

**Promoting women's participation in
decision-making at the local level.**
A case study of Barzan Sub-district in Kurdistan Region of Iraq

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Dedication

*To my late beloved mother Halema , I am always proud of you, my beloved wife
Saijeda,
and
my daughter Sara.*

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Abstract

This study was carried out in the context of participation in decision-making in the Barzan sub-district in the Kurdistan region of Iraq. It focused on women's participation in decision-making from the perspective of gender and development. Democratic governance and decentralisation served as the main theoretical framework and pre-condition for analyzing participation. Though the Kurdistan region has been moving towards democracy, decentralisation and participatory governance since 1992, there is a clear disparity between the involvement of men and women in the process. The involvement of women in the decision-making process at the local level in Kurdish society is limited. Based on this, the study explored and analyzed women's access to decision-making, their influence on the decision-making process, and their constraints and opportunities in the process. The study investigated and assessed a number of critical issues including socio-economic, political culture and institutional factors that influenced women's participation in decision-making. Based on these, the study sought to find answers as to how the participation of women in decision-making can be promoted for enhanced development to ensure maximum efficiency in pursuing development goals; and also how the participation of women at the local level can lead to changes in strategies for development at the local level.

The study was conducted in the villages of Shri and Zorgvan in the Barzan sub-district of Kurdistan Region in the Federal Republic of Iraq. The research was largely qualitative in nature also made use of a combination of inductive and deductive methods. The case study research approach was adopted in this study. Data was collected from primary and secondary sources. The required data was gathered through questionnaire, interviews, focus group discussions, participant observations and relevant documents from government, and civil society organizations institutions. Data was collected from multiple sources and with multiple methods to ensure triangulation and assure the quality of data.

The study revealed that, the triangle of traditional cultural structure namely tribalism, religious and patriarchal issues integrated in a complex scheme and paralleled with long centralized mindset, has weakened the process of women's participation in the decision-making process. Also, limit capacity of civil society, lack internal democracy of political parties, and decentralized power absorbed by the regional government have created power centres instead of power trickling down to the local level. It again came to light that decentralisation as a strategy changes structures and power relations among levels of government and key stakeholders and that negative aspects of traditional culture and the tenets of democracy do not jointly work together. In reality, it is difficult to bring them together to ensure harmony. These findings reconfirm Bernard Lewis's assertion that, implementing democracy within strong negative aspects of a traditional cultural system is like attempting to sow the seeds of 21st century political institutions in the soil of 15th century political culture. Based on these findings, two sets of recommendations are offered. As a key recommendation, there is the need to formulate a comprehensive development and gender-aware policy and as well as restricting and reorganizing the functions of regional, provincial, district, and sub-district level institutions. Finally, there is also the need to graft democratic decentralisation tenets on the best aspects of traditional cultural practices at the local level, creating and implementing quota strategies, building the capacity of staff of civil society organisations and government at different levels and democratizing the practices of multi-party coalition government to improve the participation of women in the decision-making process.

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List of acronyms

CBOs	Community Based Organizations
CEDAW	Convention of the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women
CEDPA	Centre for Development and Population Activities (United State of America)
CESCR	Committee on Economic, Social, Cultural Rights
COR	Council of Representatives
DGD	Decentralized Governance for Development
DPU	Development Planning Unit (London University)
EWL	European Women's Lobby
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
fhh	female-headed households
GAD	Gender and Development
GDI	Gender related-Development Index
GEM	Gender Empowerment Measure
GID	Gender in Development
GNP	Gross National Product
GRBs	Gender Responsive Budgets
HEC	High Economic Council
HPC	High Planning Committee
ICESCR	International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
IDEA	International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance
IDRC	International Development Research Centre
IDS	Institute of Development Studies (University of Sussex, United Kingdom)
IFAD	International Fund for Agriculture Development
IKNN	Iraqi Kurdistan Non-Governmental Organizations Network
ILDPA	Iraqi Legal Development Project
ILO	International Labour Organization
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IPU	Inter-Parliamentary Union
JHIC	Joint Humanitarian Information Centre (Kurdistan region)
KDP	Kurdistan Democratic Party
KRG	Kurdistan Regional Government
KRO	Kurdistan Reconstruction Organization
KWU	Kurdistan Women's Union
LA	Line Agency
LG	Local Government
LGs	Local Governments
MC	Municipality Council
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals of the United Nations
mhh	male-headed households
MOF	Ministry of Finance
MOP	Ministry of Planning
MP	Member of Parliament
NCWIT	National Centre for Women and Information Technology
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organizations

PC	Province Council
PDS	Population and Development Strategy
PfA	Platform for Action
PGN	Practical Gender Need
PKK	Party Krikarane Kurdistan, (Kurdistan Workers Party)
PP	Political Parties
PUK	Patriotic Union of Kurdistan
RTI	Research Triangle Institute
SEGA	Socio-Economic and Gender Analysis
SGN	Strategic Gender Need
SLA	Swedish Liberal Association
SM	Sectoral Ministries
SSO	Student Solidarity Organization
TA	Traditional Authority
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UN-DAW	United Nations-Division for Advancement of Women
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCAP	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and Pacific
UNGEI	United Nations Girls' Education Initiative
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNHCR/HRLLS	United Nations of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Development States.
UNOHCI	United Nations Office of the Humanitarian Coordinator in Iraq
USA	United States of America
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WB	World Bank
WEO	Women Empowerment Organization
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organisation
WID	Women in Development
WUK	Women Union of Kurdistan

1. Introduction

To study women's participation in decision-making in local development in Kurdistan, we have to go back to Kurdish history in the Kurdish region of Iraq, as the cultural, social, political and economic factors, provide a brief exploration of the past and its effects on the present. Orientation may change from looking at the past to focusing on the future. During the past period in the Kurdish region of Iraq, many factors in a complex environment have interacted to create the current complex situation. The researcher argues here that no development effort can be sustainable in a post-conflict situation in Kurdistan unless attention is paid to addressing the causes of the conflict¹. The aim of this chapter is to explain events less known and understood, as well as to highlight the context of the Kurdish region in Iraq which is relevant for later references in the thesis. The research problems and objectives will be discussed in this light, in accordance with the context of the Kurdish region, where the main current development challenges are rooted.

1.1 Background of study and statement of contextual problem

Kurds and Kurdistan

The Kurds have a population of about 25 million² and constitute one of the largest non-state nations of the world. They are the fourth largest ethnic group in the Middle East, after the Arabs, Turks and Persians. This ethnic group was forcibly divided, by the centralist 'nation-states' of Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Syria in 1918. There are about one million of these people scattered across Caucasian countries such Armenia, Georgia, and Azerbaijan. Others are also dispersed across Central Asia, Europe, North America and Australia (Mojab, 2001:1).

The Kurds have since time immemorial, occupied a vast, cohesive region called Kurdistan, which means the land of the Kurds or Kurd land as a homogeneous community (Barzani, 2003:6). There are Kurds from the Taurus Mountains to the Western plateaus of Iran and from Mount Ararat to the foothills adjoining the Mesopotamia plain. According to Chliand (1993:4), the geographical term Kurdistan, covers a part of the region peopled by Kurds. It comprises north-western parts of present-day Iran (eastern part of Kurdistan), northern Iraq (southern part of Kurdistan), parts of northern Syria (western part of Kurdistan), and south-eastern Turkey (northern part of Kurdistan), with overlaps into the Republic of Armenia. Yildiz (2007) stated that the term 'Kurdistan' was first used in the twelfth century as a geographical term by the Saljuks (Yildiz, 2007:7).

¹ *Conflict here refers to the war between the Kurdish people and the government of Iraq from 1963 until 1991 and the genocide in 1988.*

² *There are no official population figures for Kurds but it is accepted that they are the largest ethnic group without state in the world and the Kurds are currently the fourth largest ethnic group in the Middle East (Yildiz, 2007:9).*

However, Kurdistan is more than just a geographical term. Although the term Kurdistan has appeared on some maps since the sixtieth century, it is clearly more than a geographical term since it refers also to a human culture which exists on that land (ibid), (see Figure 1.1). To this extent, Kurdistan is “a social and political concept,” says McDowall (2000:3).

The Kurds were subjected to various degrees of genocide, ethnocide and linguicide as well as gendecide. Genocide in the region is not a product of misjudgement of a dictator, or the errors of army commanders; it has been rather, a venue of state building; here, ‘genocide is the mainstream’ (Levene 1999, in Mojab , 2001:2)

Figure 1.1: Map of the area inhabited by Kurds.



Source: www.thevangurad.org/graphics/maps/Kurdistan-map.jpg.

Geographic and demographic features

The part of Kurdistan in Iraq, which is now referred to as the Kurdistan region, occupies a more or less central position in the Kurdistan territories. It is the link between what is variously known as Turkish, Northern or Western Kurdistan to the north-west, and the so-called Eastern or Iranian Kurdistan to the east and south-east, and it borders on the mainly Kurdish areas of the Syrian Jezireh (Vanly, 1993: 139). This part of Kurdistan is a rich country which extends partly to the

wooded mountain region or terrain curved from the River Zagros in east Kurdistan (Iranian part of Kurdistan) to the mountains of north Kurdistan (Turkish part of Kurdistan). The highest peak, Hasar-Rost in the Hilgurd chain, dominates the strategic "Hamilton" route by the Iranian frontier and is 3,726 m high. The mountains slope away to the south and west to give way to the fertile plains of Erbil, Harrir, Shahrezur and Kirkuk. These plains are separated from those of Lower Mesopotamia by the low but arid Hamrin mountain chain which acts as a natural frontier between Kurdistan and Arab territories. The climate is wet Mediterranean in the plains, cold and snowy in the mountains. Several rivers cross Kurdistan including the Tigris, the Great Zab, the Little Zab and the Diyla, which the Kurdish calls Sirwan. In the mountains, notably in Badinan south of the Turkish frontier, oak trees predominate. The country's produce is similar to that of the rest of the Kurdistan territories: tobacco, cereals, wood, vines, fruit, hides, wool, mutton and goat meat, eggs and dairy produce. In certain areas the sub-soil is very rich, especially in iron and chrome, but it has not been properly exploited. The country's great source of wealth is obviously oil, a resource from which the Kurdish people draw very little benefit (Vanly, 1993: 140).

The area of the Kurdish region in Iraq is about 80,000 sq km, which exceeds 18% of the total area of Iraq. The Kurdish population in Iraq is about six million, of whom 2/3 inhabit the three provinces of Erbil, Suleimaniyah, Dohuk and parts of Dyala, Kirkuk and Mosul provinces currently under the administration of the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG). The rest of the population inhabits areas under the Iraqi government (KRG, 2009:1).

Kurds are overwhelmingly Muslims and are typically members of the Sunni branch of Islam, along with most Turks and a minority of Iraqi Arabs. Kurds have always been among the more liberal Muslims. Kurdish women, for example, have never covered their faces and have never worn the *abbaye*, the all-covering garments worn by some Arab and Iranian women. They have also worked outside of the home. Traditionally, they work the fields. However in modern times, they have attended school and university and hold jobs outside of the home (Robson, 1996).

The Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG)

The Kurdistan region is a semi-autonomous, federally recognized, political entity located in the northern part of Iraq. The full name of this region is Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) which, in the new Iraq constitution issued in 2005, is referred to as Kurdish region under the control of the Kurdish authorities. *Article 1*, Iraq is a federal state with a democratic, parliamentary, pluralistic, republican system that will be called the Federal Republic of Iraq. *Article 2*, the Federal Republic of Iraq consists of two regions:

- i) The Arabic region that includes the middle and southern regions of Iraq along with the province of Ninevah in the north except the districts and sub-districts that have a Kurdish majority as mentioned in the item below.
- ii) The Kurdish Region that includes the Provinces of Kirkuk, Suleimaniyah and Erbil, Duhok and districts of Aqra, Sheihkan, Sinjar and sub-district of Zimar in the Province of Ninevah and districts of Kahnaiqin and Mandali in the Province of Diyala and the district of Barda in the Province of Al-Wast (Constitution for the Federal Republic of Iraq, 2005).

Autonomy for Iraqi Kurds, as a part of Iraq's political and constitutional equation, dates back at least to the March Manifesto of 1970, and has, on paper, been confirmed on numerous occasions since. A legislative assembly was established in the city of Erbil in 1975 with theoretical authority only over Erbil, Suleimaniyah and Dohuk provinces which was more than

half of the Kurdistan area. In practice, however, the assembly was part of former Iraqi Saddam Hussein's regime until the 1991 Kurdish uprising against dictatorial rule.

Due to enforced de-facto separation from the rest of the country, that forced the Iraqi regime to withdraw its administration from Kurdistan in October 1991, elections were held in May 1992 and a Kurdistan Regional Parliament and the Kurdistan Regional Government (*KRG*) were formed. The Kurdistan Regional Parliament has largely adopted the laws of Iraq while amending others to fit the new situation. Four Provinces have been established, each headed by a governor. A regional government headed by a Prime Minister with a cabinet of ministers was instituted in the regional capital of Erbil.

Initially, 4 out of 105 parliamentary seats were allocated to the minority Christian community, 4 to the Turcoman minority and 37% seats for women. The current KRG is made up of a coalition of parties, elected in 2009 to the Kurdistan Regional Parliament. This coalition includes the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP), the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), the Turcoman Brotherhood Party, Kurdistan Communist Party, and the Kurdistan Socialist Democratic Party. The other opposition parties in the Kurdistan Regional Parliament include the Kurdistan Islamic Union, the Islamic Group and the Change movement.

In spite of a double embargo on the region, the prevailing difficult circumstances at the time, and a general lack of experience in running a government, the leadership was able to effectively maintain, and even extend, public services throughout the Region. Over time, security and stability have improved and people of the region as well as visitors feel safe and secure compared to the rest of Iraq (KRG, 2009:1).

Kurdish economy

Kurdistan is blessed with a good climate, an abundance of natural resources, fertile and highly productive land, water supplies and a beautiful unspoiled environment. Iraqi Kurdistan was traditionally self-sufficient with regard to food and even supplied its excesses to the rest of the country before the genocide (*Anfal*) campaign.

Kurdistan is estimated to have around 45 billion barrels worth of oil reserves making it one of the largest in the Middle East and the 6th in the world. These reserves are spread over a thin band on the margins between the high mountains and the foothills, straddling the southern and western regions of Kurdistan (KRG, 2004: 10). The KRG relies almost entirely on oil revenue distributed by Baghdad to cover its expenses. One of the most important economic problems of Kurdistan is bloated public employment. What is known is that 70 percent of the KRG budget, which in turn accounts for about 70 percent of total economic activity in the region, goes to pay government salaries, inordinately high figures by almost any standard (Pollock, 2008:9).

Arab /Kurd Oil for the Arabs versus Oil-for-Development

The Ba'ath ran its campaign under the slogan "*Arab oil for Arabs*", with no indication that much of the oil in question was actually Kurdish. Nonetheless the nationalizations were entirely justified, and perhaps more importantly, they were successful. But it is worth asking how much of the resulting oil revenue was provided by Kurdish oil fields and how this revenue was used. The Kurdish oil fields are at Kirkuk, the most important oil field in Iraq (Vanly, 1993:161). No doubt it was conceived as an avenue for Arabization, rather like the irrigation projects in Kirkuk which were geared to irrigate the plains lying to the south-east of the town where it was intended to implant population as a priority (ibid: 160).

From Oil-for-Food programme to Oil-for-Development programme

The Oil-for-food programme began at the end of 1996 after the United Nations and the Government of Iraq agreed on the details of implementing Resolution 986 (1995), which permitted Iraq to sell up to a billion dollars worth of oil in a 180-day period. The ceiling on oil sales was eased during 1998 and finally lifted in 1999, enabling the programme to move from a focus on food and medicine to repairing essential infrastructure, including the oil industry. The Government of Iraq was responsible for the purchase and distribution of supplies in the 15 Provinces in the centre and south. The United Nations implemented the programme in the three Northern Provinces of Dohuk, Erbil and Suleimaniyah on behalf of the Government of Iraq from December 1996 through 20 March 2003 and 13 per cent of the oil revenue fund was allocated to humanitarian programme in Kurdistan. Distribution of bulk food in the north was handled by the World Food Programme (WFP) and medical supplies by the World Health Organization (WHO). Activities undertaken by United Nations inter-agency, a humanitarian programme in the north, ranged across 24 sectors of need from the provision of food and shelter to mining, rehabilitation of water and sanitation facilities, electricity generation and telecommunications networks. The work of UN agencies was coordinated through the United Nations Office of the Humanitarian Coordinator in Iraq (UNOHC/I) (UN, 2003:1).

The positive impact registered within the Oil-for-Food Programme in the Kurdistan Provinces ran parallel with the negative impact faced by the farmers who were experiencing a downward trend in market prices, as a consequence of almost free distribution of agricultural products which were included in the food basket.

Kurdistan region is blessed with oil, but it is an exhaustible natural resource and therefore not renewable. Consequently, it is the responsibility of the current generation towards the new generations to utilize the returns of this resource as an investment into a permanent and sustainable production base. This means, the returns from oil should be invested in the reconstruction of Kurdistan; the directions of investments are all in harmony and enhance both current and future potential to meet Kurdish people's needs and aspirations.

The researcher proposed that the returns from oil should be invested as noted above. To this end, it is proposed that the returns from oil should be accumulated under a scheme similar to the Oil-for-Food programme that might be labelled 'Oil-for-Development' (FAO, 2003:1) programme and should involve the participation of all stakeholders, including women in the decision-making process. This is hoped to ensure the economic and social development of the Kurdistan region, including equitable distribution of the revenue from oil.

Some significant events in the history of Kurdistan

The following is a chronology of some of the significant events that were of importance to Iraq's Kurds in the past and which affect their present. It is imperative to give a historical background of the region in order to understand the complex context of its development problems as well as to highlight how the Kurds were subjected to various degrees of genocide, ethnocide and gendercide. Genocide is a product of dictatorship from various and previous Iraqi regimes. It has been rather an avenue of autonomy and democratic decentralisation. The region will also need to overcome a legacy of long-term dictatorship. Genocide also brought about a demographic change whereby the number of widows and women became higher as a large number of men were killed. It is therefore important to address the damage caused by the genocidal campaign, the destruction of rural infrastructure of the Kurdish region as well as political, social

demographic and economic challenges. This then brings to the fore the need to actively involve women especially in decisions affecting their lives.

Some key events of the early 20th century chronicled include

1920-1932: Under the British mandate, three former *vilayets* (provinces) of the Ottoman Empire, which were known as Mesopotamia in the West, were renamed Iraq. These were Mousul, Baghdad, and Basrah. Administratively, the new country consisted of 14 (now 18) Provinces, called liwas (later renamed muhafaza). The Kurds were concentrated in the provinces of Mousul, Erbil, Kirkuk, Suleimaniyah and Diyala (Barzani, 2003:7).

During the years between the formation of Iraq and its independence in 1931, limited steps were taken in the direction of the Kurds. In 1926, the initial Iraqi local language law provided for the teaching of Kurdish in schools in Kurdish speaking areas, and for the publication of Kurdish language books. In addition, there was Kurdish representation in the government.

In **1958:** The royal government of Iraq was overthrown, and the new republican government of Abdul Karim Qasim was wholeheartedly supported by all political parties, including the Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP). In the first constitution of Iraq, the Kurds were named as part of the new state.

Mustafa Barzani returned from the Soviet Union as a hero to Iraq, where he had been exiled for 11 years. Kurds were allowed to broadcast in Kurdish and publish books and periodicals as well. Elementary schools in Kurdish speaking areas were allowed to use Kurdish as the medium of instruction, and Kurdish departments were established in some of the Iraqi universities (Robson, 1996:3).

The war of liberation, 1961-1970:

Barzani led his revolt against the Iraqi government with the aim of securing Kurdish autonomy and democracy for Iraqis. Moreover, the Soviet Union pressurized the Iraqis to come to terms with Barzani. Hence a peace plan was announced in March 1970 which provided for a broader Kurdish autonomy than before. The plan also gave Kurds representation in government bodies and to be implemented in four years (Vanly, 1993:149).

Despite this, the Iraqi government embarked on an Arabization programme in the oil-rich regions of Kirkuk, Khanaqin and Sinjar in the same period. In the following years, Baghdad government overcame its internal divisions and concluded a treaty of friendship with the Soviet Union in April 1972 ending its isolation within the Arab world. As a result, Kurds remained dependent on the Iranian military support and could do little to strengthen their forces (Mahzouni, 2007: 5-6).

1963: Phase I of the ethnic cleansing and Arabization campaign: The ethnic cleansing and Arabization campaign began when the Ba'ath party first came to power in 1963 and lasted until the temporary removal of the Ba'ath leadership in February 1964 (Vanly, 1993:152).

1974: Phase II of Ethnic Cleansing and Arabization Campaign (ibid: 165)

1975: The Iraqi government signed the Algiers Agreement with Iran, in which they settled land disputes in exchange for Iran ending its support of the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) as well as other concessions. The Iraqi army created a 966 km long security zone in the border areas

between the Kurdistan region and Turkey, Syria and Iran, This resulted in the destruction of an estimated 1,500 villages (Yildiz, 2007:23).

1983: The Iraqi government caused the disappearance of 8,000 males from the Barzani tribe. In 2005, 500 of them were found in mass graves near Iraq's border with Saudi Arabia, hundreds of kilometres from the Kurdistan Region. That created a few thousand widows, female-headed households (fhh) in the Kurdish region (Saleh, 2006:1).

1984: Phase III of the Arabization Campaign: The regime began a systematic destruction of villages, homes, churches, mosques, schools, and hospitals in the Kurdish areas.

1987-1989: The Iraqi government carried out the genocide (*Anfal*) campaign against Kurdistan's civilians, of mass summary execution and disappearances, widespread use of chemical weapons, destruction of some more than 4,000 villages and of the rural economy and infrastructure. An estimated 180,000 Kurds were killed in the campaign. On 16th and 17th March, 1988, Iraqi government air planes dropped chemical weapons on the town of Halabja. Between 4,000-5,000 people, almost all civilians were killed (ibid).

1991: The people in Kurdistan rose up against the Iraqi government days after the Gulf War ceasefire. Within weeks the Iraqi military and helicopters suppressed the uprising. Tens of thousands of people fled to the mountains, causing a humanitarian crisis. The US, Britain and France declared a no-fly zone at the 36th parallel and refugees returned. Months later, Saddam Hussein withdrew the Iraqi Army and his administration, and imposed an internal blockade on Kurdistan (KRG, 2009:1).

1992: The Iraqi Kurdistan Front, an alliance of political parties, held parliamentary and presidential elections and established the Kurdistan Regional Government.

1994: Power-sharing arrangements between the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) fell apart, leading to civil war and two separate administrations, in Erbil and Sulaymaniya respectively.

1998: The PUK and KDP signed the Washington Agreement, ending the civil war.

2003: The Peshmerga; Kurdistan's official armed forces, fought alongside the coalition to liberate Iraq from Saddam Hussein's rule.

2006: At the start of the year, the PUK and KDP agreed to unify the two administrations. On 7th May, Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani announced a new unified cabinet (ibid).

These events and the various regimes of Iraq, including colonial rule, monarchy, and a dictatorship system, until the Kurdish regional government was established, has historically influenced and shaped Kurdish society over the years. Kurdish society suffered from a low level of political trust, social tolerance, political culture support for political liberty and women's participation in politics as a result of the negative effects of these events that had shaped its existence in the past. In all these, the Kurdish people had no say in what was happening but the way forward for the development of the region should be considered within the its own social, economic, environmental and historical context for it to be relevant. This then leads to the discussion of the problem underlying this study.

1.2 Problem statement

For over a century the Kurds have been subjected to the grand schemes of other powers, denied autonomy, and have faced the onslaughts of military assaults, economic embargoes, and the destruction of their native land. With the demise of the rule of the Ba'ath party in Iraq, the country's Kurdish population faces a new chapter in the political regional development of its region. The Kurdish people are currently facing the challenging task of rehabilitation, reconstruction and sustainable development of their region. The reconstruction of Kurdistan will be a difficult task. Not only will it need to address the damage caused by the war, but it will also need to overcome a legacy of 25 years of rule by Saddam Hussein including 12 years of UN sanctions.

For the first time since 1919, the regime change in Iraq in 2003 has created a unique opportunity for Kurds to promote their political rights in a post-dictatorial era (Mc Dowall 2005:4). Rubin (2008:1) argues that Kurdistan has, perhaps, been the greatest beneficiary of Iraq's liberation. For the first time in their history, the Kurds may have backed the winning horse (Yildiz, 2007:3).

A new opportunity emerged for women to participate in political, economic and social life together with the men on an equal basis. After 1991, many women's organizations appeared and challenged the existing customary law and norms that considered women as second class in society. This process has been strengthened after the latest positive political development in Iraq. The uprising of March 1991 in Iraqi Kurdistan had a great effect on the people of the Kurdish nation in all fields: - political, economic, social and educational. While it represented an opening for life from all dimensions and was considered as a historical turning point and a start for essential transfer into another type of life for Kurdish women, it was an important opportunity for them in society as they had played an outstanding role in the uprising. It liberated women from oppression, abuse and violation practised by the central government in Baghdad. Therefore, a new atmosphere of freedom of speech emerged with this involvement in the political, economic, social, and educational life.

Nineteenth of May 1992 is considered as a memorable and an eternal day in the history of the Kurdish people and the democratic movement in Iraq, because on this day the Kurdish people were able to freely choose their legal representatives in the first parliament through a direct free election not seen before in Iraq.

In principle, the Constitution declared equal rights for all people, regardless of sex, race, language, social origin, or religion. In practice however, these laws were often not enforced. There are still deviations from the official decision-making process. It is therefore evident that the decision-making process in Kurdistan is still controlled by the elites, in the sense that the male elites have a dominant position in the decision-making process, and the bureaucratic bodies of decision-making tend to have more power than the people. This is because the elite have greater access to information than other people. This in turn has resulted in a situation whereby decisions serve more the interest of the elites, despite the fact that the people as such are all involved in decision-making. This coupled with an increasing culture of corruption, absence of transparency, nepotism, tribalism, and abuse of power has eroded democracy.

Furthermore, the Kurdistan regional government lacked effective policy for regional rural development. Rather, it has emphasised more on urban development, an ineffective natural resource management and agricultural policy. It has focused more on input support instead of focusing on output and outcome, which enriches the rich, and impoverishes the poor. Generally villages in Kurdistan, prior to the *Anfal* campaign and deportation, were able to provide most, if

not all, their requirements and necessities through local productions. For instance in a village where the Author lived, the people were in need of tea and sugar only, which were brought to them from the city, but all their other requirements were produced in their village, and the neighbouring villages.

Many scholars are of the opinion and observation, that the KRG system is not able to deal with reconstruction and development problems in the region. *'I don't see a system in Kurdistan'*, said Gundi (2005: 49), because what has been inherited from the previous regime as it is not helpful destroys human talent and personality. Another reason is that there is no social equity. This leaves people with no voice in decision-making which is a great obstacle in the development of Kurdistan (ibid). Tribalism is another social and political predicament. Leezenberg (2006:175) argues that tribalism in Kurdistan after 1991 is not just a survival from the past, or something to fill any social gaps left open by a weak state, rather it is resurrected as the direct result of the state's active intervention.

Nepotism is another obstacle in democracy's path in Kurdistan. This phenomenon is particularly obvious in the political and administrative appointments (Mirza, 2007: 62). Corruption is another dimension of political performance and is not far from a criminal act. The lack of transparency within the political system, particularly in the budgeting mechanism makes it difficult to know who is responsible for the wrong doings and to evaluate effectiveness of politicians and officeholders (ibid: 64). Shwan (2007) describes the political and administrative corruption in Kurdistan as fishing net, meaning that it is a well organized system, in which corrupt elements support each other to hold their positions and can eliminate those who criticize them. Smakai (2006:252) observes that the main factor which causes failure in sustainable development in Kurdistan is the absence of transparency and non-active participation of citizens in the decision-making process regarding development.

Brinkerhoff and Tadesse (2005: 1), point out that, still today, women's lives differ markedly from male-dominated culture and there is a sharp rural-urban divide. Successful post-conflict resolution and development must take into account the role of previously disenfranchised or otherwise neglected groups in society. In many societies, focusing on the role of women and seeking to promote women's participation and empowerment are among the most important issues to address. Economic progress and democratic governance depend on the effective participation of all segments of the population, including women and minorities.

The quest for participation of women and men in the decision-making process as a means to achieve reconstruction and development in Kurdistan, is the driving force behind women's empowerment in democratic decentralisation that has been firmly established by law. It recognizes that a core element to achieve sustainable development is active participation of women in cooperation with men in decision-making processes at all levels. Women's participation in decision-making is one of the most important indicators of human development, as it reflects the level of democratic performance within a given society and the degree to which all segments of the population are included in the developmental process (Karama, 2009: 5).

The most important challenges of the current women's participation in the decision-making process in the Kurdish community can be summarized in several issues. The important one is the absence of women, their weak representation in the institutions in elective positions (Regional Parliament, Province councils, Municipal councils), and political parties. This absence extends to the government and NGOs in a decision-making position, and such absence gets doubled by marginalizing their role and position. If there are initiations of women's participation in the political field, therefore, some prevailing traditions segregate women from the political

community, and consider their presence in such fields as part of formalities only. As mentioned earlier, the researcher is going to diagnose the hindrances to Kurdish women participation in theory and practice and offer solutions.

The researcher will try in the empirical study to come out with lessons and recommendations that can effectively help in promoting the conscience of women and their qualification and participation in the decision-making process and partnership with men as per their rights and responsibilities stated in the UN statements.

1.3 Research objectives and questions

Research objectives

The research aims to find out what could be the best strategies and policies to promote the achievement of women's participation in decision-making in Kurdistan and in this manner to enhance development in the region based on the identification of the most promising practices and lessons learned to date.

In order to meet this goal the following objectives have been identified:

- To analyse the participation of women in the decision-making process with emphasis on their political participation and leadership at regional and local levels in Kurdistan.
- To make recommendations on how women's participation in cooperation with men at the grassroots, intermediate (Meso) and Micro levels can be enhanced.

Research questions

The research questions guiding the study are the following:

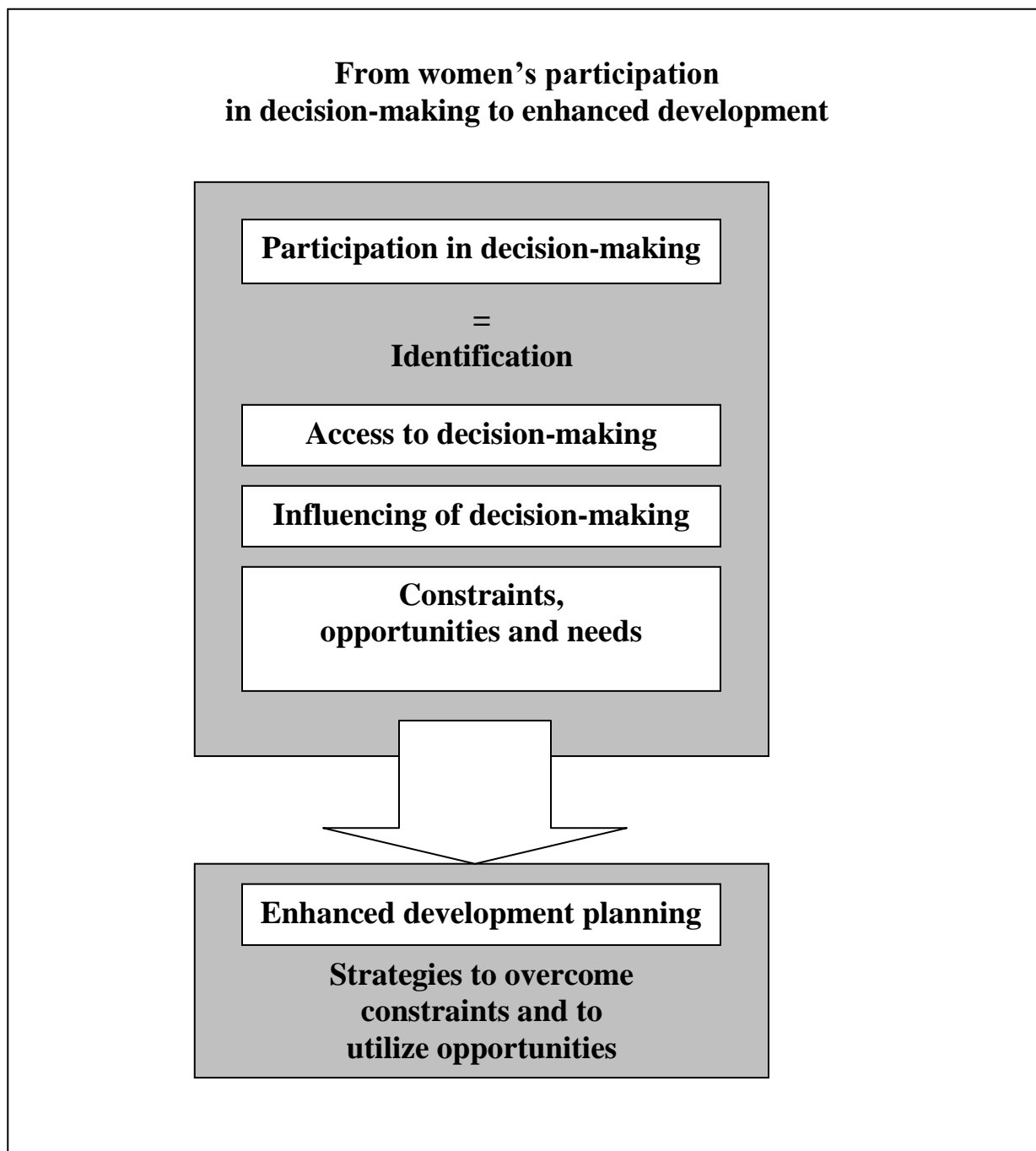
Main questions:

- How are women involved in the decision-making process at regional and local levels in Kurdistan?
- How can the participation of women in cooperation with men in decision-making be promoted to ensure maximum efficiency in pursuing development goals?

Operational questions;

- What is the current situation of women's participation in decision-making positions (at Micro, Meso and Macro levels), and more specifically their presence in legislative and executive institutions, as well as in political parties and civil organizations?
- What are the factors influencing women's participation in decision-making?
- How do women's versus men's needs (practical and strategic) and priorities differ?
- How has the Kurdistan regional government, after 20 years of establishment as a democratic decentralized system, influenced administrative, fiscal and political behaviour of local government in order to promote new opportunities for women's participation in decision-making at local level?
- What can be done to improve upon the involvement of women in cooperation with men in the decision-making process at regional and local levels in Kurdistan?

Figure 1.2: From women's participation to enhanced development planning



Source: Author's construct, 2008

For women and men to effectively participate in decision-making, as presented in figure 1.2, they should have access to the decision-making process and be able to influence it. Also, they should be able to utilise their opportunities and overcome their constraints in the process. These should help them plan for the future to take care of their needs in the decision-making process. This framework offers four basic analytical principles as a starting point for analysing their levels of participation. The first three principles of access to decision-making, influencing the decision-making process and the opportunities and constraints focus on the current situation of women's and men's participation in decision-making at local level (*'what is'*), while the fourth category on needs, focuses on planning for the future (*'what should be'*).

The effective participation of all genders in the decision-making process could have a great reflection on enhancing development planning as the needs and priorities of all genders could be considered. Moreover, the active participation of both genders in the decision-making process, especially women, could enhance their status economically and socially within society. Also, "the major schools of thought on women's development-Women in Development (WID) and Gender and Development (GAD), present a growing awareness that sustainable development must include the full and equal participation of women and men" (Centre for Development and Population Activities, CEDPA, 1996: v). Planning agencies and departments need to analyse the roles, rights and responsibilities of women and men in government, and specifically of women, to prevent their exclusion from development planning (Taylor, 1999:25).

1.4 Rationale of the research

In addition to what is obviously discernible in the background of the research problem, the justification of this study frames out through many scientific and practical considerations. No previous studies have approached this subject directly; therefore it is the first study on the level of Kurdistan in the theoretical and practical field of the participation of women in decision-making at local level.

The research will attempt to contribute to building a database of information on women's participation in decision-making at Micro, Meso and Macro levels. Coupled with its importance in the building and growth of scientific knowledge, it has the potential to open new frameworks on the subject for further research.

The relevance of this study, dealing with a vivacious subject in the Kurdish community, marks an important milestone in the interim stage characteristic of the community undertaking especially in the post-conflict period and genocide process. Also it deals with the phenomenon of deprivation and distress in many communities.

Participation widely accepted as the appropriate policy option for government development in general, should not be left unexamined for too long in district level development in Kurdistan in particular.

In the study the researcher will attempt, to come up with results and suggestions that can effectively help in increasing the awareness of women and their status, and involvement in the decision-making and partnership in development as stated at the Beijing conference (1995), as well as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Equality in decision-making and participation is not just a fair or democratic thing, but a necessary prerequisite in considering women's rights for effective and sustainable people-centred development.

1.5 The structure of the report

The entire report is divided into seven chapters.

Chapter one presents the background to the study. The first part of which presented the contextual problem, while the second part (1.2-1.4) described the problem statement, research objectives and questions, and rationale of the research.

The second chapter explores the research issues in the light of scientific discourse. The first part of it describes a historical overview of approaches concerning women and development. Another section of the chapter focused on capturing knowledge by reviewing and assessing issues and factors that determine the political participation of women while the final part discusses various theoretical concepts applicable in the Kurdistan context.

Chapter three brings to light the research framework, approaches and methods. It helps to link the theory and concepts with the empirical work.

Chapter four focuses on women's participation in Kurdistan and does well to capture empirical knowledge by reviewing and assessing the participation of women with reference to Kurdistan. It presents an overview of historical efforts of participation and also the driving forces of participation. It also presents the legal framework of political participation, institutions and women's representation. It finally identifies and discusses the key players of participation and the current government structure in Kurdistan.

Chapter five covers the characteristics of sub-district Barzan, the case studied.

Chapter six offers an analysis of women's participation in political activities at local level. This includes women's participation in civil society, electoral activities, political parties, and leadership positions, access to and control over resources and decision-making in the household, civil society and public sector. Various obstacles to women's participation at the local level are also analysed.

Finally, chapter seven offers conclusions and makes recommendations

2. The research issue in the light of scientific discourse

This chapter gives a general overview of the existing theoretical understanding related to the research topic. This includes an overview of various approaches to women and development including Women in Development (WID) and Gender and Development (GAD). The analytical principles considered relate to gender roles and gender needs. Effort is also made to cover other general theoretical concepts such as democracy, decentralisation, political participation and related contemporary issues. Based on these concepts, a conceptual framework is developed to help analyse the research issues in the Kurdistan region where the study is conducted.

2.1 From ‘women in development to gender and development’

Various terminologies have arisen over the decades to address the challenges of involving women in the development process. These have included the concept of ‘women in development’ and ‘gender and development’. This section of the thesis discusses these concepts and draws lessons from them to help the discussions on women’s participation, which is the main thrust of this research.

The concept of Women in Development (WID) was coined in the 1970s by the Washington DC chapter of the Society for International Development (Moser, 1998: 2). This was because it had become very clear during that period that women were being left out of the development process as they were not benefiting significantly from it. Also their existing status in society was being worsened by the process of development. Again, women as a group were treated as lacking opportunity to participate in development (Muyoyeta, 2004:5). There was therefore the need to address this by improving upon women’s access to resources, and their involvement in the development process. The WID approach therefore argued for the integration of women in the process of development as this was the best way to improve the condition of women in society (ibid). Also, an underlying rationale of this concept was that women were an untapped resource who could make an economic contribution to development (Moser, 1998:2). This approach focused mainly on women in isolation, promoting measures such as access to credit and employment as a means by which women were fully integrated into the development process (ibid).

Although this was to bring women into main stream development, disillusionment with it emerged in the 1980s as little progress had been made in improving the conditions of women (Leach, 2003:9). In spite of the fact that the approach made demands for women’s inclusion in the development process, it concentrated on the inequalities between men and women and ignored the social, cultural, legal and economic factors that gave rise to these inequalities.

Another shortcoming of this approach was that it tended to focus exclusively on women and assumed that they were outside the mainstream of development (Muyoyeta, 2004:6). Based on these shortcomings, there was a shift from this approach as it was realised that focussing on women in isolation was limited in scope. There was therefore the need to broaden this. By the mid 1990s, the WID had become Gender and Development (GAD) in most development agenda (Leach, 2003:9).

The GAD approach was touted as the new approach which was to overcome the shortcomings of WID (Akerkar, 2001:2 and Bauer and Shah, 2006:4). It maintained that, to focus on women in isolation was to ignore the real problem. It therefore emphasised a focus on gender

relations when designing measures to help women in the development process (Moser, 1998:3). It also focused on the interaction between women and the development process rather than purely on strategies to integrate women into development. It saw both women and men as not benefiting from global economic structures as a result of disadvantages due to class and the way wealth was distributed (Muyoyeta, 2004:7). It took a holistic view of gender and took into account the division of work and benefits between women and men. It again aimed for a conscious redistribution of not only productive activities, but also those within the household (FAO, 2006:3).

It can therefore be concluded that the gender discourse has moved through various phases from Women in Development (WID), to Gender and Development (GAD). The inclusion of aspects of gender tends to improve upon and extend the debate. It then implies a focus on the relationship between women and men and a need for awareness on the part of women (Bilig, 1992, cited in Mikkelsen, 2005: 232).

According to Mikkelsen (2005: 232) the theoretical perspectives on women in development have changed in a number of ways. This has had much influence on development cooperation (see Table 2.3) with its attendant methodological implications for how women in development and gender relations are addressed in development studies. Examples of some of these changes as pointed out by the writer are the following:

- From an undifferentiated population of women to the relationship between men and women
- From the single role of women as reproducers to the triple role of women, i.e., with roles of reproductive, productive and community management work
- From practical gender needs to practical and strategic gender needs
- From women seen as victims to women seen as actors and agents
- From a top-down to a bottom-up perspective, and
- The unit of analysis has changed from an emphasis on the individual woman and the household to socially and ethnically distinct groups of women and men and the relationship between them (ibid).

The writer further states that the centrality of gender and development has been consolidated during the last three decades. Also *equality* between women and men has now been firmly placed on the international agenda after the United Nations Fourth World conference on Women in Beijing in 1995. The Beijing *Platform for Action*, (*PfA*), adopted at the Conference, clearly recognizes that *gender equality* and *women's empowerment* are essential to address development. The global agreement reached at the *Platform for Action (PfA)* was that gender equality is the goal while mainstream gender equality is the strategy. In this view then, the focus on equality between women and men is based on two important premises. The *first* is that equality is a matter of human rights, while the *second* brings to the fore that equality is a pre-condition for effective and sustainable people centred development (ibid).

The GAD approach again provides a tool for analysing and addressing the issue of women and men more holistically and effectively in gender mainstreaming (Bauer and Shah, 2006:4). It also ensures that women and men participate equally at all stages of the project cycle, both as beneficiaries and as decision-makers. This mainstreaming approach also acknowledges that all development activities have various issues that need to be captured in the process. These include gender dimensions, roles, responsibilities, access to resources and priorities of women and men within a specific context, examining the social, political, economic, and environment factors which influence their roles and decision-making capacity (ibid).

Table 2.1 presents comparisons of various issues bordering on the concepts of Women in Development (*WID*) and Gender and Development (*GAD*) by various writers, the summary is as follows.

Table 2.1: Women in Development and Gender and Development Compared

Women in Development (WID)	Gender and Development (GAD)
The Approach	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An approach which saw women as the problem and also victims of development as they had inadequate capacity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A holistic approach to development
The Focus	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Women Women as passive recipients 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gender, (relations between men and women) Women as active participants.
The Problem	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The exclusion of women (half of the productive resources from the development process) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unequal relations of power (rich and poor, women and men) that prevent equitable development and women's full participation
The Goal	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> More efficient, effective development, (Effectiveness) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Equitable, sustainable development with women and men as decision-makers, (Equity).
The Solution	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Integrate women into the existing development process,(Enabling) Changes the conditions of women 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Empower the disadvantaged women and transform unequal relations, (Empowering) Change the position of women
The Strategies	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Address practical gender needs. Address interests of the women's projects in isolation. Increase women's ability to look after the household Concerned with access to resources Women as passive recipients 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Address strategic gender needs and at the same time address practical gender needs. Address interests of the poor through people centred development. Improve women's decision-making role (public and private) Concerned with access to and control over resources. Women as active participants.

Adapted from: 1. Canadian Council for International Co-operation (with Match International Centre and AQOSI Quebec), cited in Stephen P. Marks and Katherine E. Beal, 2003:24,
 2. Stephen P. Marks and Katherine E. Beal. 2003:23,
 3. www.chinacp.org.cn/eng/cppub/getrain/ChinaGEManual,2003:12.pdf

The above discussion is important as it serves as a means for assessing the kind of approaches that have been adopted in the Kurdistan Region to enhance the development of women. It also gives the researcher the chance to identify some of their inherent weaknesses, constraints, and possible opportunities. This may help in coming out with a holistic approach that can address the challenges confronting women in the development process in the Kurdistan region.

2.2 Gender roles

Gender roles can be defined as “the activities assigned to men and women on the basis of perceived differences while division of labour is a term used in gender literature to mean the roles and tasks assigned to women and men on the basis of perceived gender characteristics and attributes, instead of ability and skills” (Centre for Development and Population Activities, CEDPA, 1996:21). Gender roles and responsibilities vary among cultures and can change over time. For example, in India, unskilled labour is considered ‘women’s work’ while in Africa it is ‘men’s work’. In Europe and the United States, the contribution men make to domestic activities is becoming increasingly important and visible (ibid, 1996: 22).

Gender is engaged in different roles within the sphere of social reproduction and what is termed productive activity. These roles are classified by Moser (Moser, 1998:28-34) as follows:

1. **Productive role:** This refers to production of goods and service for consumption and trade undertaken by both women and men, which generates an income (whether financial or ‘in kind’), but their functions and responsibilities often differ. Women’s productive work is often less visible and not as much appreciated as that of men in most Third World societies.
2. **Reproductive role:** This refers to care and maintenance of the households and its members, including bearing and caring for children, preparing food, shopping, housekeeping, and family health-care, collecting water and fuel in rural area etc. which are essential to the reproduction of the workforce. It is almost always the responsibility of women and girls.
3. **Community work:** This refers to activities undertaken by both women and men engaged in community activities. Moser (ibid) divides community work into two different types of work.

Community managing activities are undertaken mainly by women as an addition to their reproductive role. Such activities “ensure the provision and maintenance of scarce resources” which everyone uses, such as water, health-care and education. This is voluntary unpaid work, carried out during women’s free time.

Community politics activities are undertaken mostly by men, who take part in organized, formal politics, often within the framework of national politics. They are usually paid in cash for this work, or benefit indirectly through improved status or power (ibid).

The triple role concept is useful in revealing the wide range of work that women are engaged in. These then provide the reason to use the gender role analysis in a planning framework. In addition, it helps planners to know the interrelationship in linking productive, reproductive and community roles, as any development in one area of work will change the actions in other areas.

Though the triple role concept approach does not take into consideration issues such as, ethnicity and class this classification is an appropriate one that can be used for planning in

government institutions and civil society organisations as it maintains the empowerment of women and tries to address unequal gender relations.

Also, the DPU (Development Planning Unit, London University) developed the multiple role concept gender analysis. It aimed to understand the social, economic, and political relations between women and men (March et al, 2005:123). Accordingly this concept of multiple roles may be more appropriate to the situation in Kurdish society. This is because men and women fought side by side for liberation in addition to the other roles they carry out in their homes and in society as a whole.

2.3 Gender needs

A major basis of participation of women in development concerns is the reality that men and women not only play dissimilar roles in society, with different ranks of control over resource, but that they consequently and frequently have different needs. Moser developed gender needs assessment as a tool for analysing gender needs, based on their triple role for the gender planning process. Women have particular needs as they often relate to living conditions and strategic gender interests/needs due to their subordinate position to men in society. Women's needs differ from men's needs. A distinction is made between practical gender needs and strategic gender interests/needs (Moser, 1998:37). This is discussed below.

2.3.1 Practical gender needs

Practical gender needs are to address present material and immediate (short term) perceived needs of women. According to Bauer and Shah (2006:5) and Moser (1998:40) women's practical needs tend to focus on the domestic arena, housing, basic services, child care services, maternal and income-earning activities. Practical gender needs, if they were met, would assist women in their present actions. This notwithstanding, it does not challenge women's subordinate position in society.

2.3.2 Strategic gender interests/needs

Strategic gender interests/needs are long-term and related to improving women's positions in society. It focuses on helping women to emerge from their subordinate (disadvantaged) status and position in society. Positions refer to women's social and economic standing relative to men. It is measured, for example, by male/female disparities in wages and employment opportunities, participation in legislative bodies, vulnerability to poverty and violence, and so on. Strategic gender needs, if they were met, would enable women to transform existing imbalances of power between women and men ((Bauer and Shah 2006: 5-6 and Moser, 1998:39).

According to the UNDP (2001:44) "practical and strategic gender interests/needs should not be seen as entirely distinct and separate, but rather as a continuum. By consulting women on their practical gender needs, entry points to address gender inequalities in the longer term (strategic gender interests/needs) can be created". For instance, capacity building through education, training, and awareness regarding human rights and what the world has promised concerning women's issue can in the short term be referred to as practical gender needs particularly in Third World countries. Through this, women themselves may be able to identify their subordinate position to men in their society and based on this, campaign for changes to their legal rights. Through this, their strategic needs can be formed. The opposite also holds.

The concept of practical and strategic needs is a very useful tool to evaluate the impact of a development intervention on gender relations. Despite this, Moser (1998) did not consider the strategic gender needs of men. The DPU (Development Planning Unit, London University) therefore has broadened this to include men's practical and strategic needs in its framework (March et al, 2005:123). This argument by the DPU reflects the case of Kurdistan. In the case of Kurdish society it was obvious before the establishment of the Kurdish Regional Government that the Kurdish people (women and men) were subordinated to other ethnic groups and consequently, the people themselves identified legal rights which needed long-term and specific opportunities as strategic gender interests/needs.

The summary of the various needs and interests are presented in Table 2.2

Table 2.2: Practical needs and strategic interests

Practical gender needs	Strategic gender interests
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Short term, immediate and material ● Pertain to women's current conditions ● Pertain to day to day living conditions of women. Tend to focus on the domestic arena, income earning activities, housing and basic services, childcare services, traditional employment opportunities ● Do not question existing division of labour ● Incremental (marginal increase in gain/benefits) ● Vary with economic condition 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Long term ● Pertain to the position of women vis-a-vis men ● Include changes in the gender division of labour, shared domestic labour and child care, elimination of institutionalized forms of discrimination, etc ● Seek to transform the existing division of labour ● Common for most women ● Redistribution of power and resource
Examples	Examples
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Access to clean water ● Access to sanitation ● Access to fodder ● Access to child care facilities ● Access to credit 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Sharing of housework ● Women and men in non-traditional tasks ● Equal wages for work of equal value ● Equal rights to land titles ● Equal representation and participation of women in decision-making about environmental management
<p>Practical and strategic needs are linked. Responding to practical needs identified by women at the community level can provide an entry point to identifying and addressing their long-term strategic interests. To ensure sustainable benefits, both practical needs and strategic interests must be taken into account in the design of policies programs and projects.</p>	

Source: www.chinacp.org.cn/eng/cppub/getrain/ChinaGEManual,2003:11.pdf

2.4 Policy approaches to women in development.

Gender policy classifications

Gender policies can be classified in various ways, but Kabeer (1994) in March et al (2005:20-21) classified these as follows: *Gender blind policies*, *Gender-aware policies*, *Gender-neutral policies*, *Gender-specific policies* and *Gender-redistributive policies*. All these policy classifications act as a tool to help practitioners and policy-makers determine to what degree a project or a policy is explicitly working towards transforming unequal gender relations.

Gender blind policies tend to exclude women and do not recognize a distinction between sexes. These also make assumptions which lead to a bias in favour of the existing gender relations. In the case of *Gender-aware policies*, women are recognized as development actors as well as men and that the nature of women's involvement is determined by gender relations which make their involvement different, often unequal and that consequently mean women may have different needs, interests, and priorities which may sometimes conflict with those of men. Within this category, Kabeer (1994) further makes the distinction between gender-neutral, gender-specific, and *Gender-redistributive* policies. According to the writer, *Gender-neutral policies* use the knowledge of gender differences in a given society to overcome biases in development interventions, in order to ensure practical gender needs. *Gender-neutral* policies work within the existing gender division of resources and responsibilities. Also, *Gender-specific policies* use the knowledge of gender differences in a given context to respond to the practical gender needs of women or the men they work with within the existing gender division of resources and responsibilities while *Gender-redistributive policies* are intended to transform existing distribution of power and resources to create a more balanced relationship between women and men, touching on strategic interests (ibid).

Gender policy classification in the Third World

Over the years, policy approaches to addressing developmental challenges relating to women have developed and changed in response to criticism and growth of better understanding of the dynamics relating to women their development. These policy approaches are briefly discussed and a summary presented in Table 2.3 in page 23.

2.4.1 The Welfare Approach

Before the early 1970s, the main focus of development programmes was on the practical needs of women. These reflected the context of their reproductive roles and saw them as passive beneficiaries and as better mothers who provided child-care, nutrition, sewing classes, and family planning. The focus was clearly aimed at practical needs, targeted especially at 'needy' women, who were seen as passive recipients, associated with backwardness for traditional female domestic roles. Meeting practical gender needs, through top-down handouts of food aid, the assumption that the approach (charitable approach) and that women's condition would improve together with general improvements in the economy, or with the economic situation of their husbands, began to be challenged as it became clear that women were in fact losing out. Men were assisted in some economic development projects, such as the introduction of cash crops, and new agricultural technologies that excluded women (Moser, 1998: 58-62). In this particular approach, the role of government is seen to be limited (Taylor, 1999:16).

2.4.2 The Equity Approach

The equity approach was essentially a political movement, feminist a call for gender equality were important in bringing about this approach, which was the original Women in Development (WID) approach introduced within the 1976-1985. The main aim of this was anti-discrimination. It emphasized the idea that women should participate equally with men in everything, thus they should be 'mainstreamed' as active participants in development. Also, the equity principle stresses the need to meet women's strategic needs as well as practical ones. Equity approach arrangement with issues of policy and legal measures (Women's strategic gender needs) as a means of bringing about equity, through direct state intervention, by giving women both political and economic autonomy. The equity approach, as distinct from the welfare approach, recognized women as dynamic participants organizing and bring about required changes (Moser, 1998:58-62). In this approach government is expected to play a regulatory role by providing the legal framework for the fair treatment of women especially in the political and economic spheres. There are however polices such as compulsory education for girls as well as boys, abolition of dowry, equal rights of inheritance which are equity based, but may be difficult to implement in local situations (Taylor,1999:16).

2.4.3 The Anti-Poverty Approach

This approach is a less radical adaptation of the WID equity approach. Which women, as vehicles of development not in their right, adopted from the 1970s onwards. The approach focuses on projects and programmes targeted to meet practical needs, on the basis that women need to have basic living requirements fulfilled before they can participate in development activities. It may be assumed as a basic needs approach and discount the strategic needs of women. An input practical strategy requested access to income generation and job opportunities. This approach is more popular with NGOs within such projects as mother-and-child-care programmes, provision of piped water, and vegetable gardening (Moser, 1998: 66-69). The role of government in this approach is coordination (Taylor, 1999:16).

2.4.4 The Efficiency Approach

The efficiency approach views women as employees and is a product of the 1980s economic reforms recognized as the Structural Adjustment Programmes of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank. Its aim was increased production and economic growth highlighting the complete use of human resources. Building capacities through education and training were thus key strategies. This approach have criticised that gender analysis is to shed light on women's roles and responsibilities as part of the planning of development activities that helps to improve effectiveness and ensures that women, as well as men, can play their part in development. The efficiency approach mainstreamed or integrated women in development. (Moser, 1998: 69-73). The expected role of government is to promote the employment of women by the private sector and put in place policies that ensure equal opportunities with more emphasis on labour policy and skills development (Taylor, 1999:16).

2.4.5 The Empowerment Approach

Empowerment is the most recent policy approach to women in development. It takes into consideration both practical and strategic gender needs of women as well as their multiple roles in development through a bottom-up approach.

Empowerment is an approach, which strongly related with third world feminist and grassroots organizations, in order to enlarge the self-reliance of women and to influence and modify the policy, legislative (for instance, land right, inheritance, rights to widows and divorcees, quota system for political committees), societal, economic and other levels to their advantage. Most interventions for empowerment have been at policy level rather than at project level. Its main emphasises is on women's access to decision-making. Its main strategy is awareness-raising and situates women firmly as active participants in ensuring that change takes place. Building organizational skills and self-esteem is an important aspect of the empowerment approach. The empowerment approach has opened opportunities for women to determine their own needs; through bottom-up mobilization around practical gender needs to meet strategic gender needs indirectly, polices and programmes to meet strategic needs, which is to say education, legal and political rights, mobility, and self-confidence of women and their participation in the development process (Moser, 1998:74-78). Empowerment approach has tended to emphasis on *'what women could do for development, as well as on what development could do for women'* (Derbyshire, 2002:9).

The role of the government may be significant in promoting rights of women and ensuring democratic practices among all sectors (public, private and civil society) (Taylor, 1999:18).

Empowerment in the view of Friedmann that is the vision that poor households require social power as apolitical option rather than planning as nature, through which household's themselves are able to identify practical and strategic needs and their means can be created (Friedmann, 1996:66). Therefore at the heart of the model of empowerment is the initiative of power which has to change. The possibility of empowerment depends on two things. Power can change and expand, and at that time empowerment is possible (Staples, 1990 in Nikkhah and Redzuan, 2009:173).

"This calls for something beyond an increase to bases of social power. It calls for transformation of social power and politics capable of turning political claims into legitimate entitlements" (Friedmann, 1996:70).

These highlight the transformation of dominant gender relations of power in society, through women's self-empowerment (March et al, 2005:25). 'Because there are risks and costs incurred in any process of change, it must be believed in, initiated, and directed by those whose interests it is meant to serve. Empowerment cannot be given, it must be self-generated (Kabeer, 1994:97 in *ibid*). We might come to end that empowerment (*as a mean and as an end*) a process of transformation by which women and men as (individuals, headed households, and groups) with no power or little power, gain power and the capability to formulate choices (practice and political needs/interests) that shape their lives.

