's innovative agribusinesses.



WAVES will go beyond the representation of women in climate programming and prioritize deeper understanding of—and attention to—the barriers women face to enhanced wellbeing.

Photo: Corinna Robbins/Mercy Corps

WAVES is designed to set up systems to ensure that the results extend beyond the life of the program. The women who are directly supported will be at the forefront of the climate-resilient agriculture work and will serve as role models to other women in their community to help replicate their success.

Moreover, the project will remove barriers for women through coordination and advocacy efforts to provincial and national governments. The CMHs will be a sustainable marketplace where women agricultural producers can access ongoing learning around climate-smart agriculture, market connections, fairs, and networking opportunities. WAVES will also create Women in Agriculture Committees (WACs), which will be a place where university researchers and private sector actors can introduce climate-resilient agricultural innovations to women. These WACs will also develop Advocacy Plans to help the women raise priority policy issues to promote women's land ownership, provide legal protection of women's rights and enhance women's role in agriculture.

Finally, we expect a modest increase in the portion of men and women from the broader community who view women as valuable market actors within the agricultural sector, contributing to a decline in the restrictive gender norms that impede women's economic and social opportunities.

About Mercy Corps

Mercy Corps is a global team of humanitarians working together on the front lines of crisis, disaster, poverty, and climate change to create a world where everyone can prosper. Beyond delivering aid to meet urgent needs, we develop long-term solutions to make lasting change possible.

Mercy Corps' Women's Philanthropy Group

Empowering women to lead in the fight against climate change.

Learn more by contacting:

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