Table 2.3: Different Policy Approaches to Third World Women

Issues	Welfare	Equity	Anti-Poverty	Efficiency	Empowerment
Origins	Earliest approach: -Residual model of social welfare under colonial administration -Modernization/ accelerated growth: economic development model	Original WID approach: -Failure of modernization. -Influence of Boserup and First World feminists on Percy Amendment. -Declaration of UN Decade for Women	Second WID approach: -Toned-down equity because of criticism -Linked to Redistribution with Growth and Basic Needs.	Third and now predominant WID approach: -Deterioration in world economy. -Policies of economic stabilization and adjustment rely on women's economic contribution to development	Most recent approach: -Arose out of failure of equity approaches -Third World women's feminist writing and grass roots organizations
Period most popular	1950-1970:but still widely used	1975-1985:attempts to adopt it during and since Women's Decade	1970s onwards: still limited popularity	Post 1980s: now most popular approach.	1975s on wards: accelerated during 1980s still limited popularly
Purpose	To bring women into development as better mothers: This is seen as their most important role in development.	To gain equity for women in development process: women seen as active participants in development.	To ensure that poor women increase their productivity: women's poverty seen as problem of underdevelopment not of subordination	To ensure development is more efficient and more effective: women's economic participation seen as associated with equity	To empower women through greater self-reliance :women's subordination seen not as problem of men but also of colonial and neo-colonial oppression
Needs of women met and recognized	To meet PGN in reproductive role, particularly in relation to food aid, malnutrition and family planning	To meet SGN in terms of triple role-directly through state top-down intervention, giving politic Women seen as passive beneficiaries of develop mentality with men	To meet PGN in productive role, to earn an income, particularly in small-scale generating projects	To meet PGN in context of declining social service by relying on all three roles of women and elasticity of women's time	To reach SGN in terms triple role-indirectly through bottom up mobilization around PGN as means to confront oppression
Comment	Women seen as passive beneficiaries of development with focus on their reproductive role, non-challenging, therefore widely popular .Especially women are seen as passive beneficiaries of development government and traditional NGOs.	In identifying subordinate position of women in terms of relationship to men; challenging; criticized as Western feminism; considered treating and not popular with government.	Poor women isolated as separate category with tendency only to recognize productive role: reluctance of government to give limited aid to women means popularity still at small-scale NGO level.	Women seen entirely in terms of delivery capacity and ability to extend working day: most popular approach both with governments and multilateral agencies.	Potentially challenging with emphasis on Third World and women's self-reliance: largely unsupported by governments and agencies; avoidance of Western feminism criticism means slow, significant growth of under-financed voluntary organizations.
PGN=Practical gender need, SGN=Strategic gender need					

Source: Moser, 1998:56-57

The sequential arrangements of these policy approaches to women's development may be an over simplification of reality. This is argued on the premise that many of these have not necessarily been implemented in this ordered logic by implementing agencies. A combination of these policies may be favoured, as this has the ability of meeting the needs of a wide range of women groups. Also, a particular approach may be adopted to suit a particular need and situation. Despite this, these classifications will help measure how far different policies meet practical and strategic gender needs in the case of the Kurdistan Region.

Conclusion

The Women in Development (WID) policy framework in development planning required the inclusion of women-specific projects to be translated into action. Not taking into consideration the systemic rationale of gender inequalities, this approach tended to analyse and view women as passive recipients of a development process, rather than as dynamic agents in the development process explaining their situation based on political, economic, social and cultural realities. It was consequently a typical gender-blind policy.

The Gender and Development (GAD) approach emerged in response a need to overcome the shortcomings of WID. It recognises that improving the status of women is not an isolated problem and separate, but needs to be addressed by taking into account the status of men and women, their differing existence paths and the reality that equal treatment will not automatically generate equal outcomes. So women and men must have the same opportunities and benefits in developing their potential and meeting their needs. It recognizes that, achieving equitable outcomes might require treating women and men differently. This may be done through an empowerment policy. As men and women do not have the same roles and responsibilities, they accordingly, have different needs. 'Practical gender needs' refer to material and tangible needs, while 'strategic gender needs' point to what is required to overcome the subordinate position of women to men in society which relates to empowerment.

A joint approach, or in other words, a twin approach is needed that identifies the relation between practical and strategic needs and recommends empowerment policy and planning frameworks to concentrate on both strategic and practical issues within institutions. According to the above debate, does the Regional Government and civil societies in Kurdistan have a clear gender policy? Do the activities of the KRG and civil societies contribute to the empowerment of women? What would be the most suitable approach for future planning in the Kurdistan region?

2.5 Participation, sharing power and democracy

The concept of participation is a broader term and conveys different meanings to different persons and groups. The meaning given to this concept is also context dependent. Participation is simply a way of sharing power with different stakeholders and if this power is not shared properly, there is no real participation. Participation could have several dimensions, but this study covers the following major dimensions of participation:

1. Participation in decision-making in a democratic decentralized system: This is a process of decision-making through democratic exercises including free and fair voting, legislative control, sharing of political power through different democratic institutions. These institutions include all legislative bodies such as parliaments at varying levels. In such a system people take part in the decision-making process through elections. This is democracy and participation in the context of western societies. However such a situation in its true sense does not exist in most developing countries (Adhikari, 2006:23).
2. Participation of civil society organisations in governance related affairs particularly at the local level: These organisations may include the media, private sector organisations, NGOs, political parties, community based organisations and others (ibid).

The first dimension above provides a political as well as institutional framework for participation and democratic governance at regional, province and local levels. Though these dimensions are relevant to this study, it is however some aspects of the second dimension which is the primary focus of this research and which, in turn, has been undertaken to study the participation of women and men in decision-making at the local level.

Who needs to participate?

The UNDP (2004:14), explained that an inclusive and affirmative approach is essential in decentralised governance for development and that several stakeholders need to be involved in the planning, implementation and monitoring of the process. This is as a result of the multi-dimensional and multi-faceted nature of Decentralized Governance for Development (DGD). Based on this, it proposed to include the following category of stakeholders in the process of the participation.

- The poor and the vulnerable, the claim-holders: These include especially women and the legitimate groups representing them (women's groups, trade unions, and NGOs).
It further asserts that these categories of stakeholders should be given voices in governance and development processes at the local and national levels to make them true partners, not just target beneficiaries. This is due to the fact that these are one vital group of stakeholders that are ignored most of the time in the governance process for development.
- Traditional authorities, especially of indigenous and tribal people.
- Private businesses especially those that operate at local level
- Authorities, bodies, elected officials at local and other sub-national levels.
- Government agencies operating at national and sub-national levels, e.g., central and decentralised offices of ministries of local governments, finance, health, social services and development, agriculture, industry, etc.,
- Media (*UNDP 2004:14*).

All the stakeholders, as identified, are also relevant in the case of Kurdistan where the study is being conducted. For instance at the local level, the *Shaikh* is the tribal leader while the *Malla* is the religious leader. All these stakeholders need to be involved in any decision-making process at local level to make these decisions hold and binding.

Why is women's participation so important?

According to the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, (IDEA), women's presence in politics is a standard indicator of the democracy of a society (European Women's Lobby, EWL, 2008:16). The EWL is of the view that “if more than half of the population is persistently under-represented, the legitimacy and the functioning of the democratic system are put under question” (ibid). (Karl 1995:1 in Sepoe, 2002:26) therefore asserts that “there can be no true democracy, no true people's participation in governance and development without equal participation of women and men in all spheres of life at all levels of decision-making”. In view of this, the question arises: why women’s participation is relevant to development.

The important objectives of participation in development can be based on a fivefold continuum by Paul (1987 in Moser, 1998:101). This ranges from participation for empowerment, to capacity-building, through increasing project effectiveness, to improving project efficiency and, finally, to project cost-sharing. The first objective relates to empowerment; the second concerns participation as a means of active efficiency, effectiveness and cost recovery while the third objective focuses on capacity-building.

Though women’s participation is seen to be important, in this study, the researcher refers to both the participation of women and men rather than simply to ‘women’. This is because gender is broader in two senses: in the *first place*, it is not limited to women's participation in isolation of men because there are some areas in which men's participation needs to be addressed as well. For example, effective participation requires that women and men be engaged. Similarly, family and community concerns should not be the dominion of women, but should include the commitment of men as well. Therefore gains made at national level may not be sustainable and national level policies may remain as empty rhetoric without a strongly rooted political participation by women at the local level (Beall, 2007:13).

Why gender is important for democracy and governance

Gender is important for democracy and governance due to strengthening democracy, which means both broadening and deepening participation of women. In the words of Greenberg (1998:2), broadening means extending the democratic process through diverse participation as women represent at least half the population in many countries across the globe. In this light, they should be fully and effectively included. Also the deepening of participation seeks to ensure that citizens can participate in an informed way in both electoral processes and decision-making.

As participants in a democracy, women must not only receive information passively, but also have the means to assess it. Therefore, strengthening democracy is about empowering people (ibid). But in many cases foreign assistance is provided to people simply as beneficiaries. There are many opportunities to empower women by building confidence and capacity. Moreover, it has been proven that, engaging women as participants in planning and implementing development projects has in many instances resulted in more effective programs.

Democracy as a primary vehicle towards parity, the equal representation and power-sharing between women and men

Democracy has in recent years been seen as the “primary vehicle for the fulfilment of individual aspirations, the articulation of interests and nurturing of civil society” (Cheema and Maguire 2002:2). Democracy may be viewed as “a system of government, the distribution of power within that system and the grounded rules of and values inherent in the process” (Adhikari, 2006:25). Equality and liberty are the main underlying rationales of democracy (Cheema and Maguire 2002:2). Minimum conditions that qualify a democratic system include the rule of law, collective deliberation, choice and participation and representative and accountable to government. Democratization on the other hand may be defined as “process whereby democratic institutions, practices and beliefs are inbuilt and/or strengthened in a society” (Adhikari, 2006:25). This includes fostering the participation of women and men in the democratic process.

Democratic principle and evaluating criteria

Popular control over public decision-making, decision makers and equality between citizens in the exercise of control has been the two basic principles of democracy. This was presented in the international IDEA’s democracy assessment framework and these have been used to identify democratic values which underlie pro-poor and gender sensitive indicators according to the UNDP (2006:5).

The UNDP is of the opinion that “in order to apply these principles to assess a country's system of governance from poverty and gender perspective, it is necessary to specify a set of mediating values through which they are realised in practice. These values include participation, representation, accountability, transparency, responsiveness, efficiency and equity” (ibid). To realise these values, each of them has various requirements and institutional means which need to be applied. Table 2.4 brings out the link between these democratic principles and what is required to make them effective in a pro poor and gender sensitive manner. Though each country has its own peculiar situation, including values and institutional means to drive its own democratic ideals, the application of these proposals by the UNDP (2006) is still relevant to ensure fair representation in a pro-poor and gender sensitive manner. There is therefore the need for national parliaments and those at the sub-national levels to express the concerns and priorities of women and the poor. In the Kurdistan region, where local traditions are deeply rooted in its governance system, these principles and their requirements if applied in harmony with these traditions may help improve the participation of women and those neglected in the decision-making process. In order to do this, political party quotas for female electoral candidates is an institutional mechanism that can be used to achieve this (ibid).

Table 2.4: Realising democratic values in a pro-poor and gender sensitive manner

Values	Requirements	Institutional means
Participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Women/men and poor/non-poor enjoy and exercise same rights to participate - Women/men and poor/non-poor possess the capacities/resources to participate - An inclusive participatory culture exists which encourage women and the poor to be active politically 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Civil and political rights are enforced and safeguarded for all citizens - Electoral quotas for women and groups experiencing severe disadvantage, e.g. Scheduled castes/tribes - Civic and voter education programmes targeted at women and the poor
Representation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Parliamentarians at national and sub-national level articulate the concerns and priorities of women and the poor - Civil service is representative of social composition of electorate, including women and poor 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Political party quotas for female electoral candidates - Anti-discrimination legislation and equal opportunity policies in the civil service - Affirmative action policies
Accountability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Clear and effective lines of accountability (legal, financial, administrative and political) to safeguard judicial integrity, and to ensure honest and efficient performance by civil servants in the delivery of public services to women and low income groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Speedy and low cost access to law courts, administrative tribunals and ombudsmen by the poor - Existence and enforcement of legislation against domestic violence - Anti-corruption programmes - Procedural initiatives to strengthen budgetary oversight by National Parliaments with support of Auditor-General and Accountant-General - Public Expenditure Tracking of spending on health and Educational - Robust political parties, civil society organizations and pressure groups to promote the interest of women and the poor
Transparency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Government decision-making in areas of particular concern to women and low income groups should be open to legislative and public scrutiny 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Freedom of information legislation - Independent media allowing journalists to report on gender and poverty issues - Gender sensitive budgeting (at local level) - Benefit incidence analysis of major items of public expenditure
Responsiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Accessibility of government to electors and different sections of formation, implementation and service delivery 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Systematic and open procedures of public consultation - Effective legal redress - Local government close to people
Efficiency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Goods and services provided by the public sector least cost and in the quantities/qualities desired by citizens 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Procedural initiatives to strengthen budgetary oversight by National Parliaments with support of Auditor-General and Accountant-General
Equity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - State redistributes entitlements through taxation and public expenditure in accordance with a democratically expressed social welfare function 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Progressive system of taxation and expenditure - Use of targeted welfare programmes

Source: UNDP, 2006:7

Parity democracy

The European Women's Lobby, EWL (2008) mentioned that parity democracy is a step towards a modern democracy and this concept aims at acknowledging the equal dignity and value of persons of both sexes; making political systems more democratic and just; and renewing the social organization in such a way that women and men equally share rights, responsibility and power. It is of the view that both sexes should be represented whenever decisions are made that affect their lives and the sexes should have equal representation. In the view parity democracy is not just about numbers, but also about improving the quality of policies. Parity democracy pegs the critical mass needed to ensure the fair representation of women in decision-making at 30%. Also equal representation of men and women in any political decision-making should be 50/50 of each sex (European Women's Lobby, EWL, 2008:16).

The National Centre for Women and Information Technology, NCWIT (2011), also counts as parity: “first, the percentage of women in technical positions equals the percentage of men in similar positions, or equals the percentage of women in the workforce, second, men and women are retained in the department at similar rates, third, women represent close to 50% of new hires, fourth, men’s and women’s career trajectories, promotion pattern, and/or salaries for similar work are similar, fifth, men’s and women’s participation in innovation activities, leadership, and other rewarded tasks are similar both in rate and quality” (Women and Information Technology ,NCWIT, 2011:3).

Therefore from the above definitions parity democracy concerns equal representation and power-sharing between women and men and transforms concepts such as citizenship, equality, universality, making political systems more democratic. Again this concept does not treat women as a minority group within the dominant framework. Furthermore, it implies removing structural and cultural impediments for women's entry into decision-making, such as adapting the working conditions of elected representatives to the demands of modern life, dissolving gender stereotypes, and changing electoral systems which are less favourable to women (European Women's Lobby, EWL, 2008:16-17). The Lobby reveals that there is evidence to show that equal representation of women in politics has the potential of making major changes in the political culture and the content of policies in countries where parity has been applied. It further states that, “even if women's equal representation in politics would not change anything; parity is needed in the name of equality, democracy and justice” (ibid: 17-18).

In line with parity democracy as discussed above, the Iraqi National Assembly and the Kurdistan Regional Parliament have also provided quotas for women’s representation in their various parliaments. The PUK and KDP (political parties in Kurdistan), also gave quotas for women’s representation at their various high committee levels (central decision-making units of the parties) in 2009 and 2010 respectively. This has boosted the representation of women in the various parliaments and also at the decision-making levels of the various parties concerned.

Political representatives, representative democracy and people's interests

According to Cheema and Maguire (2002:7) there are four reasons why “representative” governments may represent the interests of people. These are:

1. The public spirit of those who offer themselves for public service;
2. The use of their vote as citizens to select candidates with identical interests and devotion to public service while in office;
3. Citizen's use of their votes to remove those 'who would stray from the path of virtue'; and

4. The separation of government powers through a system of checks and balances in such way that together they end up acting in the people's best interests.

The above therefore raises the question of the best political system in which political representatives truly represent the citizen's voice. Cheema and Maguire (2002:7) argue that democracy is still more conducive to representation than other types of regimes. In their view, institutional reforms and innovations have the likely ability of promoting a more inclusive democracy and thus resulting in a form of government in which the needs and demands of the poor, minorities, and other disadvantaged groups are adequately represented. In this form of governance, women who are mostly disadvantaged and marginalized in society in many eastern countries could have the chance of also getting their voices heard. These writers are however of the opinion and further caution that “there is no guarantee that democratic development moves in only one direction and there is much to suggest that all political systems (including democracies, liberal or otherwise) become rigid, corrupt and unresponsive in the absence of periodic reform and renewal” (ibid).

They conclude therefore that, “democratic governance is the best system to ensure citizen participation in decision-making because it demands the participation of the citizens in selecting their leaders and holding them accountable. It also provides local governance and civil society mechanisms through which citizens can voice their concerns; make decisions at a local level and inform their elected representatives of pressing issues”(ibid:13-14).

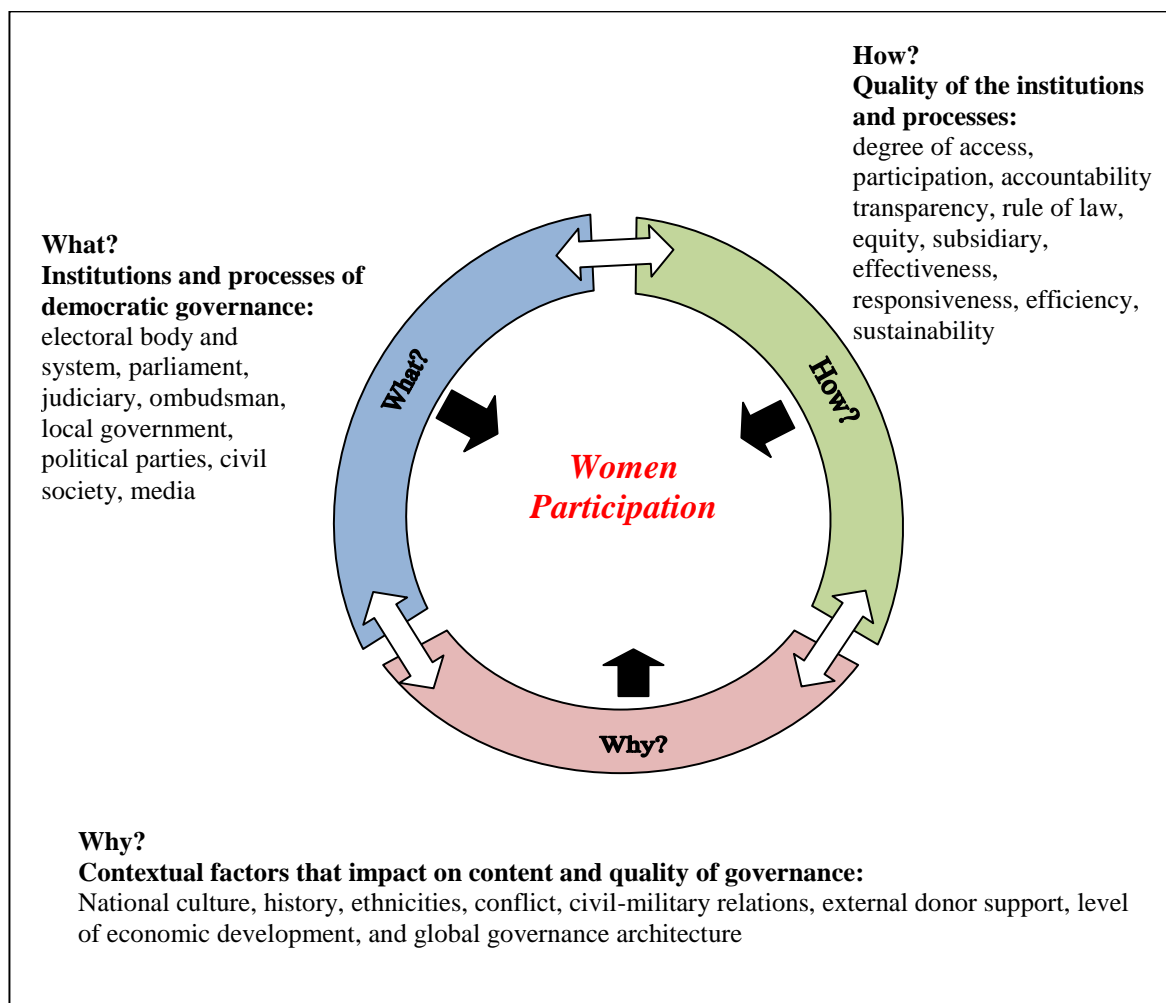
In view of the ability of representative democracy to ensure better representativeness, it has now become a dominant form of governance worldwide. There are about three main principal ideas behind representative democracy. In the *first* place, government must be elected by the people (women and men) for it to enjoy the moral title to rule; *secondly*, government must be subject to political control by women and men, and *finally* all women and men must be equal before the law of the land, enjoying human rights that are respected and protected by the government (Matlosa, 2007:11)

It is now widely accepted that democracy and development are two sides of the same coin and therefore all things being equal, should be mutually reinforcing. Again, the progress on both the democracy and development fronts is most likely to ensure peace. Although democracy ought to promote development, neither can prevail if countries are engulfed in protracted violent conflict. Therefore, the pursuit of democracy, development and peace ought to be anchored in gender equality without which, both democracy and development are severely deficient (ibid: 7).

Three main argumentative elements therefore arise which need to be kept in mind when studying or evaluating democratic governance; 'the *what*, the *how* and the *why*.' The 'What' includes the democratic governance together with its institutions, process and practices, the 'how' is focused on the key principles of democracy as a form of governance, and the 'Why' includes internal and external factors that influence the development consideration of democracy (Adhikari, 2006: 29).

Figure 2.1 shows these three dynamic interchanges between the factors that comprise and affect the quality and nature of democratic governance.

Figure 2.1: The 'what', 'how' and 'why' of democratic governance



Source: Adopted from, Cheema and Maguire, 2002, 15

In the case of the Kurdistan region, the institutions include the regional parliament, regional government, provincial and municipality councils, political parties and civil society organisation.

All these institutions are part of the democratic process in the region. They are to ensure the access of women to the decision-making process and also have influence over it. These institutions are to promote accountability, transparency and the rule of law. These, if carried out will further enhance the ability of women to participate in the decision-making process. These institutions and the process are also influenced by several factors which are both internal and external. These factors have their own specific influence on the participation of women in the decision-making process at the local level in the Kurdistan region and will be analysed in a later chapter of the report.

Political participation of women: modes of reasoning and factors of explanation

Fuchs and Hoecker (2004:2) present various arguments justifying the importance of women to influence political decisions. They further write that in political practice one encounters a mix of arguments. These arguments are presented below.

Arguments invoking justice: This argues that democracy includes the right and provides the opportunity for all groups in a society to participate in the decision-making process. To ensure justice, there should be equal representation of women and men in the process. This notwithstanding, there is no argument to support male domination in elected assemblies as an abuse of human rights and social justice (ibid).

Women's interests: This argument revolves around women's practical and strategic needs. It is of the view that the interests of women in male-dominated bodies are being suppressed, obscured and marginalised. It indicates that though the presence of women in political bodies is necessary, it is not a sufficient prerequisite for women-friendly policies (ibid). Also women and men have different responsibilities and roles which influence their varying interests. In this sense, the involvement of women is very necessary so as to capture their practical and strategic needs in the decision-making process.

Emancipation arguments: This refers to overcoming male dominated power relations with women. It points out that increased participation of women would improve the quality of democratic decisions and also bring about a better balance between participation and representation. This will help establish better links with the 'grass roots' (Fuchs and Hoecker 2004:2). These arguments are presented on Table 2.5.

Table 2.5: Arguments in favour of the political participation of women

Argument		Possible political strategies
Equality and justice	Women and men have equal rights to participate in political decisions and to influence them. It is unfair for one sex to monopolise the other.	-creating awareness also with men, changing pre-set gender roles -positive measures for promoting women -quotas for seats and candidate lists
Women's interests	Since women have interests that differ from those of men, they must involve in the political decision-making process to improve its quality.	-gender main streaming -building a women's organization and working in it
Emancipation and change in the political process	Since the patriarchal society produces a stark imbalance of power between men and women, these structures must be overcome through political actions to promote the development of a self-determined society.	-double strategy: engagement in movements and organisations against patriarchal patterns generates political pressure and is backed by parliamentary activity

Source: Fuchs and Hoecker, 2004:2

The International Labour Organization (ILO, 2008), also bases their argument for promoting the fundamental principle of equality of opportunity and treatment between men and women, on three broad rationales. These are the human rights, the social justice and the socio-economic development rationales.

The organization deems as a human rights issue and an essential requirement for effective democracy, the equality of opportunities and the treatment between men and women. Secondly, the organisation stresses on women's welfare as a matter of social justice and poverty alleviation.

Finally, the organisation sees the promotion of gender equality as a matter of social and economic development (ILO, 2008:1-2).

The European Women's Lobby (EWL, 2008) also defended parity democracy based on four different grounds. These are: Arguments based on equality and justice; Arguments based on democracy; Arguments based on the concrete benefits that women's increased participation would bring; and Arguments based on the idea of women's interests European Women's Lobby (EWL, 2008:17).

Also, a United Nations Division for Advancement of Women's (UN-DAW, 2005) expert group meeting concluded that, it is relevant to give equal consideration to the numbers of women and men in political office (UN-DAW, 2005:8). These were based on the following arguments:

1. The justice argument suggests that as women form approximately half of the population of most countries they therefore have the right to be represented as such. This is even more justified in post conflict countries where women account for more than half of the populations. In Kurdistan for instance, women outnumber men as a result of the conflict that has occurred in the region.
2. The experience argument; women's experiences are different from that of men and need to be represented in discussions that result in policy and implementation. These different experiences mean women 'do politics' differently from men.
3. The interest argument.
4. The critical mass argument; this argues that women could achieve solidarity and peace building when they achieve certain levels of representation. For instance during the civil war in Kurdistan, the women in parliament played an active role in calling for peace between the various stakeholders involved in the war.
5. The democracy argument; the equal representation of women and men intensifies democratization of governance in both transition and consolidated democracies (ibid: 8-9).

Table 2.6 summarises various arguments as to why it is important and indispensable for women to influence political decision-making.

Table 2.6: Arguments why women's participation is important

Arguments			
(Fuchs and Hoecker, 2004)	(ILO, 2008)	(EWL, 2008)	(UN-DAW, 2005)
Equality and justice	Human rights	Equality & justice	Justice
Women's interests	Social justice.	Democracy	Experience
Emancipation & change in the political process	Socio-economic development	Concrete benefits	Interest
		Interests	Critical mass
			Symbolic
			Democracy

Source: Adapted from (Fuchs and Hoecker 2004:2), (International Labour Organization, ILO, 2008:1-2), (European Women's Lobby, EWL, 2008:17-18), and (United Nations Division for Advancement of Women, UN-DAW, 2005:8-9).

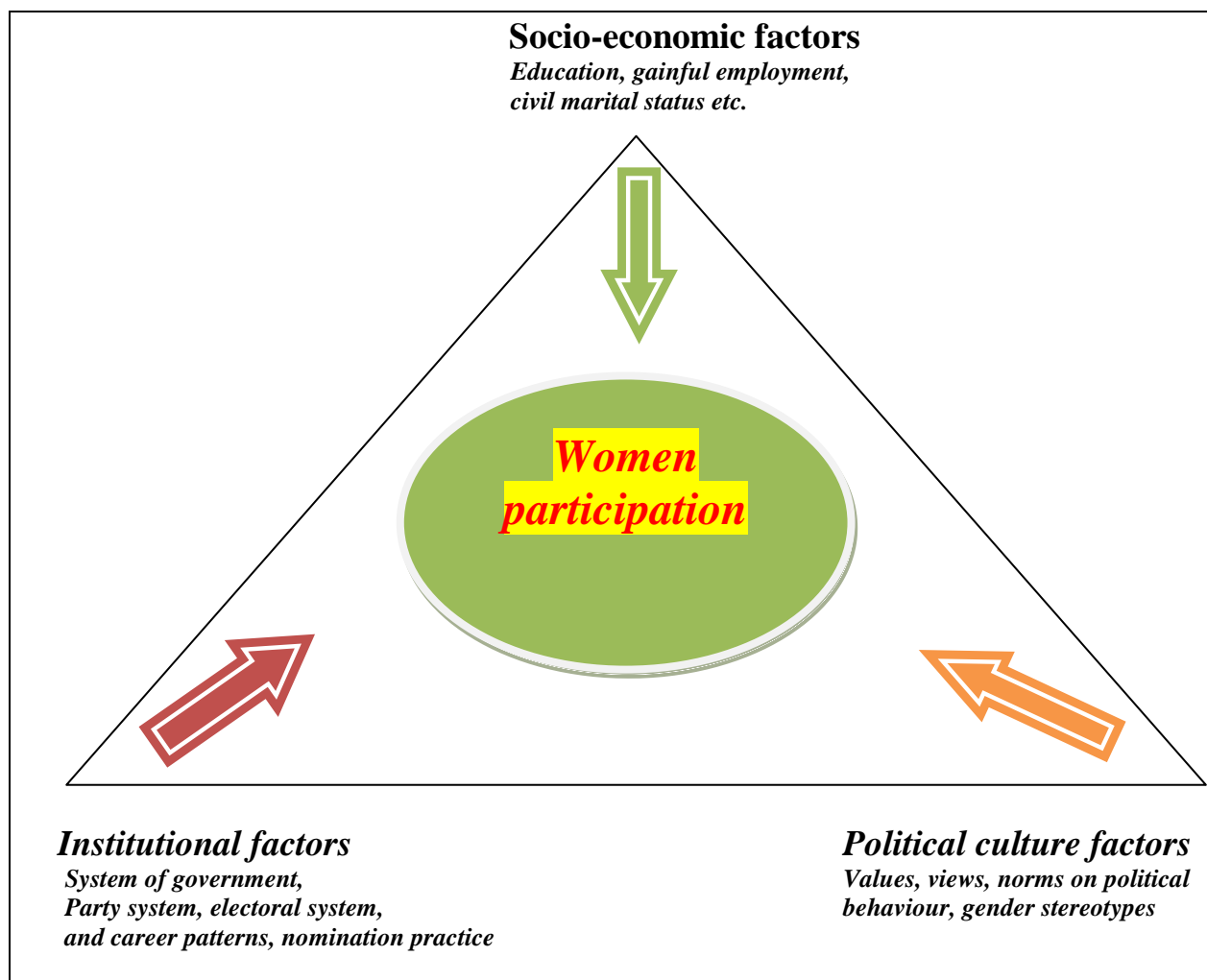
In the case of the Kurdistan region, where women have for a long time been excluded from participating in political decision-making, arguments in favour of their political participation are also applicable. For instance women form more than half of the population in post-conflict Kurdistan, and even more than half of the population in the Barzan sub-district, where the study is conducted. Therefore their right of fair representation and participation in the decision-making process becomes more justified. As the Kurdish society is a patriarchal society that produces an imbalance of power between men and women, participation in the decision-making and political process can be a means by which women, through the process of empowerment can emancipate themselves. This can help them negotiate with their male counterparts to redistribute power and resources within the household, civil society and the public sector. This will also help intensify democracy at the local level and also in the entire region as the government has gradually been implementing a democratic decentralisation process in the region.

Factors that determine the political participation of women

Scholars have since the early 1970's criticised the various individualist approaches explaining the under-representation of women as being inadequate until today (Fuchs and Hoecker, 2004: 3). This group mainly uses a 'magic triangle' to identify systematic linkages and factors that determine political behaviour. Figure 2.2 presents this triangle. They are of the opinion that three interlinked factors, namely: socio-economic structure, political culture and institutions determine political participation and that the actual line of action undertaken by female political actors will

be influenced by these. They argue that women politicians can, for a start, work to improve these conditions in order to enhance their representation and achieve their goals (ibid).

Figure 2.2: Magic triangle explaining the political participation of women



Source: Adapted from, Leske and Budrich 1998 in Fuchs and Hoecker 2004:3.

I. Socio-economic factors

This dimension of the triangle indicates that important factors influencing political participation are individual prerequisites from the socio-structural realm, particularly education. Socio-economic factors are “supply-side” variables and would include women’s literacy and educational levels and average incomes that affect political participation which presents a positive correlation between individual resource endowment and political participation. It can then be deduced that, the higher the level of education, the more skilled the profession and the higher the income, the greater the chances of political involvement (Fuchs & Hoecker, 2004: 4).

These factors are mainly obvious in developing countries. For example, women’s literacy rates, average education levels and average income reflect the extent to which women have the most basic resources necessary to qualify them to be recruited into political activities (Rincker, 2006:4).

II. Institutional factors

The institutional factor consider party systems, be they two or multi-party systems. It again takes into consideration the patterns of political recruitment and career advancement as well as with the electoral system. It indicates that institutional conditions also play an important role. A number of studies have demonstrated that systems of proportional representation foster the candidature and electoral prospects of women, whereas majority electoral systems, on the other hand, are less favourable. Lesser chances of women being nominated in the case of majority electoral systems are generally attributed to strong candidate-centred orientation of the system Fuchs and Hoecker (2004:4-5). Moreover, in majority voting, the electorate have to decide directly on one candidate, male or female, from the constituent concerned. But unfortunately doubts about the political competence of women still exist (ibid). This in many cases negatively influences the chances of women in the electoral process.

Quotas “are another important institutional device to guarantee a minimum number of women seat-holders in the legislature. Lastly, the existence of women’s policy machinery, or an agency devoted advancing the rights of women, is necessary for feminist policy outcomes (Stetson and Marzur, 1995)” in (Rincker, 2006: 4). Gender quotas therefore have the potential of bridging the gap between the numbers of women and men represented in political decision-making by ensuring that women constitute a minimum percentage of the members of various political institutions.

III. Political culture factors

This is seen as the subjective dimension of politics and represents a core factor that influences the participation of women. It includes politically relevant opinions, attitudes and values of the citizens of a country which are developed and passed on in the process of political socialisation. “Embedded therein are social orientations towards the political role of women and linked thereto-views on women's participation in politics. The assumption that countries with more traditional values typically have low female representation in their parliaments while on the other hand countries with a more egalitarian culture show a relatively high level of female representation is now largely confirmed by statistical evidence” (Fuchs and Hoecker 2004:3). Cultural factors also underlay the representation of women at the national level and that a proxy for cultural attitudes toward women and the dominant religion in a country, are significant predictors of women in the legislature (Rincker, 2006:4).

The International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA) classifies the obstacles to women’s participation into three areas: socio-economic, political, and ideological and psychological ‘or socio-cultural’ (IDEA, 2005:34).

The UNDP (2007) on the other hand mentioned that the low but increasing number of women in politics tells two stories; *first*, women still face obstacles hindering their equal participation in politics, and *second*, women do find sources of support for their candidates. The common barriers facing women’s participation are patterns of gender discrimination, psychological barriers, lack of political will, and lack of networks, incumbency, and security (UNDP, 2007:10-11).

UNDP (2009) pointed out that traditionally, the role of women in politics has been limited by factors such as:

- “Cultural and social norms that restrict women from participating in political life;
- Perceptions of men as more competent leaders and decision-makers;

- Lack of recognition that women’s views need to be equally valued;
- Lack of legal mechanisms and normative frameworks that protect women’s rights and their equality with men;
- Political platforms that do not address women’s concerns;
- High financial costs of running for political office;
- Higher rates of illiteracy among women; and
- Public and private form of violence against those active in politics” (UNDP, 2009:21).

The role of political parties and civil society in participation and democracy

Political parties and civil society are important stakeholders responsible for deepening participation and democracy. Political parties are the main vehicles responsible for articulating and aggregating the diverse wishes and demands of society. Political parties compete for political power and have the ability to directly translate these diverse demands into public policy. In this context, political parties develop positions on a wide range of issues and approach those from an ideological standpoint. Thus, vibrant political parties are the key to effective citizen participation, multi-party system and democratic governance (Adhikari, 2006:30-31). “Political parties and civil society organizations are directly involved in the electoral process, functioning of legislature, the promotion and protection of human rights, anti-corruption strategies, decentralisation and local governance system and governance in crisis and post-crisis situation” (Cheema and Maguire 2002:19).

Civil society organizations that connect individuals with the public realm and the state are a keystone of democratic governance as they are a galvanizing force for positive social change. Therefore, they can play very important roles in promoting democracy in many ways:

- i. These represent different voices, perspectives and values in a pluralist society.
- ii. Civil societies can provide checks and balances to government power and monitor social violence and these can offer options for people to develop their strengths and capacities.
- iii. Civil society organisations are often issue based so they can act in stimulating forces for positive social change (ibid).

UNDP (2009:23) puts forward the argument that, democratic governance depends on strategic partnership in social and political spheres to elaborate and redefine public policies. Also strategic partnerships should involve civil society, especially women’s networks at the local, national and international levels and political parties.

It can be concluded from the above that women's participation in public affairs is a must to make public sector more effective, efficient, accountable and furthermore, to make the democratisation process a reality and a sustainable situation .

Different forms and modes of citizen participation

Participation can be categorized into broad forms and modes based on the degree of participation (Table 2.7 and 2.8). According to various writers, as presented in tables 2.7, 2.8 and figure 2.3, the forms of participation see information sharing as the least level of participation while stakeholder empowerment and control is seen as the highest level of participation. Within this continuum are order forms of participation.

Table 2.7: Forms of participation

Forms of participation			
BMZ Participation concept (1999)	Brinkerhoff/Goldsmith (2001)	McGee/Norton(2000)	Bliss(2000)
Information-sharing	Information-sharing	Information-sharing	Information-sharing
Consultation	Consultation	Consultation	Consultation
Collaboration	Collaboration	-	Collaboration
Joint decision-making	Joint decision-making	Joint decision-making	Co-determination
			Joint responsibility
Empowerment	Empowerment	Initiation and control by stakeholders	Partnership
Control by stakeholders			Control by stakeholders

Source: Eberlei, 2001:11.

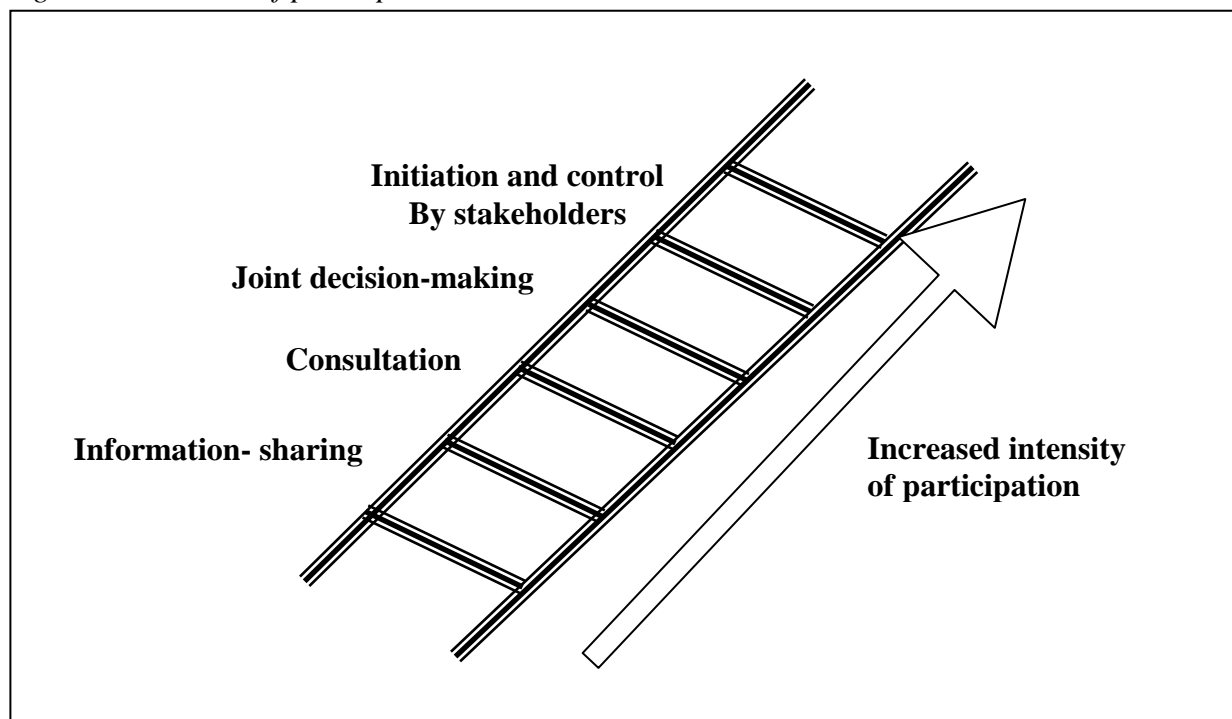
Table 2.8: Modes of citizen participation

<i>Different modes of participation</i>	Description
<i>Consultation:</i> Starting Point	It involves getting the state to directly listen to citizens' needs and demands. Such listening may be done through various means and mechanisms: consultative meetings, surveys, referenda, or home visits.
<i>Presence and Representation:</i> More intensive form of participation in an institutionalised manner	A slightly more intensive form of participation is to regularize engagements through institutionalised mechanisms. This means citizens have ongoing access to decision-making process and more are able to engage beyond a mere sporadic presentation of needs and concerns. At this point, citizens are able to negotiate with government for better plans, solutions and procedures.
<i>Influence:</i> Citizen's interests reflected in the decision.	Being consulted and being present there does not necessarily lead to influence. Influence occurs when citizens' demands actually find their way into policy programmes and service delivery. Influence is when government begins to act on such demands and being producing actual outputs. The challenge for citizens, then, is to remain vigilant so that commitments undertaken by governments are fulfilled and carried out in a transparent manner.

Source: IDS, 2004: 6-8 in Adhikari, 2006:31

A fairly standard ladder of participation adapted from Arnstein (1969) is presented in Figure 2.3 which distinguished the intensities of participation. The various different categories discussed so far indicate that the concept of participation can be put into three basic categories, namely, - indirect participation (starting point) direct participation (middle level) leading towards joint actions and ownership (highest level).

Figure 2.3: Ladder of participation



Source: Adapted from Pretty 1995 in McGee, 2003:10

McGee et al. (2003:11) write that in the specific context of citizen participation in the process of policy-making or political decision-making, the basic ladder can be elaborated to show what forms information-sharing, consultation, joint decision-making, and initiation and control by stakeholders might assume in that particular context. Also, meaningful participation of citizens (especially women), can only be ensured when women intensify their involvement in the process to the extent that their needs (practical and strategic) are translated into tangible outputs and outcomes which directly affect their lives. Crocker (2007) also distinguished from thinner to thicker, a spectrum of modes of participation in group decision-making. The writer sees nominal participation as the least level of group participation through to deliberative form of participation where all stakeholders deliberate together and formulate policies that at least the majority can accept. This is presented in table 2.9. These distinctions are very important as they help assess local level decision-making. This will help establish if members of society are very active or dormant in the process of decision-making.

Table 2.9: Modes of participation in group decision-making

Different modes of participation	Description
Nominal participation	The least way in which someone participates in group decision-making. Some people or officials of course, are members of a group but do not attend its meetings. Others are not members. Some are members but are unable to attend because of other responsibilities, or they are unwilling to attend, because they are harassed or unwelcome.
Passive participation	In passive participation, people are group members and attend the groups or official decision-making meetings, but passively listen to reports about the decisions that others already have made. The elite tell the non elite what the elite is going to do or has done, and the non elite participates.
Consultative participation	Non elites participate by giving information and their opinions ('input,' 'preferences,') to the elite. The non elite neither deliberate among themselves nor make decisions. It is the elite who are the "deciders," and while they may deign to 'consult' the non elite, they have no obligation to do so.
Petitionary participation	Non elite petition authorities to make certain decisions and do certain things, usually to remedy grievances. Although it is the prerogative of the elite to decide, the non elite have a right to be heard and the elite have the duty to hear, listen, and consider if not to heed. This participatory model, like consultative participation, is often used in traditional decision-making.
Participatory implementation	Elites determine the goals and main means, and non elites implement the goals and decide, if at all, only tactics. In this mode non elites do more than listen, comment, express. Like soccer players they also make and enact decisions but the overall plan giving orders belongs to the coach.
Bargaining	On the basis of whatever individual or collective power they have, non elites bargain with elites. Self-interest largely, if not exclusively, motivates each side, and non elite influence on the final "deal" depends on what non elites are willing to give up and what concessions they are able to extract. The greater the power imbalances between elite and non elite, the less influence the non elite has on the final outcome. Elite may settle for some loss now in order to make possible a larger future gain. Alliances with and support from actors outside and above tend to enhance non elite bargaining power.
Deliberative participation	Non elites (sometimes among themselves and sometimes with elites) deliberate together, sifting proposal and reasons to forge agreements on policies that at least a majority can accept.

Source: Crocker, 2007:4-5

In the Kurdistan region where this study was conducted, the levels and forms of participation, especially of women in the decision-making process, differ as women and men have different roles, responsibilities, capabilities and needs, nonetheless there are also similarities. There is therefore the need to find out how women are involved in the decision-making process at the local level in the region and how they can be further empowered. Their empowerment may improve their ability to deliberate on issues influencing the development of their societies.

Citizen participation: enabling and constraining factors from legal perspective.

In research carried out in different south and north countries, McGee et al (2003:62-64) conclude that legal framework, among others, is very critical to promote citizen participation. They describe different enabling and constraining characteristics from the perspective of legal framework as presented on Table 2.10.

Table 2.10: Citizen Participation: enabling and constraining characteristics

Enabling characteristics of legal framework	Constraining characteristics of legal framework
Promulgated in response to demand from below and with citizen inputs.	Imposed from above without grounds of popular demand and overly inspired by prevalent international discourses and tendencies to the neglect of home-grown discourses and in-country or regional aspirations and sources of inspiration.
Seeks to strengthen and improve institutions of representative democracy by better representation of those with least voice, better quality of representation and complementing with mechanisms of participatory democracy.	Seeks only to make the institutions of representative democracy work better and not to challenge these or extend governance relationships beyond them.
Recognizes people and civil society organizations as citizens with rights, including the right to participate in governance and auxiliary rights.	Treats people and civil society organizations as relatively passive subjects to be engaged with only in non-binding consultations at a relatively late stage of decision-making.
Builds in accountability measures that ensure representatives can be recalled and government actors held to account for poor performance.	No accountability measures or measures those that are impracticable in real life situations.
Provides for or contemplates in future a significant degree of fiscal decentralisation in fiscal processes as both an incentive to citizens to participate in local governance and assurance that local government can allocate resources to participatory processes.	Centralized power retained over fiscal matters-revenue-raising and allocation-or no participation envisaged in them contradicting spirit of decentralisation and citizen participation and reducing incentives for citizen involvement in local governance.
Law(s) accompanied by a set of operational guidelines, policies or capacity strengthening measures to ensure that the relevant actors are enabled to apply them.	Excessive reliance on laws and on a legalistic approach to the neglect of operational guidelines or the provision of practical support and capacity building for implementation.

Source: McGee et al., 2003:61-63

The described framework above concerning different enabling and constraining characteristics in citizens' participation also provides an important framework for assessing factors that influence women's participation in decision-making in the Kurdistan region. From these, the constraints

and opportunities of women in the process at local level can be identified and this in turn will lead to the creation of assets of strategy towards enhancing women's participation in decision-making at local level.

Citizen participation: contextual factors

Beyond the nature of legislative framework, there are some other contextual factors that are critical to the citizen participation. These factors relate to historic and cultural setting, the nature and background of the actors involved and the availability of auxiliaries to facilitate the operationalisation of laws and promote citizen participation. These factors, as McGee et al (2003:63-64) note, are summarised in Table 2.11

Table 2.11: Citizen participation-enabling and constraining contextual factors

Enabling features of context	Constraining features of context
Apart from, disposition and commitment from above to participation, a strong demand from citizens and civil society actors from below implies a relatively mature and strong-or strengthening-civil society.	Weak, immature or inexperienced civil society and government with weak commitment to participation in local governance.
Advanced process of political, administrative and fiscal decentralisation.	Limited or early day's decentralisation of all kinds tightly restricted fiscal decentralisation.
Relatively open, trusting relationship between citizens (women and men) and state.	State-civil society relations marked by mutual mistrust and lack of familiarity as in the immediate weak authoritarian regime.
Discourses of participation, governance, decentralisation democracy locally derived or from elsewhere, strongly appropriated and adapted to national setting.	Discourses of participation, governance, Decentralisation and democracy borrowed wholesale with no attempt to translate and adapt for the national context.
Existence of progressive political parties with their roots in democratization movements and/or social movements and strong commitment to internal representativeness and transparency and to participatory democracy.	No political parties (as in 'no-party' states) or limited freedom for political opposition parties which tends to favour conservatism and precludes pressure on government for change of a progressive sort.
A culture of 'bureaucratic hygiene', openness and transparency are including information disclosure policy and measures of active' disclosure.	A culture of corruption and/or lack of transparency which generate resistance to opening up governance process to scrutiny or interference
Other laws and policies which are supportive of, or at least consistent with participation legislation.	Contradictions between participation, legislation and other laws and policies or incomplete legislation leading to ambiguities and stalemates in implementation.
Ongoing momentum for and commitment to movement along the spectrum from elite towards participatory democracy.	Political transition (e.g. from authoritarian regime to elite democracy) seen by government and/or civil society as finite process
Opportunities for experimentation, adaptation and innovation within and outside the spaces provided by legal framework, by state and non-state actors.	No space for experimentation or innovation through excessively tight and restrictive framework

Source: McGee et al., 2003: 63-64

The conceptual discussion outlined above provides clear evidence that the notion of participation in governance which is recently used denotes much wider meaning than the traditional political participation. It is much broader and inclusive than the traditionally defined political participation that was limited in most cases to voting rights. Participation therefore in governance context means accepting citizen's (women and men) greater influence in day-to-day governance activities which affect their life directly or indirectly.

Institutionalized participation

Brinkerhoff and Goldsmith (2001:4) define institutionalized participation as “a right-based, structurally integrated and legitimized process through which capable stakeholders’ shape and share control over development initiatives”. This emphasizes that institutionalized participation has to be rights-based; integrated in the political structures of the country; needs legitimacy; and is inconceivable without capable stakeholders who have the capacity to be deeply involved in the process. Institutionalized participation also has clearly defined political structures for dialogue between all stakeholders at national as well as regional and local levels. The requirements and institutional dimensions for institutional participation as adopted from Eberlei (2002:16) are given in Table 2.12.

Table 2.12: Requirements for institutionalized participation

Elements and requirements for participation		Extended requirements for participation
Institutionalization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parliament must be involved (discussion/decision) • Planning based on previous process and existing structures. • Clear agreements with civil society on participatory procedures. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parliament must assume “watch function” in co-operation with civil society. • Clear structures for co-operation between government and civil society as the control of process. • Civil society has the right to participate in implementation (e.g. Budget hearing) and review process. • <u>Independent civil society networking</u>
Political capability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to essential information • Sufficient time for participation. • Basic equipment for analysing and lobbying work. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comprehensive and timely access to information essential documents must be available in native languages. • Regular consultations. • Networks are adequately equipped for analysing and lobbying work.
Political rights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inclusive approach: representatives of civil society cannot be rejected by governments. • Freedom of opinion • Freedom of press. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legally ensured right to participation. • Unlimited freedom of peaceful assembly, association and networking. • Freedom of information Act. • Politically independent NGOs.
Legitimization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parliament must be involved • Sufficiently large number of civil society representatives, some of which should represent local or rural groups; clearly defined criteria for participation. • Transparent, public debates and negotiations • Representativeness must be ensured. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Democratic legitimating ensured by parliamentary decisions • Participation of civil society networks must have internal democratic structures. • National, decentralized participation must be fully implemented. • Protection of minorities. • Positions of civil society must be disclosed in official documents.

Source: Eberlei, 2002:16

Institutionalized participation therefore creates room for societies to debate their development status, goals and priorities, and to take democratically legitimate decisions on those issues. These societies which create this space for them institutionalize not only participation rights, but also the exchange of expertise and ideas on solving their problems. They therefore institutionalize learning processes, and sustainable spaces where all stakeholders are brought together to discuss, consult and formulate better responsive decisions (Eberlei, 2002:16). In the light of this discussion, institutionalized participation of women and men create a suitable space for them to exchange experiences and ideas in addressing their problems and needs.

Parliament as a platform for women participation in decision-making

“A parliament is a generic term depicting a representative body of individuals to whom the people have entrusted the responsibility of representing them by laying down the legal framework within which society shall be governed and ensuring that these legal conditions are implemented in a responsible manner by the Executive” (UNOHRLLS and IPU, 2011:13). Different names are given to this institution in different countries. For instance, it is called the Congress in the USA, Diet in Japan, the National People’s Congress in China, the Knesset in Israel and the Duma in Russia (ibid) and in Iraq, the National Assembly.

In many countries across the globe, parliament is the place where most of a country’s direction is set. Where there is a democratic parliament, this in most cases reflects the views and interests of the society from which it is drawn. It also allows these perspectives to shape the society’s social, political and economic future. Where many women are involved in all aspects of the political life, including being members of parliament, societies are more likely to be equitable and democracy is both strengthened and enhanced. In spite of these benefits, women have historically been sidelined from the structures of state that determine political and legislative priorities. But democracy requires that the interests of different groups in society, including those of women, are reflected in the decision-making process (Inter-Parliamentary Union, IPU, 2008:5).

There are usually two levels of parliaments in most countries that practice the federal system. These are the national and regional level parliaments. These levels perform mostly similar roles but with the national parliament focusing on main issues of national concern while the regional parliaments are given decentralized authority to legislate in areas of local or regional significance (UNOHRLLS and IPU, 2011:13). Therefore parliament refers to both categories, for instance as exists in Iraq, the National assembly and Kurdistan regional parliament. For parliament to contribute effectively to guaranteeing the people’s rights and liberties, securing civil peace and ensuring harmonious development and to play its role effectively, it must be elected and must be representative of all components of society. It should also have the requisite powers and means to express the will of the people through its law-making and oversight responsibilities (ibid: 7).

Women are playing an important role in many parliaments, and often constitute themselves into caucuses to promote gender equity and equality in parliamentary processes as is the case in Rwanda, Burundi, South Africa, etc (ibid:20). Parliaments also act as post-conflict democratic institutions in many countries such as Iraq, Afghanistan, Burundi, Rwanda, and Timor Leste (ibid: 7).

Also, the level of women’s representation in parliaments of the post-conflict countries dramatically increased when electoral and constitutional measures were introduced to achieve greater equality in positions of power (Cool, 2008:7).

Does the number of women in parliament matter?

One of the indicators to measure progress towards goal three of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) has called for promoting gender equality and empowering women and increasing the number of seats they hold in parliament (UNDP, 2007:8).

A study by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU: 2008) indicated that number do matter because, at the very least, the more women there are in parliament; the easier it is to address women's issues and to change the gender dynamics in parliament. The study emphasized that a large number of women in parliament would increase women's influence on political policies and priorities (Inter-Parliamentary Union, IPU, 2008:1-2).

Though there has been increasing focus on women's representation in, and impact on, decision-making structures since the first United Nations World Conference on Women in Mexico City in 1975, this focus, has not seen an accompanying increase in the representation of women in parliaments. The Second World Conference on Women, in Nairobi, saw the beginning of a more sustained action towards equality in decision-making structures as governments sought equality in all areas of political life. Also, the commitments and pledges of states to promote gender equality were solidified in the Beijing Plan of Action that was adopted at the Fourth World Conference in 1995. States were called on to make women's capacity to participate in decision-making and leadership, to take concrete steps and implement special measures to ensure women's access to and full participation in power structures such as parliaments (ibid: 6). The United Nations also recognized the central role of women in development in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). It has the empowerment of women as one of its measurable goals. The proportion of seats held by women in parliament is one of the key indicators in measuring progress in this regard (ibid: 5-6).

The importance of the number of women in parliament can therefore be summed up in the words of the IPU that, "the advancement of women goes hand in hand with the overall development of society and contributes to better and more effective governance. A stronger presence of women in parliament will allow new concerns to be highlighted on political agendas; and new priorities to be put into practice through the adoption and implementation of policies and laws. The inclusion of the perspectives and interests of women is a prerequisite for democracy and contributes to good governance" (ibid: 6). Furthermore an understanding of the variables that affect the participation of women and men in parliament is central to development strategies to enhance their input and ability to affect the political agenda (ibid: 7). "It is generally accepted that a more equitable representation of women in parliament is required worldwide to more accurately reflect the composition of society and ensure that women's diverse interests are taken into account" (Cool, 2008:1).

The road to parliament: less travelled by women

Though women constitute more than fifty percent of the world's population, this proportion is not reflected in the composition of decision-making bodies. Even though there are no legal barriers to women voting or standing for election, they have struggled for political rights for centuries. It is clear that challenges to women's participation in decision-making and politics persist.

Based on the findings of the IPU (2008), the trend in terms of women's access to parliaments in recent decades has been one of gradual but steady progress. In 1975, women accounted for nearly 11 percent of representatives in unicameral or lower houses of parliament

worldwide (Table 2:13). A decade later, women's representation had increased by only one percentage point. By 1995, the proportion of women parliamentarians had actually decreased slightly.

By 2000, the proportion of women parliamentarians had increased to 13.4 percent in the lower or unicameral houses of parliament, and it reached a height of nearly 18 percent at the beginning of 2008. The highest rate of increase in women's representation has been registered in the past decade. Though there have been slight improvements generally across the globe, these figures conceal some interesting national and regional nuances. While some states have made significant progress, others have remained static or even regressed. The Nordic countries had the highest overall average during the past decade. About 41 percent of parliamentary seats were held by women in that region in 2008. In the Americas and Europe, women's representation hovered around 20 percent on average in 2008. This is up eight points from the decade before. Progress has continued in Africa and in Asia, and overall representation hovers around 17 percent in the two regions. The Arab States have less than 10 percent of women in their parliaments. Progress has been rather slow in the Pacific, especially in the case of Island States where several of them have no women members at all. Table 2.14 presents these regional distributions across the globe (IPU, 2008:13-14).

Table 2.13: Women in Parliament, 1945-2008 (Worldwide)

Number and percentage of women	1945	1965	1975	1985	1995	2000	2008
Number of parliaments	26	94	115	136	176	177	189
Percentage of women representatives (lower house or unicameral)	3	8.1	10.9	12	11.6	13.4	17.9
Percentage of women representatives (upper house)	2.2	9.3	10.5	12.7	9.4	10.7	16.7

Source: Inter-Parliamentary Union, IPU, 2008: 13

Table 2.14: World and Regional Averages of Women in Parliament, 1995-2008

World and regions	1995 %	2008 %
World	11,3	17,7
Nordic countries	36,4	41,4
Europe (including Nordic countries)	13,2	20,9
Americas	12,7	20,7
Europe (excluding Nordic countries)	10,7	19
Sub-Saharan Africa	9,8	13,7
Asia	13,2	16,9
Pacific(including Australia and New Zealand)	7,7	12,9
Arab States	4,3	9,6
Pacific(excluding Australia and New Zealand)	2,5	2,5

Source: Inter-Parliamentary Union, IPU, 2008: 13

Women in Government

The increase in the number of women in governments across the globe, especially at the executive level has been patchy. Overall, 16 percent of ministerial portfolios were held by women in 2008 across the globe. Progress has been most marked in the Nordic region and in the Americas, mirroring the pattern of increased access by women to parliaments in the past decade. In Finland, Grenada and Norway, women hold more than 50 percent of the ministerial posts while about 30 percent of ministerial posts are held by women in 22 countries across Europe and the Americas. Lower figures are also recorded for countries in other parts of the developing world. Also women are a minority in the highest positions of the State. Of 150 Heads of State at the start of 2008, only seven (4.7%) were women (Inter-Parliamentary Union, IPU, 2008:15). Though there has been some notable progress, particularly in the past decade, politics still remains in the hands of men. This confirms that women still face barriers in politics and getting access to political positions (ibid).

Quotas a fast pathway to enhancing women's representation in parliament

Once women decide to run for political office, several factors can impede their chances of success. There are both socio-cultural and institutional factors at play. Discriminatory or patriarchal norms about the role of women place a high value on women's contributions in the domestic sphere and in the household. Institutions matter too, be they electoral regime, political party organization or legislative structures, but these also contain inherent gender biases which affect women's participation negatively. There is therefore the need to find a means of improving the number of women in politics. Gender quotas have been advocated as one of the mechanisms to address this.

Despite the fact that gender quotas have been introduced with amazing speed around the world over the past two decades or more, women's under-representation in politics is a worldwide phenomena. For instance the Beijing Platform for Action, in 1995, which represented a discursive shift in the understanding of the problem of women's under-representation made known that the problem is not primary women's lack of resources, but “discriminatory attitudes and practices”. This platform for action was of the opinion that the goal is not just “more women in politics,” but a demand for equal participation and equitable distribution of power and decision-making at all levels. Consequently, special measures and the use of specific targets were recommended (Inter-Parliamentary Union, IPU, 2008:25). Gender quotas are one such measure. This tries to make reservation for both sexes in parliament. These quotas can be legal or voluntary. Legal quotas are mandated in a country's constitution or by law, typically in electoral law. For example, Costa Rica, Iraq, Belgium and Argentina have legislated quotas, which specify that a certain percentage of candidates for election must be women (Cool, 2008:9).

Voluntary quotas on the other hand are developed at the discretion of political parties. For instance in Sweden, Norway, Holland, Spain, Mozambique, South Africa, New Zealand, Germany and Iceland, one or more political parties have a voluntary party quota that sets a target or firm percentage for the number of women candidates it fields for election (ibid). But are these forms of quotas the best?

According to the IPU (2008) one of the advantages of legal quotas is that they are binding for all political parties, and legal sanctions or penalties for non-compliance can be confirmed. This is very efficient in countries where electoral authority has the power to sanction and use it,

to reject political party lists that do not comply with the quota regulations. Despite these, legal quotas may have little effect where there are no rules about the rank order of candidates or sanctions for non-compliance. Voluntary party quotas, on the other hand, may be easier to introduce to begin with. It is believed that once one political party introduces it, it is likely that other parties may follow suit. It is important in this direction therefore to choose a type of quota system that works. Quotas have tended to work best in proportional representation elected systems. It is however difficult to implement a quota system in a single member constituency electoral system. To make the system very effective, the quota regulations must work with the electoral system in place (ibid).

2.6 Decentralisation: overarching strategy

For the last three decades and a half, the concept of decentralisation which is basically a strategy through which decision-making power, responsibility and financial means are devolved to the lower level has become a very common terminology in the development arena. These forms of authority, responsibility and financial means can be devolved to regional and/or local governments and/or quasi-independent government organisations or the private sector. It is a broad and complex multifaceted concept and also a political dependent process. The concept has a series of ambiguities and variations in its definition, but most of these contain similar and identical issues and concepts that are necessary for the realization of its intended purpose.

Decentralisation: towards a common understanding

Cheema and Rondinelli (1983:18, in Ikeanyionwu, 2001:3) defined decentralisation to mean the transfer of planning, decision-making, and administrative authority from the central government field organizations, local administrative authority, semi-autonomous organisations, local governments, or Non-Governmental Organisations. This definition has expanded the concept to the transfer of authority even to Non Governmental Organisations. This definition sees Non Governmental Organisations as key stakeholders in the development process which need to have authority as part of the development structure.

Conyers (1990 in Nierras et al., 2002: 15 in McGee et al., 2003:7) define decentralisation as “the transfer of power and/or authority to plan, make decisions and /or manage public functions from a higher level of government to a lower one.” Based on this, local governments are to be “democratically elected and wholly or largely independent of central government, it may be referred to as democratic decentralisation” (Adhikari, 2006:41).

Smoke (2003:17) views decentralisation as an ambiguous concept which refers both to a system and to a process. He presents that as a system, decentralisation means a decentralised system of government in which a substantial share of power is granted to local, provincial or regional government. He also views the movement from a centralized system to a decentralized system of government as the process.

All the definitions put forward so far from the various writers and sources see decentralisation involving the transfer of power, authority and functions to units below the national level backed by required ability to perform the functions and tasks allocated to them.

In the case of Kurdistan region, democratic decentralization makes better opportunities available for Kurdish people to share the power and resource which may be granted to local, provincial and Kurdistan Regional Government. This consequently provides greater

opportunities for citizen's participation in decision-making and therefore could be a good policy option for promoting women's participation in decision-making at local level.

Table 2.15 summarizes the different types of decentralisation and identifies the feature that characterizes local government under each type.

Table 2.15: Type of Decentralisation and Impact on Local Government

	Administrative	Financial/fiscal	Political
Deconcentration	<p>LG follows central policies, plans according to central norms. Form and structure of LG centrally determined.</p> <p>LG staffs are employees of central ministries, accountable to centre.</p> <p>LG is service delivery arm of centre, little or no discretion in service choice or mix, modes of provision.</p> <p>LG provides information upwards to centre.</p>	<p>LG is dependent on centre for funds; sectoral ministries and MOF provide spending priorities and budget envelope.</p> <p>LG has no independent revenue sources.</p> <p>LG reports to centre on expenditure according to central formulas and norms.</p> <p>Centre conducts LG audits.</p>	<p>No elected LG, officials appointed by centre, and serve centre interests.</p> <p>Civil society and citizens rely on remote & weak links to central government for exercising accountability.</p> <p>Little political space for local civil society, central elites control politics.</p>
Delegation	<p>LG follows central policies and norms, has some discretion to tailor to local needs, and to modify form and structure.</p> <p>LG staff may be mix of central and LG employees; LG has authority on hiring and placement; centre handles promotion and firing.</p> <p>LG provides service menu set by centre, some discretion in mix to fit local needs, and in modes of provision.</p> <p>LG provides most information upwards to centre and selected information to local officials, citizens.</p>	<p>LG is dependent on centre for funds; LG has some discretion on spending priorities within budget envelope. Block grants and conditional transfers from centre offer some autonomy.</p> <p>LG has no independent revenue sources.</p> <p>LG reports to centre and local officials on expenditure according to central formulas and norms.</p> <p>Centre and LG audits.</p>	<p>LG may be a mix of elected and centrally appointed officials.</p> <p>Local officials often tied to national party platforms, little discretion.</p> <p>Some local accountability, but strong central orientation.</p> <p>Some political space for local civil society.</p>
Devolution	<p>LG is subject to national norms, but sets local policies and priorities, plans autonomously in response to local preferences and needs. LG determines own form and structure.</p> <p>LG staff is employees of LG, which sets salaries, numbers, assignments, and handles hiring/firing.</p> <p>LG determines service mix, modes of provision, eligibility, and allocation.</p> <p>LG provides information to local officials, citizens.</p>	<p>LG sets spending priorities, plans how to meet service delivery obligations given resource availability.</p> <p>LG has mix of own-source revenues, revenue-sharing, central transfers.</p> <p>LG may have some authority for debt financing, but is subject to a hard budget constraint.</p> <p>LG reports to local officials and citizens on expenditure according to central formulas and norms.</p> <p>LG is responsible for audits, reports results locally and to centre.</p>	<p>Locally elected officials lead LG, may or may not be linked to national parties, platforms respond to constituent demands and needs.</p> <p>Strong local accountability, LG shapes budget priorities, investments, service mix to fit local preferences and needs.</p> <p>Broad political space for local civil society.</p>

Source: From Brinkerhoff and Leighton (2002), Johnson (1995), World Bank (2004) in Brinkerhoff and Azfar (2006:3)

The above table presents local government's administrative, financial, and political dimensions under a progressively more democratic decentralized government system. In general, democratic local government offers both a greater range of decisions and more autonomous decision space within that range to local government actors (Brinkerhoff and Azfar, 2006:2).

Nonetheless, "the specific contours of that democratic space will be strongly influenced by how authority is distributed at the local level. Strong mayor-weak council systems create narrower space than systems that balance authority more evenly between mayors and councils, and that provide for citizen input to council meetings. For example, in Latin America, LGs are

characterized by a strong executive who has both policy and administrative roles. The executive wields considerable power, much more than the local legislature or council, both formally and informally. Mayors tend to fill several roles, for instance, as influential political party members and community leaders” (ibid).

Decentralisation can therefore be described as a comprehensive state strategy of bringing decision-making power from the centre or region to a position closer to the citizen. It has institutional aspects in that these transfers involve expanding roles and functions from one central agency-level of government to multiple agencies and jurisdictions. It is to improve the political and administrative set up and increase the effectiveness and efficiency of the government system. It is also a long-term political process which passes through a series of political and administrative resistance and barriers.

Centralisation versus decentralisation

Olsen (2007) argues for the decentralisation or devolution of powers to elected local politicians on the basis that the planning and implementation of service are best performed by those concerned with delivery of the service and that better quality will be achieved if the producers and consumers of the service are close to each other. He is again of the opinion that decision-making will be more participatory or democratic if elected officials and their electors are in close contact. Also service delivery may be cheap and more efficient. He finally concludes that decentralisation can bring about opportunity for the institutionalisation of gender concerns at the local level and create spaces for women as political actors, which is a path for women to identify their priorities and needs (Olsen, 2007:5).

As a counter argument, he further put forward that the decentralisation process may enhance the inequalities between richer and poorer regions of a country if there is not an effective fiscal equalisation policy to address spatial disparities. This may have the likely possibility to undermining national unity and in some cases trigger political or ethnic conflicts. Also, it may facilitate misuse of resources and corruption by elite groups within the local government as well as central government turning them into regimes of local dictatorship or elites.

It is therefore essential for the motives behind any process of decentralisation and its actual implementation to be analysed carefully within a given national context in order to be able to assess whether the specific process at hand can ensure progressive development or otherwise (ibid).

Rationale for decentralisation and new opportunities for women and men to participate

Various reasons have been advanced for the institution and practice of decentralisation across the globe. In the developing world, this has become an important policy objective since the 1970s and 1980s as governments sought to create more socially equitable patterns of economic growth and to meet the basic needs of the poor. In consonance with this, many countries are decentralising fiscal, political, and administrative responsibilities to lower-level governments, the private sector and non-governmental organizations. According to Litvack, et al (1998:1. in Ikeanyionwu, 2001:8) decentralisation is particularly widespread in developing countries for various reasons, which include the following:

- the advent of multi party political systems in Africa;
- the deepening democratic process in Latin America;
- the transition from command to market economy in Eastern Europe and former Soviet Union;

- the need to improve delivery of public services to a large population in the centralised countries of East Asia;
- the challenge of ethnic and geographic diversity in South Asia and other countries;
- the attempt to keep centrifugal and separatist forces at bay by forging asymmetrical federations;
- the simple reality that central governments have often failed to provide effective public service (ibid)

Decentralisation is a key word that refers to multiple meanings and creates multiple effects. Adhikari (2006:42) also writes that decentralisation is a democratic process that opens the door for alternative ideas and locally crafted practical solutions. It can increase effectiveness and efficiency in public affairs by satisfying a wider range of stakeholders. It also helps improve the administrative bottlenecks in decision-making that are often caused by central government's control. In his view, decentralisation has the ability to create some immediate effects at local level, and these are:

1. An increased decentralisation of decision-making authorities creates space for the involvement of stakeholders including the local people in the decision-making process.
2. Discussions and decisions can take place in the midst of reality which may help develop practical and tangible solutions to address context-specific issues.
3. It may give individual men and women the power to bring decisions into their favour or community's benefits.
4. It may also promote the effective and efficient delivery of public goods and services. (ibid).

Decentralisation also has the ability to change the political and institutional context for promoting the full and equal rights of citizens in many societies through the transfer of functions, resources, and varying degrees of political and fiscal autonomy to regional, local, or municipal governments. It may also provide new opportunities for women and men to participate and be represented on the matters that most closely affect their lives (International Development Research Centre, IDRC, 2008:1).

It again has the ability of empowering “citizens, including such historically excluded groups as women, poor people, and racial, ethnic, sexual, and religious minorities in the decision-making and entire development process. Many women and men are enthusiastic about the opportunities decentralisation affords for participation in public life and are committed to pressing for greater equality and equity in decentralized systems” (ibid: 3). The rationale for decentralisation in Iraq is multiple; post-conflict democratic process, multi party system, challenge of ethnic and geographic diversity and the transition from command to market economy. It is also likely to create new opportunities and space for women to participate in the decision-making process at the national, regional and local levels.

Decentralisation to achieve the goals of gender-centred development

Decentralisation is a form and process of governance. As there can be good governance at the national level, there can also be good decentralized governance. Good governance includes the mechanism and process which enables a society to achieve more sustainable and people-centred development. Good decentralized governance allows a society to achieve at sub-national and local levels the goals of poverty eradication, sustainable livelihoods, environmental regeneration, and gender equality (Work, 1998:2). Cheema and Maguire (2002:37) note that: “in recognition of the role of decentralisation in people-centred development and promotion of the values of

democracy and good governance, there is a global trend towards decentralisation of power and responsibilities from the centre to regions, and local governments”.

It is therefore imperative that in the design of decentralized governance policies and programmes these long terms aims be reflected in the mechanism and institutions being proposed at national, sub-national and local levels (Work, 1998:2).

The benefits of decentralisation to women may also be enormous as local government is made more accessible to them and deals also with issues which are of central importance to them. Also since local representatives are close to the ground, they may likely reflect the needs and interests of women. Decentralisation is also seen as area for empowering women (Todes et al, 2007:4).

Decentralisation as means of bringing about efficiency, welfare and a form of equity

According to the World Bank (2004, in Adhikari, 2006:43) decentralisation may create a geographic focus at the local level for coordinating national, state, provincial, district, and local programs more effectively and may provide better opportunities for participation by local resident’s women and men in decision-making in some countries. It also has the ability to bring about a more creative, innovative and responsive program by allowing local 'experimentation. 'It can also increase political stability and national unity by allowing women and men to better control public programmes at local level. “Decentralisation is not only a political and administrative strategy, but also a welfare strategy. It ensures welfare of citizens by ensuring the best possible adaptation to local needs (practical and strategic gender needs), and realities raising greater interests of local stakeholders being recognised as active development partners, not as passive recipients. Where decentralisation works effectively, it helps alleviate poverty and ensure equality” (ibid). Also the concept can help “national government ministries reach larger numbers of local areas with services; allow greater political representation for diverse political, ethnic, religious, and “routine” tasks to concentrate on policy” (ibid).

Decentralisation and devolution: local governance and gender equity

Decentralisation described as the form of devolution, “involves the transfer of powers to local, representative government including provinces, districts and communes” (Olsen, 2007:15). In situations where a current leadership is elitist or a one-man regime, Olsen is of the view that in the long run, the fairly democratically elected local government will probably be more representative of the wishes and interests of the people than central government representatives are or were (ibid). He further writes that focusing on political empowerment and human rights aspects of decentralisation and local governance means:

1. “Strengthening and deepening local democracy by bringing the services and decision-making closer to the people concerned, including enhancement of women's participation in public life;
2. Improving local administrative capacity by enhancing the accountability and transparency of all the decisions and expenditures of the local governments;
3. Enhancing the effectiveness and efficiency of local service delivery to the poorer segments of the population;
4. Local governments that have been delegated the responsibility to provide service related to economic and social rights can in turn hold national governments to account;
5. Enhancing the effectiveness and efficiency of local service delivery to the poorer and most vulnerable segments of the population. The human rights framework affirms that

government (including local government) has the duty to deliver certain services (primary education, health, public housing, drinkable water, and so on). These minimum essential services are not discretionary and must be provided without discrimination of any kind” (ibid).

He is further of the opinion that the term gender equality makes reference to equality of access by women and men to various assets and resources in society and this helps create a new platform for participation at local level. Donors have focused on the need to improve on gender equality, and through a more active overview and participation of civil society organizations in monitoring local government budgets for gender issues (ibid).

Political decentralisation and democratic local governance

Political decentralisation refers to the transfer of policy and legislative powers from central governments to autonomous lower level units of government that have been democratically elected or appointed by their local people (Adhikari, 2006:47). It may also lead to the establishment of local governance systems that enable local governments to involve key partners including civil society organisations and private sector in governance related activities. Also, communities and their organisations are likely to be empowered to become equal partners in local governance and the entire development process (ibid).

Also, political decentralisation seeks to improve the active participation of the population in the political decision-making process. It implies that locally elected authorities must bear more responsibility towards those who elected them and that they must better represent local interest in political decision-making process (ibid: 48).

Meshack (1992:26) provides the following as fundamental characteristics of political decentralisation.

- Local units are semi-autonomous, independent and clearly perceived as separate levels of government over which the central authorities exercise little control.
- Local governments are clear and legally recognised geographical boundaries within which they exercise authority and perform public functions.
- Local governments have corporate status and the power to secure resources to perform their functions.
- Local governments should be developed to be perceived by the local citizens as organisations providing services that satisfy their needs and as government units over which they have some influence.
- There exists an arrangement which allows for reciprocal, mutually beneficial and coordinated relationships between central and local government.

The requirement of a successful local governance system accountable to the local people is free and fair elections and local political competition for mayors who have executive authority and councillors who also have legislative authority. This kind of political setting also supports competitive multi-party systems and provides a clear separation of power between the executive and the legislature. In this case, the legislature can serve as a check on the operations of the executive body (Olsen, 2007:17).

In order to make local governance strategy within accountability concrete, he proposed four key areas of focus including actors, powers, and accountability relations, economic and social inequalities, local electoral structure and the party system; and the drivers of locally-elected leaders’ accountability and performance (ibid).

Strengthening decentralisation through women's participation in local decision-making

Greenberg and Okani (2001:1) write that decentralisation allows for discussion and debate about a community's needs, priorities, and resources; development of a local plan of action; and mobilization of all critical players and resources to implement that plan. They present that “although decentralisation brings decision-making and resources to the local level, it also brings them into family space, areas where women are already and where they exercise influence. In addition, because of the productive and reproductive roles in rural areas, women are key actors and most familiar with daily concerns and local problems”.

They are of the opinion that “women know both the needs of their children with respect to health, education, and nutrition and the problems of agriculture and commerce. Further, the successful launching and implementation of local development initiatives will depend on women's work and commitment. If decentralisation is done well, it is viewed as an open and fully participatory system that includes women in both processes and institutions. Otherwise, there is a very real risk that women and men, and girls and boys, may regard local, communal government as a male domain. Decentralisation may become just the latest of the numerous decision-making mechanisms in which women's needs, perspectives, and contributions do not feature” (Greenberg and Okani, 2001:1).

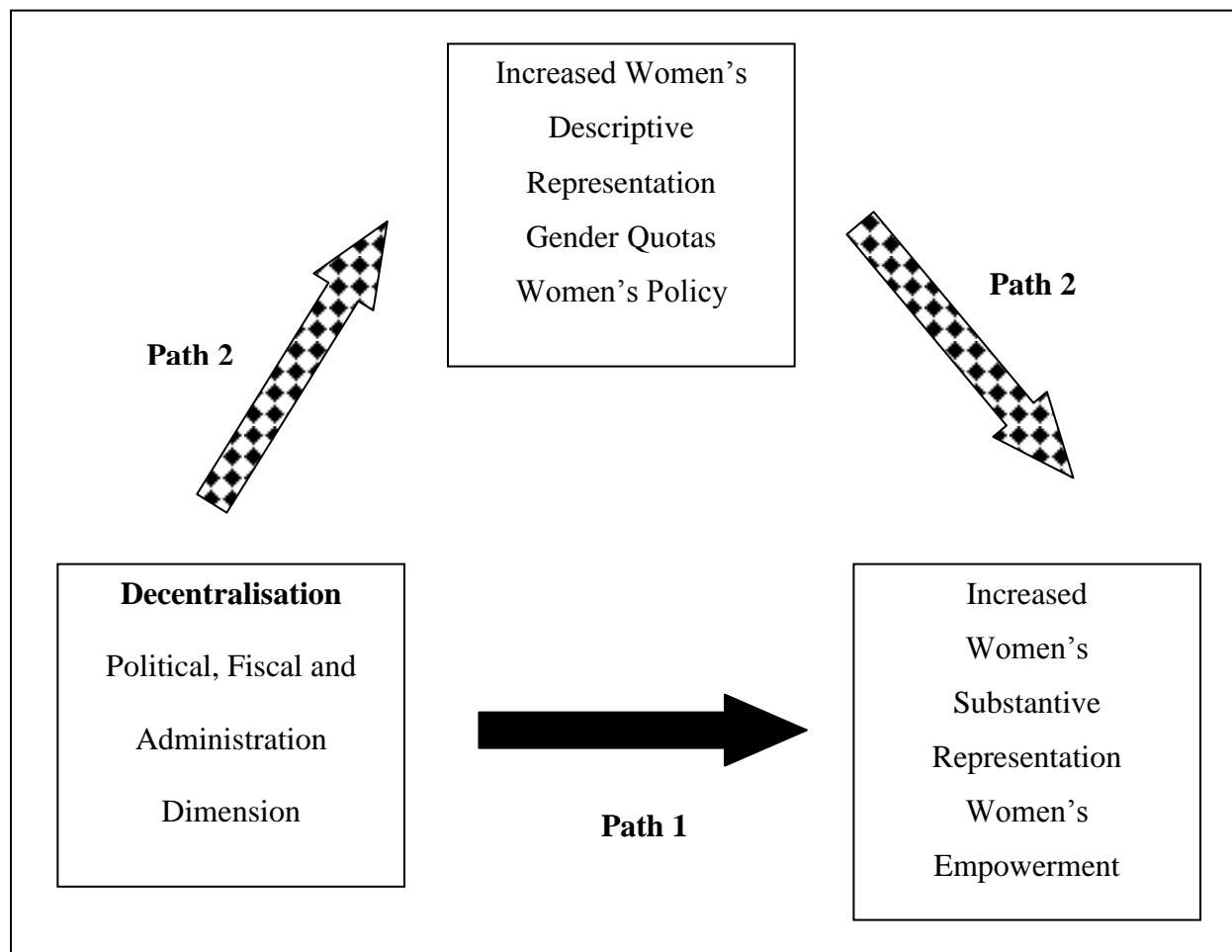
“Decentralization has sometimes been presented as a magic bullet for both development and democracy. Since nearly everyone, from world leaders to non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to donors, agree that development and democracy both fail unless women are included on an equal footing with men, successful decentralization should make government more accessible, accountable, and responsive to women” (International Development Research Centre, IDRC,2008:1).

Towards a new form of decentralisation and women's empowerment

The rationale for decentralisation is such a high priority for many international agencies as it has bearings on gender issues. Again women have historically been marginalized by political processes in many countries throughout the world. There are theoretical reasons to believe that the institution of decentralisation may impact women's status, but this may not have been tested empirically in a systematic way (Rincker, 2006:2).

Empowerment of women according to Crawley (1998:25-26 in FAO, 2000:77) implies “adding to women's power. An empowerment focus involves the radical alteration of the structures that reproduce women's subordinate position as a gender”. Rincker (2011:6) suggested two pathways by which decentralisation influences women's representation and empowerment (see Figure 2.4).

Figure 2.4: Impact of Decentralisation on women's empowerment



Source: Rincker, 2011:6

The first path indicates that decentralisation may lead directly to greater women's empowerment and substantive representation. That may lead to the formulation of policies that may also meet the priorities and desires of women.

Also the creation of various levels of government, especially at the provincial level is believed to meet the needs of citizens (including women) and match their preferences directly. Again should politicians at the provincial level have the required capacity and resources, they will be able to implement the will of the local people more effectively than the national level politicians who have national and international issues to address. These national level politicians are also likely to encounter more difficult challenges in balancing the national and provincial interest in terms of policies, than provincial level politicians. The second path also advocates that decentralisation may lead first to greater women's participation, and then substantive representation and empowerment.

A study by Chattopadhyay and Duflo (2004) on decentralisation in India indicated that the panchayats which had gender quotas had lower levels of corruption. Also policy priority for women was a major concern. They therefore concluded that greater women's descriptive representation or more women in government, through the second path, are necessary for decentralisation to lead to women's substantive representation and empowerment (Rincker, 2011:5-6).

According to Willis (2010) there are three major elements as measures of women's achievements in the economic and political spheres. These are:

- i. Political participation and decision-making-measured using share parliamentary seats held by men and women.
- ii. Economic participation and decision-making-measured by using two indicators: women and men's share of positions as legislators, senior officials and management, and share of professional and technical positions
- iii. Power over economic resources measured using income figures for men and women (Willis, 2010:136).

What is the role of a planner in a new model?

According to the FAO (2000), to advocate empowerment with equity is the key role for the development planner. Empowerment with equity enhances the contribution of socially and economically marginalized people in a decision-making process that affects their lives. Moreover, participatory approaches empower people including women with the skills and confidence to analyse their situations. This has the ability to create harmony, make decisions and take actions that will improve their status (FAO, 2000:77). In all these, the planner should play a facilitating role.

The design of decentralization: the subsidiarity principle

The underlying objectives of decentralization are to bring government closer to people with a view to empowering them into participation of the people in decision-making that affect them. Therefore in a decentralised system of government the kind of task is best determined by the people of subsidiarity.

Subsidiarity principle

What is the principle of subsidiarity?

The principle of subsidiarity states that matters ought to be handled by the lowest competent authority. In this sense, central authority should have a subsidiary function, performing only those tasks which cannot be performed effectively at a more immediate or local level. Subsidiarity is ideally, or in principle, one of the features of federalism and countries such as Switzerland has a strong federalist state built on the principle of subsidiarity (Olsen, 2007:6).

Also, this concept appears in the constitution of many countries' around the world. An example is that of the United States of America where it is captured in the Tenth Amendment to the United States' Constitution and the Maastricht Treaty of 1993 (ibid).

The concept of subsidiarity which, aims at the effective implementation of tasks within a given policy and a hierarchical level, and minimizes costs and maximizes social well-being, states that decisions should be made at the lowest possible level where competencies exist (Anderson, 2000 in Ahmed and Mbwambo, 2004:11).

Boex (2001:4 in Adhikari, 2006:49) presents that the subsidiarity principle helps in identifying the appropriate level of management and further helps bring responsibilities, authorities and resources to that level. Also, the lowest possible level nearer the general citizenry is considered better so that decisions are taken close to where problems arise. The principle again argues that levels of government should provide government services that it is capable of providing efficiently. This results in a situation where, as much as possible, the area where the benefits of a government service are felt coincides with the government boundaries at each level of government (ibid). According to the subsidiarity principle there are three types of functions that are best performed or funded by central government. These include: the provision of public goods and services that benefit the entire nation; income redistribution or equity, social aid and policies; and government activities that involve spill-over or 'externalities to districts (ibid). The principle also has the ability to help identify roles to be decentralized. But this depends on the capacity of the level of governments being considered (Adhikari, 2006: 49).

To improve decentralisation, there is the need for substantial powers and resources to be devolved to elected bodies at the lower levels. Also various mechanisms of accountability must be put into place to bring about both horizontal accountability of bureaucrats elected representatives and downward accountability of elected representatives to the ordinary people (Manor, 2011:3). Therefore for any of these to be absent, the system is likely to fail and where they are present but weak, the system is likely to succeed less (ibid).

The lowest competent political and administrative authority in Kurdistan region is the sub-district, which includes executive and legislative bodies of local government. In this case, Kurdistan regional authority should have a subsidiary function, carrying out no more than those responsibilities which cannot be achieved successfully at provincial or local level.

In the case of women, this principle is very important as they should be the once allowed to take decisions that influence their lives and existence rather than have a particular group deemed superior decide for them in the development process. They should be allowed by governments, civil society, traditional authorities and the private sector to take part in decisions that affect their lives all in a harmony. Higher institutions should only come in to support them in the process and also on activities and issues that are beyond their capacity.

This principle if properly applied in the region may facilitate the tasks of decentralization and also promote the participation of women in the process of decision-making. But to make this principle work well and ensure effective decentralisation, the process should be supported with financial resources which are also a component of decentralisation.

2.7 Fiscal decentralisation: concept and relevance

Financial responsibility is a core component of decentralisation. If decentralized institutions are to perform their responsibilities and the functions entrusted to them, they will need an appropriate level of fiscal resources to execute these functions as well as the authority to make decisions about expenditures. This process of distribution of public finance and responsibilities to the various levels of government within a country (and the private sector) is usually referred to as fiscal decentralisation.

In broad terms, fiscal decentralisation is seen to include the assignment of expenditure responsibilities to different government levels, the assignment of tax and revenue resources to different government levels, intergovernmental fiscal transfers in addition to assigning revenue sources, central governments may provide regional and local governments with additional resources through a system of inter-governmental fiscal transfers or grants and sub-national borrowing local governments can borrow (in a variety of ways) to finance revenue shortfalls (UNDP, 2005: 2-3).

Fiscal decentralisation is to strengthen the financial capacity of sub-national government to provide public goods and services. The idea is to give local governments some revenue generation powers and expenditure responsibility, and allow them to decide on the level and structure of their expenditure preference, as well as participate in governing their affairs. The net result would be better local services and a more satisfied electorate. Fiscal decentralisation requires a strong local government with autonomy to make independent fiscal decisions (Ikeanyionwu, 2001:16).

Fiscal decentralisation and women holding government to account

Women can play a watch dog role in monitoring revenue and expenditures of government. This could be at the group levels of women in civil society organisations. This is one of the major areas where they can hold these governments accountable as some women pay licenses and site fees for market stalls, street trader's permits, levies and tribute to customary authorities. Therefore through Gender Responsive Budgets (GRBs), gender analysis can be integrated into public expenditure policies and budgets as these GRBs serve as mechanisms by which governments, in dialogue with other sectors, integrate gender issues in policies and budgets. This does not call for separate budgets for women but rather the political will to disaggregate expenditure according to its differential impact on women and men (Beall, 2007:15). He further asserts that "gender analysis of local government budgets is not as advanced as efforts at the national level. If women's budget initiatives are to be parallel at the local level then the issue of local taxation becomes critical" (ibid).

2.8 Multi-levels of government and basic functions

Local government

Local governments in democratic decentralised system have various roles to play. These include playing the role of promoters of participation, democratic culture and values, service providers or insurers. Again, they serve as a link between local level (local people, women and men) and upper levels of government. The institution of local governments is also important so as to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of participation in the decision-making process at the local level (Adhikari, 2006: 61). The different sizes and structures and general functions of local government are discussed later.

Debate of different sizes and structures of local government

The size, structure and how low a local government should be, are still debatable issues both in practice and among academics. There is the belief that large governments are better equipped to meet the demands of what is identified as the basic community and in some cases also regional services. According to Olowu (2003:48 in Adhikari, 2006: 63), “many countries, however, are beginning to understand that ‘large size’ may stimulate inter-ethnic conflict and widen the distance between citizens and local governments. Furthermore, countries are learning that it is unnecessary to be large size in order to take advantage of scale. This can be done through contracting and joint production of services”. Creating local level governments has both advantages and disadvantages. These are enumerated on Table 2.16.

Table 2.16: Advantages and disadvantages of lower levels of local governments

Advantages	Disadvantages
Achieve more homogeneous jurisdictions at the lower level	Fragmentation ignores scale of economies in provision and administration: technical inefficiency.
Better match in provision areas for goods with small benefit areas: improves a locative efficiency.	May decrease scope of economies in administering public goods: technical inefficiency.
More competition between local governments: increase in administrative efficiency.	Less vertical accountability.
Government closer to the people: increased political participation and better- informed consumer of local public goods.	Too many government levels increase information costs, reduce participation, transparency and accountability.

Source: Boex, 2004:16 in Adhikari , 2006:65

To enhance planning viability and reduce administrative expenses, lower levels of governments have been put together in some countries. Others in the meanwhile have also brought together smaller municipalities to establish local entities and provided them with the minimum level of staffing and financial capacity necessary for them to provide public services. The Netherlands is an example of such countries that have reduced the number of its local governments or merged some of them (Adhikari, 2006:65). However, decreasing the number of local governments or merging them is a very political and sensitive issue (ibid). While some counties are reducing the number of their local governments, the Kurdistan region, is also increasing the number of local governments so as to bring local governance to the door step of the local people. Though this may seem appropriate and good, this is mainly a political game in the region.

Local government's role in fostering participation and democracy at local level

Democratic local governments serve as vehicles which ferry the fruits of democracy and also play a critical role in promoting democracy at the local level through different means. It provides the chance to get involved in governance activities, the sharing of power among key stakeholders through participation and promoting the culture of basic human rights. It again seeks to maintain transparency, partnership and the collaborative management of common affairs.

In order to foster citizen (especially that of women) participation at the local level, Fukuda-Parr and Ponzio (2002:110 in Adhikari, 2006:68) propose certain action, which are core to local democracy, to be taken by local governments for this course. These include participatory planning and other governance tasks and activities that lead to joint actions between public sector, the private sector and civil society actors. Also citizens can hold their own elected representatives accountable and participate in the decision-making processes which previously were traditionally the sole duty of the public sector. There should also be transparency and information sharing through various means, for instance mass media.

Federalism and decentralisation

There are varying definitions of federalism in the literature, but there seems to be broad agreement on its basic characteristic as “a guaranteed division of power between central and regional governments” (Lijphart, 1999:186). Federalism according to an authoritative definition by Riker's (1975:101, in Lijphart :1999:186) “is a political organization in which the activities of government are divided between regional governments and central government in such a way that each kind of government has some activities on which it makes final decision.” It is usually described as a spatial or territorial division of power in which the component units are geographically defined.

These units are referred to as states in Nigeria, the United States, India, Australia, and Venezuela, are called provinces in Canada, Länder in the Federal Republic of Germany and Austria, and Cantons in Switzerland and Regions in Belgium and Iraq. The “regional” government aspect of this definition deserves emphasis as the study area in this study, the Kurdistan Region falls into this category. It has a regional government which is part of the Iraqi Federal Government.

The relationship between federalism and decentralisation poses several debates among development practitioners and experts around the globe. According to Work (2002: 7), “federalism is often accompanied by decentralisation, but it is not a necessary condition for decentralisation, nor is decentralisation a sufficient condition for federalism”. He further poses the following questions about federal and decentralisation systems which are necessary to explore. These are:

- “Does a federal system facilitate decentralisation and development any better than a unitary system?
- Is the success of decentralisation and development efforts greater in a federal rather than a unitary system or is it independent of the government structure?

For decentralizing unitary systems is federalism the logical next step?” (ibid). In his view, the line between decentralisation, federalism, unitary states and centralised systems becomes blurred. Basta (in Work, 2002:7), in her overview on decentralisation, points out that “there is no completely unitary state. Every state is at least composed of municipalities as decentralised units. Accordingly, the major question arises how to differentiate among a unitary state practising de concentration, a decentralised state unitary state and a federal state”. She argues further that “the member states within a federal state dispose of original autonomy, which is not the case with the autonomy of decentralised units within a unitary state; in other words, the autonomy of member states has been established and guaranteed on a constitutional and not merely legislative (statutory level) as it is the case with decentralised units”.

Federalism is also considered by some writers and practitioners as “a special case of decentralisation: as a system in which public sector decisions can be taken at various levels of government” (ibid: 7). Within a federal system, different independent governments make public sector decisions and provide greater opportunities for citizen participation (women and men) at sub-national levels. Notwithstanding this, a federal system is expensive and institutionally complex and demands high levels of cooperation and capacity on sub-national levels to ensure the enhancement of good governance. The argument, according to Work (2002) is then that a federal state is more apt for de-concentration since the administrative and political structures are already in place and moreover, the centre does not control member state officials in a federation.

The Kurdistan region is one of the two semi-autonomous regions of Federal Republic of Iraq. Within the semi-autonomy system are different levels of government that make public sphere decisions and provide superior opportunities for participation by Kurdish citizens at local level. Consequently this could be a good policy option enhance women’s participation in decision-making at local level.

Federalism and decentralisation in practice

Political reality and social diversity determine the actual form of a federal structure in a particular country. In the view of Auclair (2002), there are no ideal models or structures for federalism but its application is really what defines a federal state (Auclair, 2002: 72). Though some countries operating the federal system have constitutions, many of them operate almost like Unitarian states. It can therefore be concluded that adopting a federal constitution is not the only way or a sufficient step to establish a federal government. A number of elements exist that can affect the structure of a federal political system. These include the number of constituent units. These can for instance have a significant impact on the dynamics of the system of government. Countries such as Iraq, consisting of two regions, Russia, made up of eighty-nine republics, Germany with 16 Länder and the U.S.A, with its fifty states, will apply a structure different to that of Canada, which is made up of ten provinces, or Australia, which has only six states. The relative weight of each constituent state will therefore depend on whether it is one of the two, or one of the eighty-nine.

The forms of power and resource distribution between the centre and regions take diverse forms. For instance, a federation may decide to give more power and resource to the centre while another will attribute the majority of the authority to its constituent units. The same may apply to the sharing of fiscal jurisdictions. These notwithstanding, a number of countries have opted for forms of power and resource adjustment to guarantee their citizens a minimum acceptable standard of living. To sum up therefore, federalism is much more than a system of government as it is also a process of ongoing negotiations, an art of resolving conflicts, and an approach based on compromise and cooperation. In the words of Auclair (2002:72-73) “in order to entirely satisfy all parties, the federal structure must first and foremost be flexible and reflect the particularities of its constituent groups or regions. There are no structured patterns to follow. None of the current federal governments around the world that has opted for a federal constitution, has won the trophy for 'best federation ', however, much can be learned from them, learn from their successes learn from their mistakes”. In the case of Iraq and the Kurdistan region, the best form of federation can be developed and improved from its practical experience-twin approach of success and failure.

2.9 Democratic governance

Governance, according to Work (1998: 1), “is a system of values, policies and institutions by which a society manages its economic, political and social affairs through interactions within and among the state, civil society and private sector”. From this definition, governance is seen as the way a society organises itself to make and implement decisions to help achieve mutual understanding, agreement and action. It also comprises mechanisms and processes for people including women and group to articulate their interest, mediate their differences and exercise their legal rights and obligations. It is the rules, institutions and practices that set limits and provide incentives for individuals, organizations and firms. Governance, including its social, political and economic dimensions, operates at every level of human enterprise, be it in the household, community, municipality, region, or nation.

Adhikari (2006:66) also defines governance as “a process of managing public affairs at all levels in which power and authority are exercised in a collective manner. The state, democratic institutions, private sector and civil society articulate their interests, mediate their differences, and exercise their legal rights and obligations to achieve shared goals and objectives. Governance holds holistic perspective and it is a continuing process through which conflicting or diverse interests are accommodated and cooperative actions are taken to manage the affairs of common interests”.

Good governance

“Good governance is perhaps the single most important factor in eradicating poverty and promoting development” (Annan 2005, in Schnyder, and Byrne, 2005:4).

Good governance according to Work (1998:1-2), among other things, “is participatory, transparent and accountable. It is also effective and equitable. And it promotes the rule of law. Good governance ensures that political, social and economic priorities are based on a broad consensus in society and that the poorest and most vulnerable members of society are heard in decision-making over all the allocation of development resources”.

The core characteristics of good governance include participation where all men and women have a voice in decision-making, either directly or through legitimate intermediate institutions that represent their interests, the rule of law, transparency and responsiveness. The others include consensus orientation, effectiveness and efficiency, accountability and strategic vision taking into account the historical, cultural and social complexities in which that perspective is grounded (Work, 1998:1-2).

Advantages of democratic governance

“Democratic governance needs to be underpinned by a political regime that guarantees civil and political liberties as human rights and that ensures participation of people and accountability of decision-makers” Fukuda-Parr and Ponzio (2002:117 in Adhikari, 2006:67). According to (Blair, 2000), “they further advocate for meaningful devolution of authority to local units of governance that are accessible and accountable to the local citizenry who enjoy full political rights and liberty” (Blair 2000:21 in McGee et al, 2003:7). It again embodies the aspiration of making government at local level more responsive to citizens and more effective in service delivery through building participation and accountability (McGee et al., 2003:7).

Cheema and Maguire, 2002: 26-32, and Fukuda-Parr and Ponzio, 2002:120 (in Adhikari, 2006:67) present that democratic governance provide opportunities for all to take part in the political process and this may help forestall and manage conflicts and avoid political changes.

This may also contribute to political stability and human security in countries. Also checks by the opposition parties, uncensored criticism of public policies and the fear of being voted out of office may serve as a check on governments to make them more responsive to the needs of the people. Moreover, through the local government structures democratic governance may lead to an equitable, transparent and accountable way of resource distribution. It could also bring about a reduction in income disparities and provide equal opportunities by protecting the rights of minorities from the 'tyranny of the majority'.

The UNDP (2009:29) puts forward that gender-responsive assessment can be applied to measure gender outcomes of good governance programmes particularly referring the following aspects: Respect for human rights; Empowerment of women; Equality between men and women in opportunities, resource and benefits; and Adoption of transformative agenda.

Approaches for effective local democratic governance

For local democratic governance to be effective McGee, et, al . (2003:47-49) proposed a set of approaches in their concluding remarks of comparative study carried out while focusing on legal frameworks of some Latin American, South and South East Asian, African, and selected (22) northern countries. These included the following:

1. The strengthening and improvement of the institutions of representative democracy by making them more representative and more responsible to the less powerful section of population.
2. The strengthening and improvement of representative democracy by enhancing the quality of representation by enabling citizens to hold their representatives accountable for their performances.
3. Complementing representative democracy with more direct forms of citizen participation in governance through promotion of more entry-points and interfaces for civil society actors to operate in governance space and processes beyond the confines of existing representative institutions.
4. The promotion of laws or polices having more outreach of government actors into civil society spaces and process and holding of public audiences and consultations of all kinds.

Effective local democratic governance will therefore require the involvement of other actors from civil society organizations and the private sector in partnership with government at all levels. Thus building and improving capacity in all three domains of governance:- state, civil society and the private sector, are critical to sustain the process and also for human development (Work, 1998:3).

Having presented the theoretical concept of democracy, decentralization, political participation, and democratic governance, the next section concludes the emerging new planning approaches and gender planning.

2.10 Emerging new planning approaches: top-down versus bottom-up

The various approaches to planning, planning from above or below have been the subject of long-standing debate in planning discussions. Various positive and negative aspects of these approaches have been discussed in order to find appropriate balance between both approaches.

The top-down planning approach “describes the conventional procedure of systematic surveys on the basis of which plans are devised centrally and worked out in details by professional staff to meet goals that are, also, decided centrally. Implementation again is

typically the responsibility of line ministries or other governmental agencies” (Dalal-Clayton et al, 2003:91). This approach to planning mostly takes place within the context of technocratic ally dominated planning practices. The development concept, supported by the planning from above approach “is based on external demand and innovations as the generator of development...” (Meshack, 1992:21).

The approach of planning from above was introduced in the 1950s in many developing countries. This was to serve as a means of providing rational and coherent policies to use scarce resources effectively to promote rapid growth. Also, arguments in favour of central planning were mostly for national integration and for rapid transformation and development (Cheema, 1983: 10 in Meshack, 1992: 21). Lessons indicate that many of the outcomes of this form of planning were not encouraging. This could be attributed to the following:

Projects and programmes were often supply-driven, planning exercises were designed and implemented as blueprints with limited flexibility. Also, planning was often delegated to the regional or provincial level and the beneficiaries at community level were generally excluded from the decision-making process (Mahzouni, 2007:40). Experience has shown that coordination is hard to achieve at central levels and therefore it should be fixed at a community or local government level, where local actors are empowered and capable of taking over the activities (ibid).

There has been a widespread increase in the involvement of citizens in development planning and programs over the last three decades of the 20th century. This has been due to the failure of former development approaches which dominated the thinking of the 1950s and 60s. The rationale for the participation approach springs from several precepts. Over the last two decades it was realized that the inclusion of civil society through participatory approaches can enable local people (women and men) to bring their knowledge, skills and resources into the development process. Also the planning from above approach has been found to be highly ineffective and elitist and seems to fail to mobilize natural, human and institutional resources for development. Moreover, many local governments have continued to depend on central governments for development funds which have often not been forthcoming, leading to unequal distribution of funds and overall inequality between individuals. At lower levels of development, third world countries have been made to look for loans and grants from foreign sources and this has led to the accumulation of huge debts by these countries while at the same time substantial local resources remain untapped (Meshack, 1992:51).

According to Dalal-Clayton et al (2003:91), bottom-up planning “describes planning that is initiated locally and proceeds through the active participation of the community. The pooled experience and local knowledge of stakeholders are mobilized in the process to identify development priorities, draw up plans and implement them”.

The concept of planning from below is based on the philosophy of developing institutions at a local level which will be capable of mobilizing local resources, so as to satisfy the basic needs of the people and those regions categorized as disadvantaged (Meshack, 1992:51).

Dalal-Clayton et al (2003:91), in writing on this approach to planning give the following advantages and disadvantages of the approach. The advantages are that, bottom up planning has the ability to strengthen a community’s sense of responsibility and confidence, strengthen local institutions to help them take on further responsibilities and build a popular awareness of problems and opportunities. It may also lead to a better use of local capacity in the form of knowledge and skills and pay close attention to local goals and development constraints. It could also assist in improving transparency.

Despite the above advantages, bottom up planning may face difficulty in coming up with a holistic framework and integrating local plans within a wider framework. Moreover, when there is limited capacity for planning at the local level, there would be the need for greater efforts in time, manpower and other resources to improve upon the situation. Also, there could be the situation whereby the local community's interests may not be well represented, as local elites may dominate decision-making and local planning process, especially in traditional communities. Bottom up planning may also collapse through the lack of higher-level support as local interests may not necessarily be the same as national interests (ibid).

Meshack (1992:51) also writes that the basic strengths of this approach to planning rest on the institutions thus created being accepted by the people. This then calls for the active participation of the people directly or indirectly through their representatives in the decision-making process. This is because development efforts affect women and men differently in the various sectors and therefore including them in the various stages of the planning process can ensure the relevance and responsiveness of the plan. Again all stakeholders who exercise political or economic power including civil society organizations, must be involved and must agree on the planning framework and the methods used. The institutions created should also be closer to the people so that it can plan in a familiar environment and with the people who will be affected by these plans (ibid).

Finally, there should be a disciplined approach to development planning. It should follow a systematic sequence of logical steps to yield effective, efficient and equitable results. This will serve as a guide to clarifying the objectives and formulating ways of achieving them as an absence of this would be like a ship without a rudder, drifting around without a port to go to. This is not the image or model of effectiveness and efficiency wanted (PDS, 2005:1).

“Providing opportunities for gender planning, therefore, concerns the extent to which 'bottom-alternative organizations outside government in fact provide the best entry point for gender planning’” (Moser, 1998:107).

Human development and gender planning

Development should be an integrated, holistic process that meets people’s economic social, political, cultural and environmental needs and improves the quality of life for all. This understanding of development includes the concept of human development, which is measured not only by economic indicators such as gross national product (GNP) but also by health (life expectancy) and education (literacy and enrolment). This is the basis of the UNDPs Human Development Index, which ranks countries worldwide by these three indicators.

Human development has two sides. One is the development of human capabilities and the other is development of opportunities for people to use these capabilities. It brings together the production and distribution of commodities and resources and the expansion and use of human capabilities. Human development also encompasses elements that constitute the critical issue of gender and development. There are four major elements in the concept of human development-productivity, equity, sustainability, and empowerment (UNDP, 1995:11-12).

Table 2.17: Essential components of the human development paradigm

- **Productivity.** People must be enabled to increase their productivity and to participate fully in the process of income generation and remunerative employment. Economic growth is, therefore, a subset of human development models.
- **Equity.** People must have access to equal opportunities. All barriers to economic and political opportunities must be eliminated so that people can participate in, and benefit from, these opportunities.
- **Sustainability.** Access to opportunities must be ensured not only present generations but for future generations as well. All forms of capital physical, human, environmental sustainability should be replenished.
- **Empowerment.** Development must be by people, not only for them. People must participate fully in the decisions and process that shape their lives

Source: UNDP, 1995:12

The significance of human development for women is the identification that “if it is not engendered it is endangered” (UNDP, 1995:12). Human development cannot be productive, equitable, sustainable and empowering or holistic unless it addresses gender inequalities and the needs of both women and men.

An important contribution to the advancement of gender equality within the human development paradigm has been the design of two new indices, the Gender-related development Index (GDI) and the Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM). These indices are used to compare gender inequality in human capability (GDI) and inequalities in key areas of political and economic decision-making structure (UNDP, 1995:6). As an approach to gender analysis, the (GEM) includes the human development indicators and also looks at such areas as participation in political decision-making and the appropriateness of legislative and administrative systems.

Why gender planning?

Gender planning prioritizes the needs and conditions under which women and men live and work as a site for change unlike most current planning methods which seek to promote economic growth. It is a site in which power is used, largely with male-dominated perspectives of what is ‘good’ economically determined development, to promote the status quo in which women, for the most part, remain oppressed and subordinate. Also, gender planning does a critical and thorough analysis of the gaps between women and men’s access to economic, social, political and cultural resources to enable development policy initiatives to correct these imbalances (Taylor, 1999:14).

Moser (1998) also views gender planning as the means by which women, through a process of empowerment can emancipate themselves as they increasingly are negotiating and debating to redistribute power and resources within the household, civil society and the state (Moser, 1998:211).

Taylor views gender planning as socio-political and technical in nature and assumes conflict in the planning process. It also involves a transformative process. He further characterised planning as a dialogue that critically examines the assumptions that planning methodology can simply adopt a universally applicable set of technical procedures and the extent to which planners determine people’s demands and priorities reflect the situation on the ground.

This addresses the shortfalls of traditional planning which is seen to be gender blind and limits the types of interventions that could be made by planning authorities to address strategic gender concerns (Taylor, 1999:14).

Moser (1998) further writes that the development of gender planning is of critical importance for a number of reasons. These are the critical need to inform policy, through the formulation of gender policy at international, national and civil society levels, as well as its integration with cross-cutting sectoral planning. Also, it is needed to ensure the development of more appropriate gender-aware-planning procedures. It also has the ability of assisting in the clarification of both technical and political constraints in the implementation of planning practice. Finally, developing gender planning as a rigorous new planning discipline in its own right is based on the fact that if there is gender-blindness in policy formulation one of the following could happen: “First women may not be recognized as important in the development process and simply not be included at the level of policy formulation. Secondly, development policy, even when aware of the important role women play in development process, because of certain assumptions, often still ‘misses’ women, and consequently fails to develop a coherently formulated gender policy” (Moser, 1998:6-7).

Development and gender planning goals are similar if not the same. The assumption is that “if women constitute the poorest, are the most subordinate and are consistently denied access to rights, services and benefits of society, then planning needs to be informed by a large gender analysis which seeks to address the root causes of these gender-based inequalities” (Taylor, 1999:14). In this sense, gender planning should not be seen as different from mainstream development planning, but rather a cross cutting one. The goals of planning should transform mainstream development economically, and socially and environmentally sustainable processes. In view of these, development planning, as a participatory process to promote integrated, holistic development which links economic, social, environmental and political goals, is returning to the forefront in the search for a human development paradigm. Development planning should therefore focus on balancing the needs of people with the need for sustainable economic development (ibid: 13).

In the light of the above, the question that comes to mind is: Why gender planning in the Kurdish society? Kurdish society is still subordinated by other ethnic groups in the eastern, western, and northern parts of Kurdistan except in the southern part (Kurdistan Regional in north Iraq) and consequently, the people themselves struggle to have legal rights as strategic gender needs. They need gender planning as a participatory process to become socio-political as the means by which they can be empowered and emancipated to redistribute power and resources (horizontally and vertically) within the households, civil society, ethnic groups, and state. In this sense taking into consideration, the promotion of current and future potential to meet gender needs and aspirations which are all in harmony and links economic, social, environment, and political goals in order to promote an integrated and holistic development.

The following section focused on previous studies concerning the participation of women and factors that have influenced women’s participation.

2.11 The focus of the research in the light of previous studies

The researcher has attempted to focus on the research in the light of previous studies in order to design theoretical and conceptual frameworks. This makes the research more significant, where some related studies have been reviewed to highlight areas that have direct and indirect associations with the subject of the research and will pave the way to understanding the subject in question, or making the assumptions in the study to be sure of the reality. This is done through the conclusions and synopsis of the subject.

In addition, the previous studies are a comparable methodology; where the researcher can compare between the results of his research and other researches related to his subject. Such studies expand the horizons of the thesis, and give it a clear perspective, in addition to addressing the difficulties and helping to face its realities in the light of the study.

The current study is considered the first one of its kind in Iraqi Kurdistan, and there are no other studies on promoting women's participation in decision-making at local level in the Barzan sub-district.

1. Iraqi studies

The study by Al-Taie (2002) entitled 'Cultural and social hindrances to Iraqi women's political participation', a case study of the city of Baghdad, examined cultural and social factors and their effects on hindering political participation of women. The researcher identified factors including negative social values and criteria, habits, traditions, family upbringing, degree of political institution openness, social nature, personal nature, educational background, and low cultural awareness as influencing women's participation in political activities, (Al-Taie, 2002:163).

A research by Dizayee (2003) brought to light that Kurdish society is still entangled with inherited traditions and habits. These issues are still effective and in one way or another control the specific relations between the two genders and also women's rights. It further revealed that Kurdish women have two types of work outside the house.

The first involves tasks, especially in the educational sector, where they serve as teachers. This was later expanded to include other civic tasks in government institutions. The second type of work is the management of agricultural activities in villages by Kurdish women. The involvement of the Kurdish woman in local communities is well appreciated in the region (Dizayee, 2003:152).

A study, also by Mukryani (2009), explained that the less active participation of Kurdish women in politics may be attributed to religious factors, social norms, traditions and time availability. Concerning the influence of religion on the participation of women, she ascertained that most of the Kurdish population are Muslims. Based on the understanding of Kurdish society in Islam, women must be at home. This plays a negative role and hampers women's active participation in activities outside their homes, and has caused women only to follow men. This has also given men the sole prerogative in deciding for women (Mukryani, 2009:44)

2. Arabic studies

Saad Ali (1989:448), in a report entitled, 'theoretical and field study', revealed as part of her field study findings that there are overlapping factors limiting the mobility of women towards political participation. She indicated that at the rural level, habits, traditions and level of education, impede women's participation. However, urban women were able to practice and work in

government despite the perceptions of society which do not give women much chance to take active part in the political process.

Another study by Al-Sadi (2001) on the involvement of Tunisian women in politics brought to light that the number of Tunisian women participating in parliament has improved due to the issue of many laws and legislations which support women's participation in politics. In the elected structures, she noticed a progress of women's rights and their presence in the parliament from 1.11% in 1959 to 11.53% in 1999. This is an indication that the Tunisian government is committed to the implementation of the agenda of the Beijing Conference on women. The objective of Conference included forcing governments to become more committed to putting in place the necessary arrangements to uplift women to higher positions including cabinet and parliament and to improve their active participation in decision-making. Concerning women's presence in political institutions and executive positions, the researcher found that women are being employed in ministerial positions in the government. Since 1999, there have been two women ministers and in 2001 another woman registrar was appointed into a ministry. Women's presence in such institutions was at the rate of 25.9% in 2001 (Al-Sadi, 2001:12).

Bibars (2002) also identified the major obstacles facing Egyptian women's political participation to include the following:

- Increase of women's illiteracy level.
- Negative effects of accumulated values and practices.
- The ruling view in rural areas that women are less valuable and that a woman cannot achieve rights by improving her education and everything else.
- Lack of enthusiasm by political parties and politically powerful institutions to put women on their indexes.
- Traditional culture which distinguishes between public and private concerns, and considers women only responsible for taking care of her husband and family and man for public activities (Bibars, 2002:4).

Karama (2009) an NGO, also pointed out that, "it is important to note that the constitutions of most Arab countries enshrine the principle of equality between women and men in terms of their civil and political rights. However, laws do not translate this principle into reality. Moreover, women's constitutional rights are no more than ink on paper. In sum, constitutional guarantees are not enough to materialize and effectuate women's civil and political rights" (Karama: 8-9). It again notes that women's low visibility in the political sphere is as a result of the predominant culture of male preference in Arab societies. In this environment, discrimination against women, social traditions, and gender-based violence in the public and private spheres are principal obstacles to increasing women's roles in decision-making positions.

The institution then summarized the obstacles to women's equal participation in decision-making to include the following:

- Political and legal barriers;
- Social and cultural barriers;
- Economic barriers (ibid).

Again, a study by Pettygrove (2006) in Jordan assessed the involvement of women in politics by using four independent variables, namely:- family, Islam as a religion, women's civil society organizations, and the quota for women in parliament and the ways in which they hinder or assist women's political participation. Political participation in the study denoted participation in roles of decision-making and leadership, in both civil society and political process. The study found that barriers to women's empowerment lay in the social structure and value system of Jordanian

society, -namely patriarchal gender roles. It concluded that family structure and the process of socialization within the family and the system of Islamic values served as obstacles to women's political empowerment. Also the activities of women's civil society organizations did not facilitate women's participation in decision-making roles. It again revealed that women's quota in Parliament facilitated, and was a necessary but imperfect first step to, -women's political empowerment (Pettygrove, 2006:2).

3. African studies

According to Greenberg and Okani (2001) the constraints for rural women's ability to participate in decision-making are lack of time, traditional culture, insufficient information, and limited economic means. Along with the constraints to women's influence over local decision-making, there are opportunities, such as women's groups and traditional information dissemination processes (ibid: iv). Their findings were made in a study in Mali. The researchers proposed the following as an analytical framework to analyse women's influence over decision-making;

- sensitization.
- time
- information channels
- substantive information relevant to women
- hope, sense of possibility, empowerment
- groups, solidarity
- skill and training
- motivation, mobilization and action

The researchers used the eight elements to suggest five sub-intermediate results for achieving intermediate results of women's increased participation in local decision-making:

- sensitization;
- more economic resources for women;
- increased information for women;
- training for women to participate in a decision-making process; and
- increased recognition of women's groups (ibid: vi).

Greenberg and Okani (2001) again indicated that decentralisation in Mali created political space for women as decision-makers. It helped connect existing women's groups, change norms among men and women to give more women time outside the home, and leadership training programs that enhanced women's participation (ibid). Also in Ghana, women constitute about 7% of assembly-members country wide, despite a 30% quota for women in these district assemblies (Ohene, 2001 in Rincker 2006: 7-8). He indicated that factors such as a lack of funds, little training for women candidates, low literacy among women kept their participation low. Kariuki (2010:4) describes several barriers that stand in the way of a young Kenyan woman participating fully in her society and separates these barriers into political, social, and economic.

4. International studies

Also findings of other studies as indicated by IPU (2008:19) have indicated that social and cultural factors are some of the main causes of women's under-representation in political decision-making. It further indicated that women were themselves hurdles to their participation in the decision-making process and were not suited to decision-making. This was attributable to their lack of self-esteem and socio-cultural pressures, especially the patriarchal system.

Moreover, gender roles that defined men and women exclude women from decision-making. Women are also not viewed as leaders (ibid). In order to address this, there is the need for sensitization, education and public awareness raising programmes and other public education programs. The general population needs to be convinced that women make as effective legislators as men. Additionally, for women to be better able to balance their household responsibilities with the time needed to take part in political activity different support mechanisms may have to be considered (ibid).

The various researches concerning the participation of women brought to light seemingly similar and identical factors that influence the participation of women. These included religious, cultural, family system, socio-economic and also political culture pertaining to the particular environment. Also women's lack of self-esteem, habits and the availability of time were other factors that influenced their participation in the process. Therefore any studies that seek to advance the participation of women in decision-making process should not ignore these factors.

2.12 Application of theoretical concepts to the Kurdistan context.

The current research, based on the relevance of contemporary theory and concepts reviewed in the earlier chapters, form the basis for preparing a conceptual framework for the study.

From the literature review carried out so far, it is becoming evident that for women to effectively participate in the decision-making process, with emphasis on political participation and leadership in local government and political institutions as well as in civil society organisations, then there should be the practice of democracy and decentralisation. The inter-relationship and dynamics of democracy and decentralisation are the overarching strategies underlying this study. A political system that allows democratic practices and existence of democratic institutions closer to the people is critical for the sharing of power and effective participation. Decentralisation of power is most likely to help trickle down power to local level governments and grassroots. Democracy has the ability of giving women the right to get involved in the local decision-making process while decentralisation, which seeks to transfer power, authority and resources to the local level for decision-making may bring local governance to the door steps of all, including women. Kurdistan as an autonomous region within Iraq³ is also gradually shifting towards the practice of democracy and decentralisation which should promote the participation of all sectors of society, including women in the decision process.

Therefore a significant barometer to measure the level of democracy and decentralisation in Kurdish society may be women's participation in decision-making at different levels. The inclusion and progress of Kurdish women serves as a barometer of the current state of political development in the Kurdistan region of Iraq and a predictor for the future of Kurdish society. Though democratic decentralisation is a necessity, it is not a sufficient condition to promote women's participation in decision-making at the local level. Improved women's participation may contribute to, but not guarantee, local development. Empirical studies of democratic decentralisation concluded that democratic decentralisation may lead to promoting women's participation in decision-making at local level if it overcomes the negative factors which are constraints, and on the other hand promote the positive factors which facilitate or promote

³ *Iraq is a federal state, with democratic, parliamentary, pluralistic republican system within which Kurdistan is located.*

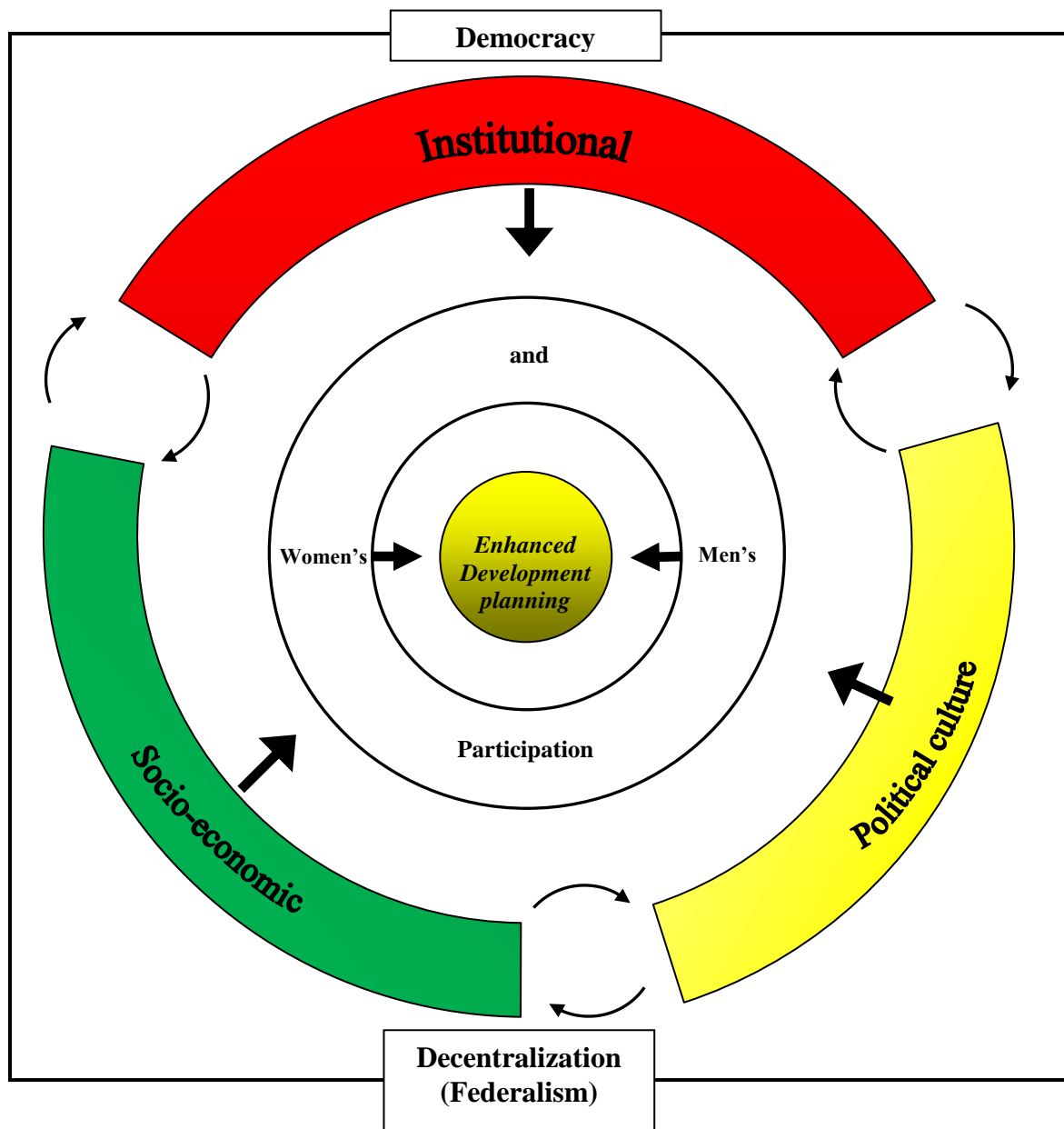
participation. Even when women have access to democratic decentralized institutions, numerous factors can influence their level of participation. In Kurdistan, participation of women is permitted by law. But women are often reluctant to raise their voice when men are present, and men are often unwilling to listen to them because of patriarchal values.

Almost all researchers who advocate women's participation present the concept in a noble form; however, it is not that simple in practice, particularly in a young democratically decentralized post-conflict country. Women's participation in practice is determined by many critical factors associated directly with democracy and decentralisation as noted in previous studies. Therefore, true participation does not easily take place in reality as presented above in an idealistic manner. The following key factors may also influence the level of women participation.

- i. Socio-economic factors (*Education, employment, and civil status*) matter for effective participation because they imply unequal power relations that directly impede or enhance capacity to engage in public life;
- ii. Institutional factors (*System of government, party system, electoral, and quotas*); and
- iii. Political culture (*values, norms on political, views, behaviour and gender stereotype*). Traditional social norms and values, time, knowledge and level of consciousness of democratic rights are very influential in participation.

Figure 2.5 presents the links between the major concepts discussed above and the various factors that are likely to influence women's participation in the decision-making process. The diagram provides a specific focus for the research in relation to the theoretical discussions and previous studies considered in this chapter. As shown in the figure, the concepts of democracy and decentralisation and the various factors, culminate in the effectiveness of women's participation in the decision-making process. This may likely contribute to enhancing development.

Figure 2.5: Theoretical concepts applicable to the Kurdistan context



Source: Author's construct 2011

Conclusion

The chapter has discussed various issues concerning women in development and the various policy approaches to women in development. It has also discussed the participation and other issues bordering on democracy, decentralisation and emerging planning approaches. The literature on women's participation, democracy and decentralization has largely confirmed the importance of women's participation in decision-making and practice at different levels: local, regional and national. Scholars have recognised the various arguments justifying women's participation in the decision-making process as equity and justice, women's interests and emancipation and change in the political process. Through democratic decentralisation, women may be able to stake a claim to participation and representation in political activities and institutions. However, while reflecting upon the practise of government and organizations, scholars have examined how participation in political activities also reflects many factors. Women's political participation in decision-making has highlighted one of the most important anomalies for democratic decentralization practices, the distinction made between the public and private spheres. In the context of women's participation in political decision-making, women have been characterized in terms of motherhood they have been referred to as the reproducers of nations and ethnicities, as bearers of cultural norms as makers of traditions, of embodying the past and future of nations.

Since participation encourages the sharing of power and resource between men and women which, in turn, challenges the functions and responsibilities of all society, it does not easily take place in practice. This explains why participation of women is of utmost importance in Kurdish society thereby being the main focus of this study. Representative democratic decentralization, towards which the Kurdistan region is moving, has in the meantime not been able to ensure an all inclusive form of decision-making at local level.

Since many societies are at different stages in the development process, participation of women in the decision-making process needs to evolve from those societies' own socio-economic, political culture and historical context, and their own institutions. These are the starting points for progress and determinants for what might be proposed for the Kurdistan region. Special consideration, in developing theoretical concepts applicable to the Kurdistan context, should take into account the deeply rooted patterns of leadership and authority and traditional pattern of decision-making.

The chapter concludes that women's rights are a determining factor for the success of any democracy and governance. Countries cannot succeed as being democratic if more than half of their population is denied basic democratic rights - as women's rights are a key determinant of overall vibrancy of any society (Basham, 2004:5). It is a known secret that women's participation in all aspects of public life is crucial not only to democracy but to decentralisation and sustainable development.

The next chapter presents the research methodology guiding the entire study on the participation of women in decision-making at local level in Kurdistan.

3. Research methodology

The first section of this chapter attempts to justify the selection of an appropriate methodology. The research used triangulation methods in order to pursue its objectives. This study is qualitative in nature and makes use of three methods, namely: descriptive, historical and comparative. The use of multiple methods, or triangulation, reflects also an attempt to secure in-depth understanding of the phenomenon under study (Bryman, 2008:608).

The second section describes and justifies the selection of the case study area. It brings to the fore the reasons for selecting the Barzan sub-district in Kurdish region in Iraq as the research area, the communities, and the households (fhh and mhh) selected for the study. The selection criteria of villages dominated by female-headed households and male-headed households used in the study is also explained.

In the third section, data collection from primary and secondary resources, the area of analysis was explained at levels Micro, Meso, and Macro consequently according to the Kurdistan Regional Government administration system. Multiple methods and tools were adapted to determine women's participation in decision-making, needs and perspectives, the others include interpretation and analysis of data through a combined gender analysis framework, finally indicators for measuring women's participation.

In the last section, the test of scientific analysis will be discussed to evaluate the applied research methodology based on the validity and reliability of obtained information and limitations.

3.1 Rationale for research methodology applied in the study

This research, largely qualitative in nature, makes use of a combination of inductive and deductive methods. Deductive research moves from general ideas and theories to specific or particular situations. This approach offers the researcher a relatively easy and systematic way of testing general ideas on a range of situations, after a review of literature and in addition to observation in the field (Bryman, 2008:85). Armed with what is appealing from the framework of the research theory, the researcher had some innovative ideas which were used to shape assumptions ready for scientific examination. Some fundamental assumptions for the current study as follows:

- Women's and men's roles, responsibilities, access to and control in decision-making and benefits of the development are different; therefore experience, needs, issues and priorities are disparate. This necessitates different strategies to achieve equitable outcomes for women and men, and different groups of women.

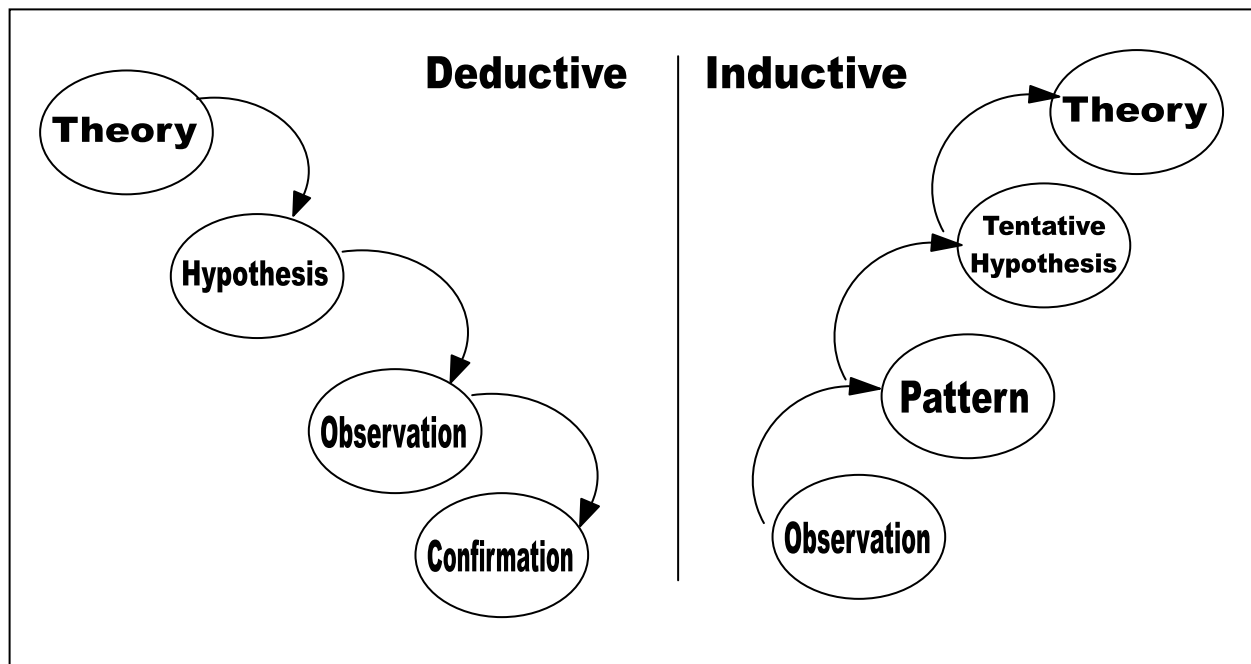
- Participation of women through partnerships with men and other stakeholders in local decision-making is essential enhancing development.

- The prevailing traditional values affect the local community. Low access to education and limited women's participation in civil society organization leads to weak participation in the process of decision-making at all levels.

On the other hand, inductive reasoning, which is the very nature of this research, works the other way around. That is, research moving from specific observations to generalizations and theories. Informally, we sometimes call this a 'bottom up' approach. In inductive reasoning,

according to William (2009), we begin with “specific observations and measures, begin to detect patterns and regularities, formulate some tentative hypotheses that we can explore, and finally end up developing some general conclusions or theories”. A diagrammatic presentation of these approaches is presented in figure 3.1.

Figure 3.1: Deductive versus inductive research



Source: William M.K. The web for social research method, online: www.socialresearchmethods.net /retrieved on March, 2009.

The research is partly deductive, since the researcher used theories related to policy making, institutionalizing and appraisal of participation to form a theoretical base and conceptual framework upon which to carry out the field work. It is also deductive, because knowledge gained from theories has been used particularly to formulate research hypotheses. The researcher’s observations were the other source used in formulating hypothesis, which is a main characteristic of inductive research. Accordingly, these hypotheses, as an inductive analysis, are going to be explored in view of the research’s practical findings and will not be tested. A further aspect of inductivity in this research is that it commences with the fundamental observation regarding the lack of access of Kurdish women to decision-making. The observation was extended to a broader generalization. The research applied a more inductive approach from the perspective that human and social behaviour are not as easily measured as phenomena in the natural sciences. In addition, the traditional local circumstances of the research area, for instance absence of effective information and communication infrastructure, call for a different method of investigation and analysis.

3.1.1 Choice of case study approach and justification

Yin (2009:2) mentioned that the three conditions for employing case study consist of (a) the type of research question posed, (b) the extent of control an investigator has over actual behavioural events, and (c) the degree of focus on contemporary as opposed to historical events. Figure 3.2 displays these three conditions and shows how each is related to the five major research methods he discussed: experiments, surveys, archival analyses, histories, and case studies. The importance of each condition in distinguishing among the five methods is as follows.

Figure 3.2: Research Methods

Method	1 From research question	2 Requires control of behavioural events	3 Focus on contemporary events
Experiment	How, why?	Yes	Yes
Survey	Who, what, where, how many, how much?	No	Yes
Archival analysis	Who, what, where, how many, how much?	No	Yes/No
History	How, why?	No	No
Case study	How, why?	No	Yes

Source: *Cosmos Corporation in (Yin, 2009:8)*

Accordingly all these conditions apply to the selection of Barzan sub-district as a case study. Nevertheless the main reasons behind selecting such methods for examining factors influencing women's participation in decision-making at local level can be briefly explained as follows:

- The case study method will help to inquire deeper and examine thoroughly the existing situation of women's participation in decision-making procedures, steps and strategies.
- One of the valuable advantages is the opportunity to gain insights into the behaviour of women and men and the relationship of variables.
- This study is focused on contemporary issues of women's participation in decision-making at local level. Therefore, a case study would be the preferred strategy.
- The nature of this study does not allow control by the researcher over the variables of the research nor on the data collection environment.
- The case study as qualitative research deals with multiple socially constructed realities or qualities that are indivisible into discrete variables.

Through this method the researcher can access and assess the multiple perspectives of the participants. This research as a social study cannot be limited and encompassed by using a strictly singular research method. Therefore, some appropriate research techniques from a few alternative research methods have been designed for the quality of the research.

3.1.2 Historical research method

During the past period in the Kurdistan region many factors in a complex environment have interacted to create the current intricate situation. The researcher argues here that the participation process in terms of what factors will influence this process, why and how, and rules

out any attempt to use a preferable case study. Yin (2009:9) has suggested in contrast, how and why questions are more explanatory and likely to lead to the use of case studies, and histories as preferred research methods.

Further the importance of the usage of this method in the study lies in being related to the past, whereas it links the social and economical phenomenon to the reality of the society in the past. It will require a return to history to acquire information and historical facts, where it refers to accumulative humanitarian experiences through a successive period in the past, which give credible evidence. The researcher has the privilege and potential to benefit from these experiences for the sake of knowledge in the specialized field. Such an advantage can be employed in the study which is significant for the development of Kurdish women's participation in the field of development planning and the conversion phenomenon faced in Kurdish history until now, and this supports the use of the historical method.

3.2 Case study area selection

3.2.1 Barzan sub-district: description and motivation

The Barzan sub-district, which is located in the Erbil province and bordered by Turkey in the north and Dohuk Province to the west, is somewhat more disadvantaged by its socio-demographic history (internally and externally displaced people) and it is one of the targeted sub-districts for the genocide of 1983 and 1988. The history of the sub-district goes back to pre-Islamic times. There are many historical ruins which have the potential for tourism development if they are combined with other local potentials to attract tourists.

In 1991, after the Kurdish uprising and Iraqi army withdrawal from the Kurdish region, most of the internally displaced households, as well as the refugees from Iran went back and started to reconstruct their own villages. The first to go back and start reconstructing their own houses in Barzan area, were women, and mostly female-headed households. Poverty in the region increased as a result of an economic embargo. The observable facts show that the oil-for-food programme in 1986 had long-term negative effects on the livelihood sources of people in the investigated sub-district. As part of the programme, food has been imported and distributed free until now. As the imported food competed with domestic production, rural people could not be a source of food as there was no demand for it. Consequently they shifted their role from producers to consumer.

The Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP), the dominating political party in the region, has tried to integrate the tribal groups into its political system. The latter is still powerful in the area with a continuous strong role of tribal system in local culture and behaviour. The leaders of the *Barzani* tribe particularly those who, occupy high positions and exert influential power within the KDP and the government, are still very strong in the area. Earlier on, there had been some Christian and Jewish minorities. The Jews moved to Israel after the establishment of the state of Israel and the Christians still live on an equal basis and peacefully in the Barzan area in the village of Bedial. There are many historical ruins from both Christian and Jewish time and the community has a strong historical and cultural identity and with a history that goes back 4000 years. The graves and ruins of ancient Kurds, who believed in *Zarathushtra*, are still found in the area, e.g. the Zremok and Shinadar Caves. It is one of the oldest settlements in the Kurdish region, perhaps even in the world.

3.2.2 Why the Barzan sub-district was selected

The area that was considered for the focus of this research is the Barzan sub-district. The justification for selecting Barzan is based mainly on the following factors:

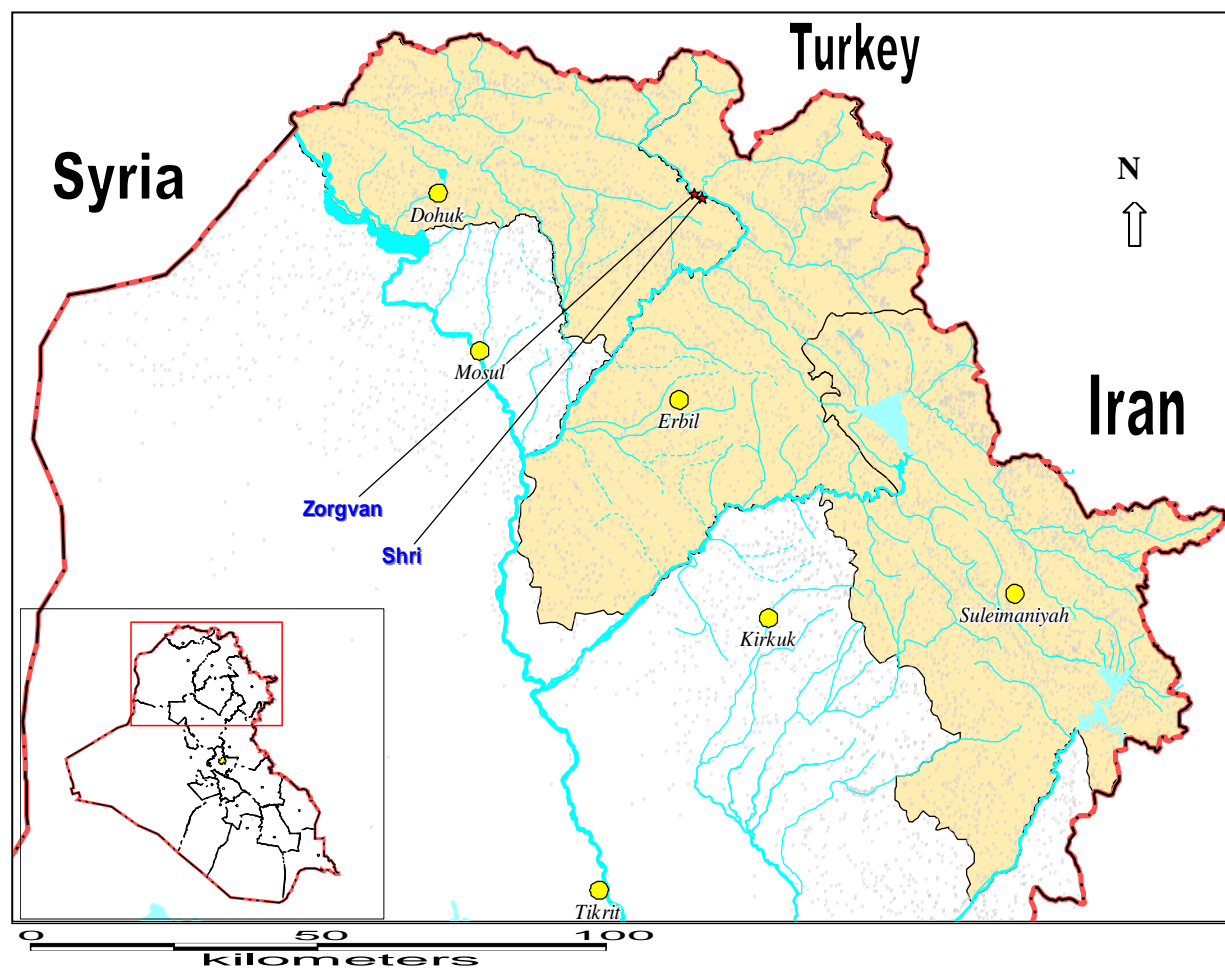
- One factor that has influenced the choice of Barzan sub-district for a case study is the researcher's level of familiarity, experiences and continuous contact with the sub-district;
- Traditional environment protection, the area had adopted a good local traditional system for environment protection worthy of emulation;
- Barzan is one of the famous and historical sub-districts in Kurdistan which has been destroyed more than 17 times, the last being under the genocide campaign (*Anfal*) in 1988 (Talabani, 2005:7);
- High number of female-headed households as a result of the genocide campaign. There are many villages in which female-headed households number more than 50% of the total households. These include Babana, Reesha, Bazei, Havendka and Shri.

3.2.3 Comparative case study

The differences between the villages made it sense to conduct a comparative case study in order to provide a broader insight into the development problems of Barzan as the research area.

In the light of this, **Shri** village was chosen in the Barzan area, where the majority of the population is dominated by female-headed households and **Zorgvan** village as it is also dominated by male-headed households. The location of these villages is indicated in figure 3.3. From the field level, the researcher analysed the socio-economic differences between women's and men's communities as well as at the intermediate level, which focused on institutions and services. The macro level included the analysis of policy and plans. In addition to analysing the three levels separately, it is important to assess the linkage between them to ensure that women's and men's needs and priorities in the community are considered by policy-makers.

Figure 3.3: Map showing location of both study villages (Shri and Zоргvan)



Source: Ministry of Planning, Kurdistan Regional Government, 2008.

3.2.3. I Shri village

The village is located in the flat terrain of Barzan, about 10 kilometres from the sub-district centre. Like Zоргvan the history of the community goes back to pre-Islam times.

There are many reasons why people in the Shri village, differ from those in the Zоргvan village. The people of Shri belong to the Khorshede castes that were not refugees in Russia and Iran during the Kurdish liberation movements of 1946-1958s and 1975-1991. As a result, the people in Shri were not subjected to significant changes in culture and social structure during the last decades and have until now remained a society with the strong tribal system of the Barzani-Khorshede caste. These people belong to the same ethnic, linguistic and religious caste and this could increase their sense of collective action on a community level as part of cognitive social capital.

3.2.3. II Zorgvan village

The village is located on the cliff edge of the Rezan River in Barzan flat terrain located about 3 kilometres from the sub-district centre. The community's history goes back to pre-Islamic times. After the collapse of the Iraqi dictatorship in 2003. Most of the community were employed within the public sector. Like other villages in the Barzan area, the internal displacement conducted by the former Iraqi army caused enormous damages in Zorgvan. The village has much potential for a diverse economic development. The community is located at the foot of the Perris Mountain and very close to the natural springs. Most of its agricultural land is irrigated and fertile which gives the area a very good potential for crops, vegetable and fruit production. A comparative analysis of selected communities is demonstrated in Table 3.1 to highlight and summarize the similarities and differences among them.

Table 3.1: Comparative analysis of community facts

Variables	Selected communities in Shri village	Selected communities in Zorgvan village
Socio demography	Dominated fhh	Dominated mhh
Distance to the sub-district centre	10	3
Access to mass-media/TV	No	Yes
Health care centre availability	No	Yes
Availability of Mosque	No	Yes
Families return from seeking refuge in Iran	No	Yes
Society (type)	Traditional	Less traditional
Land owner	Shaikh	Mosque
Religion	Khorishede caste /Muslim	Muslim
Income level	Low	Medium
Dominant institution	Traditional -Shaikh	Political party/KDP

Source: own field work, 2007

3.3 Data collection

Data was collected for the research from primary and secondary sources. Primary data sources include the use of questionnaires and interviews, semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, power matrix, seminars, multi-stakeholders' workshop, participant observations and relevant documents from local institutions including the local government and civil societies. In other words, data collection is from multiple sources so that the weakness of one method could be compensated by the strengths of another and data could be triangulated accordingly.

Data collection was on the basis of variables, units and levels of analysis see Table 3.2. Information in the research area is controlled by local traditional authorities and simply not accessible to the public. Indeed, there are many arguments for "triangulation". It helps check the data obtained from different sources that required debate, flexibility and social interaction between various interests and actors at different local levels of decision-making in the research area.

The researcher attempted to benefit from the various methods and techniques in data collection in an organized and unified manner. On the micro-level of observation, the major focus of data collection and analysis was on female-headed households, male-headed households, men and women, groups and community, district and sub-district levels of decision-making, in two locations, namely *Shri* village dominated by female headed-households and *Zorgvan* dominated by male-headed households. Data was also collected from the intermediate or meso level (provincial level) and macro level (regional level) data including polices and plans at Kurdistan region and local levels were also collected. In addition to analysing the three levels separately, it was important to assess the linkages between them to ensure that gender needs and priorities are considered by policy-makers.

Table 3.2: Applied data collection methods and triangulation

Level of participation	Level of decision-making	Issue to consider	Applied data collection method	No.
<i>Macro</i>	Regional	% of women representatives : -Members of Parliament. -Senior Government Ministers. -Managerial and Admin. Position. -Civil society and NGOs. -Political parties.	- Semi structured interviews. -Secondary data: Content analysis.	27
<i>Meso</i>	Provincial	% of women representatives : -Members of Provincial Council. - Higher position. - Civil society and NGOs. -Political parties.	- Semi structured interviews -Secondary data : Content analysis.	18
<i>Micro</i>	District &Sub-district	% of women representative : -Members of Municipality Council. - Managerial and Admin. Position. -Civil society and NGOs. -Political Parties.	- Semi –structured Interviews, power matrix. -Secondary data: Content analysis	25
	Community	-General information about the two selected communities and practical and strategic gender needs, and the role of community groups in needs provision. -The rate of community participation in planning, implementation and evaluation process of the development projects indigenous knowledge, experience with participation.	- Semi-structured interview. -Focus group discussions with male and female groups in separate sessions.	5 10
	Group	-Overcome the negative and promote the positive factors in order to promote participation in decision-making.	-Semi-structured interview with the leaders, members and non-members of community organization.	6
	Household	-Voting. -Participation in Planning, implementation and evaluation. -Members of Civil society &NGOs. -Members of Political Parties.	-Questionnaire. - Key informant interview -Observation	60 6

Source: Author's construct, 2008

3.3.1 Tools for data collection

3.3.1.1 Questionnaire and interviews

Questionnaires were given to all individuals at the household level in two villages; Shri and Zorgvan according to a government list of food distribution, only 60 questionnaires were analysed, after passing through a filtration and sampling see Table 3.3. Quota sampling was employed, in order to produce a sample that reflected people in the two villages in terms of the relative proportions of households in different categories, such as male, female, age groups, socio-economic groups, and in combination of these categories. Though the researcher was under time moving constraints between interviews, this technique was practical as it was easier to manage because calling back was not necessary. Bryman (2008) argues that as with convenience sampling, “it is useful for conducting development work on new measures or on research instruments. It can also be usefully employed in relation to exploratory work from which new theoretical ideas might generate” (Bryman, 2008:187).

Interviews for this study were conducted among female-headed households, male-headed households and women of different age groups, socio-economic groups of respondents (namely: as three categories: young; under 40 years; middle-aged; under 65 years and over 65 years old, employed and unemployed). Prior to the empirical work, there was a pre-test with a number of respondents; the researcher made efforts in order to select the literate respondents of both women and men during the field work. Data collection basically involved travelling many times to the areas studied first and staying overnight, to familiarize with respondents for easy interaction as well as personal contact with them. Secondly, group discussions were organized by the researcher to facilitate an understanding of the entire study process. Questionnaires were used to collect data, see Appendix 1 in pages 195, with the help of community opinion leaders, because most of the respondents could not read or write. The community opinion leaders were partners and facilitators based on their experience of working with communities, for example a head of an agricultural agency in the area, and the traditional leader, because he was of a Shaikh family. With the support of one female teacher from Zorgvan School, interviews and completing questionnaires were carried out by respondents from female-headed households, male-headed households, and of the women. The researcher combined two methods in one survey, an additional questionnaire within a face-to-face interview that ensures better data (de Leeuw et al, 2008:315).

“Considering rural communities as a fairly homogeneous group of people is beyond reality as there are differences of gender and age. Also, they are different in terms of wealth, ethnic background, caste and race. Each of these also has different experiences, perspectives, interests and needs” (FAO, 2001:17).

The answer to the question ‘who does the researcher interview or listen to?’ is rarely straightforward. But what is clear is that it is important to hear a variety of opinions. With the multi-mode or mixed-mode, the researcher always listened to female-headed householders, as women and wives and men, including the poorest and the most marginalised. All the different ethnic groups, age groups, castes, races, etc., in a community were considered.

Table 3.3: Respondents of the questionnaires in field work

Village	fhh	mhh	wives of mhh	Total
Shri	15	10	5	30
Zorgvan	10	15	5	30
Total	25	25	10	60

3.3.1.2 Semi-structured interviews

A semi-structured interview was one of the significant methods used in the research. It was based on key issues, related research questions identified, information about the relative role of the agencies in planning, the opportunities for women's participation and the constraints of coordination, horizontally and vertically among different sectors, private, public, and civil society. A total of eighty one semi-structured interviews were conducted, ranging from key informants at community level in Shri and Zorgvan villages, to the regional level key informants: Kurdistan regional government and Parliament. Respondents were selected according to character of research issues and the particular topic under investigation. A selection of the respondents interviewed is given in Table 3.4. Efforts were made to create an informal environment so that the key informants were not only at ease but comfortable while the discussion process was underway, even through some key informants were questioned frequently to validate some subjects.

Table 3.4: Respondents of the semi-structured interviews

Respondent	No. Men	No. Women	No. Interviews
Regional			
Member of Parliament Senior.	0	3	3
Government Ministers, Planning, women affairs, Anfal.	2	2	4
Managerial and Admin. Position.	5	4	9
Civil society & NGOs.	1	5	6
Political parties.	3	2	5
Provincial			
Deputy province.	1	0	1
Members of Provincial Council.	2	2	4
Key government officers.	4	0	4
Civil society & NGOs, Women union.	5	4	9
Sub-district			
Members of Municipality Council.	2	0	2
Key government officers, head of line agencies, agricultural, education, health, bank, and municipality.	6	0	6
Civil society & NGOs, women union, student union, Youth union, Dazgy Harman.	5	4	9
Political Parties, members of Kurdistan Democratic Party.	5	0	5
Traditional authority, Shaikh and Malla	3	0	3
Community and Group			
Members and non-members of community organization	2	3	5
Members and non-members of group organization	3	3	6
Total	49	32	81

Source: Semi-structured interview, 2007-2010

3.3.1.3 Focus group discussions

In focus group discussions with community key informants, general information on the community was gathered to examine men and women's access to and control of resources and benefits. This tool indicated who has access to and control over their use (economic, social, environment, local group, and factors and trends). Focus group discussions involved female-headed households, male-headed households and, men and women, in four separate sessions to ensure triangulation. Efforts were made in order to select the most marginalized households from both villages and traditional social groups in the community based on quota sampling. A total of ten focus group discussions were conducted in two different villages of the sub-district (see Table 3.5). A set of simple questions relevant to the research questions was prepared stimulate the focus group discussion process see Appendix 3 in pages 200. The groups were composed of three to seven participants representing different socio-economic backgrounds. In other words, the participants of the focus groups were selected in a way that made the group heterogeneous so as to capture various ideas and points of view. While each group has its own story to tell, each is important in helping the researcher understand the development situation, but in the Shri village no fhh or women participated, as they are not allowed to do so by custom and tradition. To address this challenge, the researcher had to organise informal discussions with some of the women in the community so as to be able to obtain their views.

Table 3.5: Focus-group discussion

Issues to consider	No. of questions	Shri community	Zorgvan community
1.Village resource map	9	Members both fhh and mhh	
2 .Economic profile	9	Separate focus group mhh	Mixed focus group fhh&mhh
3.Social profile	7	One focus group key information mhh & teachers An informal meeting with fhh	One focus group key information mhh ,fhh & teachers
4.Enviromental profile	10	Separate focus groups of older mhh An Informal meeting with fhh	Separate focus groups of older mhh &fhh
5.Local group profile	10	Mixed socio-economic groups mhh An Informal meeting with fhh	Mixed socio-economic groups fhh&mhh
6.Factors &Trends profile	6	Mixed socio-economic groups mhh An Informal meeting with fhh	Mixed socio-economic groups fhh&mhh
Total	51	10 (and 4 informal meetings with fhh in Zorgvan)	

Source: Focus group discussion, 2007

3.3.1.4 Power distribution

A power distribution matrix was developed to determine the grade of power in various functions or responsibilities (policy making, planning, implementation, financing and budgeting, and monitoring and evaluation) related to sub-district government. The power distribution matrix includes the decision-making power of key stakeholders that have authority or are involved in the planning process. Women's equal participation in the decision-making process, in policy making, planning, and administration is an essential aspects that means a balance between men and women, so neither side dominates (March et al, 2005: 94). The matrix is shown in Appendix 2 on page 199 and results see Table 6.13 on page 157. The following steps were applied in assessing the status of power distribution.

1. All stakeholders and government elements of the sub-district level were selected according to the reality of the current situation of Barzan sub-district.
2. Relevant sub-elements were determined and differentiated prior to grouping them under a variety of elements.
3. All government and NGOs stakeholders, who have key roles in sub-district planning and government actions, were selected based on document review, observation, and, the researcher's familiarity with planning processes, and were also reconfirmed through interviews. As well as according the first seminar on April 2007.
4. The power matrix was finalized based on discussions with key officials working at line agencies: the kind of role performed by each stakeholder in terms of decision-making, sharing of information, consultation, indirect influence, guiding and instructing were specifically scrutinised.
5. The real decision-making powers of the sub-district status of participation of stakeholders were analysed according to the government elements of concern and other key stakeholder's roles.
6. The traditional authorities were taken in consideration (Mousa, 2006:129 and Adhikari, 2006:179)

3.3.1.5 Seminar

The *first* seminar at the Barzan sub-district was conducted on 28th April 2007, which most heads of line agencies (Agriculture, Health, Education, Communication, Water and sanitation), NGOs, representatives of political party, and local people participated in, in order to explore the relationship between the research topic and the current rural problems.

Many valid reactions and constructive comments from participants captured or reflected a picture of the current development problems in the research area. Indeed, the inputs from the participants facilitated the selection of two different villages (Shri and Zorgvan) as representative sites for further investigation in the next period of the empirical work.

The *second* seminar at the Women Union of Kurdistan in Erbil was conducted on 18th January 2010, for representatives of most women NGOs, female parliament members, and female Province members. The main aim was to explain the critical challenges of participation of women and to compare with previous studies as well as obtain the views of participants about the conclusions.

3.3.1.6 Multi-stakeholder future workshop

The last stage of the empirical work was a participatory and interdisciplinary future workshop, including focus group discussions to review the data collected and initiate the participation context analysis (opportunities and constraints) and needs (practical and strategic), priorities and perspectives in consultation with the people involved in the data collection process. The workshop was divided into three phases: critique phase (key community problems and needs), fantasy phase (proposed solutions) and implementation phase (most rationally proposed solution). The consistent development of topics between different phases was ensured (Apel, 2004:6). The future workshop helped to structure brain-storming techniques to fine-tune the knowledge and experience of the participants.

3.3.1.7 Participant observation

Participant observation was used as another technique in this study, on one hand to verify primary data and on the other to corroborate other data gathered by the other methods.

In the view of Stanfield II and Dennis (1993) “*Participant observation seek a ‘holistic’ and ‘dynamic’ approach to community studies and emphasize the importance of analysing social change; one can understand social change only if one has data in the past with which present data may be compared*” (Stanfield II and Dennis, 1993:61).

The researcher started with a brief history of his personal ‘discovery’ of the practice concerning women’s roles in a community during the sixties of the last century when he was living in a village, and compared with present.

Participant observation allows the researcher to get to the heart of the community to see, hear, and feel. In the study area, particularly female-headed households had the opportunity to tell the stories and histories of Kurdish conflicts. Male-headed households, too, have a story to tell. Some of the rich and productive data in gender relation in the study area have been captured via the method of participation observation (ibid: 73). In addition to the researcher’s former familiarity with the study area, focused walking around the area, looking at different neighbourhoods, land uses, on-going projects and process of development as well as traditional norms of environmental protection, helped to detect obvious conflicts and problems in the area.

3.3.2 Secondary source

The significance of archival material and its effectiveness in the building of narratives of past events and facts, prompted the researcher to investigate women’s participation in decision-making. The researcher attempted to use archival records to restructure the procedure of human development, institutions, political culture, and socio-economic integrated with other sources of information (Stanfield II and Dennis, 1993:275).

The major purpose of archival documents about women's participation in decision-making at the local level (micro) as well as intermediate (meso) and regional (macro) was its usefulness in developing an understanding of the group studied and gender relations fields, which tends to be both historical and theoretical (ibid,283). Archival materials included:

- i. Statistics and reports from government department and ministries.
- ii. Programme and project documents from agencies and NGOs.
- iii. Studies and surveys from universities and research institutions, and
- iv. Documentation from service organizations in the area.

3.3.3 Interpretation and analysis of data

3.3.3.1 Gender Analysis Framework

Gender analysis is used to explore and highlight the relation of women and men in society, and the inequalities in those relationships, by using combined gender analysis frameworks as a mixture of frameworks, designed by Moser 1998 in (March et al, 2005:55, Harvard 1985 in (ibid:32), Longwe 1995 (ibid:99), and FAO (2001). The combined gender analysis framework includes adaptation of a mixture of various elements and tools for gender analysis: Gender roles (Table 5.8 on page 131), the access to and control of resources (Table 6.14 on page 160) influencing factors (Table 6.15 on page 163), gender needs assessment (Table 6.16 on page 165), distinguishing between different aims in interventions, the policy making, and gender participation in planning process (Table 6.13 on page 157).

Such an analysis investigates and brings to light the correlations of women and men in society, and the injustice in those relations, by asking: Who does what? Who has what? Who decides? Who gains? Who loses? How? Gender analysis looks at how power and resource relations within the household (fhh and mhh) interrelate with the different levels, macro, meso, and micro (March et al, 2005:18). Power and decision-making; *what is?* Participation context analysis; *what is?* Needs, priorities and perspectives; *what should be?* The analytical model of participation on local level is shown in Table 3.6 on page 90.

3.3.3.2 Quantitative tools

Women's participation in decision-making at all levels in development is based on gender analysis. The data obtained from the field was mainly qualitative in nature. Despite this a number of quantitative tools including computed percentages (%), ranks, ratios and averages were used to determine women's participation at different levels compared with that of men.

In addition the study used the gender gap as an indicator, even through qualitative, to explain the trends of participation which shape women's and men's lives at different levels in institutions in the Kurdistan Region (Regional, Province, and Sub-district).

3.3.4 Indicators for measuring women's participation

The identification of indicators of women's state of participation was informed by four issues which:

- focused on the position women in formal leadership positions, rather than other aspects of socio-economic status and informal leadership positions;
- provided a comparison between the position of women and men;
- are similar to each other, in terms of units and scale;
- were easily understandable (i.e. not complex or too mathematical).

For these reasons, this study selects gender gap as the basis of all types of indicator. Here the term gender gap is defined as the difference in the percentage of women, by comparison with the percentage of men, in any given category.

Gender Gap (g) = Percent males-Percent females

For example, if a parliament has 20% women, and 80% men, the gender gap is the difference of 60%. Since the unit of measurement for all indicators is percentage, then data on one indicator is directly comparable with data on another, and figures from different indicators can readily be computed to form a composite index⁴.

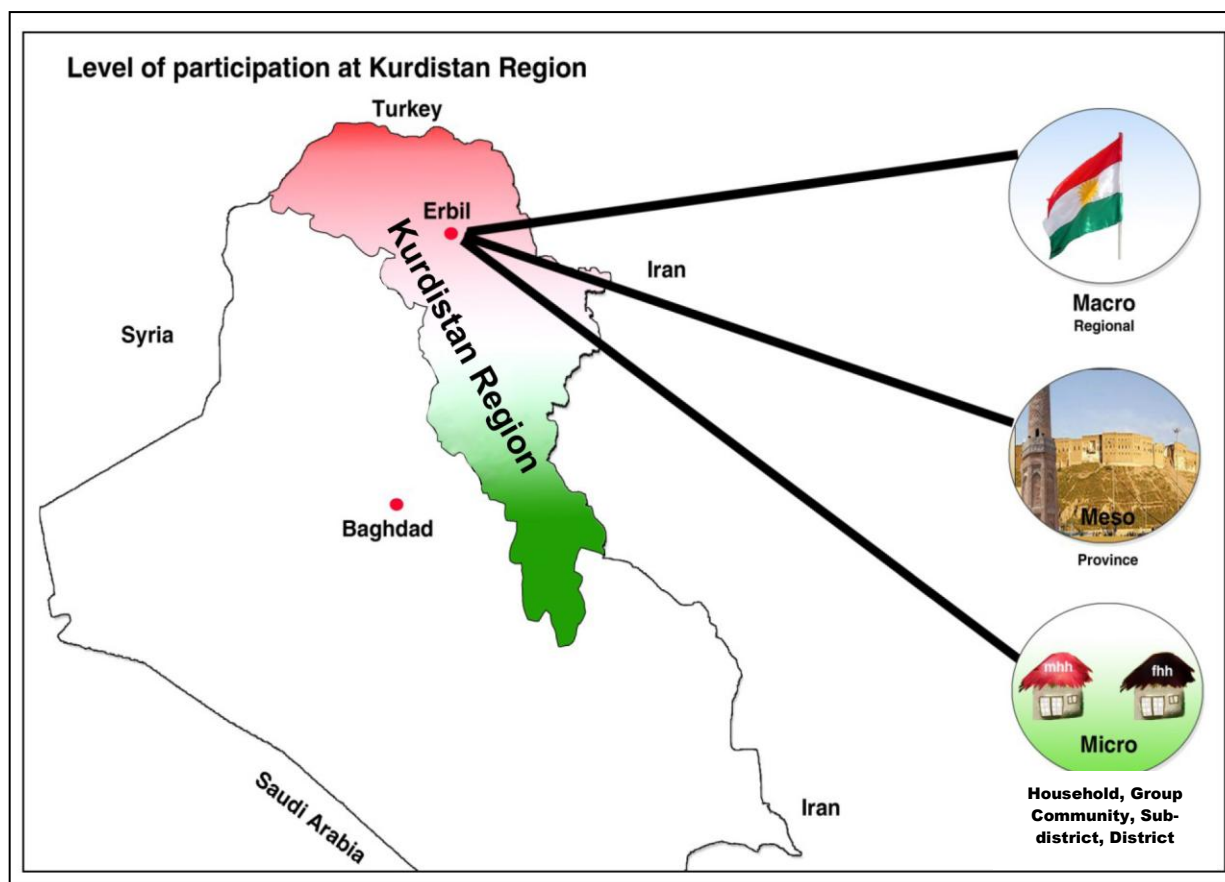
⁴ Adapted from (Longwe and Clark, 1999:6)

Table 3.6: Analytical model of participation

Category of inquiry	Issues to consider	Tools
<p>1. Power and decision-making: <i>What is?</i></p> <p>1.1. What decisions do women make at the local community?</p> <p>1.2. Which decisions do women usually influence?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Local government body -Municipality council -Village council -Political party. -Civil society and NGOs. -District planning and implementation -Voting. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Interview -Questionnaire. -Observation.
<p>2. Participation context analysis: <i>What is?</i></p> <p>2.1. What is the supports for participation?</p> <p>2.2. Which constraints do they have?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Overcome the negative -Promote the positive 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Semi-structured interview. -Future workshop.
<p>3. Needs, priorities and perspectives: <i>What should be?</i></p> <p>3.1. What are women's and men's needs and priorities?</p> <p>3.2. What perspectives do they have on appropriate and sustainable ways of addressing their needs?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -‘Practical ’ gender needs. -‘Strategic’ gender needs. Perspectives Perspectives on delivery systems- choice of technology location cost of services, systems of operation management and maintenance. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Need assignment. -Semi-structured interview. -Future workshop.

Source: Author's adapted from Harvard in March et al (2005:39-41) and Moser (1988:36)

Figure 3.4: Level of participation at Kurdistan Region



Source: Author's construct, 2010

3.4 Test of scientific analysis

3.4.1 Optimizing internal validity

Throughout the different stages of conducting this study, one of the main challenges was ensuring internal validity. Different sorts of data and methods were applied to describe and analyze the context of the study area. Caution was required to ensure the authenticity of data used and therefore two integrated strategies were applied in order to minimize any shortcomings.

The *first strategy* is data source triangulation, in this case data on the same issue were gathered from more than one source. Mikkelsen (2005) argues triangulation is an approach to acquire reliable data by cross-checking obtained information through the application of different interview techniques, using different sources of information and different perspectives (Mikkelsen, 2005:96). Furthermore, (Golafshani, 2003:603) explains that “*triangulation is typically a strategy (test) for improving the validity and reliability of research or evaluation of findings*”.

Data triangulation involves the use of different sources of data-information. A key strategy is to categorize each group or type of stakeholder for the programme that you are evaluating (Guion, 2002:1).

The objective of the study is evaluating women's participation. The researcher identified the stakeholder groups such as female-headed households, male-headed households, women, and men, and conducted in-depth interviews, questionnaires, workshops, seminars, focus group

discussion, and active observation to gain insights on what the female-headed households, male-headed households, women and men perceive as outcomes of the participation. The *second strategy* was to get feedback from key informants to assess whether interpretations made by the researcher, or conclusions drawn, accurately reflect the perspectives of the informants. This integrated strategy was important, especially when discussing issues which always are more owned by local traditional authorities in the research area, not simply accessible to the public and not documented or published. Finally, the researcher's familiarity and experiences with local knowledge of the study area helped to screen and exclude dubious or false data.

3.4.2 Ensuring external validity

The purpose of external validity, according to Yin (2009), is the domain to which a study's findings can be generalized (Yin, 2009:40). The question of external validity here is about finding out if the subject of participation of women at local level in decision-making, which is studied in Barzan sub-district, the process and factors involved, and the conclusions made, can be extended beyond the sub-district. To ensure that the conclusions of the study can adequately be generalise in a wider context, the Barzan sub-district was not considered as an isolated entity but was rather, looked at as part of a continuum of spatial occurrence and participation process in Kurdistan.

To a huge extent, the Kurdistan sub-district's analogous context and share of similar situations, factors, and challenges, influence their participation and go beyond the development process. Therefore, the analytical approach and the conclusions drawn from the case study can be generalized and transferred to other sub-districts and categories with comparable contexts in the Kurdistan region. In addition, the research findings have been compared and contrasted with existing literature and the theoretical bases of the critical issues raised were re examined taking into consideration the conclusions of the study.

3.4.3 Achieving reliability of the case study

Regarding reliability, Yin (2009) stated that the goal of reliability is to minimize the errors and biases in a study. A good guideline for doing case studies is therefore to conduct the research so that an author could in principle repeat the procedures and arrive at the same results (Yin, 2009:45). In order to ensure reliability of the research case study findings, the research design and various methodological processes involved in the study, including combining many methods of data collection that balance and complement each other, were used. Concerning the information basis, the researcher stayed one week among the community before starting the research process, in order to build trust among different groups of people. Active personal observation and efforts were made to ensure an atmosphere where communication was comfortable and guaranteed that the information obtained would be used only for research. The next chapter of the report discusses the case study area and its basic characteristics.

3.5 Limitations

Due to the limited time, resources, and communication difficulties, only two villages out of 33 were studied in detail. The researcher had many challenges and difficulties in conducting field work, especially in the villages, as respondents in the village of *Shri* were mainly females. A set of socio-cultural challenges affected the data gathering. The unwillingness of some interviewees to be open and critical in their views was that they were not sure where the information would end up. The researcher therefore assured respondents that the information would be used for research purposes only. The women included in this study refused to be interviewed formally, but were willing to talk with the researcher for hours. Many women and men asked that the tape recorder be turned off at various times in our conversations. With the tape recorder off, they spoke freely about information they thought would remain confidential, although it was important, yet sensitive, information about gender relationships in the community. Information and ideas came through many days and hours of informal discussion with these women and men. The people in this study area were survey to the potentially exploitive character of giving information. Many told stories about past NGOs who had come to collect data but who had not, in their view, done a very good job. In addition a previous conflict situation in Kurdistan still reflects negatively and effective information exchange is needed to build social and individual trust. It was not easy for the researcher as an outsider of the Barzan tribe, particularly male, to study the gender topics of dominant traditional customary laws, especially those within the family.

Stanfield II and Dennis (1993:50) argue that “qualitative researchers have typically noted the importance of rapport in establishing good research relations”. Qualitative research with sustaining quantitative tools could lead to understanding of complex social phenomenon if the norms of scientific inquiry are effectively applied in consideration of traditional norms (Yeboah, 2003:106).

The above chapter discussed the various methods that were applied in gathering and analysing data to address the issues pertinent to this study. The next chapter captures the participation of women in the Kurdistan region.

4. Women's participation in Kurdistan: capturing contextual knowledge

This chapter reviews participation efforts of women in decision-making in the Kurdistan region. It presents a historical overview of women in the region under the various political regimes of Iraq. It brings to the fore the factors, both external and internal that drive the participation of women in decision-making in the Kurdistan region. It further discusses the representation and participation of women in various institutions in the region, both in governmental and civil society. Factors such as administrative structure, socio-economic, political culture, and post-conflict experiences constitute the main components of this discussion for the region. The concept of democratic decentralisation as an appropriate atmosphere for women's participation in decision-making does not have a long history in the region. While decentralisation and democracy has topped the agenda of Kurdistan's post conflict era, it has however, been lacking in substance. Why did this happen? The answer is complicated. The reasons include historical, political culture, administrative and socio-economic factors.

4.1 The participation efforts of women in the Kurdistan region: a historical overview

Women's participation is a vital issue in any developing society and in the life of modern societies. Women's freedom in a society's development depends on the means used, as more of their social, political and economic rights, would make societies progress towards freedom and development. Therefore, women's participation in decision-making at every level remains vital to development. The people of the Kurdistan region, especially women, have suffered a great deal during various previous regimes in the country. For instance, from British colonial rule to the monarchy continue under the dictatorship of republican governments finally headed by Saddam Hussein. Discussions on the historical participation of women in decision-making in the public sphere in the region are therefore based on these eras.

Kurdish women's participation: 1900-1958

In discussing women's participation in decision-making in the region, it is necessary to go back to Kurdish history. 'Westerners', who have been visited Kurdistan since the seventeenth century, claimed that Kurdish women enjoy more freedom than their Turkish, Arab or Persian sisters do. This claim is based on the observation that they do not usually put on the veil, they associate freely with men, and some of them have ruled tribes and territories (Mojab, 2001:46). The Kurdish community and society, as Minoriski (1968:74) argues, has a greater tolerance towards women compared to all other Islamic societies. He again mentions that religion and other historical factors play a vital role in the involvement of women in decision-making in the region. Tolerance here means freedom of expression and giving women their rights, therefore, Kurds give women more freedom and accept their participation in decision-making at various levels compared to other Islamic people in Islamic communities, who show less tolerance towards women.

Some Orientals believe that there are women in Kurdish leadership in some areas, including political and tribal leadership in some villages. Authors like Rich (2008:63) and Toma (1975: 41), believe that there are many reasons for allowing a woman to lead a tribe or

community because of the many wars that the Kurdish people have fought to defend their country and the existence of their people.

In spite of the fact that Kurdish women have had such a relative position in the Kurdish community, especially at the beginning of the twentieth century, and were able to defend the rights of the Kurdish people, they have faced many problems, mainly political, in the Iraqi Kingdom. These problems included the denial of women's rights and the promotion of feudalism in Kurdistan and a patriarchal domination that did not recognize any rights for women, increasing illiteracy among women and denial to carry out studies in the Kurdish language (Bassir, 1970:2)

Kurdish women have participated in the uprising and national demonstrations especially in central cities. They also protested against the Kingdom on May 15, 1953 on the death of Mrs. Hafsa Khan in Suleimaniyah. They again demonstrated on 9th November 1956 when Shaikh Mahmood Al-Hafed⁵ died, where they met resistance from the king's police force. They have also participated in demonstrations alongside Iraqi women at the university of Baghdad, when the state was asked to support Palestine and join the Arab armies after the splitting resolution in 1947 (Jassem, 1986:182).

In contrast to their political struggle and position in society, Kurdish women in the middle of the twentieth century, have had a marginal role in society and the family. Men fail to respect, appreciate and accord them equal rights and duties. They also had no rights to participate in decisions of the family and were prevented from completing their education and working outside the home (Hassan, 1989:32).

The social backwardness faced by women at that stage reflected their position and roles in Kurdish society. Illiteracy and patriarchal domination affected their ambition to assume leadership positions. Also the development of political and legal institutions that acted against women's rights, as well as the political instability facing Iraq and Kurdistan, influenced their positions and roles.

In the history of modern Iraq, political participation is not limited to men only, but also includes the participation of women in many aspects. This is supported in many cases, where both women and men have participated in the struggles and revolutions of the Kurdish people against occupation. Kurdish women have participated effectively and played a major political role especially in the Kurdish movement and the struggle for the Kurdish people to gain self-determination since the founding of the Democratic Party of Iraqi Kurdistan in 1946.

This party founded the Kurdistan Women's Union on the 11th of December, 1952 (Shareef, 1989:4-17) to address women's issues. At the fourth meeting, held from 4th to the 7th of October 1959 in Baghdad, the Democratic Party elected for the first time Ms. Zekia Ismail as a member of its Supreme Commission for inspection and supervision of the Party (Karim, 1998:61). In addition, Ms. Nahida Shaikh Salim was elected a member of the Central Committee at a conference held in May 1960 in Baghdad. These developments brought women into high political positions and leadership in the region. These were important events that demonstrated the need to include women in political organisations in the region and presented the opportunity of improving women's influence on policy and decision-making at the political party level.

⁵ *A Kurdish political leader who struggled against British colonial rule and established the Kurdish government in Suleimaniyah during British colonial rule.*

As a starting point for the Women's Union to attain their political goals, more attention was paid to political participation such as meetings, demonstrations, marches, and the creation of awareness among women to understand their social, cultural and political rights aimed at the establishment of an effective women's movement in Kurdistan. The role of the Women's Union, in terms of social and cultural advancement, was to conduct courses in literacy awareness campaigns among the rural families to enable them to know how to care for and educate their children (WUK, 1970:7-8).

Kurdish women participation: 1958-1991(Republican period)

Before the July 1958 revolution and the regime change in Iraq from a monarchy to a republic, the authority of the elders of the tribes and feudalism controlled Kurdistan and these supported the Ottoman rule and foreign occupation. The Revolution opened up new prospects for Iraqi women to participate in politics and the decision-making process especially in city centres. Therefore, the revolution, together with deepening social and political relationships between women and men gave a new opportunity of freedom for women as well. These changes led to the active role of women to improve their positions and to free them from social obligations that have hampered the development process for a long time (Hassan, 1988:24).

On the role of the Kurdish people in the Kurdish revolution, it is important to note that the Iraqi government in Baghdad did not understand the aspirations of the Kurdish people. The reason behind this has never been clearly understood. Kurdish women are an important part of Iraqi society, but their rights had been ignored. The Iraqi government had established the Iraq Federal Women's Union but disregarded the existence of the Kurdish Women's Union. They did not give Kurdish women the right to establish their own organization. As any association including women's organizations must be part of the national organization, which is mostly dominated by men, it meant that there was less opportunity for the aspirations of women.

Kurdish women participated in the revolution of September 1961 in Kurdistan through the Women's Union, which was one of the active elements of the revolution. This was due to the awareness campaigns it carried out to achieve the goals of the revolution in the Kurdistan region of Iraq. The union again became involved in the activities of the *Peshmerga* force (Kurdish Guerrilla Force) for the liberation of Kurdistan. There were also three women among the seventeen members of the conference of teachers organized under difficult circumstances in Kurdistan in 1962. It can thus be seen that Kurdish women were involved in various activities between 11th September 1961 to 11th March 1970 (Bassir, 1970:21).

Though Kurdish women faced difficult times during the struggle, their role in the revolution of the Kurdish people is historic as they were to save the country from extinction. They gave birth to a new generation of children under difficult conditions in caves and also suffered starvation. The women were an example of sacrifice, strength and hope as they worked on secret missions at home and in schools and colleges (WUK, 1970:6).

In period of peace between the Kurdish leadership and the central government in Baghdad at the Convention of 11th March 1970, and in accordance with Article V of the Agreement, Kurdish women's rights to organize themselves and be part of the General Federation of Iraqi Women were recognised. As result of this, the first conference of Kurdish women was held on 25th September 1970. One of the most important priorities for the leaders of the Kurdish women's movement was to help them support and develop all aspects of their lives including education and to free themselves from backwardness, ignorance and disease. During

that period, they were also able to be educated alongside men, and were given the capacity to raise the level of their academic attainments as well as be employed in the public sector.

After the start of the conflict between the Kurdish movement and the central government in Baghdad in 1974, and due to collapses in a negotiated agreement with the Iraqi government, concerning Kurdish autonomy as projected on March 11, 1970, Kurdish women encountered more problems than men because of the circumstances of war. Thousands of them also migrated to neighbouring countries. In addition, many of their villages were destroyed and some women were transported to communal villages in and around the large cities in Kurdistan and southern central Iraq. During this period, the Kurdistan Women's Union became part of the Iraqi Women's Union, which did not reflect the views and perceptions of Kurdish women.

Despite the political instability in the Kurdistan region during the period 1974-1990, women in cities benefited from laws such as the national campaign for compulsory literacy (No. 92) issued by the central government for the year 1978. This forced illiterate women between the ages of 15-54 years to join literacy centres in addition to the Compulsory Education Act (No. 118) for the year 1976 for children up to 6 years. Therefore, an increase in the number of educational institutions and students of both sexes aided women in playing different roles in the family.

Though women's participation in decision-making was very weak compared with that of men, there was an article in Iraq's interim constitution of 1970, (Article 19) that all citizens, men and women, shall have the right to participate in public affairs, including the right to vote and elect (Iraq Constitution, 1970).

In 1980, the Iraqi National Assembly issued Law No. 55 giving Iraqi women the right to vote and elect. The number of seats for Iraqi women in the first election to the National Council of the year 1980 was 16, constituting 6.4% of the total number of members of the parliament of 250 members. This figure rose to 9.2% in 1989 (UN, 1995: 171). In all these elections, no Kurdish woman had the opportunity of being elected to the national parliament.

We can deduce from the above that, in spite of concessions for the development of Iraqi women, in the mid-seventies of the twentieth century, women especially those of Kurdish origin, still suffered a great deal under the dictatorship of the Ba'ath party led by Saddam Hussein. Evidence is also provided that all legislation relating to women was mostly window dressing. These materials and legislation tried to portray a good picture of Iraq in the international community as having adopted the principles of human rights and having made progress in the field of women's rights. In fact, however, the rights of women were being violated which reduced the level of equality between the sexes and led to violence and the continuing systematic repression of Iraqi women (Amnesty International, 2001:14).

The political process of Iraq in the era of Saddam's regime proved that the participation of Kurdish women was considered weak in terms of voting and elections. The ruling party in Iraq had restrictive parliamentary membership on who would be selected to be voted for by the Iraqi voters, whether the candidate was a man or a woman. This person could not be elected if he or she did not belong to the Ba'ath Party, or support it. This meant that there was no democracy, pluralism or freedom of expression in Iraq, according to human rights laws and international conventions.

Precedent experienced by Kurdish women in villages: 'First to wake up and last to go to bed'

The roles and responsibilities of rural women are different to those of women in urban areas. This is evident in Kurdish communities as well. These roles and responsibilities change along with advances in science and technology, economic, social and cultural stages of a community. The researcher, for example, remembers that during the sixties of last century when he lived in a village, livelihoods depended on agriculture and livestock. Agriculture in the Erbil region is rain fed. Wheat and barley are the major agricultural crops in this area.

During the harvest of wheat and barley in summer, there were no harvesting machines. Harvesting was manually done by men. Women gathered what had been harvested by the men. When the men were tired, they rested for a while but women, instead of resting as the men did, proceeded to care for the children taking care of their hygiene and feeding them. If a woman did not have children, she had to prepare tea and food for men.

They all worked in the field during the day. But after returning home women had to prepare dinner, and bring water from the well, as well as clean the cattle. Women had to fetch water and fuel as well as feed the children.

For instance in the researcher's village the water was salty and unfit for drinking and it was the women's duty to fetch water for the family from another area where the water was safe to drink. Sometimes, they would be fetching water until the middle of the night so there would be drinking water for the next morning. In the summer and during harvest seasons, women only got a few hours to sleep. This clearly shows that in the past women were the last in the family to go to bed, and the first to wake up in the morning.

But now life has changed and new technologies have been developed, harvesters are available, water and electricity networks are also in place and the way of life in the villages has also changed. However, despite these developments, the division of labour and duties between men and women is just the same as it has always been. They are "*first to wake up and the last to go to bed.*" So they have limited time for other activities outside the home. One can also say that women are engaged in multiple roles including productive, reproductive, community work, and even defending their society in times of aggression. For instance in 1963 when the Ba'ath party first took over the reign of Iraq and decided to displace many of the inhabitants from certain villages in the region, women fought alongside the men. Despite these multiple roles, women are still subordinate to men and have less say in the decision-making process.

Has the struggle for the liberation of Kurdish society meant women's liberation? What is the priority in Kurdish society?

In providing answers to these questions, one has to return to the history of the Kurdish national movement, as well as the women's movement and the characteristics of the Kurdish people. Kurdish is the fourth nationality in the Middle East after Arabs, Turks and Persians, but without a state, land is divided between several countries, as mentioned by Mukriany (1999:1). It is true that women are oppressed throughout the world, but men and women in the Kurdish community are subjected to oppression and injustice, surrounded by the absence of a state.

Therefore, Kurdish men and women have lived under oppression and racism as part of other states. As a people they have always lived under the threat of genocide, and therefore the birth of various movements, uprisings and revolutions have always been to achieve the right of Kurdish self-determination in the context of a Kurdish nation. The women, alongside men, in revolutions, mainly aimed at achieving self-determination for Kurdish society as their first target.

Their belief was that if the society was not free, did not have the right to self-determination, and had no statehood, then it would be difficult to achieve women's rights and equality between the sexes and among all sectors of society.

For the above reasons '**Hafsakhani Naqeeb**', a famous Kurdish woman and activist in the political movement in Kurdistan, in 1930 gave a memorandum to the British High Commissioner in Iraq, with several other women, as representatives of Kurdish women. The memorandum stated: "*His Excellency, High Commissioner in Iraq, His Excellency, Prime Minister of Iraqi Government, we, as all women in Kurdistan, we demand the rights of Kurdistan legality that was granted by the League of Nations, and we ask for your protection and sympathy*" (Mahrof, 2007:213).

'**Leyla Kasim**', another woman and member of the Kurdish Democratic Party and the Kurdish national movement were executed in 1974 by the Ba'ath regime because of her participation in the struggle for the liberation of Kurdistan. There is also another Kurdish woman who participated in the Kurdish national movement '**Aisha Gloka**', and served as a bridge between the Revolution and the people of the Kurdish Peshmerga in the mountainous areas and the city. She also became one of the victims of the Ba'ath regime. She disappeared during the eighties of the last century, and so far, no one has heard what actually happened to her.

During the uprising in 1991, and because one of her sons as in one of the prisons of the Ba'ath regime, a brave Kurdish woman, '**Khaja Bawa**', was the first to attack the Ba'ath regime in the city of Erbil she participated in the struggle and fought alongside the men. She gave up her life for the liberation of her people as she was killed by the Ba'ath regime during the uprising.

In northern Kurdistan, a Kurdish Member of Parliament, '**Leyla Zana**', was sworn-in using the mother tongue in the Turkish Parliament in 1991 and, as a result, she was sentenced to 15 years in prison by the Turkish National Security Court in 1994. She spent 10 years in prison until she was released in 2004 after considerable pressure from international public opinion. She later received many international awards in this regard (Kader, 2006:247).

Leyla Zana's statement to the state security court in Ankara on December 08, 1992 was "*I object to everything that the court accuses me of. Our ideas are known to all; we fight within the framework of democracy, for human rights and brotherhood among people, we will continue until the end of our life*" (Meiselas, 2008:366).

The Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) in Northern Kurdistan, which fought for self-determination and Kurdish rights in Turkey, also has about 30% women in their forces. This indicates how women of the region are determined to fight for their people and for their rights. The PKK have a saying that "*in the mountains is the word that removes all differences between men and women, and this word is guerrilla warfare*" (Media, 2007:17).

This is realistic and firstly provides a practical guide to the national struggle, and then to the struggle for equality and women's rights. Mojab, 2001 argues, "It seems that the feminist movement in Kurdistan is still lagging behind the nationalist movement. Brutal national oppression has overshadowed gender and class oppression; even more obstructive is the nationalist leader's emphasis on the national struggle; they clearly privilege the national over gender and class struggle; many nationalist parties downplay class and gender domination, and relegate such issues to the future" such as the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) and Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) (Mojab, 2001:87).

After the founding of the Kurdistan Regional Government as a Kurdistan region within the Federal Republic of Iraq, it can be said that to some extent Kurds in Kurdistan have more or less achieved the right to self-determination but there remain unanswered questions: Has national

liberation meant women's liberation? Has the region's self-determination ensured the right of women and their equality with men? What are the roles of Kurdish women in the current dispensation? What is the Kurdish people's priority? What are the factors that help to promote, facilitate, improve or impede the participation of women in decision-making at all levels, especially at the local level in the villages?

The researcher wants to highlight the above and many other questions in this research as a system or an appropriate way for Kurdish women to be partners with men. The variety of roles they play as part of their rights, and their participation in the decision-making process, are very important in order to achieve comprehensive and continued development in Kurdistan.

Conclusion

The above discussions have thrown some light on the historical participation of Kurdish women in political events in the region and also in Iraq. Their political lives and political decisions concerned their survival or death and the reconstruction or destruction of Kurdistan. Women in Kurdish society were subjected to oppression and injustice. Under the previous regime, Kurdish women faced a double repression, stemming from discrimination against the Kurdish people and also their subordination to men. Based on this, there was then the need for them to first struggle to liberate their society and then struggle for equality and women's rights. The discussions highlight that Kurdish women have played multiple roles in society namely as fighters for liberation, mothers, wives, producers, community leaders and custodians of the sustenance of the Kurdish race. Despite this, women's rights were limited because of customs and traditions. For instance, women were deprived of the right to choose their marriage partners.

The following explains the driving forces behind women's participation in the context of the Kurdistan region.

4.2 Driving forces of women's participation in the context of the Kurdistan region

Various factors have played their role as driving forces of participation in decision-making in Kurdistan. Perhaps the most significant factor has been the mounting dissatisfaction with centralized approaches following the failure of central level service delivery in the past.

1. *Internal factors*

The internal factors in a nutshell are three-fold and will be discussed in the following:

1.1 *Kurdistan's social and cultural practices*

Kurdish society, as has been socially organized for a long period, has a strong history backing it. Traditional social institutions in Kurdistan include the Anjuman (village council) which is headed by the Reshspi (village opinion leader) and other associations guided by locality and ethnicity. These institutions are still vibrant and play a role in most ethnic local societies. Kurdish local communities still demonstrate ties with such vehicles of associations. *Harawaza*, is a form of collective work which both women and men collaborate to execute. This form of collective work takes place in the maintenance of most public services in local villages. Examples of these include the cleaning of water spring areas in the villages and the maintenance of irrigation canals and public roads. *Zebara*, on the other hand is a collective action of men and women to assist other people in their personal activities. These are very common in most Kurdistan villages. Some of the common areas where these collective actions involving men and women take place include the harvesting of farm produce, mainly during the harvesting season, house building and reconstruction. A third practice called the *Bang*, is a traditional environment protection process whereby women and men alike participate on an equal basis in gathering wild nuts and vegetable seeds. This is part of the traditional community's survival system in the Barzan area.

All activities that involve the participation of women and men in most Kurdish villages are still evident.

The traditional social norms and rules summarised a long time ago are still observed and continue to integrate the societies and promote the participation of both women and men in the local decision-making process. *"The Kurds are the only people in the Near East who have been able to maintain their traditional dance, the Rashbalak, in spite of all the criticism by the neighbouring people who maintain that the Kurds are immoral because in the Rashbalak, men and women dance together"* (Nebez, 2004:32-33). *"It is also worth mentioning that there are indicators that in early times, maternal law ruled Kurdish society. In Kurdistan today chosen sons and daughters carry their mother's name and not their father's"* (ibid: 34). These long-standing social and institutional practices indirectly help develop an in-built desire for the participation of women and men in decision-making at the local level in Kurdistan.

1.2 Failure of centralized government system

A centralized system of the former dictatorial regime, with a one party system, was behind the genocide and destruction at the local level in Kurdistan. This is incidentally and paradoxically something which has pointed to democratic decentralisation as an alternative strategy for the participation of all stakeholders, including women, for the management of affairs at the local level.

1.3 Democratic desire of Kurdish people and the popular uprising of 1991

The uprising of March 1991 in Iraqi Kurdistan had a great effect on the people of the Kurdish nation in all respects, including political, economic, social and educational fields. It represented an openness of life from all dimensions and was considered as a historic turning point and a call for essential transfer to another type of life. For the Kurdish women, it was of particular importance since they had played an outstanding role in the uprising. It liberated women from oppression, abuse and violations practised by the central government in Baghdad. Therefore, a new atmosphere of freedom of speech came about with their involvement in the political, social and economic development process.

The 19th May, 1992 is considered the main turning point and a permanent day in the history of the Kurdish people and the democratic movement in Iraq. On this day the Kurdish people were finally able to choose at free will, their legal representatives in the first parliament at a free election not seen before in Iraq, and where all Kurdish, Christian, Turcoman and Islamic parties participated in the election.

2. External factors

Four principal factors stemming from beyond the context of Kurdistan contributed immensely to the rise of participation as outlined.

2.1 Positive role of civil society

After 1990, civil society started growing very rapidly in Kurdistan. This trend together with the donor community's positive role towards promoting women's participation in post-conflict reconstruction at local level in a more democratic decentralized atmosphere also played a vital role in the participation of women in partnership with all stakeholders in Kurdistan. Women were taken through various training and capacity building programmes to raise their awareness on women's rights and abilities. These greatly equipped them and enhanced their participation in public activities.

2.2 Positive role of multi-national community

In recent times, Iraqi women have begun participating in the political, economic and social reconstruction of their country after a long period of repression. They have also begun to speak freely at local town hall meetings, municipal councils, national conferences, and other institutions being developed. This has been made possible with the strong support of the multi-national community (Sauerbrey, 2004:7). They have also, in recent times, focused to a large extent on women in the Kurdistan region to serve as a model for all Iraqi women due to the peace and political stability and the experience of the participation of women in development in the region.

2.3 Changing role of women: global phenomenon

The changing global political climate has also encouraged the Kurdistan Regional Government to strengthen women's participation in decision-making with representation at all levels, and specifically their presence in government institutions, as well as political parties and civil societies. As women become more educated, better informed through improved communication networks, and become more aware of the problems of dictatorial central bureaucracies, they desire to participate in partnership with men in governance functions closer to their neighbourhoods.

2.4 International policy framework

The Kurdistan region as a semi-autonomous region is signatory to many international conventions and protocols to enhance women's participation and women's rights. Some of these include the Convention of the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the Beijing Platform for Action. These platforms emphasized that women's equal participation in decision-making is not only a demand for justice or democracy but can also be seen as a necessary condition for ensuring that women's interests are taken into account. "Without the active participation of women and the incorporation of women's perspective at all levels of decision-making, the goals of equality, development and peace cannot be achieved" (UN, 2006:3).

The regional government is also doing its best to adhere to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) of the UN on the proportion of seats held by women in national and regional parliaments as established in Goal 3 and serve as one of the four indicators for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women (UN, 2006:5). Based on these, it has given quotas for women's representation in these parliaments. "*At least 30% of the seats in national and regional parliaments have to be reserved for women*" (UN, 2002:1). Regarding the pace process in some countries with Iraq included, the Security Council proposed that "*in all peace processes and in all institutions, working for the implementation of peace treaties, we need at least 30% participation of women. This is the case at the moment in Afghanistan, Iraq, Israel-Palestine and the Democratic Republic of Congo*" (ibid).

Also, during the 2005 World Summit of the United Nations held at its headquarters in September 2005, member states including Iraq, of which Kurdistan is a region, reaffirmed their commitment to the equal participation of women and men in decision-making. They resolved to promote the increased representation of women in Government decision-making bodies, including equal opportunity to participate fully in the political process (ibid).

4.3 Legal framework of political participation of women in Kurdistan

Article 20 of the 2005 constitution of the Federal Republic of Iraq, mentions that Iraqi citizens both men and women, shall have the right to participate in public affairs and enjoy political rights including the right to vote, elect and run for office.

The same constitution also provides for quotas for the COR (Council of Representatives). In delineating the requirements of memberships in the Council of Representatives (COR) in Iraq's National Parliament in Article 49, the constitution "aims to achieve", but does not mandate, a minimum quota of 25% for women's participation in the COR. This is very important

and should be strengthened in order to fully entrench the quota for women's participation in the national parliament (Iraqi Legal Development Project, ILDP, 2006:13). Therefore the 2005 Constitution of Iraq expresses the equality of men and women to guarantee the basic political rights of all Iraqi citizens.

Though the law gave women a representative's quota of 25% at National level of Parliament, this is not enough for the law alone to guarantee women's rights. Men have to be convinced and society as a whole has also to be convinced of women's qualifications and their abilities. This is most important (ibid: 12).

Kurdistan Legal Framework

The regional Kurdish Constitution of 2005, as well as its amendments during 2009, recognizes the principle of equality between men and women in rights and duties, without discrimination based on sex, race, or opinion, or any other condition either personal or social. The constitution also makes men and women equal in holding jobs and positions in government, without any condition beyond those set by law. It also guarantees the right of education for all citizens, male and female, by making education compulsory, free of charge, and democratic, with the state regulating the educational system. The constitution also recognizes the right to medical care and the right to work, leisure, protection, security, and sanitation.

The constitution establishes equality in terms of civil and political rights enjoyed by men and women, including the right to elect officials and run for political office. It also gives women the right to establish and lead political parties and civil organizations.

The Kurdistan parliament also issued a quota of 30% seats for women in the parliament of the Kurdistan Region. In addition not less than 30% of seats in provincial councils and municipality councils were to be given to women in 2009.

Improvement of women's rights in Iraq: One-step forward or many steps back?

During the Saddam regime in Iraq, the country was touted as one which offered its women most liberties among the majority of Middle Eastern countries. This is a result of the Iraqi Ba'ath party's recent inclusion in its ideology, provisions for women's liberation and equality. This notwithstanding, traditional Iraqi society outside the major cities continued to relegate Iraqi women to inferior positions vis-à-vis men.

Also, the repression that all Iraqis suffered under Saddam's regime applied to the female half of the population as well. The regime also moved away from Arab socialist ideals closer to traditional interpretations of Islam in the region, including less tolerance for female autonomy in the public realm after the country's disastrous eight-year war with Iran (Brown and Romano, 2004:1).

After the Ba'ath party seized power in 1968, women were encouraged and admitted into universities, given appointments in government and public employment sectors in large numbers, and also in the private sector. At one point during Saddam's 35 year regime for instance, the proportion of women in the civil service was about 40%.

The Provisional Constitution drafted in 1970, also declared men and women to be equal under the law. The prosperous years of the 1970's and 1980's also saw efforts being made towards eradicating illiteracy amongst women, in an attempt to expand the war, stretched labour force. This attempt to eradicate illiteracy by making education compulsory for all, and by

running literacy classes for older generations, caused the literacy gap between men and women to shrink significantly. Women were also given the right to vote and hold office in 1980, one year after Saddam Hussein's ascendancy (ibid).

Despite all the above developments, Saddam's great reputation for positive treatment of women was not quite as positive as it might have appeared. Women, like other sectors of society were not permitted to organize themselves but were recruited into the corporate authoritarian structures of the regime. This then generally affected the organizational and mobilization skills of women in Iraq.

Moreover, the only women's organization that was allowed in the country was the General Federation of Iraqi Women, a branch of the Ba'ath government. This organization was simply a tool of the party and many women in the country, especially those of Kurdish origin, failed to join this organization. During this era also, women were a favourite instrument of Saddam's in finding and extracting information from dissident and suspected dissidents, and for putting pressure on opposition members abroad (ibid:3).

The 2005 constitution of Iraq, passed by referendum in October of that year, is in some areas progressive and in others problematic in terms of its treatment of women's rights and gender equality. Also guarantees of the rights of all people in the country, the monitoring of the civil rights of Iraqi women highlights the fears of women's organizations and some secular forces regarding some of the articles in it and of the laws and regulation, which will be based on these articles. They feared that such laws would revoke many of the rights and privileges for, which they had fought for decades, and feared the revoking of their rights and freedoms would affect their rights negatively.

Also Article 41 of the new constitution of Iraq raises a lot of anxiety, concerns and controversy in conferences, symposia and panel discussion inside and outside of Iraq, attracting the attention of more women's organizations, civil society organizations and political parties than any other article. It states that, "Iraqis are free to observe their personal status in accordance with their religion, sect, beliefs or choices as regulated by the law." Though this article remains important, it does not conceal the danger threatening the situation of women in Iraq. Under this article Iraqi women may not enjoy specific legal equality, since their rights would depend on their religion and sect.

Again, Article 45-ii raises concern, since it returns to the days prior to civil society. It states, that "the State shall ensure the advancement of the Iraqi tribes and clans and take an interest in their affairs in a way which is in harmony with religion and law". This also permits great exploitation of the words in Article 41 to justify these practices.

Article 2 of the 2005 Constitution is also considered to be problematic as it introduces undefined terms into the document. It established Islam as a foundational source of legislation and state:

- A. No law may be enacted that contradicts the established provision of Islam.
- B. No law may be enacted that contradicts the principle of democracy.
- C. No law may be enacted that contradicts the rights and basic freedoms stipulated in this Constitution.

The constitution also has omissions which may affect the rights of women in the country. For instance, it failed to include any reference to the recognition of international covenants and treaties, even though Iraq was one of the first Arab countries to sign, albeit with some reservations, The Convention of the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. This could therefore allow various kinds of violence against women to take place as violence cannot be addressed merely by the text in the Constitution, which refers to the prevention of

violence in vague and general terms according to Article 29-iv. Also the Constitution does not mention the economic, cultural or social rights of women.

It can therefore be said that the controversial provisions in the articles of the constitution relating to women's rights and freedoms are alarming and worrisome, due to personal status law, international instruments and conventions, and the prevalence of tribalism, sectarianism and Islamic law. In this scenario, women seem to be the major losers in Iraq, which is seen as 'new' and 'democratic' (Iraq Foundation, 2007:2).

From the analysis above, it is clear that both the policies of Saddam's regime and the post-Saddam era in Iraq had a mixed impact on the situation of women in Iraq. While Saddam's Ba'ath government policies introduced some progressive policies and legislation for Iraqi women, although only on paper, these were offset by the societal impact of ceaseless wars, domestic authoritarian control and repression, and a shift to more conservative patriarchal government policies after 1990.

Although the removal of Saddam's dictatorship in 2003 has now ended his regime's oppression and allowed the entry of a myriad of progressive NGOs, new pro-female emancipation government policies, and independent women's organizations, the current lack of security in Iraq as well as resurgent of Islamic, tribal, and generally conservative forces in the country, is a major concern to women there. The current situation provides new evidence that, on paper, women have made progress but actually, in practice, they have moved many steps backwards.

"Iraq's current discriminatory legislative provisions illustrate that constitutional provisions alone do not guarantee women the fulfilment of their rights. Legislative change coupled with active enforcement mechanisms, remain necessary to bring Iraq into full compliance with international instruments and to assure Iraqi women their equal rights" (ILDP, 2006:6).

In conclusion it can be said that, though both the legal frameworks of governance in Iraq and Kurdistan guarantee the rights and equality of women and men in the decision-making process, the national constitution has certain clauses which are in conflict with the absolute right of women. This includes the fact that Iraqis are free to observe their personal status in accordance with their religion, sect, beliefs or choices as regulated by the law. This among others reveals the danger threatening the situation of women as certain religious practices do not allow for the freedom and absolute rights of women. But this notwithstanding, the regional government has and continues to ensure the rights of women.

The next section explains the political participation of Kurdish women after the uprising of the Kurdish people in 1991, the establishment of Kurdistan regional government and parliament in 1992 and their influence on women's participation up to 2012.

4.4 Institutions and women's representation: government and civil society in the Kurdistan region

Current structure and historical background of local government in Kurdistan

The Kurdistan Region is divided into administrative units called Provinces, which are further divided into smaller administrative units called Districts. These are also sub divided into smaller administrative units called Sub-districts and made up of an unlimited number of villages.

Midhat Pasha (1869-1872) is considered as the most significant Ottoman Ruler who influences the current administrative structure in Iraq. The pyramidal organization represented by

the provinces, districts and sub-districts dates back to the era where the state of Iraq, which was made of two Provinces (Baghdad and Basrah), was divided into provinces, districts and sub-districts.

As a matter of fact during the First World War, Iraq comprised of three provinces (Baghdad, Basrah and Mosul), whilst the last mentioned comprised of Mosul, Suleimaniyah and Shahrzoor; where Shahrzoor included Kirkuk, Erbil, Rania, Koya, Kifri and Rwanduz.

In 1921, Iraqi was founded comprising of Baghdad and Basrah Provinces and later Mosul Province was attached to it. Administratively, Iraq now consists of 18 provinces, including Erbil Province.

Observers of the administrative divisions in Iraq will notice that throughout the last five decades, that followed the foundation of the Iraqi nation, there has been no essential change to the administrative structure. Iraq in the 7th and 8th decades of the last century witnessed vast and continuous changes in its administrative structures, not only in their sizes and inter relations, but also in their names and planning. This left its trace on many demographic and economic specifications of the related areas.

On the other hand, the planning studies of the regions in Iraq refer to the fact that the area and shape of the administrative units were not made arbitrarily, but came about in accordance with natural, economic and historical factors and criteria.

There were some other changes that coincided with that era, especially during the beginning of the 8th decade of the last century. Changes occurred regarding the boundaries of the administrative units and their sizes, reflecting the country's trend to control the regions, which were unstable due to the Kurdish revolution. This influenced the direction of planning of these units in a way that provided services to the central Government's security and control over the regions, far from the natural, economic and demographic basics that should have ruled in such plans.

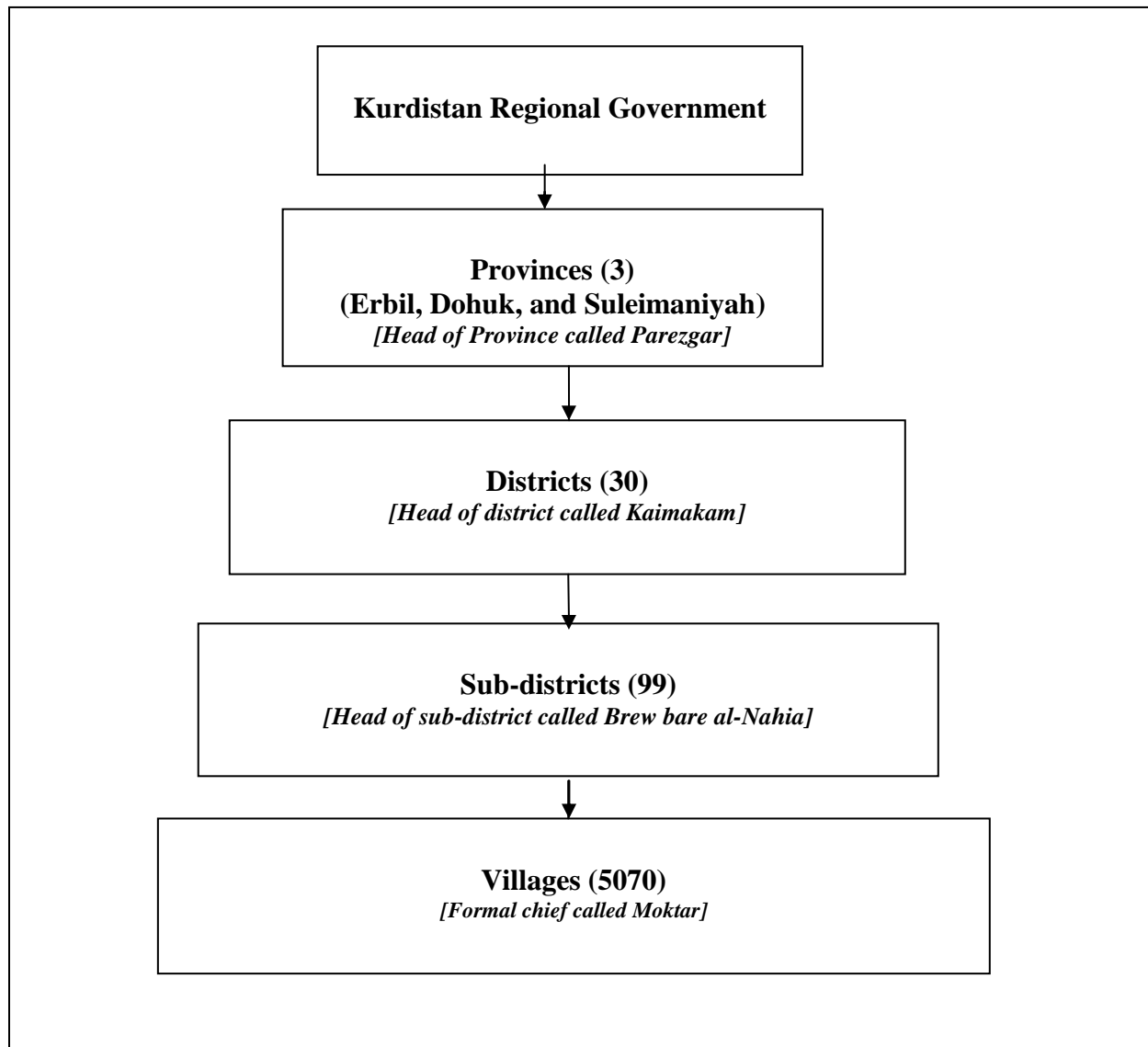
The era of the genocide (Anfal) operations also led to the displacement of many villages and the transformation of many districts into sub-districts and the disappearance of numerous sub-districts, such as Mergasor district and Barzan sub-district (Muhammed, 2003:212-214)

After the March uprising in 1991, the districts and sub-districts that had disappeared and were destroyed during the Anfal operations were re-formed. These included Mergasor district and sub-districts of Barzan, Gorato, Maznei, Peran and Sherwanmezin .

Local government structure and the women's representation in the Kurdistan region

In the Kurdistan region, there are presently 3 Provinces, 30 districts, 99 sub-districts, and 5070 villages (Figure, 4.1). The election of Municipality councils and Provincial councils were held in 2001 for the first time in the history of Iraq and Kurdistan regional government. The Acts enacted after the restoration of the multi-party system only changed the names or some responsibilities, but the basic structure remained more or less the same.

Figure 4.1: Kurdistan local government's structure



Source: Author's construct, 2011

Province

Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) appoints the civil officials of a Province. During the time of conducting the empirical work in June 2007, the role of provincial council had not been legally defined and the Province's authority was based on the previous law of governorates, No.159 of 1969.

On 20th April 2009, the Kurdistan regional parliament issued the law on provinces, No. 3, based on Article 4, "the province council shall comprise 25 seats with the addition of one seat for every 200,000 inhabitants. If the number of the province inhabitants exceeds 500,000, the representative rate of the women must not be less than 30 percent of the number of members of the province council". According to Article 5; "the province council is the highest legislative body and has oversight authority within the administrative boundaries of the governorate and

shall have the right to issue local legislation within the boundaries of the province so that it can carry out its affairs on the basis of the principle of administrative decentralisation and in a manner that would not contradict the Constitution and regional laws”, based on Article 6. “It elects the governor by an absolute majority of the members within a maximum of 30 days from the date of its first session”, (Provinces law, No.3 dated 20th April, 2009 issued by Kurdistan regional parliament). But this has not yet been implemented.

District

Kaimakam is the senior administrator of a district, and serves as the primary liaison between the sub-district and the province. The Kurdish Regional Government (KRG) centrally appoints Kaimakam, (see Table 3.5). Governmental line agencies for most sectors (health, education, agricultural, water, sanitation, and electricity) are providing community people in districts and sub-districts with the most important social services. Article 8 of the law of provinces and district, explained that members of the council shall be elected by direct election in accordance with the election law for councils. The district council shall comprise 7 seats with the addition of one seat for every 50,000 inhabitants. The representative rate of women must not be less than 30 percent of the number of members of the district council. The Kaimakams are to be elected by absolute majority of the council members. They are to monitor the progress of the work of the local administration in the district. Local administration includes sub-district and municipality councils. The heads of local administration units include Kaimakams and Directors (in Kurdish called Mudiarys).

Sub-district

In Kurdistan, district, sub-district and urban centres were not legally defined until 20th April 2009. Implicitly, municipalities are considered as comprising of sub-district, district, cities, and towns; some of the municipalities include the cluster of villages, which had been constructed by the previous regime. It should be noted that during the time of conducting the empirical work in March 2007, the Mayor and head of sub-district (in Kurdish “Brewabare al-Nahia) still had separate roles for the provision social services in their sub-districts. According to Article 11 of the law of provinces and districts, members of the sub-district council shall be elected by direct election in accordance with the election law for councils. The sub-district council shall comprise 5 seats with the addition of one seat for every 25,000 inhabitants. The representative rate of women must not be less than 30 percent of the number of members of the sub-district council. But this has not yet been implemented at the sub-district level. This is likely to be implemented during the next election.

Village

‘According to the law of governorate, No159 of Iraq, issued in 1969, a village is defined as a group of houses that has at least a population of 300 people’.

The village council is the lowest level of the local body. It is a cluster of dispersed rural settlements. The average population in the villages varies. The density of population is highest in the flat land while it gradually decreases in the hill and mountain lands. Before the Republic system was introduced in 1958, the rural area of the Kurdistan region consisted of a feudal system and the village informal chief *Kwekha* was usually appointed by local property owners Agha or Shaikh. The government, with the cooperation of Agha, or Shaikh, centrally appointed the formal chief named Moktar. During the Ba'ath regime from 1968, the formal village chief

Moktar , was centrally appointed by the Iraqi security service as a part of security service, while the informal chief had limited their role. After 1991, the village council replaced the Moktar system as democratic institutions, except this time, it was affiliated with the local political party and traditional local authority. In general, village council and Moktar lack decision-making power to act on the needs of the community and its only task is to inform the government about community problems.

Kurdistan towards democracy: the restoration of the multi-party system

The Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) is based in Erbil and it is the executive body that controls the Kurdish provinces of Erbil, Dohuk and Sulaimaniya in northern Iraq.

The current KRG is made up of a coalition of parties, elected in 2009 to the Kurdistan Regional Parliament. This coalition includes the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP), the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), the Turcoman Brotherhood Party, Kurdistan Communist Party, and the Kurdistan Socialist Democratic Party. The opposition parties in the Kurdistan Regional Parliament include the Kurdistan Islamic Union, the Islamic Group and the Change movement.

The Kurdish Regional Government has a parliament, forming the legislative branch, and a cabinet or Council of Ministers, which forms the executive branch. The current coalition government has a cabinet of ministers. The aim of the cabinet of the KRG is to provide social services to the people and rebuild the region's infrastructure, administer the region by implementing laws passed by parliament and to maintain law and order.

Kurdistan Regional Parliament and women's representation and participation

Political participation of Kurdish women: The civil disobedience of March 1991 in Iraq and Kurdistan, had its biggest impact in building the political, economic, social and cultural life of the region, and considered openness to the world from all dimensions. Kurdish women are a part of the community and had a great role in the uprising, which freed women from all types of oppression, terrorism and abuses practised by the Central government in Baghdad. In return, an atmosphere of freedom in expression, rights and political participation was guaranteed. The Kurdish people were able to elect their representatives to the region's first parliament in 1992 (KDP, 1992:49). This step taken by the oppressed Kurdish people was really a great step for all the people of the Middle East and oppressed people under the rule of Kings and dictator regimes (Swedish Liberal Association, SLA, 1995:1).

Kurdish women have participated effectively in the Kurdistan Regional Parliament. During the time of the first parliament in 1992, as indicated by the Kurdish Regional Parliament (Field work 2010), women accounted for nearly 6 percent of representatives in the regional parliament in 1992. A decade later, women's representation had increased to 26 percent in 2004. By 2009, the proportion of women parliamentarians had increased to 37 percent in the Kurdish Regional Parliament. Though there is a committee in the Kurdistan Parliament named Advocacy Committee for Women Rights, which aims to enhance the position of women in all aspects of life, a lot of work needs to be carried out to achieve this as knowledge and awareness are two essential pillars for women's liberty towards political participation in the future.

Does the number of women in Kurdistan Regional parliament matter?

Practical evidence in the Kurdish parliament shows that the number of women does matter as greater numbers increase women's influence on political policies and priorities regarding women's issues. In 2009 for instance, women's organizations in Kurdistan protested the legitimacy of polygamy for almost a year and continually pressed the government and Regional Parliament to pass a bill preventing men from having more than one wife.

Women put two different options forward to the government to solve this issue. One option was that polygamy should end; the other was that polygamy could remain, but on conditions. In the end, the government was unable to find an agreeable solution to this. It then saddled Parliament with finding a solution. The Regional Parliament also faced a similar problem. After hours of debate, it put the issue to the vote. As a result 39 MPs (mostly men) favoured polygamy, but with conditions; 35 opposed it (mostly women). Parliament at last has decided to allow men have more than one wife, but several conditions apply. It definitely seems that the numbers of women in Parliament does matter.

Kurdistan Regional Government and women's representation and participation

Kurdish women's role in decision-making positions in Iraqi Kurdistan is very low compared to that of men. Kurdish women have occupied ministerial positions in the Kurdish government in the Kurdistan region, since the day of its establishment initially in 1992. Table 4.2 shows the proportion of women at ministerial level in the cabinets of Kurdistan regional government that have been established since 1992. Nevertheless, the number of women in the leadership positions of general director was 15 percent (Al-Zebari, 2006:89).

Table 4.1: Women in ministerial level since 1992 in Kurdistan Regional Government

Period	Total Number of Ministers	Seats Held by Women	Proportion of Seats Held by Women %
1992-1993	17	1	6
1993-1996	18	1	6
1996-1999	16	1	6
1999-2006	23	2	9
2006-2010	41	3	7
2012-date	19	1	5

Source: Kurdistan Regional Government; 12th July 2010

Kurdish women led the judgeship as a judge for the first time in 1997. Though, some women have attained political positions in Kurdistan, so few cannot effectively alter the process of decision-making and change their positions in society, nor the amendment of laws and legislation to suit their interests. Also the number of working women in the Kurdistan Regional Government is 106,096 representing 32 percent of total employment. However, despite this, the rate of women's representation in decision-making positions is only 2 percent (Field work, 2009).

From what has been explained, there are a lot of hindrances to democratic participation, equal citizenship and Kurdish women's participation in the decision-making positions in Kurdistan, These obstacles include illiteracy and social backwardness, and weak foundation and

traditions, inherited habits, low access to education, weak role of civil society organizations and government institutions.

Therefore, important steps should be taken to guarantee women's rights, their access to education, then work and finally political participation. It is not important how they have obtained such rights, but how to preserve them and set up civil society networks, and fight to establish them in communities. Then, such rights will not be at risk, if political developments go the opposite way (Al-Ansari, 1999:223). Thus, to have effective women's political participation, there is a need to have a strong women's movement and female representation in government institutions.

Gaps between the cultural policies of various Kurdish government Ministries

Kurdish people have endured a difficult transitional period during the past seventeen years. In the interest of reconciliation, Kurdish ministries have been filled according to ethnic group and party quotas, and ministers were allowed to implement their parties' policies with their ministries. Despite the importance of the Ministry for Women's Affairs and its activities, conflicts between the cultural views of the various parties have restricted the development of an overall strategy for the Kurdistan regional government⁶. The Minister of Culture mentioned in a newspaper: *"I am a member and representative of my party in Kurdistan Regional Government, as long as I stay in this position my first priority is the policy of my party"* (Hawliti, 2007:4). The interview highlighted an important aspect of the various political cultures in Kurdish government ministries.

Provincial Council, head of district and sub-district and women's representation

The members of the various Provincial Councils were elected in 2001. During an interview with administrative officials in the Erbil Province (fieldwork, 2010) it came to light that the provincial council had 11 female members out of 41 members. This represented 26 percent of the entire membership of the council. The current Provincial Council of Erbil is made up of a coalition of parties. This coalition includes the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP), the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), the Turcoman Brotherhood Party, Kurdistan Communist Party, and the Kurdistan Socialist Democratic Party. The others are the Kurdistan Islamic Union, the Islamic Group, and the Christian party. The head of a district is called Qaim Maqimand while that of the sub-district is referred to as Brewabare al-Nahia. These heads were centrally appointed by the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) (see table 4.2). All these heads appointed to oversee the various districts are males and only 4 of the sub-district heads are females. This indicates that even in the appointment of these heads, women are not favoured much.

⁶ (Practical experience of the researcher in the Kurdistan Regional Government).

Table 4.2: Number of districts and sub-districts in Erbil

No. of districts In the Erbil Province	No. of Kaimakam (Head of District)			No. of Sub- districts in Erbil Province	No. of Brewabare al-Nahia (Head of sub-district)		
	Men	Women	Total		Men	Women	Total
10	10	0	10	35	31	4	35

Source: Interview with Administrative officer Erbil Province 09, July 2010

Municipalities and women's representation and participation

Kurdish women's presence in the municipal councils reached 3.7 percent in 2001, when there were 21 women out of 564 members of the municipalities of Erbil and Dohuk (Khabat: 2001). Later in the same year their presence in Suleimaniyah reached 4.5 percent. The monitoring committee over the elections of the Suleimaniyah municipality and other freed areas in Kirkuk province consisted of 20 members, most of whom were women (Itihad: 2000).

Kurdish women had their first major experience in regional elections when they participated in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. Such political participation is an atmosphere that encourages and enhances democracy and political pluralism.

In fact, the laws governing elections in the region reflect the political participation of all the people (males and females). This indicates that all people can participate freely in all aspects of politics thereby indicating the political freedom of the people.

Any democratic governance system should encourage the political participation of people either in choosing political leaders through elections, general and transparent or political decision-making through other constitutional institution channels. If this is to work effectively with everybody participating, there is a need for institutions to be created to support and complement this process in practice (Al-Salihi, 2002:92).

Civil society and non-government organizations and women's participation

The involvement of Kurdish women in civil society organizations has a long history. A member of the national elite in exile in Istanbul formed the first Kurdish women's organization in 1919 (Mojab, 2001:86). In recent times, Kurdish women have begun participating in vocational organizations, associations and syndicates.

According to the Kurdistan legal framework issued in 1993 governing the operations of organizations NGOs and CBOs in the region, all associations and organizations would have a personality and they have the right to assemble, demonstrate and affiliate.

Over the last 18 years especially, after the uprising in 1991 and the introduction of multi-party democracy, there has been a dramatic increase in the number of NGOs registered in Kurdistan, and in particular NGOs working on gender-related issues. According to the latest data from the Ministry of Civil Society Affairs in 2009, 10 percent of the 520 registered NGOs were women's organizations.

An analysis of the phases of the establishment of NGOs in Kurdistan Region

The analysis of data gathered by the Iraqi Kurdistan Non-governmental organizations Network, IKNN. The questionnaires were used as a tool for 27 non-governmental organizations all of

whom are members of the Network. The following discussion throws more light on NGOs in the Kurdistan Region:

1. The first phase of the establishment of NGOs in Kurdistan began after the genocide (*Anfal*) in 1988. These included the Kurdistan Relief Association in 1988 as well as others. These were to help ease the burden of Kurdish refugees in camps in Turkey and Iran in coordination with international NGOs. They focused on relief projects and aid.
2. The second phase began after the Kurdish uprising in 1990. This led to the withdrawal of the Iraqi government from the region and the imposition of an internal blockade on Kurdistan. Examples of the NGOs that developed during that period were the Kurdistan Reconstruction Organization (KRO) in 1991, Shanadar Reconstruction Organization in 1996, and Green Peace in 2000. The focus was on relief and reconstruction of destroyed villages.
3. The third phase was after the liberation of Iraq from Saddam Hussein's rule. This led to the establishment of several NGOs including the Women Empowerment Organization (WEO) in 2004, Pary organization in 2004, and the Student Solidarity Organization (SSO) in 2005. Their focuses are various.
4. Out of 27 non-governmental organizations, only 5 are active in rural areas. It appears that the majority of NGOs are in urban areas. NGOs are necessary and also needed in the rural areas in order to focus more on rural issues as most of the villages in Kurdistan were destroyed by the former regime with rural communities still being under the pressure of tribal power and religion.
5. The non-representation of women as heads of Non-Governmental Organizations, and also in their committee's as senior management members, consequently limits their participation in decision-making as most of the decisions are made by the various heads of these NGOs. Participation of other stakeholders in decision-making activities of the NGOs was also limited (Iraqi Kurdistan Non-Governmental Organizations Network, IKNN, survey in 2007).

It can therefore be concluded that the focus of NGOs in the region has moved over several phases since the establishment of the Kurdistan region. This included the phase of providing relief to the people for reconstruction of the region and currently for gender and development issues.

On the 19th of May 2007, thirteen women's organizations conducted a joint meeting in Erbil to establish a network of women's organizations. It included all non-governmental organizations and women's groups from all political parties in Kurdistan. In addition, the Minister of Women's Affairs, a representative of the Prime Minister, and the researcher participated in that meeting. After a long debate, they did not reach an agreement, because each organization wanted the new network to be formed around the ideologies of their own various parties. These included giving priority to the goals, objectives and other ideologies of these political parties. By so doing, the issue of women was placed second. It would seem that most organizations that represent women in Kurdistan are political organizations and are far removed the question of women's issues.

The researcher agrees with the impression that political parties in Kurdistan have dominated most women's organizations with the presidents of the majority of these organizations being wives, sisters, or family members of political leaders. In addition to this, every organization or association must obtain approval from the Ministry of Interior.

The presidents of the associations such as the Women's Union, Student's Union, and so on, receive a salary equal to that of a Deputy Minister, while a member of the Supreme Committee for these associations receives a salary equivalent to that of a general manager in the public sector of the Kurdistan Regional Government. This confirms opinions put forward by Mojab (2001:148-149). She argues that women's organizations that do exist are not independent from the political parties with which they are affiliated. Indeed, the women's organizations are often just extensions of the party's platform, in which parties jostle to gain women's votes. While there are only a few women in leadership roles, of great significance also is the collapse of feminist consciousness among Kurdish women. A second example is the lack of independence of women's organizations. Formal women's organizations do not exist outside the political arena and women for the most part have been excluded from political discussion and decisions. In particular, the Kurdistan Women's Union (KWU) is linked to the KDP while, the *Yaketi Afratine Kurdistan* is linked to the PUK (ibid: 151).

Political parties: Women membership in the political parties

The international community has undertaken several procedures in order to enhance women's participation in political discourses in many countries in the world. The question that arises here is how the Kurdish political parties were able to mobilize women in their present structure.

The study of Kurdish women's liberty in the political field is considered an indicator for the development of their political role in society. There is no doubt that women's participation in the decisive issues is important to assert their role and ensure their rights. Women's entrance into the party and abiding by its decisions, meetings, and party agenda, transfers them from a world of irresponsibility to a world of activity and self-importance (Shaaban, 2000:158).

Mojab (2001) argues that Kurdish women continue to be largely absent from the upper echelons of party power, their equal participation amongst the rank and file appears to challenge male dominated power structures so present in the rest of Kurdish society (Mojab, 2001:148).

The rate of Kurdish women's participation in political parties is very low, in fact lower than the average rate of society, and they are not able to rise to important positions in the political parties. There is only one female member out of 35 members in the central committee of the Kurdistan Democratic Party. The proportion of women in the party was about 2.8 percent in the party's elections which took place in late 1999. There is one woman in the leadership of the Kurdistan Patriotic Union, and women do not reach leadership positions in the Kurdistan Islamic political movement where their participation and representation in the high party structure is very marginal. Several factors explain this:

Firstly, low women's membership in political participation goes back to women's political awareness and the prevailing feeling among a large number of women that politics is the area of men, and their role in life is completely different from that of men.

Secondly, no political initiative has taken women's issue seriously (Al-Fakir, 2001:212). It is true that in principle women are mentioned party agenda. As propaganda, these parties elect one woman for inclusion in their leadership, but this is not comprehensive and does not provide radical solutions to any political or economic issue nor does it add to the technical experience of the parties.

Thirdly, the majority of women who are members of these parties and can continue to participate in their activities are effectively only those whose husbands or family relations are party leaders. Rarely does one find a functional woman whose husband is not a politician. If the

husband or the relation leaves, the functional affiliation of the woman will be terminated immediately.

Fourthly, despite women's activities within Kurdish national parties, and besides such positions of these parties concerning women and their effective role in the party struggle, the progress of women in the structure of the parties is not very strong.

Fifthly, the important factor for women's active participation is their willingness to work in the parties in general in national crisis as happened in the uprising of March 1991.

Sixthly, a large number of women believe that it is impossible for them to care for the house and political burdens at the same time, despite the fact that women's trust in them has increased due to basic activities. But still avoid public life where all the political activities take place.

In spite of the fact that women's political participation at the local level is considered an indicator of citizenship, they still lack self-confidence, and feel that they are not able to ask for their rights as citizens. In addition, domestic and social burdens on women do not give them opportunities and energy to perform the activities within the political set up (ibid: 212).

After the Kurdish parties took over power in the Kurdistan region in 1992 and formed a government and a parliament, the position of Kurdish women changed in all public fields and enabling them to ask for their rights as active citizens in society. This also activated women's organizations in many fields.

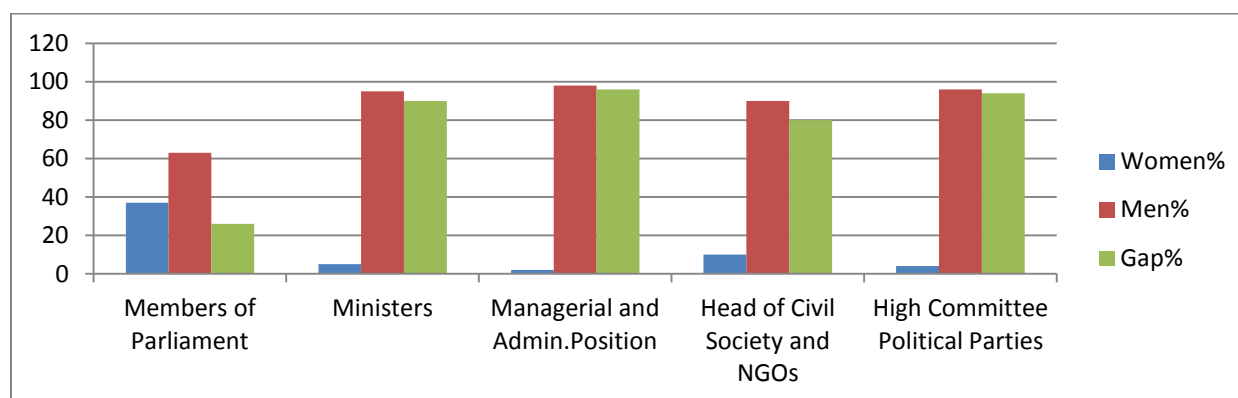
These developments notwithstanding, Kurdish women's organizations are still unable to play an active role in raising women's awareness and independence. The increase of women's participation in the parties and conferences is a national necessity for both the parties and women. It is important for the parties to be able to move among women publicly, and obtain as much as possible from them and then their participation in politics.

In the light of all this, there is still the need to enhance women's participation in the political parties in addition to what has been achieved so far.

Women's participation, representation and gender gap at regional level, Kurdistan

At the Kurdistan regional level, 37% of parliamentary seats are held by women in that region. At the executive level, women hold 5% of ministerial portfolios while 2% of managerial and administrative positions are held by women. Also, 3% of the heads of NGOs are women. There is only one female member out of 35 in the central committee of the Kurdistan Democratic Party. See figure 4.2.

Figure 4.2: Women's participation, representation and gender gap regional level

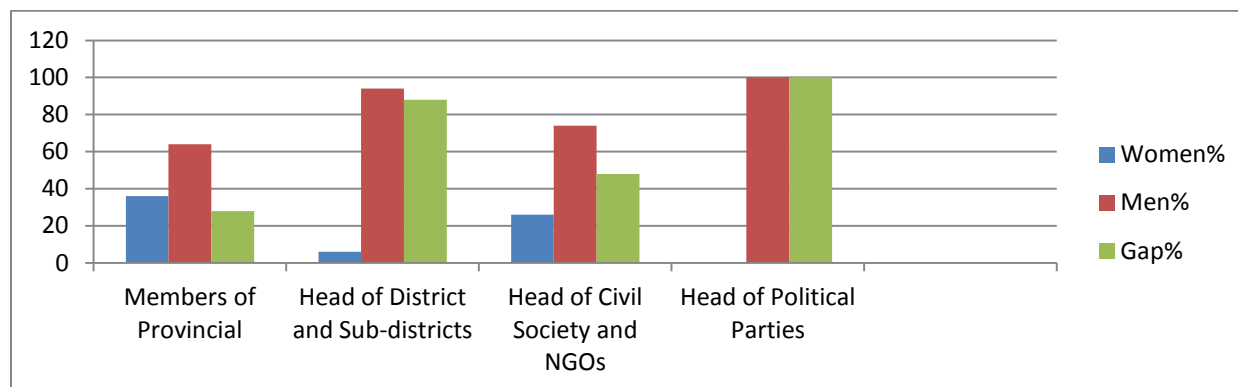


Source: Author's construct 2011

Women's participation, representation and gender gap at provincial level in Erbil

In the Erbil Provincial council there are 11 women in a total of 41 members. The representation of women is about 26%. Out of 63 heads of district and sub-districts, only 4 are female, representing an estimated 6% of the total leadership. There is no female president of a political party at provincial level. See figure 4.3.

Figure 4.3: Women's participation, representation and gender gap provincial level



Source: Author's construct 2011

4.5 The key players of participation

There are a number of institutions who are key players of participation in Kurdistan. These are briefly outlined below:

Civil society organizations

Civil society initiatives were banned during the Ba'ath period as the party and state machinery exercised strict control and covered most domains of activity that were not considered necessary for the well-being of society, including leisure and culture. Civil society organizations in the Kurdistan region include Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), professional organizations, groups and traditional organizations as well as syndicates.

Women's participation within the "third sector" and the other two sectors, namely public and private sectors, are not limited only to NGOs which are gender-related.

Although there is a strong sense of dedication among women's NGOs to address participation issues at a local level, there remains limited capacity within the sector and few NGOs that are active at local level. The sector remains dominated by the urban middle classes and the majority of NGOs are located in the capital city, Erbil, and others cities such as Dohuk and Suleimaniya. In this view, attempts should be made for them to expand operations to rural areas.

Political parties

The political parties have been perceived as instruments of change in social, economic and political spheres ever since the beginning of the Kurdish people's movement in 1961. Their credentials as advocates of democracy and agents of change were established by the decisive role they played in the uprising of March, 1991. They were successful and able to establish multi party democratic institutions like the Kurdish Parliament through elections in 1992. This has not only established multi party democracy but also led to a democratic federal constitution that reflected later in the new Iraq constitution published in 2005.

One can assuredly say that being in the driver's seat under multi-party policy; political

parties have a crucial and determining role to play in strengthening participation at all levels. The researcher notes that a major challenge remains in the internal democratic structures. Almost all the political parties lack adequate internal democratic processes and are much centralised. This is clearly observed in the area of succession of leaders and renewal of leadership. The leading parties are still family, male, and tribe-dominated and elections do not determine party composition. In addition, there is a political consensus on nationalism which comes first and political parties differ on priority of issues and process. They have paid less attention to important issues of a practical nature such as organizing all-party meetings and sharing vision on crucial issues such as democratic decentralisation, participation, maintaining transparency at a local level and open discussions in local bodies. It appears that the majority of political parties are focused in urban areas and central cities. Each political party has access to independent mass media including television and radio stations, magazines and news papers. All these reasons show that political parties tear down democratic decentralisation practices and transparency and hence fall short of intra-democracy and streamlined internal procedures. This is confirmed by the leader of one of the opposition political parties, named Change, in the region. The leader Mustafa (2010): stated that:

- The government system and political party policy is mixed.
- The Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) and Patriotic Union of Kurdistan party (PUK) the two major parties in Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) are interfering in the authority of executive, legislative, and judicial process.
- The two major parties are interfering in the Universities, Institutions, and Civil societies.
- The two major parties are interfering in businesses and trade.
- The Official army force (*Peshmerga*) and police are controlled by the two parties.
- There is no transparencies regarding the budget, it is used in unjust ways, there is corruption in financial, administrative and political circles (Mustafa, 2010).

These indicate that more needs to be done to enhance multi party democracy in the region.

Sectoral ministries

The sectoral ministries have a crucial role to play in fostering successful participation of all in the decision-making process. More so, the sectoral ministries have a region-wide network of institutions up to village level. These line agencies are under direct administrative command of sectoral ministries and departments and operating as de-concentrated units parallel to the local government system. Line agencies constitute a significant proportion of development investment in the district and sub-districts. According to the researcher's experience and notes taken during the time of conducting the empirical work, these agencies do not seem to have played any role in giving a boost to democratic decentralisation and participation. There is no evidence of a collective awareness, which is the responsibility of all ministries to strengthen local bodies (implicitly women and men are considered) and make them capable and effective at management level.

Ministry of Women's Affairs

The Ministry of Women's Affairs was established in 2003 as a governmental body to promote the interests of Kurdish women during the transition to democratic Decentralisation, to assist in promoting NGOs, women's groups and developing projects for women. This Ministry also acts as a liaison between local and international organizations. In the context of the absence of a strong established mechanism and clear policy framework related to democratic Decentralisation

and participation of women at all levels, the role of this ministry is critical to make the participation process functional. In addition to the Ministry of Women's Affairs, in 2005 the Kurdistan regional government established the Institute of Equity policy at the regional level only. But in 2009 the new government of the Kurdistan region closed several ministries including the Ministry of Women's Affairs.

Local agencies

There are many local agencies in Kurdistan that promote women's participation. They are the line agency, civil society, political parties, traditional authority, municipality council, and local government. These agencies play pragmatic roles through collective advocacy in favour of strengthening participation and local governance. These activities have been gradually contributing to the internalization of the participation process.

Local leaders

Shaikh, as tribal leader plays an active role in traditional Kurdish society, for instance during the Anfal process when the previous military regime controlled the Barzanan camp near Erbil city, the first person who was caught was the Shaikh, then all others followed him. In other words, what the Shaikh decided influenced the decision of the other members of the tribe. In some cases Shaikh played double roles as tribal and religious leader as observed by the researcher in Shri village.

Malla, as a Muslim religious leader, plays a vital role in Kurdish society especially in rural areas. The people consult him about all social, economic and cultural issue. In most villages there is a minimum of one mosque as a religious institution where the Malla is available most of the time. During collective prayers on Fridays, the Malla gives his advice on various issues including political ones. Most people take these accounts as guidelines. In January 2009 for instance, during data collection in Erbil city, the researcher used a taxi ten times in the same day in order to observe what kind of radio programmes or tape recorded events were listened to by most taxi drivers? He noted that out of 10 taxi drivers about 8 listened to the Malla's Friday speech, one of them listened to Kurdish Music and another used neither radio nor tape recorder. This indicates the importance people attach to the Shaikhs and Mallas in Kurdish society as their decisions influence their lives and it is also an indication of the key roles they play in Kurdish society.

Private sector

The private sector is principally recognized as an active development partner at regional, provincial, and local levels. However, the private sector's roles have not yet been legally defined at all levels. There is no clear policy or clear-cut mechanism to involve such development collaborators in the development planning and programming process other than through the implementation of development activities.

Women's participation in the current planning system in Kurdistan

The Kurdistan regional government is a very young one. The beginning of an autonomous planning process was intended to start with the establishment of the Kurdistan Regional Parliament in 1992, following the Kurdistan uprising against the Ba'ath regime that led to the withdrawal of the Iraqi Army and administration. The Kurdish people's influence on planning was very limited at all levels,. Despite this, most Kurdish villages were destroyed during the genocide campaign (*Anfal*). The Kurdistan regional government (KRG) was established in 1992, this was to give the Kurdish people, for the first time in modern history, the power to initiate, prepare, amend and abrogate their own plans at the regional, provincial and local level.

Currently in Kurdistan, there are three administrative planning levels: regional, provincial and local. It is important to emphasize that the regional level is the strongest level of planning. There is a High Planning Committee and High Economic Committee, and these committees work under the supervision of the Regional Prime Minister. There is no women's representation on either of these committees. These may influence the inclusion of women's needs and priorities negatively in policy formulation.

Concerning institution planning in Kurdistan, the relationship between them is recognized to be weak. The integration of these planning functions remains a great challenge facing planning institutions at regional, provincial and local levels. Meanwhile, no specific regional plan has been formulated at the regional level.

In 2006, the Ministry of Planning established the process of formulating a regional strategic plan and this is supposed to guide future province and local plans, but this is still not clear. Each sectoral ministry had its own plan and democratic bodies still do not control the planning process at all levels. Administrative structures at all levels are still not development oriented, what is normally put on paper is principally like a shopping list. In this regard for example, the strategic planning of Ministry of Agriculture is an obvious example as the technical inputs in the planning process are weak, the flow and structure of information is limited and the financial structure is centralised. In 2007, the Erbil province, with the cooperation of the International Research Triangle Institute (RTI) prepared a strategic plan for Erbil province.

In general, planning issues are too many; each has its specialist institution within a sectoral approach that has been adopted in Kurdistan. The Ministry of Planning (MOP) and the newly established High Planning Committee (HPC) together with the High Economic Council (HEC) are responsible for regional and strategic planning. According to a presidential order signed in 2006, HPC will be responsible for formulating regional policies and approve regional plans prepared by sectoral ministries. Though a ministry in charge of the welfare of women existed in 2007, it had no budget to make it operational. In the current cabinet from 2009, this ministry was expunged. Therefore in terms of planning for women's issues, there is no sectoral ministry to address this. This may again negatively influence the inclusion of the priorities of women's needs in sectoral plans in the region. The Committee in charge of initiating and regulating strategic regional planning for agriculture is composed of representatives of several ministries (agriculture, industry, irrigation, and trade) as well as representatives of council ministries.

In the area of local planning, and due to replacing a long standing centralised attitude and lack of local government technical capacity, sectoral ministries and sectoral branches in provinces formulate local plans. The local government units represented by the line agencies and village councils, with the cooperation of local authority, are passively involved in the process of local planning, as they do not legally have the power to formulate plans. Instead of provinces that exist between the regional and local level to supervise functions and operations the municipalities and village councils', in many cases sectoral ministries and sectoral branches in province work independently to raise funds and implement additional projects.

It can be concluded that it is very difficult to draw clear lines between the many roles of government institutions, to define clearly, which of them might be responsible for what at all levels. In addition, one man dominated systems and planning processes (i.e. minister, governor or general director) is also a characteristic of the Kurdistan government system.

It might be the government's policy to create several institutions or committees to broaden planning, but in the practical sense, it is hard to make them work in harmony.

Regarding, community participation, the current planning system places more emphasis on the participation of elite technical bureaucrats in public sectors. In this view, planning has been monopolised by technocratic planners at regional and provincial levels with a major focus on physical planning in urban to the neglect of the rural areas. As the Kurdish revolution and genocide (*Anfal*) started in the village, so must reconstruction and development start in the village.

During field work, as well as through the review of documents, it was realised that most departments and agencies have staff with knowledge and expertise related to the sector within which they work but without a gender-aware perspective in their sectors. In development planning agencies, most of the staff was male, and training oriented to technical and administrative aspects that fit the traditional planning model. There is also a shortage of professional women in the planning sector who have gender analysis capacity. Even in instances where women are present, like their male colleagues, they are not gender aware. In this sense they may experience difficulty in translating gender interests and needs into planning goals. Discussions also held with women members of such agencies indicated that many of them experience antagonism and are even ridiculed in their attempts to address gender inequalities. Where gender awareness is lacking, those who have decision-making power may be indifferent, resistant or even hostile to gender development plans. Planning agencies and departments therefore need to analyse the roles, rights and responsibilities of women and men in government, and specifically those of women, to prevent their elimination from development planning.

Conclusion

The formation of the Kurdistan regional government has created a new sphere for women's participation in decision-making in the region. Women's participation in conjunction with that of men is a vital issue in the reconstruction and development of Kurdistan. Therefore, participation in decision-making at local level remains one of the main democratic decentralisation approaches on the one hand with the internal and external factors which drive women's participation on the other hand. Since the introduction of democracy and decentralisation in the region, there has been a dramatic increase in the number of civil society organisations in Kurdistan and also a new space for women's participation in decision-making. Despite this, most of them focus on urban areas. Also, many of these are not independent from political parties and government. Some are affiliated to certain political parties and others also receive a salary from government. This means that they cannot be classified under Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs). This is because all indications point to the fact that, they are part of government and consequently account to it, instead of playing a watch-dog role on government and its activities. Political parties also lack adequate internal democratic processes and are much centralised. The leading parties are still family, male, and tribe-dominated. Political parties are also focused in urban areas. The lack of a clearly launched development policy and a gender aware policy could be identified as an important problem in development planning in the Kurdistan region. Since each political party reflects its policies, there is no holistic policy for the Kurdish regional government. But despite these, the implementation of quotas of reserved seats for women at the regional parliament and provincial council levels, have clearly improved the representation of women at these levels as compared with their representation in most political party positions and other public spheres in Kurdistan.

The above chapter discussed the participation of women in decision-making at regional, provincial, district and sub-district levels in public sphere. The next chapter discusses characteristics of the study area Barzan sub-district.

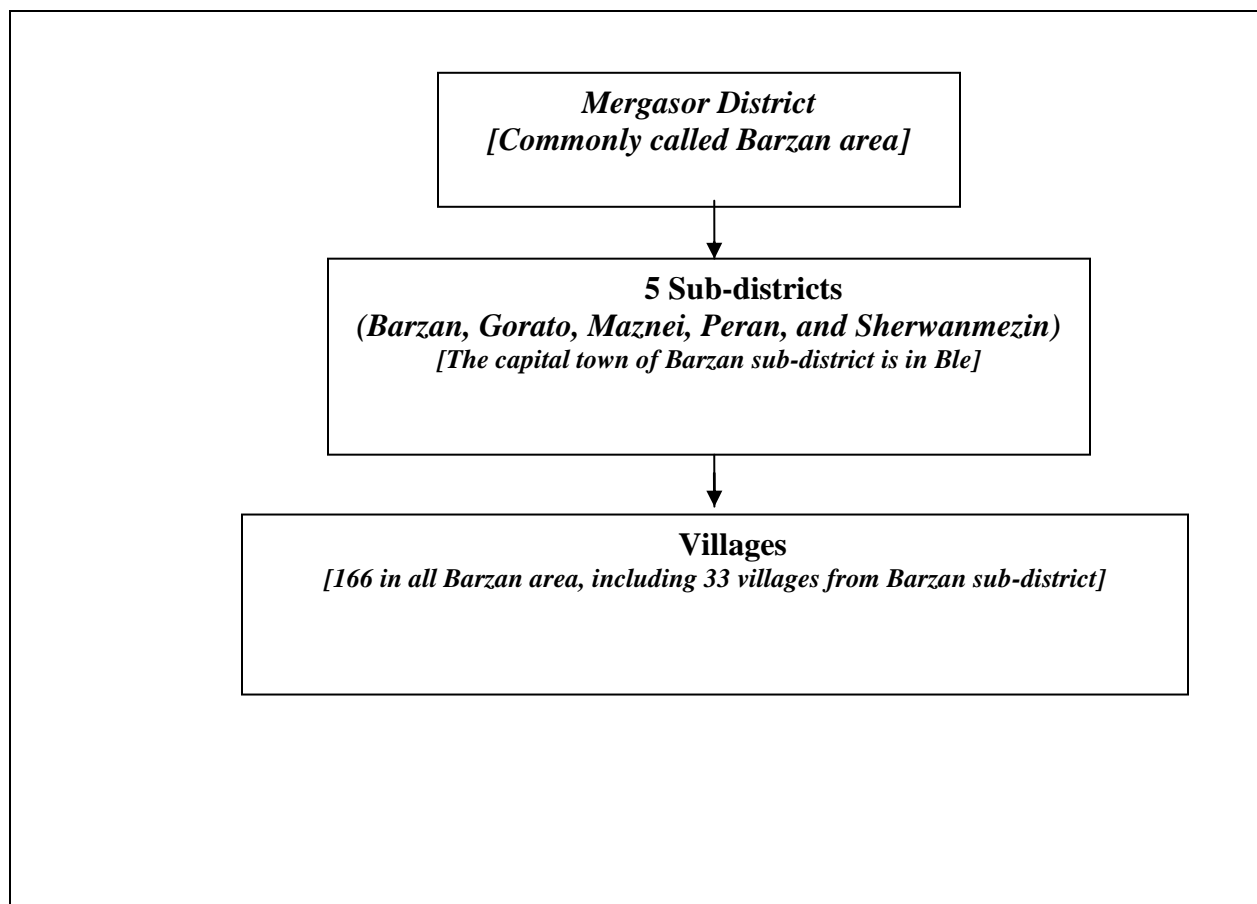
5. The case study: Barzan sub-district

5.1 Location, demographic features and land-use patterns

Location and area

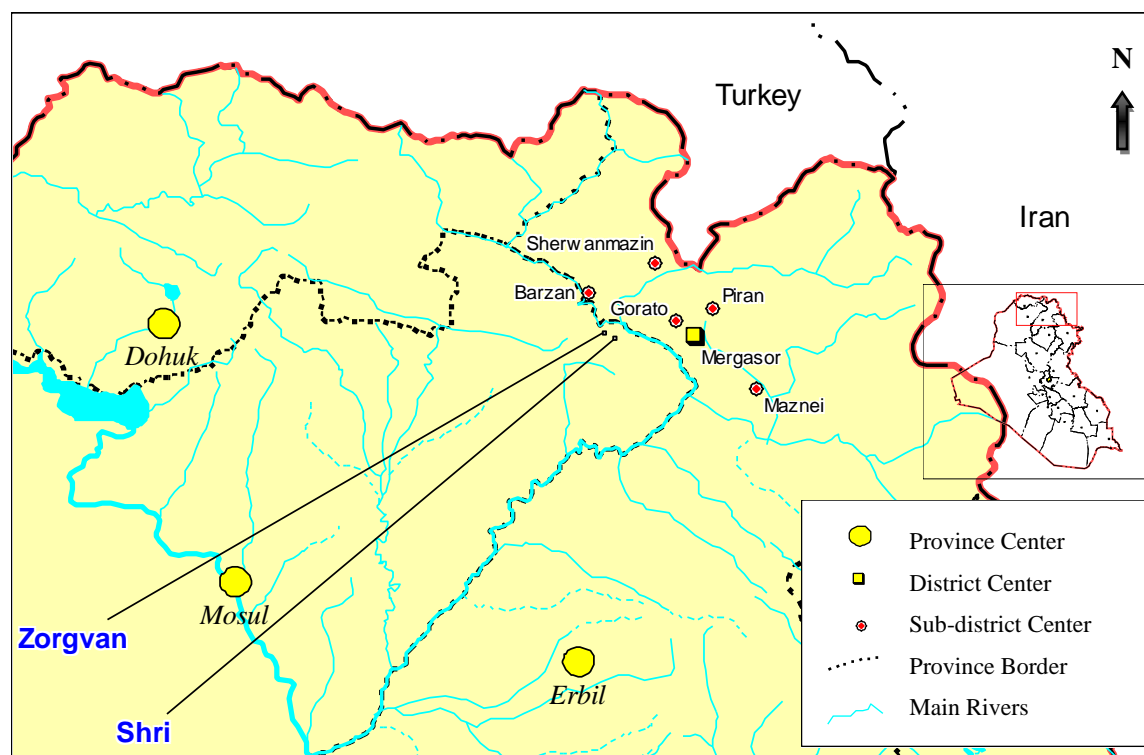
Mergasor district, which is commonly called Barzan area, is divided into five sub-districts Barzan, Gorato, Maznei, Peran and Sherwanmezin, Figures 5.1 and 5.2. Each sub-district has its own municipalities for the purpose of administration, election and service delivery. A sub-district is an intermediary level between village and district. Barzan sub-district is located in the mid-mountains. The total extent of the sub-district is 140 sq km. The sub-district is composed of a number of small valleys and mountains. The capital town of the sub-district is Ble, which is 130 km north of Erbil, the Kurdistan regional capital. There are 33 reconstructed villages while 12 other villages remain to be reconstructed in the sub-district of Barzan.

Figure 5.1: Local government structure in Barzan area



Source: Author's construct 2011

Figure 5.2: Map showing location of Margasor district and sub-districts.



Source: Ministry of Planning, Kurdistan Regional Government, 2008.

Mergasor district

Sub-districts:

- Barzan
- Gorato
- Maznei
- Peran
- Sherwanmezin

Demographic features

The total population of the sub-district was 14,096 people in 2008. According to the statistics by the Ministry of Planning in 2008, Ble, being Barzan's sub-district centre has 33% of the sub-district's population and the other villages have 67% of the population as shown in Table 5.1. The recent trend shows that it is one of the very fast increasing populations in the sub-districts. The land use rate (prime agricultural area to built-up area) is very high because of the rapid expansion of settlements due to increasing population pressure in the sub-district areas as well as lack of a clear land use policy.

Table 5.1: Demographic profile of Barzan sub-district, 2008

Description	Number	Proportion of total
Total population	14,096	100%
Male	6,900	49%
Female	7,196	51%
Capital of Barzan sub-district population	4,651	33%
Village population	9,445	67%
Total	14,096	100%
Total number of households	3,114	-
Average Households size	5	-
Population density (person/sq. km.)	101	-

Source: Ministry of Planning, Kurdistan Regional Government, Sub-districts profiles, March, 2008

Many families have continued to return to the Barzan area from Iran, where they had been in exile since 1975, causing an increase in the population growth rate in the sub-districts and other districts centres. The concentration of goods and services, higher chances of employment and other economic opportunities available in centres are the pull factors to the rapid growth of the population in these areas.

Spatial dimension, land-use patterns and other features

The land of Barzan area consists of mountain ranges, hillsides with scattered and scrubby oak forest, and fertile river valleys that can support orchards and vineyards. The major rivers that flow through the Barzan area are the Greater Zab and the Lesser Zab (locally called Rezan River).

The region experiences high and low temperatures during the summer and winter periods respectively. In the mountainous areas, temperatures fall to negative figures in winter, and rise above 40 centigrade in the summer. In the lower lands, the climate is milder. Although temperatures are consistently high, the climate is more predictable, and transportation is easier along the river valley.

The area is supported mostly by winter snowfall in the mountains that runs off every year into rivers. There is ample precipitation in the mountain areas to support extensive agriculture, but the amount of fertile land is too small for it to be a major agricultural region. The district has very good access to two larger cities of the Erbil and Dohuk provinces. The sub-district is

connected by national road network to Erbil and Dohuk and to Turkey and Iran.

An improvement of the road network situation will have significant impact on socio-economic conditions in the district. Thus, the level of interdependency of the district and functional-spatial integration will be further strengthened in the future. The land use pattern of the district is given in Table 5.2 below.

Table 5.2: Land use pattern, Barzan sub-district, 2009

Land use	Coverage area km.sq	Total
Low land areas	49,135.625	35%
Low mountainous areas	44,924.000	32%
High mountainous areas	46,327.875	33%
Total	140,387.500	100%
Cultivated land	109,425.000	78%
-Irrigated	53,000.000	-
-Non irrigated	56,425.000	-
Uncultivated land	30,962.500	22%
Total	140,387.500	100%

Source: Ministry of Planning, Kurdistan Regional Government, Sub-districts profiles, March, 2008

The Barzan area is to be reserved for agriculture, agriculture based economy through enhanced sustained support. The land has various topographies, with a large area of cultivated land and other natural resources. The agriculture economy should be economically sound and agriculture must be anchored in government policy that shapes the pattern of natural resources for farming opportunities to be in harmony with other activities through actions and programs. Agriculture should be an important productive economic potential activity in Barzan area.

5.2 Socio-economic conditions

Local economy

The sub-district is an attractive place from a tourism point of view. It has pleasant landscape and historical areas including caves. Before the genocide and the 1996 UN-Oil-for-Food program agriculture was the major economic base of the household economy,. The majority of Kurdish families relied on food baskets to survive, originally provided through the UN Oil-for-Food programme from 1996 to 2003 and continued by the interim government after the change in Iraq from Saddam Hussein's rule. The public sector provides more than 90 percent of income and large employment opportunities to its villages and district and sub-district population. Those villages which were once sources of production and the backbone of the economy of the country are becoming 'consumers' today.

Traditional environment system

Due to social traditions, several years of experience of the people and the system adopted by the Shaikhs, the Barzan area had an organized system to protect the environment. Therefore, when we compare the Barzan area to other areas all over the Kurdistan region, we see that the mountains there are covered with trees and forests and the wild animals are protected.

We can say that there is a special traditional environmental protection norm in this region which is becoming a culture in this area. The principles of its environmental protection are as follows:

1. Cutting wet and productive trees in all cases is prohibited. Citizens can use the dry trees for the purpose of domestic consumption such as firewood. Oak trees can be used to build the roof of houses, and farmers can benefit from the leaves of the trees to feed their animals.
2. The collection of honey from the hives is prohibited due to a shortage in the number of bees in the forests and mountains.
3. To kill black snakes is prohibited because this disturbs the ecological balance, the black snake can eat poisonous snakes.
4. Fishing in rivers is prohibited in the region throughout the breeding season, and hunting small fish, using small bombs is also prohibited.
5. Hunting of all kinds of animals such as mountain goats and birds is prohibited in the area of Barzan.

All of these regulations safeguard and protect the environment and were issued by Shaikh Ahmed Barzani, the grandfather of all the Barzani people, many decades ago. The green forest coverage and the number of animals are evidence of good local traditional environmental protection in Barzan (Sherwani, 2008:24). If one of these rules is violated by anyone, he or she must leave the village and stay in the Pereesa village, which is located in a remote area with no service and infrastructure. This was to serve as a deterrent to others from damaging the environment.

Religion

Kurds are overwhelmingly Muslims and are typically members of the Sunni branch of Islam. The Barzan population has always been the most liberal among Sunni Muslims. Barzani women for example, have never covered their face and have never worn the *abbaye*, the common all-covering garments worn by some Arab and Iranian women. *Kurdish culture and traditions are affected by other cultures like Turkish, Arabic and Persian Kurdistan* (Zayneb Khan, 2004:24). They work outside the home. Traditionally they worked in the fields but in modern times they have been educated to also hold jobs outside the home.

The family

The family is very important in the Barzani community. A household typically consists of a husband, a wife, and their children. Like all Kurdish households, family influence extends far beyond the household. A girl marries into her husband's family and is very much under the thumb of her mother-in-law, who wields considerable power acceptable by her public behaviour.

To a traditional Barzan man, the family is a very private matter, not to be discussed in casual conversation and not a matter for public concern. It is this attitude, from which most of the customs having to do with women arises. Women in a family have a significant value as part of a man's life, and his privacy and honours are violated if they are accused of or insulted by other men.

Most Barzani marriages are still arranged. It is often assumed that Barzani mean mostly only marry Barzani women, and seldom does a Barzani man marry a woman from another tribe. Traditionally Barzani women are not allowed to marry outsiders. Significant choice criteria include character, behaviour, and family connections. Sometimes the son or daughter might have a say in the choice of mate, but frequently the chosen mate is a cousin, even a first cousin. Despite all other Kurdish tribal customs, there is no *Zin be zin* (exchange of women in marriage arrangement). For example if a man wants to get married, the woman's family will also ask for a bride in return from his family, for their own son. In tribal Barzani, sons or daughters are freer in choosing a partner, even if the family disagrees, they can ask the Shaikh to begin and arrange the process of marriage.

Local autonomy

The Barzan community is traditionally tribal. The Barzan tribe is the social and political unit of a group of people, associated with a particular Barzan area. It is united more by geographical ties than by relationship to a common ancestor. Traditionally, a Kurdish tribe or local political group, at any given time had an acknowledged leader to whom absolute loyalty was expected (although the leader was often aided in decisions by a council). The leader's position was in some cases inherited and in other cases elective, and his power was frequently perceived in terms of the wealth at his command. The leader made all decisions and could be counted on to keep foremost in mind the benefit of tribal members and consequently consolidate his own power as a leader. Probably because of the inaccessibility of the area, the Barzan people have remained basically tribal or local despite the fact that the area has for centuries been nominally controlled by larger political entities. They are widely considered to hold their local political concerns above their religion of being Muslims, only insofar as the religion does not counter the interest of the tribe.

Harman Institution (Dazgay Harman)

The Harman Institution is a non-governmental organization established in 2002. It has its head office in the Barzan sub-district and is supported by the Kurdistan Regional Government through the Ministry of Culture, as well as international and local NGOs. The main objectives of the institute are the promotion of a culture of equality, democracy and tolerance. It again seeks to spread awareness of the legal issues, social, environmental protection and the rights of women and children based on the principle of human rights. The institute has the following sections: culture and genocide, public relations and finance, media, arts and children and finally management.

The Harman institution is very active in the Barzan area. All stakeholders greatly appreciated the efforts of the institute, particularly the radio programmes which are of interest to the residents of traditional villages as access to television is not allowed.

Radio programs are broadcast 10 hours a day and this serves as a free platform for all the people of Barzan.

These programmes serve as a bridge between the government and the people, as well as between all the people of the area. Between 40-50 people, mostly women normally discuss issues of equality between women and men on this radio programmes. Television programmes are also broadcasting to the people for three hours each night. The institution also publishes magazines and makes them available to the general public. For instance the 'Zerimok' magazine is a monthly magazine for children while 'Parjan' magazine is seasonal and focuses on women and genocide.

Social and technical infrastructures

Education and health facilities

The district has relatively good educational facilities that have been reconstructed recently (see table 5.3) below.

Table 5.3: Educational facilities of Barzan sub-district, 2008

Description	Number
Kindergarten	2
Primary School	28
Secondary School	11
High School	1

Source: Ministry of Planning, Sub-districts profiles, March, 2008

Table 5.4: Number of female and male teachers in Barzan sub-district, 2008

Description	No. female	No. male	Total
Kindergarten	10	-	10
Primary School	85	85	170
Secondary School	21	42	63
High School	3	6	9
Total	119	133	252

Source: Ministry of Planning, Sub-districts profiles, March, 2008

Numbers of female teachers in schools in Barzan sub-district are similar to the number of male teachers in primary schools. This is remarkable and a positive indication of the picture of female employment in the educational sector. It is an obvious phenomenon in traditional society that people prefer the sector of education and health as an area suitable for the employment of females.

Table 5.5: School enrolment in Barzan sub-district, 2008

Description	No. female	No. male	Total
Kindergarten	73	63	136
Primary School	733	871	1604
Secondary School	352	805	1157
High School	48	106	154
Total	1206	1845	3051

Source: Ministry of Planning, Sub-districts profiles, March, 2008

The above school enrolment at the various levels indicates a higher participation of males in education at all levels except at the Kindergarten level. The drop in the rates of females as they progress may be attributable to certain cultural practices such as early marriage. Also in certain communities where higher level educational facilities are not present in particular communities, the female child is not allowed by their parents to attend school outside. This has the likely ability of influencing the attainment level and participation of women in the decision-making process in the future.

Public health facilities are distributed throughout the Barzan area. But the service quality in remote areas is poor. Private clinics and nursing homes are located in most areas of the district. Two hospitals have been established and are operated by the Ministry of Health. There are no private or non-government hospitals in the Barzan area. Mobile clinics and other clinics are operated by non-governmental organizations. The number and type of health facilities related key indicators of health are given in Table 5.6.

Table 5.6: Number of Health facilities of Barzan sub-district, 2008

Description	Number
Hospital	2
Primary health centres	15
Doctors	12
Pharmacy	3
Health posts	62
Nursing Homes	74
Ambulances	4
Electric generator	15

Source: Ministry of Planning, Sub-districts profiles, March, 2008


Transportation and accessibility situation

Only the main roads are paved. The roads between the sub-district and villages need to be paved. There are still 17 villages that depend on animals for transportation. There is therefore a need to improve upon access to these areas especially in winter when there is snow, as well as in the rainy season.

5.3 Key reconstruction indicators of Barzan area in 2008 vis-a-vis 2005

Barzan area has evolved as one of the progressive districts in terms of improving its overall reconstruction indicators since 2005 in comparison to 2008. The district suffered under the genocide (*Anfal*) until 1991, when the process of reconstruction was started. However, its key indicators of reconstruction have shown significant improvement in the reconstruction, though it started from scratch in 1991. Table 5.5 shows comparative reconstruction indicators in the years 2005 and 2008.

Table 5.7: Key reconstruction indicators of Barzan sub-district in 2008 vis-a-vis 2005

Description	2005	2008
		
Population	12,545	14,096
-Male	6,148	6,900
-Female	6,397	7,196
No. Of Villages remain to be reconstructed	14	12
Illiteracy rate	70%	<i>Less than 70%</i>
Health		
Hospital	1	2
Primary Health Centres	5	15
Doctors	4	12
No. of Pharmacy	1	3
No. Nursing Homes	50	74
Health Posts	4	62
Ambulances	2	4
Electric generator	3	15
Education		
No. of Kindergarten	0	2
No. of Primary School	20	28
No. of Secondary schools	6	11
No. Institutes	1	1
Water and Electricity		
Availability of Electricity	80%	90%
Availability of Water	75%	90%

Source: Field work, March 2008, Joint Humanitarian Information centre, Vol. Iv, 2005: 48 and Ministry of Planning Sub-districts profile.

Note: 'Mergasor district, commonly called Barzan area includes the following sub-districts; Barzan, Gorato, Maznei, Peran, and Scerwanmezim'.

5.4 Historical overview of gender roles in Barzan sub-district

Harvard framework for gender analysis recognized roles as either productive or reproductive. As explained in Chapter 2.2, Moser (1998) later added a third category: community activity ‘triple role’ and multiple roles could be more appropriate to same case of Kurdish society. When engaging in gender analysis, we have to ask questions such as :Who does what? Why it is like this?

The chronology of significant events that had importance to the people of Barzan in the past, which also reflects on the present, and has influenced changes in gender roles over time, is presented on table 5.8. The table explores and highlights the characteristic roles of women and men in society, their available resources during different periods and the inequalities in their relationships, as well as how relations vary according to time and place, and between different groups of people in the case study of villages.

During the past, factors such as time, venue, war and different systems of governments based on tradition and other formal forms, have caused gender roles to change within the same community from re-productive to productive, and then to multiple-roles and again to reproductive roles in the current situation under the traditional system in the area.

Regardless of their current roles, female-headed households in Barzan area have kept their families and their country progressing despite decades of war and genocide that was severe under the Saddam Hussein regime. These experienced and capable women may be described as “Kurd's Hidden Treasure”, a valuable resource that the society must tap to fulfil its reconstruction and sustainable development goals. But highly patriarchal communities enforce rules, responsibilities and behaviour for women who affect their self-confidence and limit their access to information and skills. These reinforce their lower status.

Table 5.8: Chronology of the significant events and changes in gender roles from 1975-2009

Attribute		Period and Venue				
		Before 1975 Original Village	After 1975 South Iraq	1980 Collective Camp	1983 Collective Camp	1991-2009 Original Village
Role	Men	Productive (Farming)	Productive (Public services)	Productive (Public services)	*****	Productive (Public service)
	Women	Re-productive	Re-productive	Re-productive	Multiple roles	Re-productive

Source: own field work, 2007

The Barzan area was also affected by the three major issues that affected the entire Kurdistan region. These included the genocide that took place, the Oil-for-Food programme and a high level of public employment (which made the local people leave farming). Genocide for instance affected the Barzan people's demographics. The large number of widows has impacted negatively on society. For instance 40 families in the village of Shri had no males and from 1984 until 1992, only one child was born (Anfal Magazine, 2006:2).

Also, most people in the two villages surveyed cited the public sector as the main sources of employment and income for males and obtaining incentives to support females. Even in Shri village where there is no Mosque, the government has employed three people as services workers, so they receive a salary without doing anything. The Gemawar newspaper issued on 18th June 2007 mentioned that 75% of Kurdistan's regional government budget is allocated for salaries of the public sector (Gemawar, 2007:1). Also, the Planning Minister of the Region, on 8th January, 2008 mentioned in the Media news paper (Media newspaper, 2008: 3), that most of the public sector departments, agencies and units in the region were over staffed by about 40 percent.

5.5 Past experiences with gender participation in decision-making at local level

In the view of the study, it is important to incorporate the perspectives, knowledge and practices of local people, especially women, in the decision-making process. Past experiences with gender participation in local development, provides a good lesson on what went wrong and what went well. Good local examples are the irrigation project in Zorgvan and the Hand-made carpet project in Barzan village. The output and outcome of these projects could throw more light on the importance of the roles of women in participating in such projects and also in the entire decision-making process.

Hand-made carpet project

In many countries, the development of micro-enterprise has been used as a livelihood strategy for women. Such an enterprise allows women to combine work and family responsibilities. In 1993 handmade carpet centre was established by Caritas-Swiss NGO in Bazan village for revenue-generation in accordance with the recommendation of a study undertaken by the researcher with the participation of all stakeholders from NGOs, the public sector, local tribal leaders and other citizens. Men and women were also involved at all stages of project planning, implementation and follow-up. The project management was left in the hands of women and men of the Barzan village. For the first time the opening ceremony of the project was commissioned by the poorest child, because the project was for the poor and in the hands of the poor. In the light of previous genocide, this project has been beneficial for a number of female headed-households. It has also acted as a training and capacity building centre for other women who work at home. This pilot project was able to show how essential the participation of men and women is in decision-making, especially with regard to maintaining the project. Parallel with this project, the government attempted to set up a similar project in other villages such as Ble and Soran but was not successful due to the non-participation of men and women. They were ignored and did not participate in the planning process.

In an interview, one key informant who knew about the project observed that: *“The aim of the project as part of Caritas-Swiss programme was to increase the technical knowledge of the targeted group in hand-made carpets so that they can run their own business as a source of*

income. The Shaikh helped to select a land at Barzan, the Caritas-Swiss established the building, and our local committee in Barzan village, which included fhh and mhh helped to identify and select target group of fhh”.

The project was successful and is still ongoing in attaining its intended objectives. Information about the reasons behind the success of the project have been obtained from different groups surveyed and was crosschecked as a part of triangulation. The participants from the focus group discussion with female-headed households in 2008 mentioned that the target groups in Barzan had been involved since the start of the project, meaning the planning phase, and they had been properly trained to take over the project. Nevertheless, in a semi-structured interview, the head of project gave the following information with reference to the project:

“This was the first project in the region, which included the participation of the local committee of women and men in the design, planning, implementation and follow-up. This may be the first time in the history of Kurdistan in the opening ceremony of the project; when the poorest boy had opened the project. The project was for the poor and in the hands of the poor.”

The interview with key informants in Barzan, highlighted another important fact behind the success of the project: *“The Government has established a similar project in Ble, which is only 10 km away from Barzan village, but without a proper feasibility analysis. It ended after one year without achieving its goals. The reasons behind the failure of the project were that the group targeted in the Ble had not been involved in the planning, they were not informed of the assumption of the activity, and finally handing over the project to the same group, who run the Barzan Project”.*

Irrigation project in Zоргvan

The outcome of the interview of key informants and focus group discussions with local communities (Shri and Zоргvan villages) revealed that many development activities of NGOs failed. An example is the irrigation project in Zоргvan. This project was designed and implemented by outsiders. It ignored the capacities, priorities and needs of local men and women. Those made people hesitate and trust the NGOs less.

Even in a case where local people were asked for information, most development programmes were planned outside the community without involving them in the planning process. These could be among the key elements which had contributed to such failure. Participation requires that local women and men speak for themselves. After all, it is only the local people who know the details of the local ecology, and of the linkage among activities of their family members’ by whom, and under what constraints and what opportunities.

The knowledge and practices of local people need to be appreciated by development agents and built upon in development activities. The follow up interaction from FAO underscores this importance:

“An outsider who comes with a readymade solution is worse than useless and must first understand from us what our questions are and help us articulate the questions better, and then help us find solutions. The outsider alone is a friend who helps us to think about our problems on our own” (FAO, 2001:14).

A few conclusions can be drawn from the described cases. There is neither a clear framework from the government and NGOs to involve local people nor formal and informal institutions, in the planning and implementation process to ensure the sustainability of the implemented projects. Furthermore, in the research area, women are not usually directly involved in planning and the implementation of projects. Their men or other members of their

family only inform them. Because of that, most people and institutions surveyed agreed that it would be better to seriously incorporate the perspectives, knowledge and practices of local people in the decision-making process and planning procedures. This would reduce the risk, increase the sense of community ownership and effectively maintain and make projects more sustainable. Based on the above it can be said that, learning from what went wrong and why is as important as learning from what went well and why.

Traditional gender participation and environment protection measure (*Bang*)

The Bang process, practice is a traditional gender participation and environmental protection strategy whereby women and men alike participate on an equal basis in gathering wild nuts and vegetable seeds. This may provide good lessons for the participation of local people, especially women in the development process.

During the field research, the researcher discovered the value that the Barzan people place on the practice of traditional environment protection and women's participation in gathering wild nuts and vegetable seeds, and as a part of traditional community survival.

According to traditional rules which are issued by the Shaikh, the date of commencement of gathering wild nuts from Turpentine trees (*Kazwan*) is 15th October of each year. On the night of 14th October, the people from Shaikh would announce in all villages that the next day is the first day of collection of wild nuts (*Bang of Kazwan*). Based on traditional rules all women and men start the process of gathering nuts in the morning and the process continues for three days when it becomes open to all. The same process applies to every 20th of August with respect to vegetable seed gathering (*Kangrok*).

It seems that the Bang process should complement the efforts of development agencies to investigate first what people know and then develop and improve upon indigenous technologies. This strategy gives an indication of how local planning and the involvement of women have been an integral part of the development process at local level in the region. Though this strategy is not very well documented, it should be made to complement the efforts of development agencies to investigate first, what people know and have, and then develop and improve upon this indigenous knowledge.

Conclusion

The chapter has thrown light on the various characteristics of the study area including its location, local economy traditional environment system, religion, family, local autonomy and institutions. It has discussed the various key reconstruction indicators of the study area.

The Barzan people have faced hardship over the past century including genocide, and the destruction of their native land. The Barzan society is characterized as a society where tribal, religious and family ties dictate all aspects of life. Despite the process of the internal and external displacement of the Barzan people, the values of the tribal system (which is regarded above all other factors including religion) continue to shape the social structure. Also, the role of religion is in many ways similar to that of tribalism. Religious values are also an important component of traditional values in Barzan society especially in Khorshede castes which is highly patriarchal. Tribalism and religion have been integrated to promote patriarchy. Also patriarchal gender roles are perpetuated through socialization in the family and are re-enforced by tribalism and religion. The immediate chapter following presents a detailed analysis of women's participation and presents at the local level Barzan sub-district.

6. Capturing women's participation at the local level in the Kurdistan region: evidence from the Barzan sub-district

Introduction

The start of the 21st century has seen a dramatic revival in emphasis on women's participation in decision-making. This has renewed interest in the principles and procedure of democratic governance at the level closest to the people. With issues of justice, equity and human rights taking centre stage focus. This is the century of women's liberty. As such they need to be involved from the base upwards, and empowered to participate in democratic, pluralism values and freedom in the community.

In this respect, women's political participation means respecting women's rights in expressing their opinions within a societal frame; contributing to decision-making on issues related to development policies whether those institutions are formal or informal, direct or indirect. This chapter aims to present the results of the field study. These results include Kurdish women's political participation at local level, expressed through electoral activities, representation, political parties, and civil society institutions at decision-making levels. The researcher again reviews the obstacles and the most important stages in addressing political participation expressed through traditional customs, habits and religion.

The research process seeks to create benchmarks and hear, see, and consider directly from Kurdish women and men at local level. In response to this opportunity, the researcher distributed questionnaires with the cooperation of a traditional leader and others. Quota sampling was used in order to produce responses that reflect reality in two villages in the Barzan sub-district: Shri and Zorgvan. However, questionnaires were selected and analysed since most wives of male-headed households' gave the same answers as their husband: '*household is a joint decision-maker*' (Moser, 1998:20). As well as to other questionnaires those were not realistic. In addition to the questionnaires, the data collected was cross-checked through multi-methods (Interviews, focus group discussions, power matrix and participant observation). The weakness of one method could be compensated for by strengths of another.

The questionnaire was organized after consulting experts and administered face to face through combined methods in one survey to female-headed households and women in coordination with a female teacher from Zorgvan village, and also to male-headed households in coordination with an opinion leader from an agricultural line agency in Barzan sub-district. The questions in the surveys covered political participation in the past years. The complete questionnaire can be found in Appendix 1 see page 195-198.

6.1 Women's political participation in Barzan sub-district

1. Women's participation in civil society organizations

With the rise of the Kurdish liberty movement in the middle of the 20th century, the phenomenon of forming political, social, economic organisations and civil society significance of civil society organizations emerged in Kurdistan. Currently increasing and widening its roles as a result of the radical changes in Kurdish society in all aspects of social, economical and political space.

There are diverse reasons why people decline from affiliating with civil society organisations in the Kurdistan region. Kurdistan society stands to benefit from strengthening of the activities of its civil society organizations, unions and associations. Civil society can play an

important role in improving the participation of women in decision-making through capacity building programmes. They can also transfer administrative skills or gain the trust of members in sensitive positions of decision-making. Government has to stop dealing with associations superficially or superfluously organized without any efforts and hard work to build self-confidence. To know the causes for non-affiliation or non-voluntarism to the NGOs, associations, and unions, Table 6.1 summarizes the responses (25 fhh and 10 women). Table 6.1 gives reasons for non-affiliation of female-headed households and women to the civil society organizations.

Table 6.1: Reasons behind the non-affiliation of women with the civil society organization

Reasons	Ranks	No	%
The negative influence of tribal and family ties	1	16	45,7
Organizations affiliated to political parties.	2	7	20
Absence of democracy inside such organizations.	3	5	14,3
Don't defend women's right.	4	4	11,4
Conflict among women's organisations	5	3	8,6
Total	-	35	100

Source: own field work, 2007

The above table show the reasons why women fail to affiliate with and participate in civil society organizations. Most of the respondents and women leaders that were met during the field work confirmed the limited participation of women in the civil society organisations in general and at the local and rural levels in particular, which are still under the effect of customs and tribal traditions. It can be said that participation is not just narrow, but hardly includes women with a low level of education in various social groups. The results of this study also confirm a research by (Al-Mubarak, 2001:9), which indicated that the differences and difficulties of women affiliating and being part of civil society organisations, is also influenced by customs and traditions. Furthermore, the findings of the study agree with the results of Al-Zebari (2006:169) that powerful customs and traditions have dominated political life and their effect on women's affiliation with civil society organizations has been negative and are often criticized.

To give an instance of this line of thinking, the researcher quotes from a 2008 semi-structure interview with a leader of the Kurdistan Women's Union in Erbil (*Yeketi Afretani Kurdistan*), which is one of the organizations of the Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP). One of the women denied the extensive non-participation of women in decision-making in Kurdistan; an interviewee opposed the practice because she believed that it was against the tradition of the Kurdish people. Another leader of the women's organization opposed elopement and said:

"I cannot say that elopement is a good thing. We should understand clearly the society in which we live. What culture do we have? If we talk about women's rights within a very extensive framework, the society (Komel) itself will stand against us. We should walk with society gradually. The Islamic culture and Kurdish traditional, tribal culture have become societal law (yasay komalyeti); if we cross this border, we will not succeed".

A second cause is that, organizations are affiliated to political parties coupled with a lack of independence of women's organizations. In particular, the Kurdistan Women's Union (Yaketi Afretani Kurdistan) (KWU) is linked to the KDP; the Women's Union of Kurdistan (Yaketi Jinani Kurdistan) is also linked to the PUK. The same thing applies generally to other parties in Kurdistan. Each party has separate women, student, and other professional unions.

The role of civil society organizations becomes more important in the Kurdish society especially at the local level, which has witnessed great changes towards democracy and decentralisation since the beginning of the 1990s of the 20th century. They have the potential to work to promote the role of women in political life.

2. Women's participation in the electoral activities

As has been stated already in this study, the Kurdistan region and Kurdish society witnessed political, social and economic changes in the 1990s. The most prominent being the participation of Kurdish women in the public, economic and social life. Women's political participation is limited especially at the local level despite the democracy Kurdistan enjoys which demands effective women's participation because they represent about half of the region's population. As such, government and organizations must give due attention to women's issues to develop and progress in the society. Elections are seen as a means for people to choose their representatives and government, and a way of conferring legitimacy on the political system (UNDP, 2009:26). There have been several elections in the region where both women and men have participated. Comparing the participation of female-household and male-household heads in the various previous elections that have taken place in region within the past decade is indicated on (Table 6.2, 25 fhh and 25 mhh)

Table 6.2: Importance of and participation in the various types of election

Types of election	fhh			mhh		
	Ranks	No	%	Ranks	No.	%
Municipality councils election 2001	1	25	100	1	25	100
Regional election 1992	2	23	92	2	24	96
Iraqi National Assembly election 2005	3	22	88	3	23	92
Iraqi National Constitution 2005	4	18	72	4	19	76

Source: own field work, 2007

It is realised that these interviewees attached various levels of importance to these levels of election. The majority of the interviewees took part in the municipal council elections. This indicates that they attach more importance to this level of elections. Also the participation in the region's first elections of 1992 (regional elections in Kurdistan) ranked second while voting for the Iraqi National Assembly 2005 and the Iraqi national constitution ranked third and fourth respectively. It was noticed that generally participation of the number of male-headed households in the elections was greater than female-headed households which this could reflect the disinterest of women in political activities and experience beyond the local level.

As was mentioned earlier, the above gives us the basis that, there is constructive growth in

political participation at the local level. Due to the improved political atmosphere that the Kurdish society witnessed after the parliamentary elections of 1992, the methods used further strengthen and deepen democracy, with regard to the obstacles women are exposed to in their political life.

Therefore, there is a strong connection between political improvements and participation evaluated by the standard of qualifications in the governmental and political positions. In addition, the power at local and regional levels is no longer based on the ability to inherit positions and power in the traditional ways.

Regarding the choice of gender in the selection of a candidate during the previous elections, most of the respondents, especially male-headed household voters, selected male candidates, Table 6.3 details this.

Table 6.3: Reasons for preferring men as candidates (25, fhh and 25, mhh)

Reasons	Ranks	No.	%
Patriarchal belief	1	45	75
Less chance for electing women by political parties	2	36	60
Perception of society that women cannot serve as leaders	3	24	40
Man is perceived as more capable than women	4	18	30

Source: own field work, 2007

The existence of such differences between the answers of both male-headed households and female-headed households as to their preferences towards males to be their candidates, seems normal due to the reasons that men are more capable than women in performing political activities.

This contradicts what has been referred to in the theoretical context with regards to the political participation and its obstacles, which is a reflection of the culture of the society as the main factor for shaping personality and limiting the roles. However, Kurdish culture especially at the local and rural level is considered tribal and patriarchal; males have more authority than women. In addition, women's lack of trust in themselves affects their leadership positions in society. Some believe that religion deprives women of political participation, and that men are more rational and experienced in making decisions. Regarding reasons for preferring men as candidates, as presented in Table 6.3 men were thought to have more ability than women in political activities. However, the results in the table overlap as respondents (25 fhh and 25 mhh), gave multiple responses. Also according to the responses, women have less chance of being selected by political parties. This supports the general view that Kurdistan political parties are failing to seriously involve women in their political activities. Independent and reform minded women have been largely excluded from the party list system in municipality, regional, and national elections.

Women's presence is limited in parties and political movements and the differences are obvious and more biased towards men within these organizations. For instance the percentage of representation of women was about 4% in the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) in 2007. Approximately a quarter of the respondents said that man has the ability to endure more than woman and more than a quarter looked down on women in society. They were of the opinion

that the importance of women in society is not like that of men, and women should not have the same roles and responsibilities.

It is obvious from this that bias exists against women. This was also clearly indicated in the theoretical part of this study especially in traditional societies. Again, the results confirm a study in Jordan regarding the participation of Jordanian women in political life. In that, nearly half of the respondents confessed that men are more capable than women in political life (Al-Zebari, 2006:174). Reasons behind the selection of women as candidates in the elections are presented in Table 6.4. In (25 fhh and 25 mhh), respondents were interviewed. But the results in the table also overlap as respondents gave multiple responses.

As indicated in Table 6.4, more than one third of respondents indicated that women have the ability to understand women's issues more than men. Women's presence in parliament helps to bring out and discuss women's important issues to assist them in getting their rights. In addition, the respondents also believe that women being elected will strengthen their position in society and will help improve their status. Less than half believe that women have ability in political activities and will not do worse than men if given the chance to practice political activities.

Table 6.4: Reasons behind selecting women in elections (25, fhh and 25, mhh)

Reasons	Ranks	No.	%
Women have the ability to understand women's situations better than men.	1	25	42
Having women in the parliament helps to raise women's issues	2	20	33
Empowering and supporting women in society	3	16	27
Women have the capability and qualifications to work in political life	4	12	20
More independence for women and releasing them from the control of men	5	5	8

Source: own field work, 2007

As a woman parliamentarian explained during the semi-structured interview in Kurdish parliament on 17th April 2007:

“On top of all, women's goal in parliament must be intended at breaking the patriarchal faith that men are born to rule, and women to be ruled, mainly in countryside part of Kurdistan. For that cause the important role of women is to make it clear that women are equally valuable as parliamentarians, and that they can use their position to make clear the inadequacies in men's performance such as the protecting interest of women”.

The enhancement of the involvement of Kurdish women in political activities will increase their political legitimacy on the one hand and on the other will again highlight this neglected category of society. Less than a quarter of respondents stated that electing women would increase women's independence and their emancipation from the dominance of men.

Regarding individual decisions to participate in the election and nominating candidates, the question was posed whether such decision was based on the individual's own choice or influenced by family decisions? More than one third of respondents (fhh and mhh), said that their decision to participate and nominate their candidates was their own and in fact, the majority of male-headed household respondents, and more than half of female-headed household respondents, indicated that they did so on their own volition. Family decision ranked second. About a quarter of the male-headed household respondents and more than a quarter of female-

headed household respondents said that their decision to choose candidates was influenced by family decisions. This analysis therefore brings to the fore that decisions to participate and nominate candidates were less influenced by family decision.

The existence of the differences between the two groups is normal and brings us back to family upbringing and socialization where the male should be the decision-maker at home and has the freedom of movement and expression and looks down on women.

The findings of the study point out the necessity of assigning seats to women in parliament and municipality in Kurdistan. More than half of the female-headed household expressed the need of assigning seats to women, while a quarter of the male-headed household were against it.

Results from a recent study agree with the studies of the Jordanian Pettygrove (2006:2) and Al-Zebari (2006:177). In these studies more than half of the respondents said it was necessary to assign seats for females, but the number of women supporting the presence of women was more than men. In the current study however the presence of men is more than women in assigning seats for women in the parliament and provincial councils.

In many countries, a quota system is used to provide a special number of seats for women to represent themselves in the parliament and provincial councils. In Jordan, the government decided to assign 30% of seats for women in parliament. According to Iraq's constitution of the year 2005, about 25% seats of the National Assembly have been reserved for women. Also the Kurdistan regional parliament indicated a quota of 30% seats for women in the parliament of Kurdistan Region. In addition not less than 30% of seats in provincial councils and municipality councils were to be given to women in 2009. This has been implemented in the Kurdistan parliament, but not yet in provincial and municipality councils.

3. Women's membership in political parties

Women seek to join political parties and political movements so as to participate in political decision-making and carry out their duties and rights as citizens. The phenomenon of official affiliation to a party or political movement and enjoying its membership privileges is one aspect of active political participation for women. The existence of these differences between female-headed households and male-headed households reaffirms the belief of women that politics is the monopoly of men. Despite the creation of awareness, political participation by women is limited. This is due to traditional culture and the dominance of one political party, Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) in the Barzan sub-district so that women do not have the chance to join any other party in addition to marginalization of women's role and nomination to leadership positions. Furthermore, men's rejection, especially those with tribal tendencies, is based on the concerns that women do not have the capability to lead a party especially in the rural communities.

The study found that, generally women often joined political parties in their youth when in school in the Kurdistan region, but the majority moved away from political activities in their married lives. Their involvement sometimes also becomes restricted to committees of the party or social affairs. This occurs for a number of reasons:

- Lack of internal democracy of the different Kurdish political parties;
- Perception prevailing in the society regarding the position and status of women;
- Traditional habits and customs dominate in the family.

To enhance the understanding of the reasons behind limited women's participation in political parties, 25 female-headed household and 25 male-headed household were interviewed. The result is presented in Tables 6.5, and 6.6. (Again the answers overlap as respondents gave multi

answers). It is clear that social traditions and the priority of housekeeping for women are common issues identified by both males and females and ranked number one and two respectively. This shows that habits and social traditions constitute a major factor to women's limited participation besides the house work factor or limited time.

Table 6.5: Reasons behind women's limit membership in parties (25, mhh Responses)

Reasons	Ranks	No	%
The negative influence of tribal and family ties	1	14	56
Housekeeping (Limited time)	2	8	32
Weakness in political awareness creation	3	6	24
Women are perceived as less capable than men to serve in politics	4	5	20
Non-initiative of parties by taking women's issues seriously	5	3	12

Source: own field work, 2007

Table 6.6: Reasons for women's limit membership in parties (25, fhh responses)

Reasons	Ranks	No	%
The negative influence of tribal and family ties	1	15	60
Housekeeping (Limited time)	2	10	40
Non-initiative of parties in taking women's issues seriously	3	8	32
Common perception that politics are just for men	4	7	28
Weakness in political awareness creation	5	5	20
Parties' rejection in electing women on top of the list.	6	4	16

Source: own field work, 2007

Mukiryani (2009) argues that so much time is needed for cleaning the house, cooking, raising children and serving the husband at home which are the major duties of women at home. If a woman has administrative work outside (productive), there would be insufficient time to participate or think about politics. This is why women regard politics as an unnecessary activity. But this age requires women to participate in politics. They should participate in seminars, conferences, dialogues and discussions. But sad to say that time in Kurdish society is not the concern of women but their concern to the home. In other words, women are the property of the home (female the house maker), so all these duties at home leave no time and opportunity for women to participate in other activities outside (Mukiryani, 2009:44).

The low level of women's political awareness is one of the reasons for their limited participation in politics. This is a result of the feeble initiatives of the political parties in taking women's issues seriously. The fourth rank is the common feeling that politics is for the prerogative of men. This prevails in patriarchal societies which only see politics through the eyes of men. It is a common perception in these societies that women were only made for men. Also,

women consider politics as a strange field out of the domain of their experiences. This means, in other words, that men are more capable of making decisions than women. This finding agrees with the field research findings by Al-Zebari (2006:180) in Kurdistan region and the Centre of Strategic Researches about women and democracy in Jordan.

The failure of parties to take initiatives towards women's issues seriously, ranked as fifth, compounded by weak women's political awareness. The rejection of female candidates by political parties is another contributory factor. These factors are considered the most important reasons behind women's poor participation in political activities. Political parties could possibly influence politics positively by changing traditional roles and expanding the field of women's political participation by facilitating their appointment to leadership positions in society. Therefore, it is important for observers and women's movements in Kurdistan to direct their attention to studying these mechanisms and push for change and eradication of all types of discrimination restricting women's participation in politics.

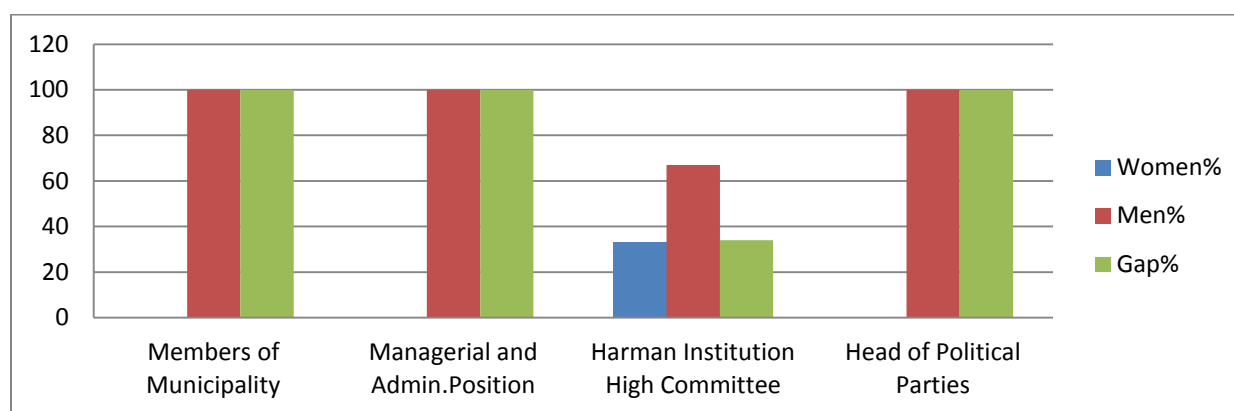
4. Women in leadership positions

There is significant practical evidence that democracy and individual rights, including those of women in decision-making positions, require quantity of basic level of socio-economic development, such as essential education, or some economic, social and administrative capacity to become effective in decision-making processes (Linder, 2004:30).

The assumption to any leadership responsibility in various fields including politics requires, in general, certain accumulated skills and capabilities from experience and training. Gender should not be counted as one of the considerations for this kind of responsibility.

The number of women in managerial and administrative positions in government Barzan sub-district is limited. In addition there are no female members in the municipal council. Despite all these, out of 6 committee members of the Harman institute, 2 are females, constituting about 33%. As well as 55% of the total staff of the Harman institution is females. See figure 6.1.

Figure 6.1: Women's participation, representation and gender gap Barzan sub-district



Source: Author's construct 2011

During the field work, a question was posed whether women should be given leadership and administrative tasks and responsibilities. More than a third of the male-headed households and half of the female-headed households answered positively. Despite that fact, the number of women employed in decision-making positions in government is very low as was mentioned in the theoretical discussion. In addition, there is reluctance by the powers that be to changing the traditional roles of women in Kurdish society. Those women who have accessed such leadership

positions do so not because of the level of their qualifications due to the low education level of women in Kurdish society compared with women in general and in rural areas especially or success in their positions, but rather political connections and family and tribal relationships.

The results of the current study agree with those of an Iraqi study by Al-Zebari (2006:182) on how some women obtain leadership positions. It concluded that half of the samples studied asserted that women's accessibility to such leadership positions were influenced by the above factors.

Through comparing opinions of males and females on the reasons for not entrusting responsibilities or leadership positions to women, the researcher noticed the existence of similarities. Most of the important causes why many leadership or administrative positions are recently occupied mainly by men, concerns their experience and knowledge level. This was based on the responses of more than half of the males and less than half of the females included in the research.

Efforts must therefore be made to promote effective participation of women in all fields, and the creation of opportunities to develop their capabilities, which could be realized through appropriate training. As Anderson (1991) has recognized, "training approaches and their effectiveness are influenced by the social, economic and institutional context in which they occur. Nevertheless, the basic assumption on which all training rests is that it is a powerful 'transforming' tool through which people (women and men) learn new attitudes, knowledge or skills. Once acquired, this will make them become more effective at what they do", particularly, in rural areas where, women and girls face difficulties in accessing education (Moser, 1998:177). Thus women will be able to hold leadership positions and participate in decision-making in society. However, the leadership positions in employment are always given to men because of social considerations, which have nothing to do with capability, ability or leadership and administrative experience. Attaining leadership positions in the region depends on party loyalty and has more to do with favouritism than administrative capacity, experience and capability of both men and women. It therefore seems that most leadership positions attained by women at all levels in the Kurdistan region are influenced by party affiliation and loyalty, tribal relationships and family ties.

5. The role of legislation and laws relating to the status of women

Since mankind's early laws and legal codes, Iraq has shown concern for women. The code of Hammurabi gives legal consideration to women and contains provisions to protect the wife and safeguard her financial and human rights (FAO and IFAD, 2004:44).

There is no doubt that legislations and laws are a reflection of thoughts, social and economical interests in society. Accordingly, any change in society may come about by making changes in the legal systems of that society. Kurdistan regional legislations and laws guaranteed women's participation in general and political activities, on the principle of equality between men and women. During the field work a question regarding the effect of Kurdish legislations and laws on the current situation of women was posed. Comparing opinions of male-headed households and female-headed households, half of the respondents stated positively that the opinions of a small number of male-headed households were negative; it seems that this related to those new legislations and laws issued by parliament, for instance, amendment of personal civil identity, retribution law and a committee to defend women's affairs in parliament, in addition to the Women Affairs Ministry.

Therefore, it can be concluded that Kurdish women's roles have seen a slight improvement after

the establishment of the Kurdish government and parliament in 1992. However, the development of legal legislation related to women is the responsibility of all social institutions. The role to be played by all women's groups in this respect is to support women and their role in the society and political life. From the analysis of women's political, social and economical status in Kurdistan, it seems that a small number of male-headed households and female-headed households are of the opinion that it is good while half of the male-headed household's respondents stated that women's situation is medium comparing to the half of the females. From this, we conclude that although there has been relative progress, Kurdish women's progress is still limited. It goes back to several interrelated factors. To understand the challenges of women's political, social and economical roles in Kurdish society Tables 6.7 and 6.8 present the details:

Table 6.7: Reasons for weak women's status in society from polling 25,mhh

Reasons	Ranks
Society disallowances of women's political involvement	1
Low education level	2
Inadequate financial capacity of women	3
Unavailability of women's freedom.	4
Men's injustice towards women	5

Source: own field work, 2007

Table 6.8: Reasons behind women's status in the society from polling 25,fhh

Reasons	Ranks
Society disallowances of women's political involvement	1
Inequality of rights between men and women	2
Inadequate financial capacity of women	3
Unavailability of women's freedom	4
Weakness in educational level	5

Source: own field work, 2007

Comparing the answers of the respondents in the two tables about the reasons of women's limitation in political and social roles and positions in society, the results confirmed the non-acceptance in society of women's political activities as indicated in Table 6.7. It seems that women are disadvantaged from participating in political activities because of family influence. Furthermore, society's traditions, habits and standards limit their freedom and status in society. While low level of education ranked second for the responses from mhh concerning the limited status of women in society, inequality of males and females before the law was ranked second by female respondents. Though the laws of the land put men and women at the same level, this is not so in actual practice as indicated by the responses above. Thus laws prescribing equality for

both sexes will not work if there is no radical change in social beliefs and structures.

The study concluded from earlier facts that there is a need to make clear to Kurdish women, their political legal awareness and also develop legislation that reflects strategic gender needs, and develop policy approach in compliance with International norms and principles and Human Rights in harmony with Kurdish traditional society.

A traditional leader from Barzan emphasised this need during a semi-structured interview: *“It is difficult to concentrate on women’s participation in political activities according to the law in isolation from the status in which it finds itself. The customary law (adaiti mlati Barzan) of Barzeanan tribe has guidelines for all segments of community, including women”*.

Furthermore, the participants from the focus group discussion in Shri village highlighted that:

“The traditional rules (adat) and religious law (fatwa of Shaikhs) are being re-established among the Barzan community after we got back to our village. Women risk losing all the gains made in terms of their rights, and not obtaining any benefit from the Kurdistan constitution”.

The religious law (*fatwa of Shaikhs*) is, in some areas, a positive influence, and necessary in promoting progressive positive aspects thereof. The survey by Iraq Legal Development Project, ILDP (2006) pointed to the fatwa issued by Ayatolla Ali Al Sistani (*He is the most important Shiite cleric in Iraq*) for the January 2005 national elections as of great significance “in creating awareness among the people regarding the necessity of women’s participation, regardless of whether father or spouse objects” (ILPD, 2006:21).

6.2 Obstacles to women’s participation at Barzan sub-district

There are several obstacles at the local level that inhibit or assist women’s political participation. These include religion, patriarchal values, patronage and family limits, illiteracy and absence of political education programs standing in the way of women’s advancement (ibid: 25). These are discussed below.

1. Religion and women’s participation

Traditional religious belief plays an important role in marginalising women’s political leadership positions. Most male-headed households and female-headed households interviewed believed that religious belief deprives women of participation in political activities.

By comparing both answers for (25, mhh and 25, fhh) shown in table 6.9, it was noticed that there is agreement of both males and females on the role of religious belief in women’s participation in political activities. It was also mentioned that according religious practices in the area women’s rightful role is raising children at home.

Table 6.9: Religious and other impediments to women's participation (mhh and fhh)

Reasons	Ranks
The negative influence of religion	1
Religion sees women's rightful position as delivering and raising children at home	2
Other reasons	3

Source: own field work, 2007

These findings agree with the research carried out by Mukiryani (2009). She indicated that, most of the Kurdish population are Muslims and are greatly attached and committed to their religion even in their daily lives. If we read carefully the verses of the holy Qur'an-the holy book of the Islamic faith. It is noted that some verses ask women to always be at home and only when necessary be close to men. As much as they could not go out, if they went out they should cover all the parts of their bodies even their faces. This plays a negative role that hampers women in participating in all aspects of life and life outside their homes. This has rendered women as subordinates to men (Mukiryani, 2009:46).

Also, Islamic fundamentalists are of the view that men and women are equal but have different responsibilities in society. They discuss women, men and their connection to nature and say that, women are not born to be in the public sphere, they are only born to take care of the family. Moreover, they believe in a patriarchal societal system and its control of women and their behaviour (Zayneb Khan, 2004:45). One questions whether Kurdish non-Muslims face similar challenges in their quest to improve their lot and advance their political careers. It has been pointed out that the major issue of concern is not so much the religious factor, but broader aspects of new tribalism. It is not culture alone that impacts on women's political participation, but a whole multitude of other factors come together to form a complex scheme.

2. Patriarchal values

"In patriarchal societies, this means that the organizations' culture, rules, and outcomes are modelled on male values and attitudes. Thus, they are often unfavourable to women, fail to recognize and reward their contributions to organisations, and therefore recreate and reproduce the gender hierarchies and inequalities dominant in the wider world" (March et al, 2005:9).

Patriarchal values have an effect in determining women's role in society. Through the field research, it came to light that both male-headed households and female-headed households have similar views about patriarchal values of participation and the kind of roles they are to play. This is related to our cultural civilization and educational background including religion. Through social patronage, members of society built the priorities of social ladders that made women play major role to be housekeeper role. However, men's special role goes beyond this limit and includes the general field of joining public work and dealing with economic institutions and other areas that organizes and takes care of general affairs of society including politics.

Table 6.10: Patriarchal Values behind women's role in society respondents' opinion

Patriarchal values of respondents (25, mhh and 25, fhh)	Ranks
Values concerning honour	1
Values concerning women's isolation and restriction of her movements	2
Values specifying women's rights in society.	3
Values of dividing working activities between men and women	4
Other values	5

Source: own field work, 2007

Table 6.10 indicates the opinion of respondents (25, mhh and 25, fhh), about the effective patriarchal values behind women's role in society. Values concerning honour were ranked first. This was followed by values concerning women's isolation and restriction of movement. Values limiting women's rights in society was ranked third while values concerning the division of working activities between men and women were fourth. The respondents also gave other values that were outside the above categories. The respondents at this point also indicated a negative attitude that women were holders of the honour of the family. All other roles of women in economic, social and in politics activities have been built around this belief. This is a characteristic eastern society that holds on to its habits and traditions. Social isolation, limited movement and communication have been imposed on Kurdish women especially in the rural areas according to these values. This led to their separation from cultural and scientific trends in society. That is why women have been deprived of the opportunity of participation by their ability and status to become active and productive rather than being a consumer and dependent on others.

According to the participants in the focus group discussion in Zorqvan village:
"Although the legal provision exists, women are reluctant to set up any activities without the approval of their husbands, fathers, and male members of their family because of patriarchy, cultural traditions and customs".

Kurdish society is basically a patriarchal society with a complex social structure which influences all aspects of social, cultural, economic and political life of the people. Women have a complex identity made up of class and ethnicity. A woman coming from a certain class, or ethnicity has different problems compared to that of women coming from another ethnic group or class in Kurdistan. Kurdish women are discriminated against, because of son-preferring traditions dominated by religious and traditional beliefs. Also traditional cultural values militate against the advantage, progress and participation of women in any political process.

Names of women are not mentioned from birth till funeral ceremonies. Names of Kurdish women, like other Muslim women, are only mentioned as a mother only during a funeral ceremony.

Despite this, the researcher observed during field work in the Barzan area that there is one male who used his mother's name instead of his father's in all his official documents. When the researcher asked about the rationale behind this, he stated that *"I have never seen my father and never know the one who put me in this situation. I know only my mother"*

Some bad examples of negative traditional and cultural male practices are:
 If one person decides to be a Malla (Islamic religious person), he should study for a long period and pass many examinations and then he can hold the title of Malla, but when he is married his

wife gets the title of (*Malla Zein*) which means ‘wife of Malla’s just on the first night of the wedding ceremony. This is the same with other traditional leaders such Agha and Shaikh. Despite this, when the daughter of Agha or Shaikh marries a normal person she had no opportunity to get the title of her class as Agha or Shaikh. The researcher came across a practical example in the case study area during the field work. He observed that the second wife of one Shaikh was from a normal family and she currently has all authority and access as the wife of a Shaikh, but while she was a worker in the Shaikh’s house before he married her, she had no titles. These are practical examples of the patriarchal community of the Barzan area.

3. Patronage and family constraints

Family upbringing and the socialization process differs for males and females in Kurdish society as well as other eastern societies. All these several of roles are allocated to the different sexes. There are different instructions for male and females in Kurdish families despite that both genders have legal opportunities in their lives. The Kurdish families still enforce this authority and practice against women. We conclude from the field study that there exists a convergence in opinions among the study cases about the family instruction pattern which separates the son and the daughter. It gives the male authority and power within the family that puts women second in all things. Her position is below him, and she must perform her feminine traditional role. This forms part of her characteristics. Tables 6.11 and 6.12 present the reasons related to patronage and family constraints from the point of view of both the 25 male-headed households and 25 female-headed household interviewed. But again the responses in the table overlap as respondents gave multiple answers.

Both groups agree on the mastery power of the male, on his position, and role inside the family. This approves what has been discussed previously in the theoretical and field studies that the Kurdish families, like other eastern families, are headed by men and they have authority (father, big brother) over other members of the family (patriarchal).

Table 6.11 Reasons related to patronage and family constraints, 25, mhh respondents

Reasons	Ranks	No	%
Mastery power of the males, on his position, and role partitioning inside the family. (<i>Patriarchal Beliefs</i>).	1	12	48
More liberty for sons than daughters	2	10	40
Sons participate more in decision-making than daughters inside family (Son decision-maker, daughter house-maker)	3	9	36
Not allowing daughters in most cases to complete their education	4	7	28
Do not give chance to daughters to communicate with others	5	5	20

Source: own field work, 2007

Table 6.12: Reasons related to patronage family constraints, 25, fhh respondents

Reasons	Ranks	No	%
Mastery power of the males, on his position, and role partitioning inside the family. (<i>Patriarchal Beliefs</i>).	1	15	60
Son decision-making participations more than daughters inside family.	2	13	50
More liberty for sons than daughters	3	12	48
Non allowing daughters in most cases to complete her education (Family discrimination)	4	11	44
Do not give chance to daughters to communicate with others	5	10	40

Source: own field work, 2007

From comparison of the various answers in the tables above, it is evident that women are more concerned about issues that influence their patronage and family constraints than men.

Also from earlier facts, we can conclude that there is a significant variation of instruction and learning patterns inside the Kurdish family. These instruction methods inside the Kurdish family reflect the conservativeness of character of the 'eastern' man who is thought to indicate the reputation of the family and his honour through the difference in the methodical treatment of the two genders. There exists a paternal male authority system where the man has the final word, over privileges whether it is economical, sociological or cultural.

Thus these patterns reflect that, the chances boys have are more than those of girls. This makes the girl a follower and with less influence in the family. She is also relegated to a second level in political participations, in addition to decreasing her ambition and participation in political activities. This limits her ambitions in economic, cultural, and political arenas by keeping her busy inside the house and the family.

From the perspective of female-headed households, it is just an indication that the family stands as an obstacle in women's progress. These patterns reflect what is expected of women according eastern values, and opposing these values crossing red lights and non customary for her family and society manners. This pattern, in the opinion of the researcher, indicates a relationship between the family instruction patterns and the weakness of political participation of women. While the man grows inside the family occupying leadership and monopolising decision-making, the woman's destiny is only inside the home.

Barzan social norms and attitudes, which have eulogized women's roles in the private sphere while creating barriers to their participation in the public domain, remain an important obstacle.

The World Bank (in IDEA, 2005:56) sees gender roles and dynamics within the household as being shaped by the traditional gender paradigm that presumes that, the most important contributions women can make to the family and society, are as homemakers and mothers. While the World Bank put this paradigm forward to explain the low rates of female participation in the labour force, it can easily be applied to explain their low rates of participation in political or public life in general. This gender paradigm is based on four elements:

- "The centrality of the family, rather than the individual, as the main unit of the society. This emphasis on the family is a justification for equivalent, rather than equal, rights.

- The assumption that the man is the sole breadwinner of the family
- A ‘code of modesty’ under family honour and dignity on the reputation of the woman prevails. This code imposes restrictions on interaction between men and women.
- An unequal balance of power in the private sphere that affects women’s access to the public sphere. This power difference is anchored in family laws” (IDEA, 2005:56).

Today, the Kurdish woman is obviously devoted to achieving equality, freedom, democracy, power of authority and responsibility in decision-making, after various efforts have been made to improve her role in society. Also immigration outside the country, especially the immigration of many Barzani families to Russia until their return in 1958 and Iran from 1975 till their return after the uprising of the Kurds in 1991 has influenced the changing role of women in Kurdish society as these migrants came into contact with different cultures and traditions that supported an improved role for women in society. Moreover, the changes in laws and civil legislation for the benefit of women, institution of civil society and activating their roles in addition to other different impacts like globalization, have all had their affect on the family and the change of women’s roles in the community.

During the interview with both males and females, the majority of them were certain that although there has been a change in women’s roles in the community, a woman still favours loyalty to her family. At some point in field work semi-structured interview, a woman from Dazgay Harman in Barzan explained that *“one of the greatest obstacles to the equalization of women's right is the patriarchal traditional power structure within family. Even when statutory laws have been revised in women's favour, customary laws continue to render this purely academic”*.

4. Educations and political participation

Due to the vital importance of education and its roles in the political participation process, acknowledging its impact in developing woman’s position and their role in the Kurdish community is of vital significance. Haji Qadiri Koyi (1818-1897) a Malla and Poet who had migrated to Istanbul, called on the Kurds to rise up and establish their own state. He encouraged them to use their own language, collect and publish their oral and written literature, acquire modern secular science, allow female education, and engage in publishing newspapers and journals (Mojab, 2001:72). “The economic empowerment of women, along with education and access to information, will take women from the constraints of the household to full participation in politics” (IDEA, 2005:42).

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) articulates the universal right to education which states *“everyone has the right to education”*. The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), reiterates the right to education, which the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR) has coined as an *“empowerment right”*. *The committee explains that “education has a vital role in empowering women, safeguarding children from exploitative and hazardous labour and sexual exploitation, promoting human rights and democracy, protecting the environment, and controlling population growth”*. Coupled with equality, the Iraqi Constitution guarantees equality to women and girls. Islamic *Shari’a*, in addition provides an added layer of protection for equal access to education (ILDLP, 2006:129).

Interviews revealed that illiteracy and low level of education of women led to the downgrading of their position and roles in the society. We can conclude that education changes

the role and position of women in society by securing knowledge and work through economic and social growth which can change the traditional Kurdish women's role as a wife and mother. It also brings proportional progress in changing the marriage pattern, and also eliminates the early marriage. Education will also result in women participating in family authority, and activating her role in the family decision-making. Obtaining education and working outside the home will reduce some family roles of women, especially their reproductive role.

The low educational level of Kurdish women is related to the conservative nature of Kurdish society especially in the rural community and some religious families in the civilized community. These groups express the normal position of women as marriage and household life. "In Iraq, social and cultural conditions have made women, even educated ones, regard education not as a means of qualification and employment, but as a means to become a good wife and mother" (Al-Attia,2006:17). Because of this discrimination, a Kurdish woman's position in society will be lower, unlike that of the educated women who obtained an educational certification and who has an effective role in society and a distinguished position.

Concerning problems relating to the low educational level of women in the region, both groups of male-headed households and female-headed households interviewed were unanimous on the causes. The level of illiteracy of women in the region was the main problem. Also women's dropping out of school was the second major problem affecting their low level of education. Their denial of economic independence came third. Other problems such as religion, customs, and traditions ranked fourth. These findings are in line with studies by Bibars (2002:12). She identified that one major obstacle facing Egyptian women's political participation is "the increase in women's illiteracy level which is more effective in impacting negatively on the family and children, as well as on their rights to getting education".

The reasons why girls participate less in the basic cycle of schooling than boys in many of the third world counties are often identified as 'barriers'. They include in the view of Leach (2003), lack of school places, distance to school, costs of schooling, the need for girls to perform domestic duties at home, early marriage, and parental views of the lower value of educating girls (Leach,2003:24).

During the interview with the person in charge of Shri village (Moktar-Village chief), he said that *"his daughter will continue her education only until the end of the primary school, and he will not allow her to go out of the village to continue with her education. When inquired about the reason, he answered that this is how our tradition, custom and how our ancestors used to live and we must follow their steps"*.

In the case of Kurdistan education opportunities are available for both boys and girls on an equal basis in cities. However, in villages and rural areas, educational opportunities for girls are almost less existent, particularly in the advanced stages of education. The low literacy rates are indicative of a multitude of challenges Kurdish girls and women face in accessing education, although official education policy encourages equal access to education opportunities; girls are often denied their right to education due to a wide range of political, social, cultural and economic factors.

Although there is a high level of illiteracy in the native areas including the villages, they had a higher level of participation in voting in elections compared with the cities, and this is because the villagers support a candidate based on tribal and clan loyalty.

5. Perceptions regarding the appropriate role of women in Kurdish society

During the field work, a question regarding the role of women in Kurdish society was posed to both males and females. The objective of this question was to highlight the existence of any contradictions among the answers of the respondents, and explore the opinions of the respondents about the role to be accomplished by women in the community. Tables 15 and 16 show the ranking of the role of women by the respondents.

In comparing the responses of both male-headed households and female-headed households about the role of women in the community, the 'reproductive role' (bearing and caring for children, housekeeping and preparing food) was ranked first by both groups. This is attributable to traditional community practices, patriarchal structure resulting from the domination of tribalism and religion in society.

This was emphasised by a participant in the focus group discussion organised in Shri village where she said that:

'Our community continues to be governed by customs and traditions that make man the household head. Certain acts are considered within the domain of men, and therefore unacceptable for women to accomplish, even though the law accords women the right to participate.'

This result is also in line with findings in the previous sections which also indicated that the role of the woman is to give birth, keep the house and raise the children.

Traditional cultural values work against the advantage, progress and participation of women in any political process. Societies all over the world are dominated by an ideology of 'a woman's place'. According to this ideology, women should only play the role of 'working mother', which is generally low-paid and apolitical (IDEA, 2005:44).

It can be concluded from what has been mentioned previously that; in spite of agreeing with the case components on the great and noble role of the women at home in the areas of giving birth and that of raising of children, it is important to elevate her role and position in the community, by making changes in the existing perspective patterns of both women and men. Women are not able to actively participate in political and leadership activities, as they would have to balance their roles both within and outside the home. Their public roles can also not be against their culturally assigned roles. It is advocated that their participation in the public field should lead to their development and that of their surroundings and should be enhanced.

Traditional community planning in Kurdistan

Planning and development have existed in Kurdish society and is deeply rooted in its culture as part of its indigenous knowledge. It can be clearly seen in villages where the Kurdish communities strongly maintain their own traditional culture and indigenous knowledge. How traditional communities develop their own planning based on their own culture becomes a very interesting issue to be observed. This is the starting point where the researcher formulates the planning issue and it becomes a conscious product for observations.

The researcher witnessed this process when he lived in the village, and noted that when the village community faces a problem, they try to resolve it through discussions and consultations with each other (women and men), called "*Aei Tagber*". *Tagber* in the Kurdish language means, '*what is the plan*' in order to address or solve the problem? It seems that planning in this case is a means for solving problems. Planning in their context means thinking about the future, and is more obvious during conflicts, for instance conflicts in the environment, economic and social contexts.

In the Kurdish community, it is common for the community to debate about the planner, even at the family level. There is this common saying in the Kurdish language that '*Nin Payda Karit Bemre Nak Tagberkar*' which translated means "the death of the bread winner is not as important as the consulter the one who (man or woman) gives advice or direction in a situation". There again the community emphasizes the importance of the planner's roles and responsibilities. The researcher observed that the Kurdish community gives greater importance and priority to the role of the planner or consulter than that of the bread winner. That idea is deeply rooted in Kurdish culture based on daily practical experiences, which is transferred from one generation to another through oral action as a part of their heritage.

It seems that the rural people in Kurdistan have inherited indigenous knowledge on many aspects of their surroundings and their daily lives which constitutes a valuable resource for sustainable development. This indigenous knowledge in the Kurdish rural area covers a wide range of subjects concerned with land use, water harvesting, planning and knowledge transfer. Although the potential of indigenous knowledge for development has been realized through historical evidence on the ground it has remained, for some time, neglected by formal institution.

The first water harvesting techniques are believed to have originated in Iraq over 5000 years ago in the so-called Fertile Crescent, which is believed to be the very cradle of agriculture (Stockholm International Water Institute, 2001:8). A practical instance which is greatly appreciated is the vision and indigenous knowledge of an old farmer from Marwe village in Qaradik during a workshop on the reconstruction and sustainable development of Kurdistan villages in 2007. The old farmer mentioned that in the Kurdish language "*the Ba'ath regime destroyed all Kurdistan villages, transported people, and established them in a collective village according to a centralised plan. Presently if we attempt to reconstruct the villages, ("Pewesta Hamuw Liyake Ba Tagber Harawaze Bekain")*", we must involve all key stakeholders together that include government, NGOs, political parties, and the village under same umbrella in planning process toward reconstruction of Kurdistan. It can be inferred from this that the practical experience of the rural people in Kurdish society integrated with indigenous knowledge can positively influence planning for reconstruction and development.

Practical experience: religion, people's priority and government responsibility

As a starting point for the application of the theory on the participation of all stakeholders (public-sector, private-sector and civil society) in the reconstruction of rural areas in Kurdistan, the researcher argues that it is the village people who must first start this at the village level. But as has been observed, different projects were started by different stakeholders. For instance the reconstruction of schools was by the government, while the reconstruction of the Mosque was through the participation of local people, Non-Governmental Organizations, and the government.

After the above, there was the need for the re-construction of the primary health care centre. This was based on the ideas of local people and the researcher. After consultation with the local people, the researcher attempted to start the implementation of the project after approval from the government had been received, and announcement of the project was made in the newspapers. These newspapers included the PUK media (2008), Kurdistaninew newspaper (2008:3) and *Khabat* newspaper (2008:4). This announcement included the declaration by the researcher that he is ready to rebuild the primary health care centre by supporting part of the project budget with his own funds.

Based on previous experiences of the villagers in other projects, especially the construction of the Mosque, and based on the belief that though each person can pray at home all

agreed to build the Mosque, but one is unable to obtain health care at home, the same person who organized the reconstruction of the Mosque also started to organize the reconstruction process of the primary health care centre.

Unfortunately no one from the local community was able to participate in the reconstruction process and the people, who are very close and have relations with the researcher and organizer, failed to participate and bear part of the project budget. The researcher tried to ascertain what people's reasons for non-participation were after asking many questions and having discussions with some of the people. Most of the people of the village emphasized that the 'reconstruction of the health centre is the responsibility of the government'.

An important conclusion is that people from rural areas are more influenced by factors of religion than all other factors, and it seems to be a good lesson based on tangible evidence. There is a traditional attitude deeply rooted in society. Also the local people are of the view that all public goods and services are the responsibility of the government and not the local people.

Parliament, Mosque and Dewakan; which produces better laws, norms, and rules?

Which is the most appropriate to guide Kurdish society? Is it the parliament, the mosque, or Dewakan? The traditional authority in Kurdistan is still more superior to other formal authorities (rule of law). It often seems to be capable of being implemented on the ground, for example, when an accident occurs in the street, the traffic police will determine the cause of the accident and if the driver admits that he is at fault, then in accordance with the traffic law he will be charged with the offence, but if the two agree to settle it among themselves based on traditional dispute resolutions, then they are allowed to do so. This is a common practice in Kurdish society. Even the trial judge in a case may sometimes make judgments within the framework of the law or may also allow the parties involved to resolve the issues based on traditional rules outside the court, in instances such as marriage, business and others.

The role of religion in society: There is a Mosque in every village in Kurdistan. In the city of Erbil, there are as many as 300 Mosques where the faithful say prayers five times a day and meet every Friday to pray. Here, the Malla informs and updates the faithful on many different issues during every meeting compared with Parliament which may not have more than 10 issues discussed in a whole year. The question is this: in whose hands lies the authority and resolutions of Iraqi Kurdistan? Is it with the government or still with the traditional authority?

Almost every Kurdish person, whether he or she lives in a town or a village, or is not a member of any recognized tribe, will refer to himself or herself as a 'tribesman', by which it is meant that the person recognizes tribal law and customs, and expects others to treat him/her as enjoying tribal rights (Rich, 2008:51).

A traditional Kurd does not think of him, herself, as one of millions of Kurds, but rather as a member of a tribe, a locality, or a political party. Even urban Kurds appear to identify themselves with a local group or party, rather than as members of a large ethnic or national group (Robson, 1996).

Arguments put forward to explain this situation have focused on the political culture of the Middle East Countries region, highlighting tribalism as one the predominant factors in shaping a context that is not conducive to greater freedom and democracy (IDEA, 2005:54).

The interview with key informants in the case study area emphasized another vital fact behind the pride of people being members of the Barzani tribe: The question was, are you Barzani, Muslim, or Kurd? and why? *"Openly and without any hesitation, I am first Barzani in other words, I am from Barzani tribe; secondly my nation is Kurdish, and ultimately I am Muslim. My question is also this, why were only members of the Barzani tribe targeted during*

the genocide (Anfal), furthermore, why is the Kurdish nation well known through Barzani tribe, and why were most Islamic states silent regarding the genocide? Respondent asked". It is obvious that the respondent being a Barzani is firstly proud of his tribe, then his Kurdish nationality and finally of being a Muslim.

Dewakan is the platform of tribe and feudalism in Kurdish society (traditional place where all members of a tribe meet under supervision of the head of tribe or Feudal person (*Agha*). There are many Dewakans of the tribes and feudalists in Kurdistan. The activity of Dewakan is that during the day and night many issues are discussed in parallel with updated issues. The head of a tribe or Agha has his vision and provides guidance and issues orders to the people. The Kurdistan Regional Government facilitates and supports this system, for instance there is a special budget for Dewakan called in Kurdish (*Dewakanina*). The government and political parties, who are in power, support this funding. Women have no chance to be Malla, Agha or Shaikh; therefore they have no opportunity to participate directly in the decision-making concerns of the entire society.

We can conclude that in practice still traditional culture (tribalism, religion and patriarchal) is integrated into a complex scheme that guides Kurdish society and the formal laws are no more than ink on paper. Therefore any studies and strategies that try to improve the participation of women in the decision-making process should pay attention to the dynamics of the various facets of customary law.

Conclusion

Though it is evident that women have been involved in the development process at the local level, their effectiveness in participation is challenged in many ways. For instance in the Barzan sub-district, women in villages are the first to wake up and last to go to bed, in general participation of female-headed households and women is limited in most activities and decision-making processes, especially in the area of affiliation to civil society organisations and political party activities. The limited affiliation of female-headed households and women to the civil society organizations is a result of customs and traditions as well as the affiliation of many of these organisations to political parties. Also their limited participation in political party activities is the result of a number of reasons including the lack of internal democracy of the different Kurdish political parties, perceptions prevailing in the society regarding the position and status of women and traditional habits and customs that dominate in the family. Moreover, they also attach varying levels of importance to the various levels of election in the region. The majority of female-headed households, male-headed households and women took part in the municipal council elections, but the same cannot be said of their participation in other higher level elections. This indicates that they attach more importance to this level of elections than others.

It can therefore be said that women's representation and participation in decision-making at local level is generally limited. This problem arises due to many reasons. Though the constitution of the region provides legislation and rules and also promotes practices that provide formal rights, in reality however, there are informal constraints or barriers that continue to prevent women from participating actively in decision-making at local level. Within the Barzan sub-district these constraints range from traditional culture, religious, patriarchal values, patronage and family constraints, economic impediments to other societal barriers all of which continue to negatively affect women in exercising their rights. It could be concluded that in practice, traditional culture, tribalism, religion and patriarchal values are integrated into a complex scheme (customary law, *adaiti mlati Barzan*) that guide the Barzan community and that formal laws are no more than ink on paper.

6.3 Locus of decision-making, power distribution and women's participation

In many countries, these might be appropriate conditions for participatory planning. These conditions are very difficult to have everywhere as local conditions rarely exist. In reality, what is important is to kick-start and adopt participatory approaches where possible, and try to improve upon it. No matter the form of planning being carried out, women as vital stakeholders in society should be involved. This section of the study explores where decision-making power is located and tries to identify whether women are included or excluded in the planning process at the local level in the Barzan sub-district.

Exclusion versus inclusion

By exploring where decision-making power is exercised, we will have a better understanding of the dynamics of inclusion or exclusion and how it affects each actor at the local planning and policy making levels. The actors involved in local planning in Kurdistan include: High Planning Council (HPC), Ministry of Planning (MOP), Ministry of Finance (MOF), and Sectoral Ministries (SM) at the Regional level. At the Province level, there are the Line Agencies (LA), Local Government (LG), Provincial Council (PC) and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), and at the Local level, which is the study focus, the actors include the Line Agency, Political Parties (PP), Traditional Authority (TA), Municipality Council (MC), and Local Government (LG).

The process of decision power covers the following functional components: policy making, planning, implementation, financing and budgeting, and monitoring and evaluation. The following power distribution matrix was made by the researcher based on the fieldwork findings, documents shared by respondents, and observations accompanied by the researcher's work experience as an NGOs project manager, UN Senior officer, and regional government planner. With focus on inclusion and exclusion of actors at local level, the following are important considerations as revealed by the power distribution matrix: (Table 6.13).

Table 6.13: Power distribution matrix

(Used for assessment of functions and power distribution across the levels)

Functions or responsibilities	Key players in local planning												
	Regional (Kurdistan)				Provincial (Erbil)				Local (Barzan sub-district)				
	HPC	MOP	MOF	SM	LG	LA	NGOs	PC	LA	PP	TA	MC	LG
Policy making													
Setting of local policy	G	G	D	D	C	I	X	X	I	C	C	X	I
Guidelines & principles for planning	X	X	C	D	C	D	X	X	I	X	X	X	X
Planning													
Vision building & goals setting	C	C	D	D	D	X	I	X	I	X	I	X	I
Data base & collection	C	C	D	D	C	X	I	X	I	X	X	X	X
Determine priorities	I	C	D	D	C	D	X	X	I	I	C	X	C
Physical planning	G	C	D	D	G	X	I	I	I	C	C	X	C
Socio-economic planning	G	C	D	D	C	D	X	X	I	X	C	X	I
Implementation													
Strategy and delivery mechanisms	X	X	G	G	C	D	X	X	D	C	C	X	C
Formulation of Action plans	G	C	C	D	C	D	D	X	I	I	X	X	I
Financing & Budgeting													
Determine tax rates, fees, etc.	I	C	D	C	I	C	X	X	I	X	X	X	I
Revenue collection & expenditure	I	C	D	C	I	C	X	X	I	X	X	X	I
Resource share	I	C	D	C	I	C	X	X	I	X	X	X	I
Monitoring & Evaluation													
Identify indicators	X	C	C	D	C	D	X	X	I	C	X	X	X
Carry out monitoring	X	C	C	D	C	D	X	X	I	C	X	X	X
Supervise & evaluation	X	C	C	D	C	D	X	X	I	C	X	X	X
Agency Function:													
D: Decision-making C: Consultation G: provide guidance and instructions													
I: Information sharing-informed X: Not direct involvement in decision-making-No input													
CSOs: Civil Society Organization MOF: Ministry of Finance PC: Province Council MOP: Ministry of Planning HPC: High Planning Council NGOs: Non-governmental Organizations LA: Line agency PP: Political Parties LG: Local Government SM: Sector Ministry MC: Municipality Council TA: Traditional Authority													

Source: own field work, 2007

Policy making

- *Setting of local policy*: The decision-making power is mainly in the hands of sector ministries and the ministry of finance. Local actors have no concrete input in this regard, while line agencies just provide information to the upper level. It is important to mention that according to the law, the local municipality council is the elected government body which is supposed to formulate local policies but which has never happened on the ground.

- *Guidance and principles for planning*: This operation is totally dominated by sector ministries and the line agency at governance level. The local actors have no chance to make inputs or feedback in this regard.

Planning

- *Vision building and goal setting*: the power to take decisions in this regard is shared among the high planning council, the ministries of planning and of sector ministries, with limited cooperation among them, which has confused local government and line agencies. The line agencies might provide some information, but there is no guarantee that their input will be considered. The NGOs and local government have no input except on some occasions when the projects are funded by donors or regional development from central government, in which case consultation with local NGOs or local government at governance level becomes obligatory.

- *Data base collection*: the ministries of planning mainly practise this operation, sectoral ministries and line agencies while local government provides information.

- *Determining priorities*: priorities are mainly determined by the central level institutions for example, sectoral ministries like health, education, agriculture, and finance, and local government, line agency at governance level and traditional authority at local level might be consulted, while other local actors are totally excluded.

- *Physical planning*. The sectoral ministries prepare these plans; the finance ministry dominates the final decision for physical planning. The provincial government has no input except on some occasions when projects are funded by the Kurdistan Regional Government using funds from federal government. In this case, the head of the provincial government dominates the final decision for physical planning. These central institutions can amend, change, approve or reject the plans. Sometimes these central institutions prepare the physical plans on behalf of some small local actors. Once again, the local actors are totally excluded, except on some occasions, in consultation with traditional authority.

- *Socio-economic planning*: Decision-making in this sector is mostly in the hands of central institutions at regional province level. Line agency and NGOs might share or provide some information, but their views are not binding.

Implementation

- *Strategies and delivery mechanism*: Although there are consultations with government institutions at local level, the line agencies are the bodies responsible for implementing this mechanism.

- *Formulation of action plans*: Under the guidance and supervision of sectoral Ministries, the line agencies decide on action plans. In the implementation of the plans or projects at local level, Municipality Council and Local government have minimal input and NGOs in government projects are lacking.

Financing and budgeting

- *Determine tax and revenue*: the regional authority represented by Ministry of Finance mainly decides these issues. Local government and NGOs are totally excluded and do not have access to influence these decisions.

- Resource sharing: Central government provides 100% resources for development projects as local governments have no own revenue, especially at the district and sub-district level.
- The budgeting plans are formulated by the Sectoral Ministries under the supervision and guidance of the Ministry of Finance. As a matter of formality, sectoral Ministries have to approve the plans before forwarding them to the Ministry of Finance, which can amend, approve or reject the budgeting plans.

Monitoring and evaluation

Mainly regional and government institutions in cooperation with line agencies, do monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of local plans and projects.

Centralised mindset

Replacing the long-standing centralised attitude of dictatorship regime and culture is not an easy task. It is very demanding for participatory planning. It requires a strong political commitment and consistent efforts towards empowerment, enhanced democratization and decentralisation (Democratic Decentralisation).

The case study, however, shows that decentralised power might be absorbed by the regional level and that level might try to create power centres. Underestimating the aspiration of local stakeholders in the planning decision-making process is one example of overwhelming evidence in this case.

Decentralisation in Kurdistan, particularly fiscal decentralisation, began with the oil-for-food program in 1996. The share to Kurdistan was 13% until the end of the program. After the fall of the dictatorship in Iraq, the share was increased to 17% based on the number of Kurdish people in Kurdistan, but the share is not distributed based on the population at the level of province, district, and sub-district. Furthermore, the share is not clearly distributed according to the priority of each sector.

The preceding section shows that development planning in Kurdistan is essentially a top-down centralized approach, as local government are only required to comply or respond to regional government and centrally determined goals and objectives within a broad framework.

Women are almost excluded from all functional components: policy making, planning, implementation, financing and budgeting, monitoring and evaluation. Men dominate the majority of staff at the regional, province, district and sub-district levels in-charge of planning. Also, men and women alike are not involved in planning for the local level. While recognizing that decision-making at the local level in Barzan sub-district has traditionally been limited to men at local level due to centralised planning, women have been engaged in the process of planning without their realizing it. During the field work, the researcher noted that there were informal mechanisms by which women participated and might have also influenced decision-making through indirect consultations with some authorities including the regional government through line agencies, local agencies and local traditional authorities. This also happens at the village level where some men consult their wives on decisions concerning some major societal issues.

When the researcher had discussions in the focus-group with male-headed households, in both villages, the participants decided that the final discussions should be postponed to the following day in order for them to 'sleep on it'. This often meant that the men went home and consulted with their wives. The men returned the next day, having likely discussed the issues with their wives, who also had discussions with their peers in order to help their husbands arrive at a clear decision. This came to light when the researcher also had informal discussions with various sections of women in both villages and they seemed to know what was discussed with their male counter parts.

Access to resources and control over their use in fhh and mhh

“Given equal access to opportunities and resources, women, like men, have proved to be efficient, dynamic and indispensable partners in development. Their empowerment through the exchange of knowledge and information is crucial for enhancing rural living conditions and achieving development goals” (FAO, 2004:4).

Harvard framework access and control profile was used to examine female-headed households, male-headed households, and women’s access to and control over resources in Shri and Zorgvan villages, by asking: Who does what? Who has what? Who decides? How? The data collected based on multi research methods and tools, is partially represented in the table below. Table 6.14 indicates who has access to resources and control over their use.

Table 6.14: Comparative analysis of access to and control over resources in Shri and Zorgvan

Category	Shri Village			Zorgvan Village		
	fhh	mhh	women	fhh	mhh	women
Activities						
-Productive	A	A/C	-	A	A/C	-
-Reproductive	A/C	-	A	A/C	-	A
-Community roles	A	A/C	-	A	A/C	-
Natural resources	A/C	A/C	A	A/C	A/C	A
Productive resources						
-Land	A/C	A/C	-	A/C	A/C	-
-Education	-	A/C	-	-	A/C	-
-Credit	-	-	-	-	-	-
-Extension & Training	A	A/C	-	A	A/C	-
-Machines, Cars.etc	A	A/C	A	A	A/C	A
-Time	A	A/C	A	-	A/C	A
-Radio	A/C	A/C	A	A	A/C	A
-TV.	-	-	-	A	A/C	A
-Livestock	A/C	A/C	A	A/C	A/C	A
-Income	A/C	A/C	A	A/C	A/C	A
Key: A = Access, C= Control						
<i>Access: This is defined as the opportunity to make use of resource.</i>						
<i>Control: This is the power to decide how a resource is used (March et al, 2005:19).</i>						

Source: own field work, 2007

“In most Third World societies, the man is the breadwinner and therefore the male as productive worker-predominates, even when, he is the primary income-earner, the female is also seen as the home-maker” (Moser, 1998:28).

About 88% of male-headed households in the village of Zorgvan obtained their income from the public sector, 9% from the private sector and the rest from their own farming activities. Similarly, 61% of male-headed households in the Shri village obtained their income from the public sector, 33% from the private sector while 6% of them were unemployed. Almost more than 90% of female-headed households were unemployed in both villages.

This rate was very high as compared to their male counterparts. The main source of income for fhh was the public sector, which is an incentive from government. Female-headed households and male-headed households did not own land in either village. In Zorgvan village the land was owned by the Mosque, while the Shaikh owned it in Shri village. All households benefit from land for production to feed their families and not much as a source of income. Women as wives were involved in household work, reproductive or childbearing responsibilities and domestic tasks.

Female-headed households traditionally do not have access to or control over education, extension and training especially in the village of Shri, since it is under the supervision of the traditional authority of Shaikh. Gaps exist in educational levels between female-headed households and male-headed households. About 91% of female-headed households are illiterate in both villages and this continues to undermine women's capacities and opportunities. Neither female-headed households nor do male-headed households have access and control over credit and neither party owned land.

Traditionally, female-headed households did not access and control machines as male-headed households did in both villages. In addition to the women, a few young girls in Zorgvan village had access and control over cars. The researcher personally observed girls controlling cars during the field work, and concluded that the reason behind this was that they were raised and educated outside Kurdistan.

Female-headed households and male-headed households both in Shri village traditionally have no access to or control over Television. Although they have access to Radio the control is mostly by men. Even in families that are female-headed and if there is a grown up son, the priority is for him to control it more than the female-head. The Harman local Radio is very active in the Barzan area and the researcher observed that most people listen to it daily and participate in most of their live programmes. Radio is supposed to be the voice of change in the Barzan area. Female-headed households and male-headed households both have access to Television, but its control is normally by the men in the family, in the village of Zorgvan.

In the Shri and Zorgvan villages, livestock production is not the primary source of livelihood. Women are responsible for calving, feeding and milking, but women and men are collectively responsible for grazing, and vaccinations. In fact in both female and male-headed households share access to large stock and small stock animals. However, it is almost only men who have control and decision-making power concerning the animals. If the men are not available in the family females have control such as in a family which is headed by a female. In fact women who are wives have no control over any resources.

Voice for change (Harman local radio)

Communication is no longer seen as a one way, top-down transfer of messages and information through the media; instead, when applied to development, communication is used to promote a two-way process of sharing and participation. The experts at the FAO indicated that, "People-oriented and sustainable development can only realize its full potential if rural people are involved and motivated and if information and knowledge is shared. Sharing is not a one-way

transfer of information; it rather implies an exchange between communications of equals. On the one hand, technical specialists learn about people's needs and their techniques of production; on the other, the people learn about the techniques and proposals from the specialists" (FAO, 2004:9-10). "This means that participatory communication efforts with rural women should begin with development planners and technical specialists listening to them. Listening goes beyond a simple appraisal of needs. It involves listening to what women already know, what they aspire to become, what they perceive as possible and desirable and what they feel they can sustain. Although often illiterate, rural women have wisdom, knowledge and practices based on deep-rooted cultural norms, traditions and values, as well as generations of experience. This indigenous knowledge should be taken into account, and traditional methods of information exchange and communication should be harnessed together with modern means" (ibid).

Previously in the Kurdistan society, the main source of information for women in rural areas was at water sources and other traditional ceremonies '*Women from spring water platform during fetching water to the local radio platform*'. They had the opportunity to discuss various issues at these places. Women could exchange information while fetching water and at other traditional ceremonies. However mass media, especially the radio, is the current means of exchanging information. Harman radio is the most powerful mass media in the Barzan area, and also an important source of information especially in Shri village, because there is no access to television there.

Local radio is the main media for reaching many people in the Barzan area, even in the remotest villages, since they have access to local radio, which builds on the oral traditions of Barzan populations. Although men own the majority of radio receivers, women can listen to programmes at home. Harman radio is an important tool for the diffusion of messages on new ideas and techniques as well as on health, nutrition, family planning and other social and cultural issues. The Harman radio was used for training and the transfer of new ideas about women's rights and attempted to change the attitude of communities about the role of women.

During the field work on 2th May 2007 at Harman institution the researcher observed that there was a program for training people who work in the media. The training programme was organized in cooperation with the Association of Newspapers without Borders, and the number of participants was 24 trainers, 10 of them being females and 14 males. This was clear evidence of the importance of the participation of females in the Barzan area in capacity-building as a starting point towards participation in decision-making and towards enhanced development.

The local radio can promote dialogue and debate on major issues of rural development as well as provide a platform for the expression of rural women's needs, opinions and aspirations. Radio enables women to voice their concerns and speak about their aspirations with Barzan policy-makers and development planners. Finally, Harman radio is a vital tool that can be used to develop community cohesion, solidarity and changing attitudes about women. The researcher observed that the community has successfully used the Harman radio especially the rural population of Barzan area. Harman radio programmes are most effective since it is produced with audience participation both female and male, in the local language and with consideration for the cultural traditions of the Barzan tribe. It seems that Harman radio is an important channel for motivation and education of women since it raises consciousness of gender issues as well as informing women about their rights. It offers women in the Barzan area to tune in to many issues that interest them. More and more young women are receiving training in the programming and management of community-based radio so that the programmes can reflect their real needs.

Summary of influencing factors, constraints and opportunities of women's participation in decision-making in Barzan sub-district

Table 6.15: Factors, constraints and opportunities on women's participation

Influencing factors		Constraints	Opportunities
Socio-economic	Education	Low level of education	High rate of female teachers and students
	Skill	limited by family obligations (not free to travel)	Harman institution vibrant
	Income	Low level income and high average age among fhh	Compensation of government
	Employment	Men can spend more time on production tasks; women have domestic and household tasks	Recent research on participation of women
Gender specific roles/structuring		Pressure to produce sex-disaggregated statistics on economic participation	
Institutional factors	Policy	Lack of development oriented policy	Available women's advocacy organizations
		Lack of gender oriented policies, equal-opportunities policy in government	Human rights agenda, more successful women in public life
	Legal parameters	Men block women's access to power; senior management is mostly male dominated	Law exists but needs to be enforced
		Fatwa of Shaikh and Islam religion's 'Sharia', customary law, society law	Existing quota system needs to be implemented
	Party system	One political party (KDP), and dominated by men	Opposition protesting
	Civil society organizations	Related to political party	Efforts towards lobbying and building networks
Urban focus			
Unclear mission			
Conflict among organizations with limited staff skills in gender planning		Harman institution vibrant and practical experience	
Political culture	patriarchal values and traditional culture	Women's place is in the home	NGO involvement in education
		Women's role is to serve men	Awareness raising
		Reluctant to set up any activities without the approval of the male in family	
		Limited interaction between women and men	Traditional environmental protection practices
		Improper land use	Traditional environmental protection
		Tension between global and local culture	Harman efforts to narrow the gap
		Negative form of tradition	Voice for change local radio
		Religious beliefs and tribalism	Greater acceptance of women in economic role
		Women as mothers and caretakers	Awareness raising concerning political participation
		Women traditionally not accepted as leaders	Pressure from international community for gender mainstream in all government policies and programmes
		Women seen as inferior/less intelligent	In practice played multiple roles

Source: own field work, 2007

Table 6.15 summaries the identified factors influencing women's participation in decision-making in the Barzan sub-district. It also brings out the various opportunities and challenges that confront women's participation in decision-making. These factors, opportunities and constraints can in turn lead to the creation of a set strategy towards promoting women's participation in decision-making at local level.

Gender needs

Mahat, 2004 concluded that the identification of strategic and practical gender needs is very important for gender analysis. Strategies can be explored to establish whether they are practical gender needs or strategic gender needs, and is identified preferably by women themselves. Clarification of strategic and practical gender needs serves as a tool for gender planning which in turn, helps to ensure the long-term sustainability of projects (Mahat, 2004:27). Participation strategies and women's equality should reflect women's perceptions, needs and perspectives.

“For a number of years it has generally been accepted that participation is a fundamental requirement for project success, because it is understood that a proper understanding of people's needs and priorities can only be gained through a participatory process. Similar to this is the notion that each gender has its own requirements and its own constraints which need to be taken into consideration. A gender approach ensures that these needs and constraints are at least understood by the planners, which should enable them to design better project and programme interventions” (FAO, 2006:16). Respondents almost unanimously concluded that the Kurdistan Regional Government and civil societies have taken no special measures in determining and addressing the practical and strategic needs of rural women, mainly the female-headed households as a marginalised group.

Practical gender needs

This kind of needs is immediate and material in the short term and pertains more to fhh's, than mhh's in day-to-day conditions. It focuses more on the domestic arena, housing and basic services, as well as income earning activities. Female-headed householders give a higher priority to basic services than mhh, as most of the fhh were old and had difficulty in travelling to the cities. The Shri village also lacks a health centre while there is a shortage of technical health staff in Zorgvan village. Almost all fhh give higher priority than mhh to housing reconstruction, because approximately 94% fhh in Shri village and 70 % of those in the village of Zorgvan had the roof of their house made of wood instead of cement. Both fhh and mhh gave similar priority needs to electricity. Female-headed households in Shri village gave more importance to secondary schooling than fhh and mhh in Zorgvan village, because if a school is not available in their village they do not allow their girls to attend a secondary school located outside of the Shri village. They fail to let their girl children attend school outside their village because they not want any outside influence on the children. Both fhh and mhh give similar priority to the irrigation channels in both villages. Regarding the paving of roads inside the villages, fhh in Shri village focused more on this than fhh in Zorgvan village (see Table 6:16).

Table 6.16: Gender needs assessment Shri and Zorgvan Villages

Shri Village		Zorgvan Village	
Practical needs	Strategic needs	Practical needs	Strategic needs
Electricity	Payment of equal compensation for victims of genocide (<i>Anfal</i>) and martyrs	Electricity	Payment of equal compensation for victims of genocide (<i>Anfal</i>) and martyrs
Health centre	Collective organization	Paving internal roads	Collective organization
Paving internal roads	Law on agricultural land ownership	Health staff	Law on agricultural land ownership
Irrigation channels	Anfal should be regarded as an international case of genocide	Irrigation channels	Anfal should be regarded as an international case of genocide
Secondary school		Secondary school	
Housing reconstruction			

Source: own field work, 2007

Strategic gender needs

Strategic gender needs are long term, and also pertain to the position of fhh or women vis-à-vis mhh or men, and seek to transform the existing division of labour for instance, fhh or women and mhh or men in non-traditional tasks, equal rights to land titles, equal voice in court, and equal representation and participation of fhh or women in decision-making process. Female households in both villages gave very similar higher priority to the equal incentive of the victims of genocide (*Anfal*) and martyrs, while this incentive is the only source of income for fhh and the majority of fhh were unemployed. Furthermore, genocide of Barzan people has to be accounted for as are other genocides such as Rwanda, Armenian, and Bosnian. The second priority of strategic gender needs in both village and for both fhh and mhh is the reform of the law on the ownership of agriculture land, as mentioned previously, the land is owned by the Shaikh in Shri village and Mosque in Zorgvan village (see Table 6:20). In an interview with an old woman in Shri village, she highlighted another fact behind the strategic gender need and the genocide of the Barzani people. This woman wanted the *Anfal* to be viewed as an International case. *“I am more than eighty years old and during my life, our house was destroyed fourteen times, and we reconstructed it again, but that does not matter. What matters is how we could reconstruct our family and community, which was destroyed during the genocide (Anfal). My life is about to end, but I am worried about my children, especially women. I remember even, what happened to them, when the Jews were in the Barzan area. I hope similar thing will not happen to us. It should be prevented and it should never happen again”*. It seems that she was worried about the future of the whole region, especially of women, and may harbour a bleak vision of the region based on past experiences.

Conclusion

Female-headed households and male-headed households have different role dynamics (which change over time and venue), and multifaceted responsibilities (that vary within and among cultures), different livelihood strategies and constraints, and different strategic and practical needs. In this view, each category must be listened to, both female-headed households and male-headed households. There is overwhelming facts that development must address the needs and priorities of both in order to be successful. Participatory planning is then a vital tool in this aspect as both female-headed households and male-households speak for them. In the end, it is only both of them who know the details of the local situation, and of the linkages among the activities of their family members. They are the people who know how these are to be managed and by whom, and under what constraints and opportunities. The knowledge of female-headed households and male-headed household needs and priorities, should be recognized in order to build the development process thereon. It also helps to look around and learn from those female-headed households and male-headed households which have improved their knowledge and skills and identify their best practices.

To enhance the participation of both household heads in decision-making and in the development process, there is a need to draw upon practices and trends in decentralized planning approaches which are well known in the development process. There is also a need for gender-aware policies. This need arises from the fact that despite the contribution to social reproduction of female-headed households, female-headed household and women continue to have low status and are not afforded opportunities to become part of the economic development and political systems except at the subordinate ends. It is for this reason that gender-aware policies and planning become essential tools to achieve an optimistic change in female-headed households as well as women's lives.

Gender-aware policies and plans are more likely to respond to facts analysed including gender gaps and contribute to policy-making and planning procedures. In cases where female-headed households and women do not have an equal chance to influence development planning strategies, a gender-aware approach may enable their involvement to correct these gaps. This is because this category of stakeholders needs to be involved in policy-making, which is a process of social and political decision-making about how to allocate resources for the needs and interest of society and ending in a policy strategy and also in planning and implementation of the various actions. The above processes, according to Moser (1998:6), can be proposed to explain the interrelated phases of gender policy. One of the problems in development planning in Kurdistan is the absence of an explicit gender policy and a clear development framework guiding the development of the entire region. In view of the fact that the gap between gender-aware policies and planning is significant in planning institutions it is an area that needs to be addressed in the planning system in Kurdistan. The following words of Taylor (1999:18) are used to conclude this chapter: *'By raising gender awareness and a critical analysis of social and structural problems through mass based popular development education, poor women and men would become empowered and enabled to use democratic space to change or engage in a process of transforming oppressive structures, policies and programmes'. The process will lead to economic, political, social empowerment of women.*

Having presented the findings on the participation of women in the study area, the final chapter concludes the study by making certain recommendations in addressing the issues identified.

7. Summary of findings, conclusions and recommendations

7.1 Summary of findings and conclusions

The participation of women in local development decision-making in Kurdistan goes back in history. Women's participation has changed over time, in space and within political systems. The Kurdish people clearly emphasise the importance of women's liberation as part of a total national liberation process and give priority to national liberation. The semi-autonomy status attained by the region helped the people to freely choose their legal representatives in the first parliament through a direct free election. This brought about the establishment of democratic institutions in the region which was a new form of a democratic governance model in the whole of Iraq. This process witnessed in its weak multi-party democracy and the inclusion of major stakeholders in the governance process of the region. This had great impact on building the political, economic, social and cultural life of the region. The chapter presents a summary of the key findings and conclusions of the research and makes recommendation to enhance the participation of women in the decision-making process.

Less representation of women in public sphere

Generally, women are less represented in most political positions in the public spheres of Kurdistan whether in appointed or in elected positions. They have clearly had more success at gaining access to regional and provincial level decision-making positions than to those at the local government level. This success is directly related to a quota of reserved seats being allocated to women at the provincial and regional levels, but this has not yet been implemented at local level. Despite that, participation in local government may be easier for women since this is able to fit into their daily activities, along with family, household responsibilities and employment. Women should have had more success at gaining access to the decision-making process in local government than those at central government level but this has not been the case due to the absence of the implementation of the quota system.

Gender gaps in Kurdistan regional government

Gender gap is the slit which arises from the different gender roles and social locations of women and men. Here the term 'gender gap' is defined as the difference in the percentage of women, in comparison to the percentage of men, in any given category (Longwe and Clark, 1999:10). The gender gaps in the public sphere in the Kurdistan regional government ranged from 26 percent at regional level parliament to 100 percent, mostly at local level. Naturally, this may be considered as a fundamental gender issue.

From the above, it could be viewed that the gender gap in the public sphere is a gender issue in itself. For instance, it is theoretically possible that all men in the public sphere might be interested in being gender sensitive that all decisions are taken with the interest of both women and men in mind. This does not however happen in practice which is why it is necessary to have representatives of all genders.

In general in the current experience as well as in practice, male dominated public spheres achieve male privileges and benefits to the detriment of women. If women in the public sphere behave as 'token males', and accept traditional patriarchal values, then nothing will change. That

was what the researcher observed regarding ministries in the Kurdistan regional government and in the Kurdistan parliament, when the Kurdish parliament put polygamy up for vote. The Islamic women members (MPs) favoured polygamy in parallel with males in their acceptance of patriarchal values. Female membership of parliament or in other public spheres is useful only in so far as female members develop a collective purpose to take action to achieve gender political empowerment, herein referred to as gender equity.

Therefore, closing gender gaps in public spheres may necessitate getting more women into parliament, senior management positions, and heads of civil society organizations at all levels. This has political meaning, as an objective in itself. It could also be used as a means towards addressing gender issues of participation in decision-making in wider society, thereby enhancing development.

Ineffective development oriented policy and inconsistent gender policy

From the analysis it is clear that the region lacks a clear integrated development oriented and gender policy to guide its development. Also, development planning in Kurdistan is mainly a top-down centralized approach. Moreover, sectors and ministries prepare their own plans and these are also focused mainly on the physical planning of urban areas to the detriment of the rural areas. Therefore, no specific and comprehensive regional plan has been formulated at the Kurdistan regional level. Planning has also been monopolised by technocratic planners at all levels in the region. The planning system in the region again fails to legitimise the roles and responsibilities of all stakeholders in the process of planning. There is also a lack of involvement of women in the planning activities carried out by the regional government. This then affects the inclusion of the needs of all genders in the development process. Moreover, more of the Kurdistan Regional Government's budget goes to pay government salaries than going into actual development activities of the region. This, if not checked, will have a long term negative implication on the region's development should the oil revenue it currently enjoys be depleted. No financial resources have been allocated to address gender needs especially of women in the region. Local authorities in general, and only in sub-districts, are passively involved in the process of planning. Legally they have no power to formulate plans. Men and women alike are also not involved in planning at the local level due to the centralised nature of planning in the region. This may also be due to a lack of legislation that could enhance their involvement in the process.

Less effectiveness of civil society organisations to address women's issues

The remarkable increase in the number of civil society organisations in Kurdistan region, especially those involved in women empowerment issues. This huge number of civil society does not reflect the expected improvement in the involvement of women in the decision-making process at local level. This is because women in Kurdish society continue to be marginalised in the process of participation in decision-making at household, civil society and government levels, especially at local level. This may be attributable to the fact that many of these organisations are not independent from political parties and even the regional government. This makes them respond more to the needs, goals and objectives of the political parties they represent than addressing women's issues. In view of this, they fail to play an advocacy, lobbying and watch-dog role on government and its activities to enhance women's participation. They fail also to network properly. This affects their ability to effectively lobby for women's interests in decisions at all levels in Kurdish society.

Lack of experts to translate gender interests and needs into development planning goals

The research identified that although most of the institutions at different levels in the region had staff with knowledge and expertise related to technical and administration issues, their knowledge level is not updated through capacity building programmes. During the field work and in the researcher's experience, it was realised that most institutions are at different levels. There was also a lack of expertise that could translate gender interests and needs into development planning goals. Empowering women to participate in decision-making will therefore mean striking a new deal among the same old groups with conflicting interests and demands that historically made the Kurdistan region a deeply dysfunctional society. Therefore, it will require a highly skilled political navigator to successfully map a course through the diverse current sweeping through Kurdish local development.

Monopoly by political parties negatively affects women's representation and participation

The current political system in the Kurdistan region, which is in favour of power sharing between the two major political parties, affects the participation of women in the process as these parties are mostly male dominated. They also lack adequate internal democratic process and gender policies that may favour the inclusion of women in the process of decision-making. Each party has separate mass media coverage that encourages its policy. For instance the monopoly of the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) in the Barzan sub-district affects the political participation of women negatively as women have less opportunity to join other political parties to be able to get suitable positions.

Parallel structures (traditional cultural and long centralised mindset) hamper participation

The study indicates that the triangle of traditional cultural structure (tribalism, religion, and patriarchal values) together with long centralised traditional mindset has weakened the process of women's participation in decision-making. This has shaped the institutional set-up from the regional to the local level through line agencies, civil societies and political parties that duplicate similar functions at regional, provincial and local levels. Moreover, complicated tasks and generated dualities in the accountability mechanism have made it difficult to be in harmony at local and regional levels. This has slowed regional development performance and finally made democratic decentralisation ineffective in bringing about an affirmative outcome of participation at the local level. The danger is that the regional government, in coordination with the province has absorbed decentralized powers and created power centres instead of handling it very slowly. Key planners with no women representatives and development workers are obviously accountable to the regional and provincial levels and this leads to a decline in local democratic decentralisation practices. This takes away their obligations towards local government thus making it difficult for them to be held accountable to that body.

Kurdish women: between law and culture

Culture is the basic starting points to examine the situation facing Kurdish women today. This is because Kurdish society has undergone considerable changes during the last decades. Analyzing its culture has become a pressing scientific demand, particularly given the exceptional circumstances of the last two decades that have presented Kurdish society, especially Kurdish women, with new realities. These realities have served to reintroduce some of the "traditional" elements of Kurdish culture that have evolved over time and can be traced back to the ancient

civilization of Kurdistan, as well as to tribal culture and agrarian society. This has led to a conflict between customs, traditions, tribal social norms and the law. This is particularly true with regard to women's issues. Moreover, the genocide of the Kurdish people, the lack of civil authority and rule of law under the Ba'ath government has led the Kurdish public to rely on secondary social orders to provide protection and make advances. As happened in the Barzan area, where the formal government structure failed to favour them, they decided to strengthen their tribal system to enable them to overcome these various conflicts so that they would not lose their identity. The government had to treat the Barzan people based on their tribe and not on an individual basis. This may have been helpful in times of crisis, but it ultimately it caused the Kurdish society to become increasingly influenced by tribal traditional culture. This affected various segments of society, particularly women, negatively as this strengthened the already existing patriarchal system and continued to make women subordinates to men.

Tension between international cultural and local traditional change

Local attitudes are ambiguous about accommodating international cultural changes and using them to improve the living standards of the individual. For example, world technologies, such as electricity, medicine, telephones, television, internet, corrective eyewear, computers, cars, and airplanes, etc, which reflect the intellectual openness of the societies that invented or discovered them, are part of day-to-day local culture that no one can do without. Yet, traditional local culture rejected the intellectual approach and social values of the speed that produced these technologies. This became apparent in the process of formulating the new Iraqi constitution and personal laws in Kurdistan, when international conventions that protect human, women, and children's rights were rejected and labelled alien to Islam's religious '*Sharia*' principles and tribalism. Despite the fact that various Kurdish communities have accepted the role of women as educated persons, employees, physicians, engineers, and ministers, most local attitudes still differ on giving women the freedom to select their own lifestyles, claiming a fear of sexual promiscuity would cause the family and, hence society, to collapse and its values to weaken.

Balancing traditional authority and government

How to balance the two power poles is a challenge for women's participation. The ideal situation would be less effect of traditional authority in decision-making and more participation of women and the application of rationality. Unfortunately this situation cannot be altered overnight. Traditional authority does not change easily, but rather in current experience and practice, it seems difficult to come up with an ideal solution in the short term. If one is to expect success in this, then the attitude of leadership and traditional authority has to change from that of a traditional cultural one (tribalism, religion, and patriarchal) to a more open and modern one characterized by democracy and tolerance. This takes time and will be a long term process.

Vibrancy of institutions at local level

The Harman institution is very vibrant at a local level. Local communities, local government, political parties, are all highly appreciative of the efforts of the Harman institution. There were some critical areas which the institution focused on in order to advocate and reflect on the community's needs in local development. During the field work the researcher observed how the people were interested in all the institution's activities especially the radio programmes, which are very necessary in traditional villages and remote areas. The people felt that the outcomes of

implemented activities are from their representatives. The people have strong faith in local bodies as democratic institutions at local level. Out of 6 members of senior managers of the institution, 2 are female. These women are heads of the local Radio and TV departments which are very important for the local people. Most of the staff of the institution is quite active in their own way and they are responsible and accountable to the Barzan community.

There is a broad consensus on the institutional vibrancy and the Barzan community's loyalty to democratic institutions at local level. This is a very positive factor for successful women's and men's participation and local democratic governance. Elected leaders are rooted in the institution and address themselves to local needs and problems. In order for the vibrancy of the institution to be sustainable, it is necessary that the success of leaders should be measured by their re-election and vice-versa.

In the Barzan sub-district, there are two distinct governance frameworks within which participation of women are defined, accessed and decisions made. These are the framework of traditions and customs, within which participation is based on social patriarchal, tribe membership, and religion; and that of the formal, democratic decentralisation regime, within which people participate based on legal rights. It is the relationship and distribution of power between these two frameworks that provides the context within which women can claim rights in decision-making, to shape Barzan women's experience of participation. The efforts that are currently taking place in this area, and in the context thereof, towards democratic decentralisation building in regional government development process underway in Kurdistan, provide some important opportunities to empower women and improve their level of participation.

The previous section covered the conclusions arrived at in the study. It came to light that parallel structures hamper participation and Kurdish women are torn between law and traditional culture. There is also tension between international cultural and local traditional change. Moreover, it emerged that there is a need to balance traditional authority and that of government in the region as this will go a long way to influence women's participation. Finally, issues concerning the vibrancy of institutions at the local level and gender gaps in Kurdistan's regional government were discussed. The next section makes recommendations to address the major findings of the study.

7.2 Recommendations

The following recommendations are intended to highlight issues in an attempt to pave the way to further promote the participation of women in the decision-making process. These issues are discussed at the following levels:

7.2.1 At the regional government level

Formulating a comprehensive development policy

The first important step that should be taken is that efforts should be made to create a policy oriented development process in the region. The returns from oil should be utilized in the reconstruction and development of Kurdistan. This should be under a new scheme 'Oil-for-Development' in order to put the area back on the track of development and so solve the problem of bloated public employment and the negative impact of the free distribution of a food basket which was the result of the Oil-for-food programme. A clear development policy would identify the role of each sector within the decision-making structure, and indicate how collective efforts could be utilized and integrated into a development plan for the Kurdistan region. This is essential and its purpose is to make clear roles and responsibilities. It is the role of the Kurdistan government in cooperation with civil society and the private sector to include gender-aware policies as part of their development agenda and policy formulation.

Changes to the systems within which the sub-district level government operates:

Creating an enabling legal environment; planning law

This research has revealed many shortcomings in planning laws that have impacted on all government structures at regional, provincial and local levels, and their relations with all stakeholders. It might be the role of the Kurdish parliament, together with other relevant regional institutions such as; the ministry of planning, sectoral ministries, provincial, and local government, to exercise their roles and issue laws and codes.

The rationale of these laws and codes should lead to expanding spaces for all stakeholders (public sector, private sector, and civil society) to have the legal rights to participate in planning and policy making processes at regional, provincial, and local levels. This issue in particular would command vigorous advocacy and lobbying on the part of all stakeholders and particularly from the side of civil society in order to achieve these legal amendments. A new law or regulation should be implemented and enforced to achieve this which would have to be supported by additional codes or operational measures. According to the research and the researcher's experience, legal frameworks must recognize important roles that could be played by women and men in development. The Regional government should provide legal areas for women and men to participate in its policy formulation and planning at regional, province, and district and sub-district levels. One of the key elements of good governance is women's representation in policy-making forums, local authorities and civic organisation. Unless women are involved in the decision and policy-making process of the state, changes in women's political, and to some extent social and economic status, will continue to be marginal (UNESCAP, 2001:11).

Furthermore, these legal frameworks should be based on the principles of subsidiary assistance, integration of sectoral policy by means of a strong territorial component and inter provincial or inter-district fiscal compensation. The distribution of planning competence on all three political and administrative levels (regional, province '*province council*', and local level

'municipality council') allows for strong “counter current” in decision-making and for a balance between top-down and bottom-up planning strategies.

In addition, these legal frameworks ought to reinforce the democratic decentralisation institutions such as province and municipality councils. Planning should also be seen as a multi-disciplinary and a more open exercise within the political democratic process and not the monopoly of only the technocratic planner.

Local councils have to be guaranteed legal rights through planning laws to participate as policy makers at the local level and get involved in the planning process. This means that the regional government has to hand over its authority on key decisions to local level institutions. In this respect, regional government, maintained by the new legal innovations, has to broaden local government mission and its roles to cover most development domains. This would lead to more autonomous local actions. It is believed that this would create a better environment for women and men to exercise a real influence on local decision-making, since decisions would be made directly at the local level. Several attempts should be made to find the appropriate balance between regional and local powers as the problem of unequal participation and dominance of centralised regional decision-making still persists. With democratization and the introduction of the multi-party system in Kurdistan, the need to devolve power to grass-root levels and to provide them with the tools for efficient participation has become more very urgent.

The Kurdistan regional government has a young history. This peculiar political history has to be taken into account in order to understand the degree of political democratic decentralisation in Kurdistan. The laws should concentrate on basic issues which in future have to extend to cover a clear identification of stakeholders' relationship at all levels, particularly in development planning. The stakeholders, for instance, NGOs, key informants, women and men, and most staff of planning institutions, during a semi-structured interview, expressed exceptional willingness to participate in planning, but did not show a great knowledge of how to translate their willingness into either practice or practical policies.

Furthermore, replacing the long-standing centralized attitude from previous regimes and culture is not an easy task. This will need strong political commitment and consistent efforts towards empowerment. This would take time as changes in attitudes and methodology require training, awareness and capacity building programmes

Quota strategy: breaking down initial social barriers to women's participation in decision-making

In a patriarchal society like the Kurdish region, the regional government is unable or may not want to break the traditional culture of social values that dictate women's roles. In Kurdistan in particular, there is a high level of distrust in the efficiency and transparency of the government as change does not happen through the political system. In many elections, women do not succeed, as most Kurds believe that women are less capable of serving in political affairs and positions than men are. Even when individuals vote on the basis of skills and capabilities, women lose out to men because there is a lack of faith in women as political leaders. Findings of this study attest to the fact that even some women are of the view that the capabilities of women as political leaders are less than that of men.

Therefore women and men in this study believe that it is necessary to assign seats to women in parliament, province councils and municipal councils in Kurdistan. Therefore, “the women's quota is an important factor in breaking down initial social barriers to women's participation in the decision-making process” (Pettygrove, 2006:42). “In this social context, the

quota for women's seats in public spheres is a reasonable mechanism to overcome the strategic obstacles to women's participation in the political system, because it provides the opportunity for women to change social perceptions about the capabilities of men in the government and their own rights" (ibid, 2006:43). Though the quota system law issued by the Kurdistan Regional Parliament in April 2009 is in place, there is a need to enforce all the different levels of government (regional, province, and local levels) to implement this in all public spheres to overcome the initial social barriers and also give women the opportunity to prove their worth and their abilities. Quotas for women may only be the first step as many studies found out that quotas for women were the key to securing a significant presence of women in political bodies. Despite this, quotas are not enough to turn the presence of women into influence on decision-making. However, the quota strategies alone cannot secure women's participation. A number of additional strategies may be proposed including building women's capacity, networking and lobbying by women's organizations to influence decisions. In the view of Linder (2004) concerning gender issues in politics, there are other strategies possible than Quotas for women. "In highly gendered traditional societies, for instance, it may be more suitable to create women's organizations or women's schools than insisting on women's quota in political institutions or on coeducation at school" (Linder,2004:27).

Towards empowerment of women in education

Empowerment of women in education as a means to an end: One of the important priorities of traditional societies should be that rural women, who are governed by social norms, customs, and low literacy rates, are made to recognize their wide-ranging potential which leads to parity between men and women through quality education. Kurdistan Regional Government should review the current education system, and develop a holistic policy approach in compliance with Human Rights, International norms and principles driven in particular by two Millennium Development Goals (MDGs): Goal 2, which calls for universal primary education, and Goal 3, which promotes gender equality and empowerment of women focusing on early childhood development and early literacy efforts to keep girls in primary school. Again, it should remove stereotypes that insult women and put them at a disadvantage to men, as well as supporting the values of tolerance (United Nations Girls' Education Initiative, UNGEI, 2012:6).

Newly created positions of leadership for women particularly at decision-making levels increasingly require critical thinking skills, knowledge, and attitude which, could be acquired through training. For instance, building women's capacity in running societies, defending women's rights; (right to information, to services, and political representation, their right to a 'voice' and to accountable government), public speaking, gathering support, and organizing societies' work to maximise support possible and give priority to rural women, thus building local basic structures that can identify women's practical and strategic needs, ambitions and provide help to them as well as renew respect for traditional works and merge them into the development. We could conclude that building qualified women's leadership could be demand-driven and for multi-purposes, greater employment at leadership positions, equal wages, income generation, family planning, and change in the perception of women and their roles in society and development (ibid, 2012:23). "Women are more likely to be an agent of change if they have post-primary education" (Grown and Kes, 2005: in ibid).

Grafting grassroots strategy (Muterba)

In contrast, available evidence strongly suggests that the causal relationship between women's participation in decision-making and culture (traditional, tribalism, religious, and family) and patriarchal values works the other way round. Traditional culture shapes political participation under democratic decentralisation far more than democratic decentralisation shapes traditional culture.

At this stage, democratization optimists may want to think about historian Bernard Lewis's reminder: "In the Islamic calendar, this is the beginning of the 15th century, not the 21st century. They are at a different stage of political evolution." It should be noted, therefore, that the United States is attempting to sow the seeds of 21st century political institutions in the soil of a 15th century political culture" (Basham, 2004:18).

Based on these, the need to better graft democratic decentralisation tenets on the best aspects of traditional cultural practices at local level seem more relevant now.

"Because each country is at its own stage in its development, change needs to evolve from its own cultural and historical context, and its own institutions. These are the starting points for progress and determinants for what might be achieved in the short run.

Special considerations apply in countries that have deeply rooted patterns of leadership and authority and traditional patterns of decision-making. Complexity is added when different patterns in different areas of a country require harmonization within a national framework of decision-making. Here, the right to cultural expression, the functionality of existing system, and the consequences of their erosion come into view. Different forms may co-exist between local levels provided that they are compatible at their interface with higher levels of government" (Joy, 2003:9).

Several arguments and observations support grafting (*Muterba*) and illustrate the necessity of grafting (*Muterba*) as a strategy:

- **Facing facts versus replacing facts**

These are facts, (religious, tribalism, patriarchal) which cannot be ignored, and by no means overcome by legal or other theories. The graft model may have the ability to support and make these factors obvious with the goal to formulate a societal consensus on these issues (Jenssen, 1992:36),

- **Actions versus comprehensive approaches**

The regional planning authorities cannot solely depend on blueprints for future development situations. If they are really concerned about development, they have to play an active role within the regional actor constellation which combines indigenous, theoretical and other ideas (ibid: 37).

- **Conceptualizing reality versus realistic concept**

The grafting model tries to conceptualise reality within realistic concepts. This then helps the planner to conceptualize reality and apply real facts of society within theoretical thinking, explanations and expectations. Thus the selection of a development approach itself becomes a result of the planning process with a high degree of political and social acceptance. This supports the idea of Jenssen (ibid: 37), that 'in order to propose models for a realistic situation it would be more appropriate to derive models from the situation which fits into the socio-economic and political context" of a particular spatial unit. This is what the grafting model is proposing.

- **Muterba versus technocratic approach**

In view of the complexity of development problems, analytical techniques in themselves alone do not generally provide optimum solutions. This is because there exists a situation of weak formal data base and the shortage of well trained staff which adversely affects the application of sophisticated tools. The black box nature of most of these tools creates serious problems for action and decision-making. But qualitative judgment can be obtained through consultation and dialogue not only within the government and formal sectors, but also with other local and private actors. Such a dialogue remains consultative and requires no conformity which is what Muterba (grafting model) is all about (ibid).

- **Dimensions of time**

The time factor played a vital role in bringing change to a particular system. Bringing about change in the skill, knowledge and attitude of people in a community is also a long-term process that needs time. It is also the same for the cultivation of new trees. But the grafting model has the ability to reduce the time frame needed for a particular form of change to occur, be it in society or in the cultivation of trees as is mostly evident in the field of agriculture. *“Like trees, political institutions need time to grow and bear fruit”* (Linder, 2004:29). Similarly, the adoption of behaviour of individuals and groups to new values, attitudes, and systems needs more effort and time and could take generations to be brought about. (ibid: 46).

- **Climate change**

The change in environmental conditions also has the ability to influence the behaviour and success of an entity in a process. For instance, climate change has affected the environment of Kurdistan’s forest trees. If these old trees are cut and new ones planted (including exotics), they may not be successful due to changes in temperature, drought and other reasons (Mosha, 2011: iv). In a similar way, globalization may be having the same effect on communities trying to remove the best aspects of traditional cultural practices that are not documented. But this may not successfully lead to the general development of society as people are accustomed to certain local conditions and practices. This then calls for other means to merge the needs of new developments with already existing local best practices instead of doing away with them completely. This is what the grafting model proposes.

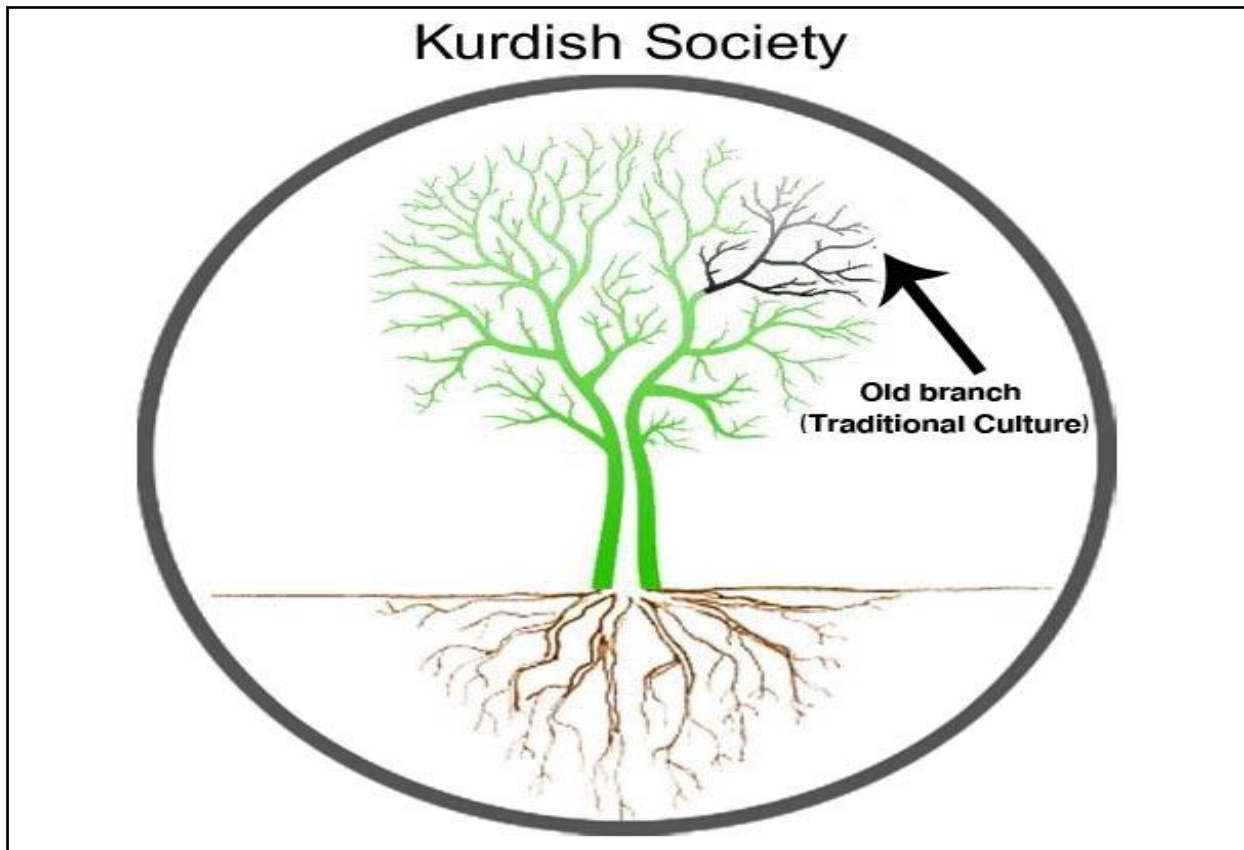
Proposed application of the model at the local level in Kurdistan

In order to propose models for a realistic situation, it would be more appropriate to draw from situations which fit into the socio-economic and political context of a particular spatial unit. The outcome of grafting (Muterba) can help to get a realistic understanding of what is possible or impossible and what can be accepted or rejected by communities.

Customs and traditions are rooted in Kurdish culture especially in rural areas, and these traditional customs and approaches include positive and negative aspects. In general, there seem to be more positives than negatives, and an important issue to be addressed is how to overcome the negatives and promote positive aspects? In order to obtain the answer, due consideration should be given to the current situation of the Kurdish community, and the factors (social factors: cultural tribalism, religion, family, and others) that have influenced the various roles of actors in decision-making. Kurdish society is like an old tree in the mountains, deep rooted in the soil, and therefore cannot be moved easily by the wind. Because of climate change, and other reasons, many of the branches of this old tree do not bear fruit. This is pictorially presented in figure 7:1.

So then what can be done to get the best quality and quantity of fruit from this old tree? Various scenarios arise in addressing this.

Figure 7.1: Kurdish Society



Source: Author's construct 2011

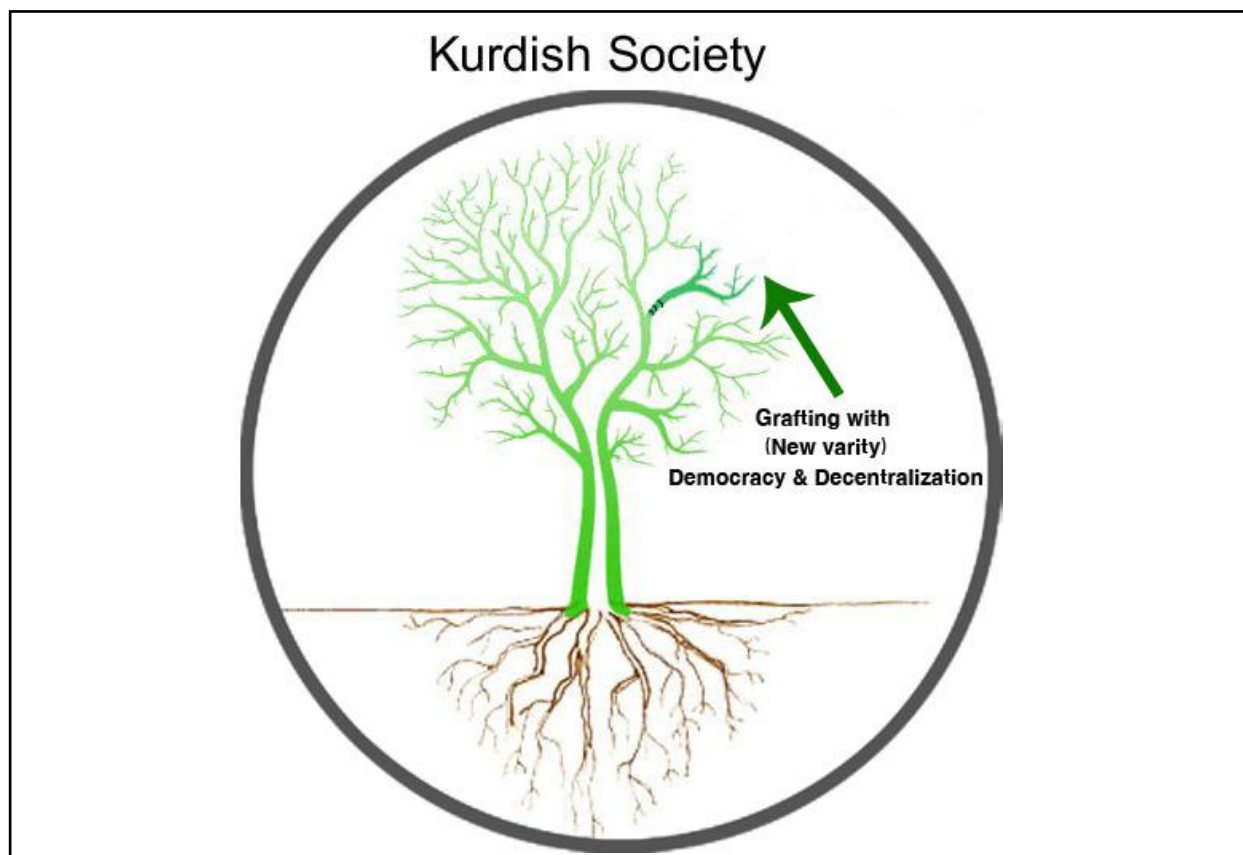
The first scenario

Cut the tree from the roots and plant a new variety of that can bear that quantity and quality of fruit. In this case it needs many years, efforts and resources to bear fruit, and as a result of climate change may not give the required results. In this sense, it is impossible to implement radical changes of this nature in the Kurdish community in the short term, but may need a minimum of a generation for this change to occur.

Second scenario

Cut down the old branches and graft on a new variety from the same family of this tree, in this case maintaining the same roots and structure of the tree that was protected (See Figure 7:1). The Kurdish community could in the same way overcome the traditional norms and standards to promote the positive aspects and remove the negatives through grafting with democracy and decentralisation. There is a practical example of people in the Barzan area who grafted turpentine trees with a new set of pistachios, which gave good results (See Figure 7:2)

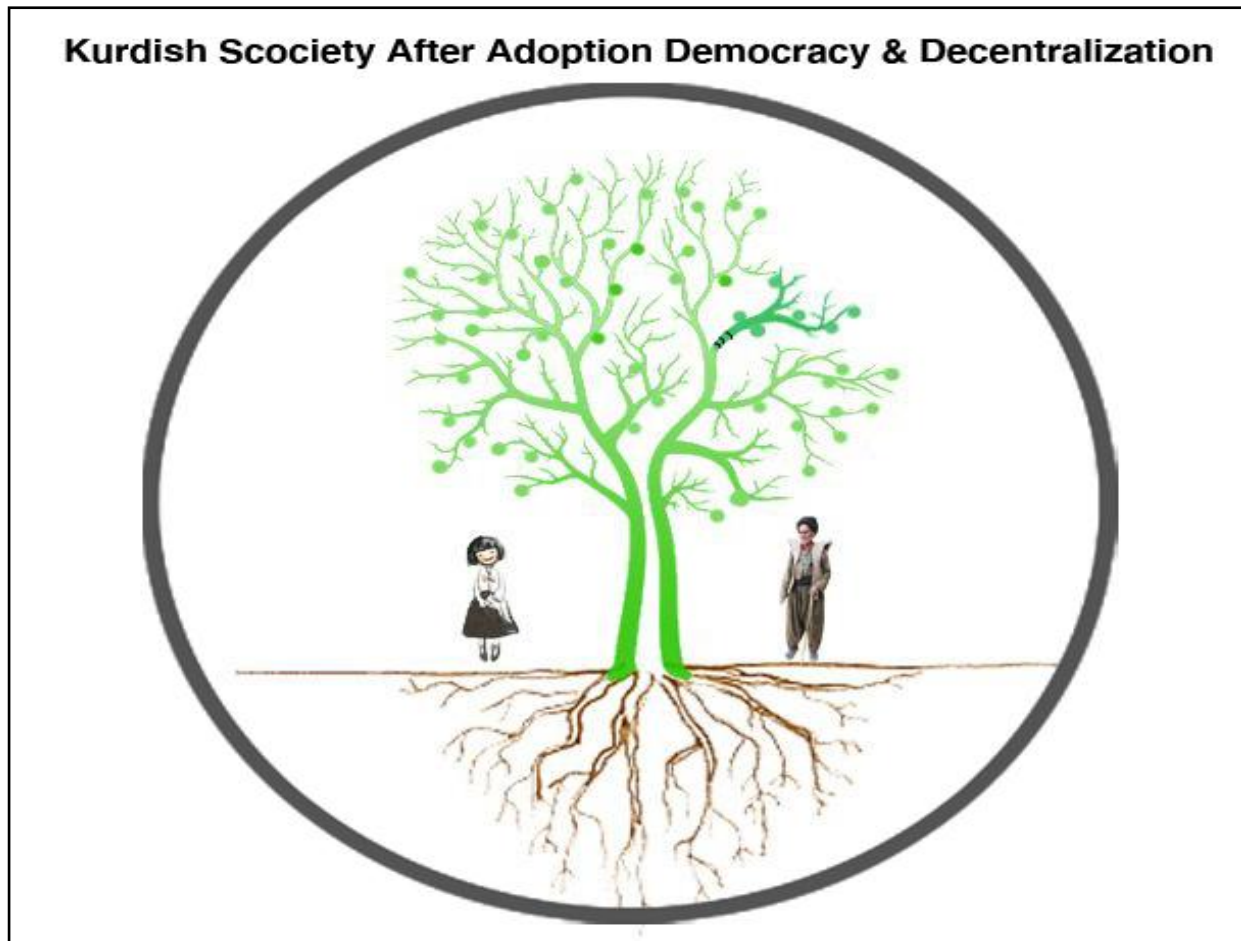
Figure 7.2: Grafting the society norms and standards with democracy and decentralisation.



Source: Author's construct 2011

Scenario two is therefore the recommended approach for adoption in the Kurdish society as it is important to realize that not all local traditions are beneficiary to women. Hence there is the need to change some cultural traditions and practices that encourage and subordinate women while valorising and encouraging those which promote gender equity. Negative and harmful traditional practices such as male child preference, early marriage, and other forms of domestic violence against women, and derogatory and harmful widow practices indicate the cultural subordination of women. The final proposed result from this is indicated on Figure 7.3. This could bring about good fruit as women and men will have similar opportunities to participate in the decision-making process.

Figure 7.3: Kurdish Society after adoption of Democracy and Decentralisation



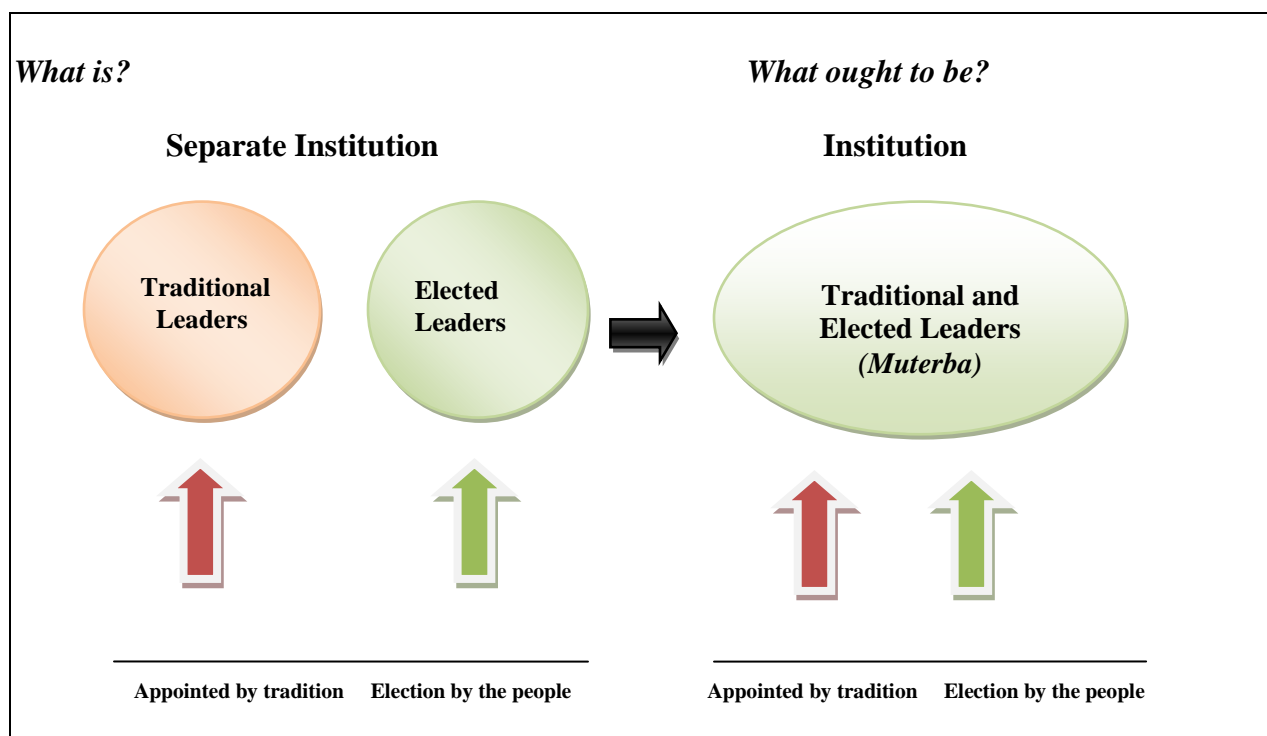
Source: Author's construct 2011

Making Muterba Work

It is not in the interests of traditional local authorities in society to perform change as they are the ones who lose out on power from the process of democracy and decentralization. On the other hand, leaders elected by people have gained power as a modern society. *(Wherever modernization takes place, it is introducing individual option behaviour, and setting back traditional obligations (Linder, 2004:46).* This indicates that traditional values, attitudes and behaviour become significant; consequently the partnership between traditional leaders and elected leaders is important. In order to create balance between these two elements of power, modern leaders have integrated with traditional leaders as a combined model (*Grafting Model, Muterba*). The success and failure of a combination depends on its practical situation. Theoretically the following points can be mentioned: **First**, all success of such co-operation depends on the respect of both sides. **Second**, negotiation on mutual adjustments should be concerned on the point of how co-operation of the two kinds of leaders should be institutionalized under the same umbrella (Linder, 2004:37). **Third**, representational consolidation, if all leaders participate in the formulation and implementation of policies in a regulated and transparent way, and if political pluralism is achieved. No single actor, be it

Shaikh, Agha, and Malla or others has the power to dominate them or to break the power of traditional leaders. **Forth**, consolidation of behaviour and civic culture. **Fifth**, a step-by-step-process can start with a single project on the basis of existing local government institutions Barzan sub-district (ibid: 45).

Figure 7.4: Co-operation between traditional leaders and elected leaders



Source: Adapted from (Linder, 2004:38)

Traditional leaders and elected leaders may agree to divide responsibilities for instance, it may be reasonable to leave the environmental system in the hands of traditional leaders as they have been efficient and successful in the Barzan area. There are other examples where traditional leaders are doing well. For instance water resource management in the Heran sub-district by traditional religious leader is much better when compared with that of other water resources in same area which are mostly damaged and were under the control of the public sector. This may lead to dividing responsibilities but under the umbrella of one institution.

In the view of Linder (2004) "combining a process and a product". *"The more important point is that it offers a fair chance to engender trust, citizenship and solidarity which in its modern form is planting a conviction that co-operation beyond family or clan limits is not only useful but meaningful"* (Linder,2004:47).

In addition much can be learnt from other successful projects: the practical experience of a handmade carpet project and local radio, as a voice for change (combining modern and traditional). A lesson could also be learned from the Barzan area where they grafted turpentine trees with a new set of pistachios, which gave good results

Strengthening the Bang and other local participatory processes

The **Bang** processes should complement the efforts of development agencies to investigate first what people know and have, then develop and improve upon indigenous knowledge.

The study recommends the following as a means of enhancing the Bang process:

- Building strong awareness programs to appreciate the Bang and the other strategies and their role in resource utilization and management,
- Promoting and transferring the process to areas with similar characteristics,
- Exchanging visits between groups working in similar projects,
- Capacity building and empowerment of local people to recognize the value of Bang and to promote this system, and also
- Receiving support from government, for traditional communities to develop indigenous knowledge

7.2.2 At the Civil society level

Promoting women's participation in decision-making is a legitimate planning tradition in its own right. Therefore, women are required to struggle effectively for it. *'The rights must be taken and not given'*, as the Kurdish proverb says. Historically, top-down government intervention alone has not removed any persistent causes of women's non-participation and women's subordination. The Kurdish regional government alone might never be able to recognize the problems caused by the limited and non involvement of women in decision-making. It is the role of Kurdish women's organizations to facilitate their engagement for reforms from below. Moser, 1998 argues that gender planning is not an end in itself but a means by which women, through a process of empowerment, can emancipate themselves. She argues that this is best achieved through a process of negotiated debate about the redistribution of power and resources within households, civil society and the state (Moser, 1998:190). If the success of development planning depends on the participation of women, then the organization of women is important, because of their capacity to reach 'grass-roots' where there are many people, as observed in the role of Harman institution in this respect.

Lobby to practice legal frameworks

Government alone might never implement and make use of legal frameworks and international statements unless NGOs and other civic organizations lobby for it. The capacity to confront the nature of legal frameworks and international statements has only been fulfilled when it has been incorporated and integrated into the bottom-up struggle of women's organizations. Women's organizations can utilize their close relationship with the political parties and other civil societies to raise their voices in order to be heard in the Parliament and Kurdish regional government. It is necessary to emphasise that women's organizations themselves must first be aware of what they are lobbying for, and have clearly drafted plan suggestions, so that these can be discussed by government decision makers to reach a consensus with women's organizations, for example the reasons behind why quotas have not yet been implemented at local level.

"Where decision-making bodies lack women's participation, women's organizations can work collectively to voice gender-specific concerns and advocate for gender equality" (UNDP, 2009:24).

Building strong networks to enhance civil society advocacy roles

One factor to be overcome by Kurdish civil society is unclear focus and mission. Most civil society organisations are not independent from political parties. It is a challenge of civil society organisation to discharge their efforts, power and resources effectively, resolve their leadership conflicts, and to overcome their various political stands for the sake of formation of strong pressure groups among themselves in order to maximize their influence. Formation of civil society networks will therefore strengthen the influence of civil society over governments at all levels as “networks can be seen to have three primary areas of impact namely: programme coordination, knowledge sharing, and policy advocacy” (Abelson, 2003:3).

Capacity building

Non-governmental organizations in co-operation with government and political parties at different levels have a major role in maintaining women’s political empowerment which could be achieved through proper training, facilitation, negotiation and communication skills and other capacity building programs. In order to effectively launch participatory approaches, staff of civil society organizations and government at regional, provincial and local levels must have the skills and knowledge of how to implement these approaches properly. These programs are rather to strengthen the knowledge base of such civil society organizations working at different levels, especially at local level and to increase their professional contribution to the planning and policy making process.

Strengthening local institutions

The local government should enter into partnership with existing local institutions such as the Harman Institution to help strengthen local participation and the involvement of women in decision-making and the entire development process at local level in the region. Local government should again put in measures that will sustain the already existing local community based organisations, non-governmental organisations and other institutions to improve their efficiency in the process of formulating an integrated policy (twin policy; gender-aware policy and development policy), planning and implementation towards enhanced development at local level.

7.2.3 At the level of political parties

Political parties are the vehicles of the participation of women. They have great influence in shaping social, economic, political, and administrative culture at regional, provincial and local levels. Therefore, their role and attitudes are very vital in the context of women’s participation in decision-making.

As mentioned before, the political party named ‘*Change*’ has been protesting for the revival of the Kurdistan Regional Government system.

The current political system in the Kurdistan region, which is in favour of power sharing between the major political parties Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) and Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), should be changed to redistribute the power and resources of opposition parties within the Kurdistan regional Parliament. However, a mosaic of multi-party coalition government can enhance the transparency, accountability and efficiency; reduce the sphere for corruption and abuse of power. The political landscape of the Kurdistan region should, in the long-term, be expanded. Access to information to the media to report on development and gender issues should be granted unconditionally by the regional government and the media should also focus on gender sensitive budgeting at local level in the region.

Anfal should be viewed as an international genocide case for increased global security

A main strategic gender need in the study area, as identified in this study, is the common effort from the international community to avoid violence, war, mass graves and genocide to ensure peace and stability. It is not easy to achieve global security in the absence of human rights, social and economic injustices and democratic decentralisation principals at local level especially in post-conflict countries. The essential issues to reduce mass immigration to developed countries are to avoid social conflict and in this way increase global security. The International community can avoid repeating previous mistakes .These issues are actually major areas of investment for the United Nations, European Union and international development agencies (*Saleh, 2006:11, Mahzouni, 2007:197, and Author's participant observation*).

7.3 Further research

Through the journey of launching this research, some issues have been proposed for more in-depth investigation and research. The study has probably been limited to finding answers to all questions concerning women's participation. It is of high significance to investigate how to facilitate indigenous knowledge as well and make it effective in local development as well as how to successfully implement the Grafting model (Muterba) and continuously evaluate their impact on local level development.

Why do communities trust traditional authorities more than government?

It may relevant to look at the extent of politicization of traditional influence in the presentation of women's participation and their contribution to local development?

How to strengthen the existing traditional social resource administration system (Bang) toward involvement of women in decision-making and the entire development process?

From food basket to sustainability;

How to relate the reconstruction and development of the Kurdistan region to sustainability? Sustainability in the Kurdistan region maybe conceptualised as: sustainable development. "*Sustainable development is a process of change in which the exploitation of resources, the direction of investments, the orientation of technological development and institutional change are all in harmony and enhance both current and future potential to meet human needs and aspirations*" (Burian, 2000 in Kyessi, 2002:108). In the case of the Kurdistan region the exploitation of resources (water, land, human, return from oil, etc), are a dilemma in sustainable development and should be taken into consideration. It is of particularly high significance to investigate how to create a comprehensive framework that contains long term strategic objectives?

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Participation in formal decision-making at local level

Declaration

This inquiry is carried out for an academic purpose to fulfil the requirement of Ph.D. research. The information collected will not be used for any other purpose. All information will be compiled and used for the declared purpose and individual name or references will not be quoted anywhere.

Anwar. Ibrahim, Ph.D. Student, University of Dortmund, Germany

1 . Are you affiliated to any institutions of the civil society?

Yes No

2 . If the answer is (No) what are the reasons in your opinion.

- 1. Not defending women's rights*
- 2. Organizations affiliated to the parties*
- 3. No cooperation and coordination among these organisations*
- 4. Women conflict*
- 5. Power monopoly by women for a long time*
- 6. Not enough democracy among the organizations*
- 7. Not allowed by traditions and habits*
- 8. Other reasons*

3 . In which of the following voting activities were you involved?

- 1. Voting in the regional elections of the 1992*
- 2. Voting in the municipal council elections in 2001*
- 3. Voting in the elections of the national council in 2005*
- 4. Voting on the constitutions of 2005*

4 . During the elections did vote for a man or a woman?

Man Woman

5 . If the answer is for the man, what was the reason?

- 1. Men have more rights in the political participation*
- 2. Men have more capable personality than women*
- 3. Men can bear more than women*
- 4. Less opportunity for women to be nominated by the parties*
- 5. Weak in taking decisions*
- 6. Other reasons*

6 . If the answer is for the woman, what was the reason?

1. *Women have the ability to understand the status of women more than men.....*
2. *Supporting women and strengthening them in the society.....*
3. *Women's presence in the parliament helps the emergence of the case women and its discussion.....*
4. *Women have the ability and qualifications to work in the political environment.
.....*
5. *In order to achieve equity between men and*
6. *Other reasons.....*

7. Is the decision for participation in elections and selection of the candidate your decision or family decision?

Your decision.....Family decision

8 . Do you think that it is necessary to reserve seats in the parliament for women and provincial councils in Kurdistan?

Yes.....

No.....

9 . Are you affiliated to a party or a political movement in Kurdistan?

Yes No

10 . If the answer is (No) what are the reasons for the low participation and representat of women in the political parties?

1. *Low political awareness.....*
2. *Feeling that politics is the monopoly of men.....*
3. *No party initiatives to take women issues seriously.....*
4. *Domestic issues don't allow them to practice activities inside the parties.....*
5. *Political refusal for nominating women on their lists or supporting their nomination.....*
6. *Social traditions do not allow women to participate politically and get associated with men.....*
7. *Other reasons.....*

11. Are women given leaderships, administrative posts and responsibility in this region?

Yes No.....

12 . If the answer is (No), what do you think is the reason for this?

1. *Not having the qualified women cadres.....*
2. *The main administrative positions are dominated by mostly men.....*
3. *Leadership and management tasks required qualified person who can made the decision.....*
4. *Inadequate media focus on enhancing the participation of women.....*
5. *Other reasons.....*

13. What is the effect of Kurdish legislation and laws on the situation of women?

Positive..... Negative.....not effected.....

14 . How do you evaluate the social, economic and political situation of women in Kurdistan?

Good.....Medium.....Weak.....

15 . In case of evaluating women's issue as a weak one, what do you think is the reason?

1. *Low educational of level*
2. *Non-availability of women freedom*
3. *Unacceptability of women's political participation*
4. *Men oppressing women*
5. *Non-equality in rights between men and women.*
6. *Non availability of women materialistic privacy.*

16 . Do you think that religious beliefs hinder women's political participation?

Yes..... No.....

17. If the answer is (Yes), what are the reasons?

1. *Religion prevents women from political participation.....*
2. *Religion sees women's real position as to give birth and raise children.....*
3. *Others.....*

18 .Do you think that traditional societal values weaken the role of women in the society and their political participation?

Yes.....No.....I don't know.....

19 . If the answer is (Yes), what do you think are the reasons?

1. *Traditions related to East.....*
2. *Traditions that limit women involvement.....*
3. *Traditions behind the distributions of work between men and women.*
4. *Other traditions.....*

20 . Do you believe that the family influences women's participation in decision-making than other social institution?

Yes..... No.....

21 . If the answer is (Yes), does this weaken the political participation of women?

Yes No.....

22 . Do you think that low women education leads to reducing their role and position in the society?

Yes.....No.....

23 . What is the essential role for women in the Kurdish society is:

1. *Housekeeping and children upbringing.....*
2. *Take a productive role outside the house.....*
3. *Women work in the home and political field.....*

24 . Which of the following institutions advances women's issues in Kurdistan:

1. *Government.....*
2. *Parliament*
3. *Non Governmental Organizations*
4. *Political parties*
5. *Women organizations and unions*

25 . Are there any obstructions in women's political participation in Kurdistan?

There is there is not.....

26 . In case of obstructions, what do you think are the reasons?

1. *Men's refusal of women's political participation*
2. *Society's refusal of women's political participation*
3. *Inability to strike a balance between house work and office work*
4. *Less capability of women to participate...*
5. *Discouragements by the political parties for women participation.....*
6. *Other reasons.....*

Appendix 2: Participation: power distribution matrix
(Used for assessment of functions and power distribution across the levels)

Functions or responsibilities	Key players in local planning												
	Regional				Provincial				Local				
	H P C	M O P	M O F	SM	LG	LA	NGOs	PC	LA	P P	TA	MC	LG
Policy making													
Setting of local policy													
Guidelines and principles for planning													
Planning													
Vision building and goals setting													
Data base & collection													
Determine priorities													
Physical planning													
Socio-economic planning													
Implementation													
Strategy and delivery mechanisms													
Formulation of Action plans													
Financing & Budgeting													
Determine tax rates, fees, etc.													
Revenue collection and expenditure													
Resource share													
Monitoring & Evaluation													
Identify indicators													
Carry out monitoring													
Supervise & evaluation													
Agency Function: D: Decision-making C: Consultation G: Guidance and instructions provide I: Information share-informed X: Not direct involvement in decision-making-No input													
CSOs: Civil Society Organization MOF: Ministry of Finance PC: Province Council MOP: Ministry of Planning HPC: High Planning Council NGOs: Non-governmental Organizations LA: Line agency PP: Political Parties LG: Local Government SM: Sector Ministry MC: Municipality Council TA: Traditional Authority													
<i>Source: Adapted from Adhikar, 2006:330, Mousa, 2006 and Eberlei W., 2001:11</i>													

Appendix 3: Village resources Mapp, Economic, Social, Environnent. Local group and Institutions Profiles.

Adapted from FAO (2001) Socio-Economic and Gender Analysis (*SEGA*)

1-1.Village Resources mapping: for learning about the environmental, economic and social resources in the community.

- Infrastructure(roads, houses, buildings)
- Water sites and sources.
- Agricultural lands (crop varieties and locations)
- Agro-ecological zones(soil ,slopes, elevations)
- Forest lands
- Grazing areas
- Shops, markets
- Health centres ,schools and religious facilities
- Special use places (bus stops, cemeteries, shrines).

Source: Participants of community members both fhh & mhh.

1.2-Economic resource profiles: for learning about the community's natural resource base, land forms, and land use, location and size of farms or homesteads, and location and availability of infrastructure and services, and economic activities.

Questions;

- ✓ What are the major activities carried out in each village of the community (Productive, reproductive and community roles)? By whom (female and male)? When is the work done in the community (daily, seasonal)
- ✓ What services and infrastructure are available in each village?
- ✓ What are the natural resources available in each village?
- ✓ What economic opportunities are available in each village?
- ✓ Who has what, who has access to productive resources such as land, credit, income, education, training, equipment and time?
- ✓ Who has control over these resources?
- ✓ Are the rights of access in each village different for fhh and mhh or for people from different ethnic or other socio-economic groups?
- ✓ What are the principal problems?
- ✓ What interventions for improving the situation have been implemented so?

Participants: Mixed or separate focus groups of fhh and mhh.

1.3-Social profiles: for learning about the community's population, local poverty indicators, and number and location of households by type (ethnicity, caste, fhh & mhh, wealthy, poor, etc.).

Questions;

- ✓ How many fhh and mhh are there? Size of the households? What is the number of people?
- ✓ Is the village growing or shrinking? why?(birth –rates ,out-migration ,in-migration)
- ✓ Are families polygamous or monogamous? Are living arrangements by nuclear family or extended family? How are these defined?
- ✓ If the village has more than one ethnic group, caste or religion, are they found mostly in certain areas?
- ✓ Is there some part of the village where poorer or landless people are concentrated?
- ✓ What are the local definitions for “rich” and “poor”,” female and male households”?
- Which households are rich? Poor? Medium?
- ✓ How many households are female-headed? Is the number growing? If so, why?

Participants: One focus group for key information from both fhh and mhh

1.4-Environment profiles: for learning about environmental trends(deforestation, water supply, draught);economic trends(jobs, wages, costs of living), population trends(birth-rates ,out-migration ,in-migration),and other trends of importance to the community before and after Anfal camping.

Questions;

- ✓ What are the most important environmental trends? e.g. drought ,deforestation ,erosion.
- ✓ What are the most important economic trends? e.g. jobs, wages, price, costs of living, crop yields, livestock population.
- ✓ What are the most important demographic trends? e.g. birth-rates. Infant mortality, in-migration, out-migration, increases in female-headed households.
- ✓ What other trends are important?
- ✓ What are the linkages between the trends?
- ✓ Are there linkages or causes stemming from the intermediate –or macro- level?
- ✓ What is getting better? What is getting worse?
- ✓ What trends impact female and male –households differently?
- ✓ What trends impact the poor more so than the rich?
- ✓ Are there differences by ethnicity, caste, (fhh&mhh)..etc.

Participants: Separate focus groups for older fhh and mhh

1.5-Local groups and institutions profiles:

for learning about local groups and institutions, goals, achievements, needs and their linkages with outside organizations and agencies.

Questions;

- ✓ Are there local groups organized around environmental issues e.g. forest users group, water user group, others?
- ✓ Are there local groups organized around economic issues e.g. credit; Agriculture production, others?
- ✓ Are there groups from which fhh (women) are excluded? Which ones? Why? Do the fhh lose due to their lack of participation?
- ✓ Are there groups exclusively for fhh (women)? If so, what is the focus of these groups? What do fhh gain from them?
- ✓ Are the poor excluded from any of the local groups? Which ones? Why? What do the poor lose due to their lack of participation?
- ✓ What are the links between local groups or organizations and outside institutions? e.g. NGOs, political parties, government institutions.
- ✓ How many local groups or institutions are there? Who participates in them? Elders, women, farmers, fhh, and mhh what are their purposes?
- ✓ Are leadership positions dominated by a particular social group, (e.g. high caste wealthy elderly men, elderly women)?
- ✓ Do fhh or women occupy leadership positions in any of the local Institutions? If so, which fhh or women? Which institutions?
- ✓ Which local institutions have links with outside institutions? For what purposes?

Participants: Separate focus groups of fhh and mhh, mix of socio-economic groups .

1-6.Factors and trends profiles:

Questions;

- ✓ Which social, economic, cultural, religious, political, environmental, demographic and legal factors will constrains or facilitate women's versus men's participation?
- ✓ Which of the above are changing and which are intractable?
- ✓ What could influence these factors and trends?
- ✓ What are the priority problems in the community, for women, men, fhh and mhh, different socio-economic groups?
- ✓ What are the priority needs (practical and strategical) of in the
- ✓ Community? For women? Men? fhh and mhh?
- ✓ What perspectives do they have on appropriate and sustainable ways of addressing their needs?

Participants: Separate focus groups of fhh and mhh, mix of socio-economic groups .

Appendix 4: Glossary: operational definitions

Anfal:

‘Anfal is that action by which all the belonging and properties of the defeated side in a battle will be controlled in times of wars. The former dictatorial regime of Iraq used the word to name the genocide campaigns carried out under the rule of the tyrant Saddam. Middle East watch has defined the Anfal campaigns as (a series of massive attacks – 8 campaigns in all –in six different geographical locations. The chief command of this operation was under the domination of the Northern Office of Al-Ba'ath party based in Kirkuk city. This base was run by Ali Hassan Al-Majeed (known by Chemical Ali) since March 1987).

According to Kurds viewpoint, Anfal operation was a part of greater campaigns against the Kurdish identity of the Region. The aims behind them were to deform and destroy the demographical perspective and nature of the area with demolishing the economical structure of the Kurdish rural area (Yildiz, 2007:25).

Widows:

The social phenomenon of widows refers to those wives who have lost their husbands in internal and external battles and /or accidents, or they are left behind without remarrying. This makes the wives to bear all the family responsibilities from raising up children to bread winning for the family. In this concept, the widow suffers from the socio-psychological problems. Those families, which are headed by females for any reason, are called female headed households (fhh) In this regard, the widows as a result of genocide operations by dictatorial regime of Ba'ath against people from Barzan area may go under this category’ (Joint Humanitarian Information Centre, JHIC, 2004:3).

Household:

‘Social unit consisting of those who eat from the same pot’ (Wakefield, 2004: ii). ‘Household is a group of people who live and eat together’ (Bolt and Bird, 2003:13). A variation of this definition is that the household is where members share a common source of major income and food, and they sleep under same roof or in the same compound.

Community

A community is often defined generically as a group of people living in the same locality and under the same government, we employ a working definition that focuses on the collective action dimension: a community is a group that share a sufficient commonality of interest such that its members are motivated to engage in collective action (Brinkerhoff and Azfar, 2006:6)

Participation in decision-making

Participation in decision-making is viewed in term of actions such as decision-making positions, and specifically at their presence in executive, legislative, as well as in political parties and civil organizations, debating formal and informal issues, and lobbying.